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WHAT CLIENTS DON'T GET ABOUT MY PROFESSION: A MODEL OF PERCEIVED ROLE-BASED IMAGE DISCREPANCIES

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While most work on image has focused on character traits, we argue that, with respect to professions, *roles* represent an important, underexplored source of image. Employing qualitative data from 85 members of four professions, we identify "role-based image discrepancies"—misalignments between what professionals perceive as the content of their professional work and what they believe others think constitutes the professionals' professional work—as a salient and costly issue for professionals. Specifically, we find that professionals believe that clients' perceptions of their roles lead clients not only to devalue professions but also to have misaligned expectations about the process and outcomes of the professional-client relationship. Further, professionals perceive that these client evaluations hinder the professional-client interaction and, consequentially, lead to productivity and emotional costs. In response to the recognition of these potential costs, professionals are motivated to manage role-based images and client evaluations through specific problem-focused image management tactics. We develop a model of role-based image discrepancy management that encapsulates these findings and identify mechanisms that link role-based image discrepancies with their outcomes and with professional responses. Our findings carry theoretical and practical implications pertinent to professions, professionals, and image management.

Professional work is intimately tied to the provision of service to clients (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933) and, at least to some extent, clients and other members of the public can both confer and withdraw the right for a given profession to exist (Wilensky, 1964). Accordingly, *professional image*—how professionals believe outsiders view their profession—may be a salient and consequential issue for professionals because how others perceive them may influence the way the public, and ultimately their clients, interact with them (e.g., Newton & Chaney, 1996; Whitaker & Coale, 1997).

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In recent years, a number of professional groups have encountered substantial threats to image, and their connections with the public seem increasingly tenuous. For example, public confidence in professionals and professional organizations is declining. According to a Harris Interactive Confidence Index (2011), public confidence in the field of medicine has dropped from 73 to 33 percent between 1966 and 2011. Law firms have fared poorly as well, with confidence dropping from 24 percent in 1973 to 11 percent in 2011. Further, with the proliferation of information on the Internet offering all types of "professional" advice—including legal, accountancy, architectural, and medical—many professions are facing the erosion of their unique knowledge bases, a hallmark of professions (Freidson, 1988). As Hardey noted, "The equity of presentation offered by the Internet dissolves the boundaries around areas of expertise upon which professions derived much of their power" (1999: 827).

As these examples illustrate, many professions are facing declining public confidence as well as increasing vulnerability to public perceptions regarding their value, including the exclusivity of their knowledge bases. Consequently, professionals may be confronting increasing challenges to their professional images. Such challenges have implications for both practice and theory. With regard to the former, challenges can range from frustrating to threatening. Academics may feel this frustration when responding to questions such as, "Now that you are not teaching, what will you do this summer?"[1] More problematically, as Leary and Kowalski noted, "the failure to convey impressions consistent with one's role not only diminishes one's effectiveness in that role, but in many cases can lead the individual to lose the right to enact that role" (1990: 41). In this vein, professions are facing challenges to long-held practices that are central to how they operate, such as attacks on tenure for academics (Berret, 2011). For some, these recent challenges to confidence in professionals may come on top of decades-long trends toward deprofessionalization and increasing external control over how professional work is done (Ritzer & Walczak, 1988; Rothman, 1984).

From a theoretical perspective, the image-related challenges noted above provide cause to consider an underexplored image-related issue. While previous research has focused on character-based images (i.e., traits or characteristics associated with social groups), what is central to the profession-related challenges identified above is that they revolve around roles—that is, what professionals do. Given that clients are bound to professionals by the provision of service, misunderstanding of roles may have a larger impact on professional-client interactions than matters of character. You may think surgeons are arrogant, but these impressions may play a secondary role if you need your appendix removed.

It is not clear that image discrepancies concerning roles behave similarly to, or have the same outcomes as, character-based discrepancies. To begin, character-based discrepancies often implicate entire groups (e.g., "Americans are self-centered") and thus may be responded to as a membership threat. Discrepancies involving roles, by contrast, concern the issue of what someone does (i.e., role enactment). Further, research suggests that character-based perceptions tend to be associated with stable causes and thus may be difficult to change, but other perceptions (e.g., your mood today) may be attributable to more changeable causes (e.g., Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009). Researchers do not know how role discrepancies will be attributed (e.g., are they easily changeable?). These issues become even more complicated when looking at role-based discrepancies among *professionals*. We know that believing that one has been wrongly stereotyped on the basis of character can lead to deficits in performance (Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999), but this effect typically occurs when the stereotyped person is of lower status and is vulnerable to a stronger (e.g., a majority) out-group. How might discrepancies around role influence relationships in which the client (i.e., the stereotyper) may not only be of lower status than the professional (the stereotyped), but also vulnerable to the professional for the completion of service?

Although research suggests several explanations for why those outside a profession may misunderstand professions/professionals and how social

[1] Of course, professionals are not alone in their frustration with public misperceptions. In fact, a recent article in the *Atlantic* was devoted fully to "What people don't get about my job" (Thompson, 2011), and there is currently a trend in social media whereby individuals post examples of what people think they do in their work versus what they actually do (see http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/what-people-think-i-do-what-i-really-do/photos). As we discuss later, professionals may be particularly susceptible to image issues and especially vulnerable to their consequences.

forces are challenging professions as a whole, it is not yet understood how these challenges and misunderstandings impact an individual professional. As we argue below, given evidence that professions and professionals may be particularly susceptible to misperceptions and especially vulnerable to their consequences, these oversights are important to address because current theory does not afford us the ability to explain the nature or the implications of discrepant perceptions related to roles. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to build and elaborate theory around what we refer to as *role-based image discrepancies*[2]—misalignments between what professionals perceive as the content of their professional work and what they believe others think constitutes the professionals' work—and the implications these image discrepancies carry for professionals.

IMAGE DISCREPANCIES AND PROFESSIONS

While scholarly interest in image encompasses many lines of research, including work on identity verification, stereotyping, and impression management, there is considerable agreement on a few central findings (see also Gilbert [1998] and Macrae and Bodenhausen [2000] for reviews). First, to maintain a sense of control and predictability, individuals want others to view them and their groups in a manner consistent with their self-views (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). Second, when perceptions of how others see an individual (i.e., her/his image) and the individual's self-view (i.e., his/her identity) do not align, individuals perceive what we refer to as "image discrepancies" (Roberts, 2005). Third, image discrepancies result in an uncomfortable state, and individuals are often motivated to manage them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Despite significant progress in this area, relatively little research has examined images and their management within the confines of work—particularly image discrepancies based on roles. Our research brings this underexplored source of image and image management to the fore. To set a foundation for our theorizing, we discuss the potential differences between character-based and role-based discrepancies, reviewing research pertinent to image (including work on stereotypes) and impression management, as well as the relatively small body of research that explores these issues in occupations and professions. We then discuss how spotlighting the case of professionals may illuminate and advance understanding of role-based image discrepancies.

Character-Based vs. Role-Based Discrepancies

Broadly speaking, much of the previous research on image construction, identity verification, and stereotypes has focused on character-based images derived from group memberships (e.g., North & Swann, 2009; Operario & Fiske, 2004; Tajfel & Forgas, 1981). A review by Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick (2007) suggests that perceptions of others tend to involve two universal appraisals: warmth and competence. For example, people often stereotype older people as high in warmth but low in competence and, conversely, stereotype Asian people as highly competent but low in warmth. However, in an exposition on image, Dichter wrote that "[image] describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others" (1985: 75). This suggests that there may be areas of image content separate from personal characteristics that researchers have yet to explore sufficiently.

Role-based images are a prime case in point. In our view, role-based images differ from character-based images in important ways. To begin, because of its focus on perceptions of group characteristics, much work on character-based images and discrepancies draws upon social identity theory (Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006; Roberts, 2005; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002), which emphasizes group membership as a basis for identity. Role-based discrepancies, by contrast, appear to have more in common with identity theory, a microsociological perspective on identity that suggests roles and role enactment—rather than group membership (Stryker & Serpe, 1982)—are central building blocks of identity and, by implication, of image. These perspectives have some fundamental differences. For example, role-based perceptions are embedded in interpersonal interaction (Stryker, 2007), but social identities and character-based perceptions can be formed with little interaction among group members. Moreover, identity theory does not "consider in any direct sense the impact of other social attributes on the self . . . [such as] ethnicity, sex, race, and nationality" (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995: 264), yet groups based on those attributes are

[2] While not our original focus, roles surfaced as a key discrepancy area and guided our theoretical development.

at the heart of theorizing about stereotypes and impression management. Thus, while the literature is replete with studies about image discrepancies as they relate to social groups and group memberships, it is not clear which insights from these studies apply to role-based images.

Less directly, other evidence suggests that types of discrepancies matter. Drawing on Weiner's (1986) work on perception, Tomlinson and Mayer (2009) suggested that violations in expectations, which include image discrepancies (e.g., "I am not who you think I am"), vary depending on the degree to which the causes of the violation are internal or external to a violator, and are stable and controllable. To illustrate, in examining trust repair, Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, and Dirks (2004) argued that individuals weigh negative information about integrity more highly than positive information, but the reverse is true for competency. That is, evidence of integrity failings may carry more weight than those regarding competency failings. This is perhaps because integrity attributions imply stable causes, such as an individual's character. Competence, by contrast, may vary and indeed improve over time, and hence may be less stable. By inference, it is also possible that people will judge different types of image discrepancies (e.g., character versus role) differently. People are likely to view character, for example, as internal to a person and stable. This should influence the perception of as well as the response to these types of discrepancies. It is unclear, however, how individuals view or respond to role-based image discrepancies.

Professionals and Role-Based Image Discrepancies

Although research on professionals and image discrepancies has largely been character-based,[3] we suggest that professionals are vulnerable to role-based discrepancies. This is because professionals are characterized by *high visibility*, *frequent use of esoteric knowledge*, and *high interdependence with clients*. These characteristics, we argue, stem from the very nature of what it means to be a professional. For an occupation to be considered a "profession," it must have (1) a substantive body of knowledge that is acquired through systematic training, (2) a professional association that certifies practitioners, (3) societal recognition of the profession's authority, and (4) a service orientation articulated by a code of ethics (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933; Foote, 1953; Greenwood, 1957).

Regarding visibility, professionals are well known in society because of both their interactions with clients and the presence of professional associations (criterion 2). In addition, they are often the focus of television, movies, and other media portrayals. Such portrayals may be inaccurate or misleading, emphasizing certain aspects of a profession (e.g., a lawyer "performing" in the courtroom) and overlooking other essential elements that may take up the bulk of a professional's time (e.g., preparing for upcoming trials for hours on end). Professional work is also characterized by a large and often esoteric body of knowledge and set of prac-

[3] Research in this field has taken one of two perspectives. The first perspective examines "outsider" views of the characteristics of an occupational worker. For example, Imada, Fletcher, and Dalessio (1980) found that individuals viewed accountants as either adventurous, social "tigers" or low-energy, detail-minded "lambs." In a similar vein, Yzerbyt, Schadron, Leyens, and Rocher (1994) found that subjects in a lab study consistently associated library archivists and comedians with introversion and extroversion respectively, despite receiving individuating information about target individuals. And, in a study of various occupations in the construction industry, Loosemore and Tan (2000) found that architects, contractors, engineers, and surveyors all held stereotyped perceptions of the individuals in the other occupations as to such personal traits as honesty, cunning, and hostility. Research on occupations also focuses on the relative prestige of one occupation vis-à-vis another (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, & Treiman, 1992; Gusfield & Schwartz, 1963; Zhou, 2005), and shows that occupations with jobs associated with "masculinity" are often granted higher prestige (Glick, 1991). The second perspective, including more recent work as well as our own work here, has shifted from such an outsider perspective to an interest in how workers believe outsiders perceive them. Research on occupational stigma, or "dirty work," argues that those working in low-prestige occupations recognize that others associate their work with various levels of moral, social, and physical taint and that these workers are motivated to manage such perceptions (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner et al., 2006; Tracy & Scott, 2006). The more limited body of work on the image of professionals, as a distinct type of occupational worker, focuses on how professionals actively work to project an image of competence and character (Roberts, 2005). More generally, despite this shift to more of an "insider" view, recent research in this area continues to echo a classic theme found in earlier work: image consists of traits or characteristics associated with social group.

tices (criterion 1) that, even when directly examined, may be difficult for outsiders to decipher (Elliott, 1972; Evetts, Mieg, & Felt, 2006). Finally, society must validate the service of professionals (criteria 3 and 4). Because of their service orientation, professionals have high levels of interdependence with those they serve. In turn, clients serve as evaluators of professions and of professionals themselves (Brown & Swartz, 1989; Kadushin, 1962; Ojasalo, 2001). For this reason, professionals may find themselves in a quandary: they must interact with clients (and the broader public) who—due to the propagation of professional knowledge and less than fully accurate portrayals—both believe they understand the professionals' profession and fail to appreciate its nuances or even its most crucial tasks. This combination of interdependency and misinformation may render professionals vulnerable to the consequences of public misperceptions. In sum, professionals are likely acquainted with role-based image discrepancies, and the consequences of these discrepancies should matter. Therefore, we consider (a) the implications of role-based image discrepancies and (b) how professionals respond to those implications.

What are the implications of image discrepancies? One major implication of image discrepancies relevant to organizational studies is a decrease in individual performance. In a series of laboratory studies, Steele and colleagues (Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995) demonstrated that individuals underperform when they feel categorized on the basis of stereotypes—generally based on gender or race. Such effects may be due to the negative emotions and stress that can arise when others do not validate one's self-perceptions (Burke, 1991; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Miller & Kaiser, 2001; Swann et al., 1992). Performance decrements associated with image discrepancies may also stem from the fact that processing discrepant perceptions consumes cognitive and emotional resources, reducing the pool of resources available for task performance (Croizet, Després, Gauzins, Huguet, Leyens, & Méot, 2004).

The impact of image discrepancies on occupational or professional members has received considerably less attention. However, the little research that exists suggests that image discrepancies may result in lower performance and higher turnover for those in tainted occupations or professions (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Moreover, Roberts (2005) argued that professionals experiencing image discrepancies may have poorer-quality relationships at work. While not a test of professionals at work, Polzer and colleagues' (2002) study of 423 MBA students working in groups supports this assertion. Here, groups in which members failed to verify each others' identities demonstrated less social integration, more relationship conflict, and less creativity than groups whose members did "self-verify." In sum, there is a scarcity of research on the outcomes of image discrepancies among workers, in general. Moreover, it is not clear whether negative emotions, stress, and limited cognitive resources are the primary mechanisms explaining the impact of role-based discrepancies, or whether other mechanisms may be in play.

What are the responses to discrepancies? At a general level, scholars have identified two ways in which individuals cope with image discrepancies. First, individuals may attempt to bring others' views more in line with their own views (Swann, 1983; Swann & Read, 1981). The literature on impression management focuses primarily on how individuals try to change how others view them in order to align perceptions or create positive perceptions through such tactics as ingratiation, exemplification, self-promotion, supplication, and intimidation (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Second, individuals may change their self-views to better align with the views of others. This form of coping has been labeled "internalization" (Lemay & Ashmore, 2004) and "behavioral confirmation" (Snyder, 1984; Swann & Ely, 1984). In a longitudinal investigation of individuals transitioning to college, Lemay and Ashmore (2004) found that over a two-month span, in addition to self-verifying, students changed their self-perceptions to align with how their peers perceived them. Similarly, in a laboratory context, Skrypnek and Snyder (1982) found that when male-female pairs negotiated a division of labor, females assigned themselves more masculine roles when the person they were working with believed they were male. Thus, image discrepancies have the potential to influence individuals to conform to others' expectations.

In the area of occupations and professions, much of the empirical work on responding to and managing image discrepancies has examined tainted occupations. For example, Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, and Fugate (2007) found that managers of stigmatized workers attempt to normalize taint by (a) crafting occupational ideologies that enhance the meanings associated with their work, (b) forming networks of similar others that create a social buffer against the negative attacks of hostile outsid-

ers, (c) adapting to the status quo by engaging in defensive tactics (e.g., avoidance), and (d) proactively attempting to change how the public or clients view their work. Roberts's (2005) theoretical work similarly suggests that professionals from minority groups (based, for example, on race or sexual orientation) who are experiencing professional image discrepancies will engage in social recategorization (e.g., de-emphasizing certain demographic categories) or will enhance positive distinctiveness (emphasizing the positive elements of the devalued identity). In sum, research focusing on occupations and professions adds other paths for managing image discrepancies beyond "change others' views" and "change self-views."

Despite recent work in this area, two areas of ambiguity remain. First, it is not clear whether or to what degree professionals will be motivated to respond to image discrepancies, much less role-based discrepancies. In their discussion of tainted occupations, Ashforth and Kreiner noted that, "because prestige is associated with a status shield, the salience of social perceptions may be reduced" (1999: 430), indicating that professionals may be exempt from the need to manage such impressions. The nature of role-based discrepancies may exacerbate this response. If professionals believe that role impressions, unlike character impressions, are easy to change, they might find role-based discrepancies less threatening and thus may even be less motivated to resolve them. By contrast, Roberts's (2005) research on professional image management suggests that professionals, especially those with a devalued social identity (e.g., minority status), may need to engage in both traditional (e.g., enhancing traits) and social identity impression management tactics, which suggests that they may engage in more types of impression management than nonprofessionals.

Second, professionals enact roles within a professional-client relationship, and it is not yet clear what image management tactics professionals may use when confronted with a client base that often does not understand the nature of their work. Because of their codes of ethics, professionals may face constraints on their ability to engage in the entire repertoire of adaptive tactics examined in previous research. As such, withdrawing from the relationship, displaying strong or negative emotions, or aggressively trying to change the views of clients may be unavailable or costly options for professionals. Leary and Kowalski (1990) suggested that role constraints determine the impression management tactics individuals are likely to use. Specifically, they argued that role occupants try "to make their social images conform as closely as possible to the prototypic characteristics of the role they are playing" (1990: 41). Unfortunately, as we have noted above, there are several reasons (e.g., misinformation from media) why clients may not share with professionals an understanding of what is "prototypical." Moreover, if misunderstanding surrounds what a professional does, it is not clear how the professional can act in a prototypical way. As a result, we do not know how professionals facing image discrepancies will respond to them.

METHODS

Given the paucity of research on role-based image discrepancies, we used a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to elaborate upon preexisting perspectives on image management. Theory elaboration involves refining a theory or identifying the conditions under which it does or does not offer potential for explanation (Vaughan, 1992). With this goal in mind, we gathered data from four professions that allowed us to gain in-depth knowledge and identify similarities among cases.

Sample and Research Context

In total, our sample included 85 professionals: 24 architects, 13 advance practice nurses (APNs), 17 litigation attorneys, and 31 certified public accountants (CPAs). As is sometimes the case, our research project did not begin as a single study, but instead as separate investigations (e.g., Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, & Mao, 2010; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Individuals colocated at the same university initiated three of these investigations. As these researchers discussed their respective projects early in the data collection process, a common phenomenon became apparent: the difficulties that professionals experience when they believe outsiders have discrepant images associated with what they do. Upon identifying this common phenomenon, these researchers decided to collect additional data from their respective data sources (in architecture, advanced practice nursing, or law) and assembled a shared protocol to use for further data collection. A researcher operating independently at another university initiated the fourth investigation, which focused on accountants. Coincidently, this researcher presented preliminary findings of

this investigation at a research conference that a member of the other research team attended. From this presentation, the similarity between the projects was evident. Following this realization, the different research teams began discussing the possibility of merging this additional data set with the three that had already been collected.

One of the main concerns in these initial conversations was whether there was enough consistency in the interviewing protocols that had been employed to combine these data sets. This required a careful examination of both the protocols and the data obtained from them (see Appendix A). In particular, the first author had in-depth discussions with the researcher who collected the accountant data about the nature of the data and the meanings ascribed to it. The first author also read the entirety of the accountant data to ensure that the content aligned with the architecture/APN/law data. Analysis of the protocol questions and the interview transcripts left us confident the data were sufficiently similar to warrant combining. That is, even though the questions were sometimes different, the responses were remarkably similar. To illustrate, while accountants were the only group directly asked about their responses to "misperceptions," each group addressed this issue, albeit in response to different questions.

Each of the professions we studied possess the traditional qualifying characteristics of a profession noted previously. Moreover, given their vulnerability, professionals are an appropriate sample for studying image discrepancies. That said, the professions we studied also vary in important ways, allowing us to capture "shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity" (Patton, 1990: 172). Prestige is central to professions (Larson, 1977), and our professions varied significantly in prestige. According to the 2009 Harris Poll on the prestige of 23 professions, when asked how much prestige they attributed to each profession, respondents rated nurses (the closest group to APNs)[4] as the fourth most prestigious profession, viewed by 76 percent of people as having "very great prestige" or "considerable prestige." Accountants, by contrast, were 22nd; 80 percent said this profession had only "some prestige" or "hardly any prestige at all." Lawyers (ranked 13th) and architects (ranked 11th) scored more moderately. Directly relevant to our interest in perceptions of professions, these professions also differed in terms of visibility. As a rough guide to degree of professional visibility, we used Google to ascertain the number of websites devoted to each profession. At the time of our interviews, APNs had the fewest sites (around 170,000), followed by CPAs (over 3 million), architects (over 66 million), and lawyers (over 89 million).[5] Thus, we believe these four professions represent a relatively broad spectrum of professions, at least in terms of visibility and prestige. To orient the reader to these professional groups, we provide a brief description of each.

Architecture. The purpose of the architecture profession is to conceptualize, design, and oversee the construction of a wide array of structures. In their daily work, architects may interact with engineers, developers, clients, contractors, government officials, and other consultants to bring a structure to fruition (Lewis, 1998). While the work of an architect generally does not involve actual building, architects often oversee the work of contractors to ensure they build structures as designed. To become registered in the state in which they practice, aspiring architects must complete a bachelor's degree (many complete a master's), go through a rigorous internship process, and take nine licensing exams (Cuff, 1991). The 24 architects interviewed in this study worked in a firm that focused on large health care, education, and residential projects. Informants held positions varying from interns to top management and ranged in professional tenure from six months to 30 years.

Advanced practice nursing. The profession of nursing involves the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and prevention of illness and injury. Advanced practice nursing includes a range of specializations, such as nurse practitioner, certified midwife, and nurse anesthetist. APNs have advanced educations (typically a master's degree) and training, are licensed in the state in which they practice, and provide high-level clinical ser-

[4] Given that many outsiders do not differentiate between nurses and APNs, we used this as a credible proxy. It is telling, though, that advanced practice nurses were not rated, which speaks to the low visibility of their profession.

[5] The higher number of lawyer websites may have been due to the preponderance of private practices. Even if that were the case, however, their greater presence in a community is likely to account for an increase in people's awareness of this profession.

vices. As a relatively new profession whose first members were educated in 1965, advanced practice nursing has evolved to "fill the gaps" in health care systems through the provision of direct patient care, support of systems, education, research, and professional leadership (Gardner, Chang, & Duffield, 2007). The work of APNs involves a broad range of responsibilities, including patient evaluation and diagnosis, prescribing drugs and therapy, making referrals, and managing the implementation of care plans. APNs have a higher degree of autonomy in patient care judgments and interventions than registered nurses. The APNs in this study worked for a single health care organization and ranged in professional tenure from 1 to 18 years.

Law. The area of law examined in this study, litigation, involves resolving disputes and grievances through formal legal proceedings. Toward this end, litigation attorneys, or litigators, represent the interests of their clients by engaging in a variety of processes including arbitration, mediation, plea bargaining, and trying cases. Perhaps the broadest distinction in litigation is between criminal and civil cases. Criminal cases involve crimes committed against the state (government), whereas civil cases involve charges filed by one citizen (plaintiff) against another (defendant). While many litigators focus solely on criminal or civil law (e.g., a "state's attorney" may work exclusively in the criminal system), others handle both types of cases. Within civil law, lawyers can specialize in a variety of areas, including personal injury, family, employment, intellectual property, and corporate law. Litigators (as well as other types of lawyers) are licensed in the state in which they practice. The 17 lawyers included in this study worked for various law firms and ranged from 1 to 42 years in professional tenure.

Certified public accounting. Accounting involves the organizing, maintaining, recording, and analyzing of financial transactions and activities. While one may find accountants in almost any organization, states grant a certified public accountant license only to individuals who meet educational, experience, and ethical requirements and pass a state CPA exam. CPAs provide a wide variety of services, including accounting and financial reporting, auditing and other attestation services, tax compliance and consulting, personal financial planning, systems design, and business valuation. We interviewed 31 CPAs working in the "Big Four" accounting firms. Informants were staff associates, senior associates, and managers and had one to five years of professional experience in the areas of audit, tax, and consulting services.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data source for our investigation was transcripts generated from one-on-one interviews with informants. For each profession, the investigation of image discrepancies was one part of a larger study. The complete interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The protocols were semi-structured in such a way that the interviewers asked informants a standard set of questions but were free to probe further on specific topics in order to get richer, more in-depth insight into the experiences of the informant. As illustrated in the protocols, presented in Appendix A, we asked informants questions to elicit their understandings of how outsiders viewed their profession and the implications of these images for themselves and their profession.

We collected observational and archival data at each of the research sites to gain greater contextual information through which to interpret the interviews. Nonparticipant observational data were obtained by attending meetings, shadowing informants, and observing interactions through the course of work (e.g., courtroom observation of lawyers). In addition, we collected documents from each of the professions, primarily published articles by practitioners about how others perceive their profession. However, given the variance in the systematic nature of the observations and archives across studies, we did not subject these data to formal analysis.

Broadly speaking, our analysis comprised three main steps. While we refer to these analytical processes as "steps," we note that they did not occur sequentially. Rather, in keeping with the nature of grounded theory investigation, these steps involved an iterative process of traveling between data and theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, even as we constructed profession-specific models in the second stage of data analysis (described below), new codes emerged from different understandings of the data, prompting us to return to the first stage by recoding the data in search of these codes.

The first step of data analysis involved open coding, which consists of breaking and naming—or coding—data into discrete incidents, ideas, events,

or acts (Locke, 2001). This process began with each author reviewing the transcripts for a particular profession and developing open codes for his/her own data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After the initial round of data collection and coding, the authors studying lawyers, APNs, and architects had collective conversations about the themes that were emerging in their data. We combined similar codes into a common coding scheme for the data, involving the development of higher-level theoretical categories. For example, we coded references to "drawing pretty pictures" in the architect data, "cleaning up bedpans" in the APN data, and "arguing cases in court" in the lawyer data as instances of "scope of profession." The researchers in these studies then continued data collection to pursue these new insights, and discover new ones. A separate researcher independently completed a similar process, without interresearcher discussions, for the accountant data.

At the conclusion of data collection, we combined the open codes for the accountant data with those from other data sets. For instance, mentions of "bookkeeping" in the accountant data were included under "scope of profession." In the process of combining data codes, authors responsible for all data sets discussed the emergent findings and continued to refine codes in line with these themes. We also went back to the data to look for additional instances of the codes and to begin our second step of analysis: finding relationships between codes. This latter process had two outcomes: the development of aggregate dimensions and of profession-specific models. During this process, we began to identify aggregate dimensions that captured the theoretical categories. For example, we aggregated "scope of profession" and "level of complexity/difficulty" into "role-based image discrepancies." On the basis of the emerging categories and dimensions, we also developed four profession-specific models of how professionals perceived and responded to the images they believed outsiders held of their profession. We then met to compare and contrast the models we had built. Constructing different conceptual models enabled us to visually compare the experiences of members of each profession and highlight similarities and differences.

In our final step, we compared our profession-specific models to identify relationships shared by professions, such as a link between client evaluations of the profession and productivity costs. We then began to construct a more general model of image discrepancies. After we constructed a tentative model, we exchanged data sets and used the agreed-on codes to recode the data. As a result, we revised this model a number of times before we all felt it adequately represented the findings across professions and did not do "violence to experience" (Pratt, 2008). Figure 1 summarizes the data structure resulting from this analytical process, depicting the first-order data that emerged from the words of informants (Van Maanen, 1979), the theoretical categories we used to describe this first-order data, and the broad aggregate dimensions associated with the theoretical categories. In the following section, we present the findings that emerged across professions.

FINDINGS

Our data revealed consistent themes. Professionals believe that others do not understand the content of professional work, as related to the roles that professionals play, and feel that role-based image discrepancies lead to problematic client evaluations of their work. Further, professionals perceive that client evaluations carry productivity and emotional costs that arise when professionals and clients interact. To help mitigate these costs, professionals have developed tactics for managing role-based image discrepancies. Figure 2 illustrates and serves as an orienting structure for these findings. In addition, Appendix B offers a longer data fragment illustrating how the various "boxes" in our model fit together in a coherent process.

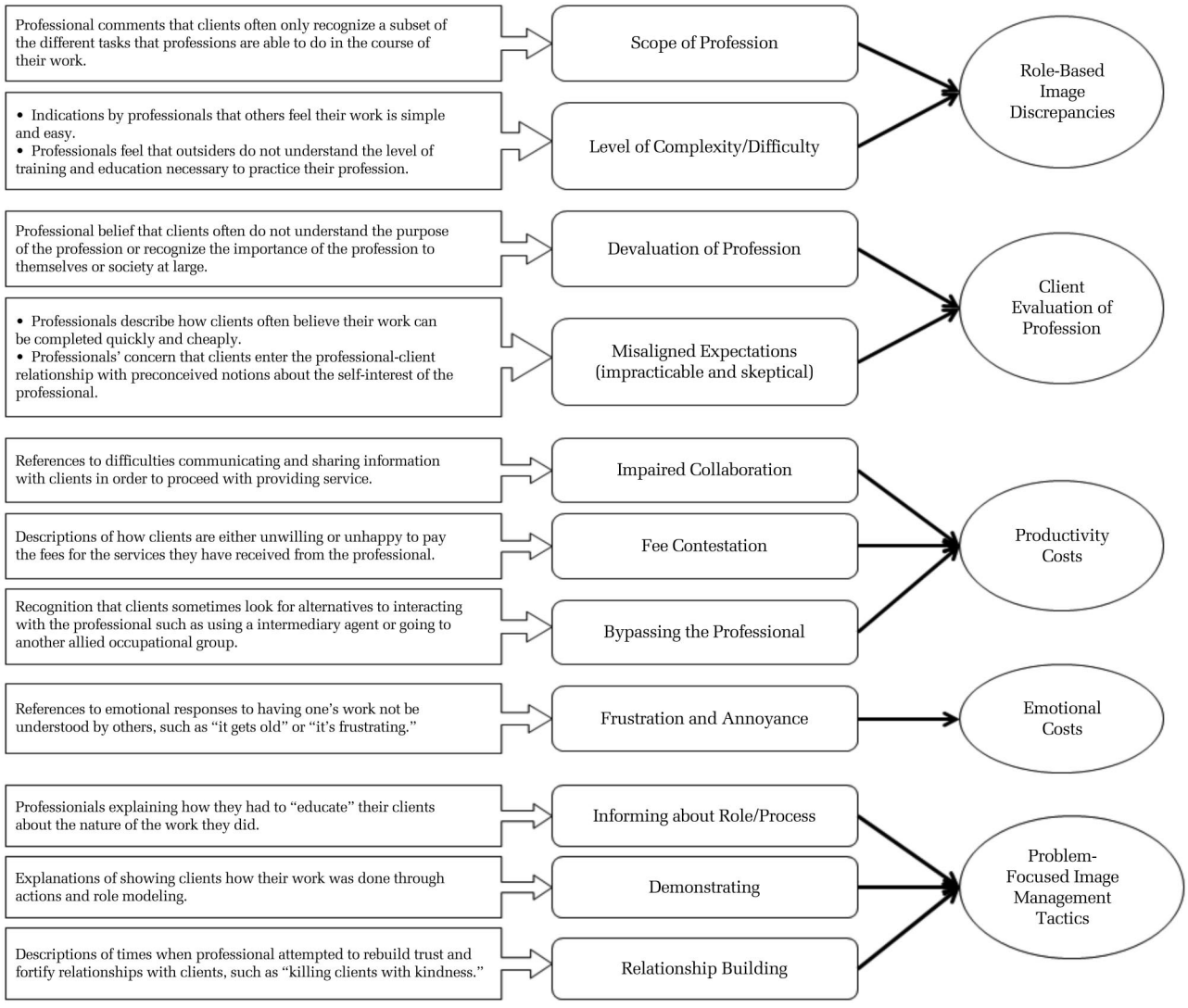
Role-Based Image Discrepancies

As noted in the introduction, image discrepancies arise when one perceives misalignment between who one thinks one is and who others think one is (Roberts, 2005). A particularly salient form of image discrepancy for the professionals we interviewed was role-based discrepancy. In general, professionals saw their roles as involving high levels of responsibility, complexity, problem solving, and client advocacy. However, individuals in each profession felt that outsiders held inaccurate and often limited perceptions of what members of their profession did. Table 1 provides instances of how members of each profession described their role as well as examples of how they believed others' perceived their role.

In analyzing our data, we found that image discrepancies exist between professional and outsider perceptions with regard to the *scope* and the *level*

FIGURE 1

Overview of Data Structure



of complexity/difficulty of professional work. Table 2 provides examples of both forms of discrepancies. First, professionals believe outsiders perceive their work as having a much narrower scope than it actually has:

> I think there's a lot more to think about than how a building looks when you actually look at what an architect has to do—some more responsibilities than I think sometimes people take into consideration. (architect, 10)

> The whole dirty part [of my job], that's just such a small piece of it. It's just not the whole broader picture, what you're doing for people and hopefully just making a little difference, making something just a little better. (APN, 12)

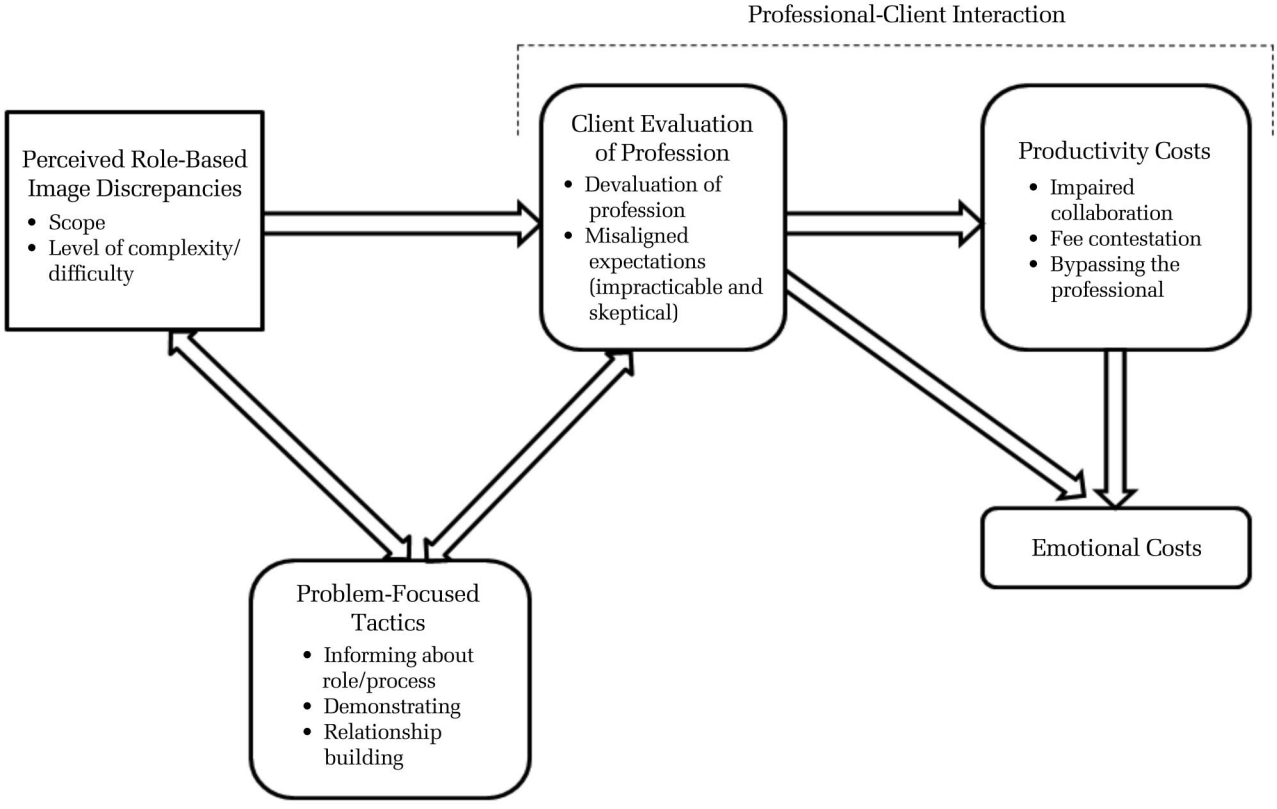
> Outside of the business world, I don't think a lot of people know what an auditor does. Their only reference for the word "auditor" is, you know, my taxes are being audited. (CPA, 1)

> The amount of time and discussion and energy we put in to try to resolve these things [law suits] is really significant. It's a large amount of our practice that people on the outside never really know about. (lawyer, 1)

Professionals feel that outsiders have discrepant perceptions of professional work in part because

FIGURE 2

A Model of Role-Based Image Discrepancy Management



outsiders lack complete and accurate information about what professionals actually do.

In addition, professionals reported that, beyond not understanding the scope of professional work, those outside their profession consistently underestimate the level of complexity and difficulty of that professional work and, consequently, the amount of skills and knowledge necessary to complete the work. As an accountant explained:

> I think that when most people think of accountants, they think more of a bookkeeper, which is still accounting, but it's not nearly as complicated as it really is. At least that's been my experience that people think I write checks all day. (CPA, 7)

Similarly, an architect observed the following:

> There's a lot of thinking that goes into how [architecture] works that nobody sees relative to the image of the building or the photo of the building. They don't understand the complexity of doing the project. Ahh the people don't get it. If only they'd realize how hard it is. (architect, 3)

The lack of understanding of the complexity of their work is also represented in professionals' beliefs that others do not recognize how much time and effort is necessary to become a profession member: "I think people don't realize how much school we need to be an architect, or how many tests we need to take to get our license" (architect, 14) and "I do often tell people that it's a demanding job that there's a lot of time that you put into it. There's a lot of education that you have to do" (CPA, 17).

Another way issues of scope and complexity/difficulty were manifest in our data was through confusion over professional boundaries. For example, APNs reported that people often confuse them with doctors, other nurses, or other staff:

TABLE 1
Evidence of Role-Based Image Discrepancies

Roles and Role-Based Discrepancies	Architecture	Law	Certified Public Accounting	Advanced Practice Nursing
How professionals see their role	At the core of it is problem solving. You're solving technical problems, you're solving design problems, and you're solving management and people problems and issues. (architect, 5)	We're all advocates and we all, when we go to court, try to do the best possible job so we can present the best case for our client. (lawyer, 1)	I guess I see myself as sort of the person behind the companies. I'm ultimately not with the company, but I'm there assisting them sort of every step of the way. We don't probably get the notoriety that the companies get, but ultimately I think we're the people helping them achieve their goals is where I see our role. (CPA, 11)	[Nursing is about] looking at multiple things in their life, not just physical, but mental. Holistic is a favorite word in nursing, so I'm gonna use that one again. I mean, it's just looking at every aspect of their life and helping them take care of themselves. (APN, 4)
Role-based image discrepancies	I think it would be helpful if people had a better understanding of the profession. I know people say "Could you draw up some plans?" What does that mean? That's crazy you don't draw plans. You conceptualize something and then the plans are the communicator of the idea of the builder. You don't just draw up some plans. (architect, 3)	I mean they don't—they don't know how you struggle over applying the law, filing the right result, giving the right counsel. And I think people don't realize what lawyers are and the initial things, we're counselors of law. I mean what we do is we advise our clients. (lawyer, 12)	I think a lot of people just kind of are like, "Oh, you're an accountant. Can you do my taxes?" Like that people don't really understand the role I play. I don't think people know what's involved in an accounting function, even at a company, as far as maintaining documentation and things like that. (CPA, 16)	My mom thought I spent my time feeding babies and changing their diapers. Yeah. [chuckle] I mean, I think some people have that misconception, just about neonatal nursing in general. "Oh, that'd be a fun job." Well, you know what? Not all the time. Not always, you know, cuddling babies. That's probably one misconception. (APN, 9)

> I don't think [people outside the profession] get that connection that advanced practice nurses are sort of a different breed. . . . I think people don't know the person who rooms you from the nurse. Like my mother-in-law will go to the doctor, and she'll say, "Oh, the nurse who took my blood pressure and wrote down my medicine"—well, she's not a nurse at all. They call them, I think, office assistants. (APN, 3)

> I think there's a lot of question about, "what is it that you do? and what makes that different from a nurse or a PA or my family practice physician?" So, I think, as far as our identity, it's a little gray for a lot of people. (APN, 12)

Client Evaluation of Profession

While professionals often spoke about the perceptions held by members of the general public, they acknowledged that these perceptions are relatively unproblematic until someone holding these perceptions becomes one of their clients/patients. They mentioned that it can be irritating when friends and family and the people they meet at a cocktail party do not understand their work, yet professionals reported that it is when *clients* hold discrepant perceptions that the work of a professional can be compromised (see Figure 2). In particular, our data indicate that, owing to their role-based perceptions, clients may devalue a profession or hold impracticable expectations—beliefs about the process and outcomes of the profession that are not viable in practice (see Table 3 for examples).

Devaluation of profession. Professionals indicated that because clients did not always understand the scope or the complexity/difficulty of a professional's work, clients often underestimate the importance of the work as well as the professional's capacity to address a broad range of problems or issues. Thus, professionals felt that clients devalued their profession. To illustrate:

> [Clients] don't realize there's a lot of work that goes into that [architecture], you know. That's the first

TABLE 2
Role-Based Image Discrepancies

Label	Description	Example
Scope	Perception that the profession consists of only the most visible responsibilities and tasks	I think TV does a total disservice to portraying what an attorney actually does, and they just want to entertain and that's fine, but you very rarely on TV see an attorney preparing, they always kinda seem to get the case and then try the case in the same episode. . . . You know a lot of the cases I have right now I've had for year. . . . No one believes me that I spend at least 30 percent of my time trying to convince people not to do anything, 30 percent of my time trying to convince them to settle, and then probably the other third of it actually moving forward with the business of the thing. (lawyer, 3)
		I don't know if people really understand about the time that architects have to put in, and the low pay. And just the mundane crap that you have to do most of the time. Like being a project manager, we're on the phone a lot, there's a lot of emails that are done by architects. And I guess maybe some people think "Oh yeah, they're always designing blah blah blah." But there's so much more stuff that's involved. (architect, 17)
Level of complexity or difficulty	Underestimation of how hard the work was or the level of skills and knowledge necessary to complete the work	Yes, I think that the perspective of many individuals is that nurses do what the doctors tell us to do. And that maybe we don't know what we're doing because the doctor has always been at the top. (APN, 4)
		When I tell people I'm an architect they think I'm an interior designer, decorator. We go through a lot more intensive schooling, a *lot* more intensive. We have way more liability and responsibility in what we do, so the risk assessment is a lot higher for us than for decorators. (architect, 14)

> problem of them not understanding what architects do. Then they don't value it. (architect, 13)

> I had an opportunity to work on a client who—the president of that client was very ingrained into doing things and didn't see the value in increasing the accounting staff to meet with different reporting requirements to meet timeliness guidelines that the parent company had wanted. He didn't see the value in that. I think that is generally how most people view accountants. (CPA, 25)

APNs explained that because patients do not understand their work relative to the work of doctors, they often value the services provided by APNs less than that those provided by doctors—despite similar outcomes:

> I have heard people say for a follow-up appointment: "Well, we didn't really get to see the doctor. We saw the nurse practitioner, but we really didn't get to see the doctor." I don't know, I guess anymore I kind of shrug my shoulders to that. I am not a doctor, and I think physicians deserve that respect, but what you got out of it, I'm not so sure would have been all that different—the outcome. (APN, 12)

Devaluation is consequential because professionals may find it difficult to interact with clients or patients who do not believe the work they do is worthwhile. A senior architect explained how devaluation of the profession leads to unproductive professional-client interactions:

> If they [clients] give us short shrift and if they don't care about what we do, they don't care about the qualities that we bring . . . that's not who we want to deal with. It's going to be a very unsatisfactory process. (architect, 18)

Misaligned expectations. Professionals also reported that clients enter the professional-client relationship with two types of expectations: those that the professionals *could not* and those that the professionals *would not* meet. This former type of expectation—*impracticable expectations*—concerns the scope or complexity/difficulty of a

TABLE 3
Client Evaluations of Profession

Label	Description	Examples
Devaluation	Perception that others do not value one's services or the services provided by the profession	I wish there was a little more appreciation from the business part of the public that uses us. I think we're looked at as a necessary evil, it feels like that sometimes. We are an integral part, you do need us, we are worth our fee at the end of the day. (architect, 21) I think that we do such important work, it really is frustrating that we can't manage to communicate that. (APN, 2) I think sometimes people would say that it's expensive and not worth it. (CPA, 12)
Misaligned expectations	Client beliefs about timelines, indicators of service, and professional intentions	*Impracticable expectations* All they want to do is get a building built. They want this type of thing for this money. "I want to talk to one person and just get that done. I don't want to see you again, just get it done." So there is this lack of patience of cost of money or you know realistically to accomplishing something quickly and efficiently. (architect, 18) Lot of times I'll have even a fairly sophisticated business client come in here and they've just been sued and they say, "So will this be going to trial next week?" You know, nothing goes to trial next week unless there is some sort of unusual emergency, but how the court process works is really foreign to a lot of people. They have no idea how it works. (lawyer, 1) *Skeptical expectations* I think there's a misconception on the part of some people that there's a lot of lying and cheating and bribing going on, and I don't think there is, I think that's just wrong. If you do that, you'll get caught, and you'll get disbarred. We are a regulated profession, and there's sanctions if you do certain things. (lawyer, 9) And owner's reps have come up on the broker's side and what they basically have said is "You know, you have to watch the architect because the architect isn't going to watch your budget. I'll watch your budget for you and I'll make sure that you're done within the budget. And by the way, you know, we'll control the architect, we won't let him get out of control." architect, 1) Auditors on the client side, their first instinct is you're annoying, and you're here to get me in trouble. (CPA, 3)

profession and relates to clients' beliefs that professionals can accomplish the outcomes of professional work quickly and with relatively little effort. For lawyers, these types of client expectations often center on how easily their case will be resolved:

> They just have no idea . . . what a drawn-out process it is, or what the process entails . . . they may think they've scored a touchdown when it may be a first down at best. . . . Sometimes, if there's not a settlement offer they consider very favorable to their side coming forth, they think, "Well my lawyer must not be doing a good job for me because otherwise the other side would be knocking at my door because I know I have a great case . . . it must be my lawyer's fault." (lawyer, 14)

> I think that everyone thinks that in a week or two we will go over to the courthouse and they can just tell their story to the judge. I think a lot of times people think it is just the Judge Judy show. Whenever you start to explain to them, even then they don't quite believe it that a lot of times things can take years and there is the discovery process. Before you get to the point where someone can sit in front of the judge and tell their side of the story it is years and thousands and thousands of dollars before that ever happens, so people get discouraged. (lawyer, 3)

Architects also emphasized clients' unrealistic expectations concerning time to completion:

> Our greatest challenge [with a particular client] was to help them understand that our first scheme wasn't the final answer—you know we've got another six months to go here. (architect, 13)

> I think especially with TV these days, like with that Ty Pennington or whatever Extreme Makeover

> where the houses are made in eight days or whatever, some ridiculous amount of time. And big projects too. I think people have an impression of architecture that it can be done quickly. (architect, 7)

These perceptions mean that clients often enter the professional-client relationship with expectations about costs and duration that professionals cannot reasonably hope to meet. As a result, professionals face scenarios in which their clients are almost inevitably disappointed with the services professionals provide.

The second type of client expectation—*skeptical expectations*—involves what the professional *would not* do. Whereas one may view impracticable expectations as giving the professional more credit than he or she is due (i.e., assuming they can do the impossible), skeptical expectations run the opposite course: giving the professionals little credit by assuming that they are not well intentioned. This may involve narrowing the scope of or simplifying what the profession does. For example, architects reported that some clients perceive architecture as focused solely on aesthetics and not functionality. Specifically, architects noted that, in some cases, clients believe that architects will only work to meet their own aesthetic standards rather than work with clients to reach a mutually satisfactory design solution. "There's some perceptions that architects are only out for themselves, they aren't out for what the client really wants or they design these outrageous things that engineers and contractors can't even put together" (architect, 16). Skeptical expectations can also take the form of clients failing to see the big picture, especially regarding how professionals have to balance self- and other interest. CPAs reported that their clients often expect them to cause unnecessary hassles: "[A lot of clients] think that we're out to get them in trouble or that we're out to, like, find something wrong with them, or we're out to get them fired, and it's not like that at all" (CPA, 29). Lawyers too reported that outsiders often view them as acting only in self-interest: "Clients walk in with a sense of entitlement and the assumption that . . . [I] want to screw them" (lawyer, 6). Thus, according to architects, CPAs, and lawyers, clients believe that professionals do not always have the clients' best interests in mind and instead are privileging their own professional agendas or financial gain.[6] As we will illustrate, misaligned expectations result in a lack of trust, which in turn causes further difficulties for the professionals as they attempt to carry out their work.

Productivity Costs

Professionals indicated that, gone unmanaged, role-based image discrepancies and the client evaluations associated with them hinder their ability to provide high-quality service to clients. In particular, when clients do not value a profession or have misaligned expectations about how and when professional work will be performed, clients may distance themselves from the profession or be unwilling to provide time, effort, and resources to professionals (see Table 4 for examples). As an architect noted:

> [These images of the profession] makes for a professional struggle. It makes for a challenge to satisfy clients and to provide service that is acceptable. I mean it is something to deal with in the profession for sure. (architect 6)

In particular, role-based image discrepancies and challenges to professional-client dynamics may lead to three costs for the work of professionals: impaired collaboration, fee contestation, and bypassing.

Impaired collaboration. If clients enter the professional-client relationship with perceptions that the professional is going to take advantage of them or work purely for self-gain, they may be defensive in their interactions with profession members. In such cases, client evaluations can lead to impaired information exchange as well as conflict. Professionals mentioned that clients do not always cooperate with them by providing the information needed to do their work. Because some view CPAs involved in auditing as a "necessary evil," clients can be hesitant to assist CPAs in completing their work:

> While we were doing the counts [for our clients], like making selections and going around counting things, [the clients were] not very into it at all, not very willing to help me find things or help count things. And at the end . . . it took a large number of

[6] In contrast, however, nursing work tends to be associated with caring-related tasks such as "cuddling babies" or "changing bedpans." Accordingly, APNs indicated that their patients see them as caring and well-intentioned: "I think in general nursing is thought of as well trusted and good people. We hope to never dishonor that" (APN, 10).

TABLE 4
Productivity and Emotional Costs of Role-Based Image Discrepancies

Label	Description	Examples
Productivity costs		
Impaired collaboration	Clients not providing professionals with necessary information or unintentionally impeding progress toward objectives	You can go in and ask for support [from some clients], frankly, and it's immediate pushback—like, all the eyes, hands turned down, "Don't have time. Get out of my office. I'll get it to you when I can. I'm really busy. I don't have time for this." At the end of the day, she has to give me that report. I mean—or else I'm never going to leave. It's a constant struggle with that one. (CPA, 15)
		I think [clients] definitely don't understand the amount of work that goes into all the decisions. I think they see it like really like a puzzle: "Oh I can swing this over here and that's fine." They don't understand like how much is behind it. That's the thing that we always struggle with. "Oh can't you just move that over?" We can do that. It's going to take three weeks and it's going to be an extra 10,000 dollars. (architect, 20)
Contesting professional fees	Clients—who do not understand the process or value the complexity of the service—question the amount they are being charged	I mean I think if the public valued what we were doing we would get paid accordingly. Just because we bill a client doesn't mean they're going to pay in full, they might negotiate. I guess that happens all around you know careers and professions, but it seems more so in architecture. (architect, 14)
		People don't like to pay lawyers, just because if you're going to a lawyer or even a doctor, it's not because you're going there to have a great time; it's because you need some sort of problem resolved. (lawyer, 15)
Bypassing the Professional	Clients using services from other occupations because they feel the professions services are unnecessary or unhelpful.	A lot of folks will go into a hospital thinking, "Well, as long as Dr. Smith is my physician, I'm going to be alright." And that's the perception. I truly believe that, being out there and having talked to I can't tell you how many groups of people. The reality is that the physician is a huge piece of that bus ride or the boat ride, but the physician issues what they would like to see done, and then, they're gone. And why did the patient survive through the night is how good the nurse is. (APN, 1)
		I think in certain markets, like housing and commercial, and probably health care too, people don't engage architects. They miss a great piece of the action and you know they miss a margin of expertise that they need. (architect, 6)
Emotional costs	Negative emotional response to image perceptions of client	I'm a nurse practitioner. I get real upset when they call me a PA, physician assistant. I go, "No!" (APN, 5)
		I've been in places where you walk in, and it's like you've ruined their whole day, and that's very hard on me. . . I just feel like it's such bad manners sometimes, you know, if somebody's doing something, and we don't try and make things difficult by any means, but if somebody doesn't want me in their office, it's really hard for me to be there. (CPA, 26)

follow-up calls and e-mails to get anything from them. So, it was pretty hard to finish it up due to their adverse reaction to the auditors. (CPA, 21)

Accordingly, CPAs reported feeling anxious about how clients will respond to them: "You're worried about how you're going to ask someone for something or, you know, you're worried about how they're going to treat you since you're taking up so much of their time" (CPA, 1). The extra effort necessary to procure information from clients may therefore compromise a professional's ability to provide prompt service.

Further, professionals described how clients' expectations that the professional could easily complete their work could hamper progress. This was particularly true for architects whose clients often made last minute changes, not understanding the broad implications of these changes:

> Clients can be ignorant toward the amount of work it also entails to get the job done. . . . I know clients always change their mind and then they don't really realize how it has like a domino effect on other things as well. You know just be like all of a sudden, "I don't want these three rooms here, put this instead." (architect, 4)

Along related lines, another architect explained that clients' beliefs about his work make it difficult for him to attain the kind of information necessary to complete his work:

> The second problem [with clients' not understanding architecture] is they don't realize they have a responsibility to react or know how to react and talk about a design or their needs. One of the things that we do as architects, we program buildings. We go to the owner and say. "Let's sit down and see what your needs are." They have about as much knowledge of their needs as somebody with a severe mental disorder is in touch with their feelings. They don't have the language to deal with it. (architect, 13)

Ultimately, last-minute changes and the inability of clients to express their needs can jeopardize both product quality and an architect's ability to get the project done in a timely and cost efficient manner.

Fee contestation. Devaluation of professions and misaligned expectations are also associated with clients' feeling that professional work should take less time and effort than it actually does. Accordingly, professionals who worked on billable hours systems (architects and lawyers) noted that when clients do not understand the process or value the complexity of the service, they question the amount they are charged:

> Even when you win a case, you have to send them [clients] a bill for what they thought they were entitled to have anyway. So then they're upset with you because you sent them a bill. Or they say "I can't believe it. I mean you have a day here where you say you spent ten hours." You're like, "Actually I didn't go to sleep the whole night, because something happened and you rewrote your whole thing, and so you're up 24 hours." But you can't charge the client for 24 hours. But still you can send a bill and they're not happy about that. (lawyer, 12).

> [Clients' perceptions of architecture] matter to me when I'm billing a client and they don't think my bills are legitimate because they don't really know what I'm working on. (architect, 14).

The contestation of fees is problematic not only because professionals may not receive full payment for their services, but also because, in anticipating clients' concerns about fees, professionals may feel pressured to work under difficult constraints, such as insufficient hours to get the job done within budget. In fact, some architects mentioned that they sometimes do not bill for all of the hours that they worked because they suspect the client would not be willing to pay for them: "We shouldn't have problems asking for money, when it's deserved I mean. You have a contract, you know. No one is out to do free work, but architects do just tons of free work" (architect, 2).

Bypassing the professional. The final productivity cost that professionals associated with client evaluations about their professions involves cases in which clients (and potential clients) opt to bypass professionals. Professionals noted that client devaluation of their profession and misaligned expectations can lead clients to not want to work with a professional and, accordingly, to look to alternatives. Owing to the devaluation of nursing, APNs reported that, in some instances, clients overlook them in preference for consultation with a doctor:

> Even though we may have said a whole spiel about what we were going to do for the baby and everything, a lot of times the parents feel like they haven't talked to the "doctor." And we are considered the provider group, as a whole, but they don't consider us providers. They might be used to a nurse practitioner in the office but somehow when you get here in the hospital, they don't know that's what we do here, too. They can ask us as well as the doctor. (APN, 13)

The issue of being bypassed was also salient for architects, who indicated that clients do not value them, fearing that architects are self-motivated and not interested in serving clients' interests. Accordingly, these clients may look to other professions, such as contractors, to substitute for architects:

> I think people don't look to architects because they don't appreciate the value. To really do a custom design or even do a semicustom design, it's very time consuming, and that's not going to be free. Because of that architects only get involved with more elaborate, showy things. Then [clients] think, "We'll I'm not going to work with an architect who's going to design a monument to herself, who's going to try and reinvent the flippin' wheel. I just want a house." So they are hesitant to work with us for those [reasons]. (architect, 10)

Further, architects noted that other occupations have been able to convince potential clients that they either do not need to use an architect or that

the relationship with the architect needs to be controlled or negotiated by a third party, often limiting the scope of services provided by the architect. One architect provided a hypothetical example of an engineer convincing a potential client not to use an architect: "[Potential clients] don't have any idea what the point [of architecture is], why should they bother hiring one when their engineer friend is saying 'Aww, architects really just don't do anything'" (architect, 16). Perhaps more dramatically, a number of architects noted that the introduction of program managers or owner's representatives into the construction industry means that clients often look to architects for a more restricted range of services than in the past. For example:

> You find this whole other category of program managers that have come on the scene that basically hire architects now and represent the owner. They manage the process. The profession keeps getting dwindled and whittled down to a smaller set of scope or responsibilities and I really think it's not good, generally. (architect, 1)

Thus, in the case of architecture, bypassing occurs both at the level of the individual professional-client interaction as well as at the level of the profession because of the introduction of a new occupation.

In sum, the productivity costs associated with the professional-client interaction—impaired collaboration, contesting professional fees, and bypassing—may compromise the ability of professionals to provide high-quality service to clients. Notably, professionals feel that image discrepancies restrict the range of services they can provide, meaning clients are not able to benefit as much as they could from the professionals' service. Moreover, professionals face conflict and tension during interactions with clients that prevent them from performing their work at a level they consider satisfactory. Further, they feel limited in the work they can do based on how much they think the client is willing to pay.

Emotional Costs

Informants reported that interacting with others who did not understand their work could also have emotional costs. In particular, professionals feel frustrated that those outside their profession do not understand what they do and, as such, often oversimplify or devalue their work. For some, the frustration arose because they felt others did not sufficiently appreciate their profession. An APN described this emotional strain, linking it to the issue of "valuation" (as discussed earlier):

> There's a lot of angst among a lot of the staff that I've ever worked with, including here, say, "They have no idea what we do." This is a discrepancy that just won't go away. So, make peace with it. Again, "Why are you here? Are you here to get acknowledgement and credit?" If so, you might not want to pick health care. (APN, 1)

Others linked emotional costs to the expectations clients brought with them into the professional-client relationship. In particular, professionals found it frustrating that clients assumed professionals were not acting in their best interest:

> [They think of us as a] watchdog, babysitter, "I'm going to tell you that you're doing something wrong, and if I can't find it right away I'm going to work harder to find what you're doing wrong." That's just what people tend to think, that we are the bad guy. That we're not there to help, we're there to make them lose their job. As I was starting out, so as a younger staff, this would be bothersome, and kind of an area that could get you down. (CPA, 19)

The lawyer who earlier mentioned that clients think he wants to "screw them" further noted:

> That's the position that they come in with, and so with every new client—almost all of them we have to break that down first before we get anything else done. And so that can get old. (lawyer, 6)

A few informants conceded that they have been tempted to break from professional etiquette due to their frustration with how clients perceived them:

> But you know ultimately, yes, there are those days when I just want to snap back and say, "You know what, I'm doing my job and I'm not trying to make your life miserable and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." But, problem is, I can't. (CPA, 24)

> Sometimes I get defensive about it, you know sometimes I don't just let it go or let them think what they want. . . . [I] worry about how I'm going to be perceived rather than just doing a good job and letting that speak for itself. (architect, 23)

In addition to reactions to devaluation and expectations, professionals noted that dealing with productivity costs could be emotional draining. We depict this relationship in the arrow connecting productivity costs with emotional costs in Figure 2. A CPA described how impaired collaboration (a productivity cost) brings with it emotional costs:

> You'd say [to a client], "Okay, you know, whenever you have a chance, can you just drop that off." And then, if it goes on and on and on where she's not dropping it off, then you send her an e-mail, give her a call. But, I mean, you have to work with the client, it's hard, but you have to be nice. It can be difficult. . . . It's draining, and it's hard to find meaning in it. (CPA, 15)

According to a principal architect, the fact that clients are bypassing the profession or using third parties to manage the architect-client relationship worries him: "It's frustrating because I really do think it's slowly eroding our profession" (architect, 1). As most professionals feel that their work is highly worthwhile, they find it tiresome and stressful when clients do not understand or value it, or come in with expectations they cannot, or should not, meet. Additionally, they also expressed anxiety and frustration related to cases in which client perceptions get in the way of their work. That said, our data do not suggest that professionals passively accept these emotional and professional costs arising from client evaluations. Rather, our data indicate that professionals take actions to manage client perceptions and evaluations.

Professional Image Discrepancy Management Tactics

We uncovered two sets of processes that professionals used in response to image discrepancies. After identifying these tactics and considering them in line with the literatures on image management and coping, we realized these tactics fit squarely into the categories of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-focused coping is aimed at changing a situation to address a particular problem. In our data, professionals directed such tactics at either adjusting outsiders' views of professional work or reducing the deleterious effects of client evaluations on the professional-client relationship. Table 5 provides evidence of the specific problem-focused coping tactics we identified: informing, demonstrating, and relationship building. In contrast, individuals use emotion-focused coping to deal with emotional responses to a stressor. Emotion-focused coping is more cognitive than behavioral. Because the emotion-focused tactics in our data (a) involve coping with the perceptions of the general public, rather than clients specifically, and (b) are similar to previously identified tactics for coping with image (Ashforth et al., 2007), we do not elaborate on them here.

Informing. With regard to problem-focused tactics, one tactic, informing, occurs when professionals educate their clients about their work itself ("what we do") and about the process ("how we do it"). Professionals believe it is necessary to help clients see the value of their profession and to develop more realistic expectations about how the client-professional interaction should unfold. All professionals described informing clients as an important part of their practice:

> We have to describe things to people all day long, which I'm happy to do because I want them to understand that, you know, we're not out to get people and here's the steps we take, and this is why we have to do things the way we do. (lawyer, 7)

> We just try to educate families and patients. Everyone has a role here, and Dr. Smith is so important in telling us what he would like the plan to be, and now it's my job to make sure that it happens for you. So, we just try to do gentle education. (APN, 1)

> The whole billable hour base of the architecture profession is just not understood by the rest of the world. And it makes it very difficult for them to understand why teams have to fluctuate and then the process of forming phases, people don't really get that and so they don't understand how the work ebbs and flows. We are [obligated], by the way, to help them understand that. (architect, 6)

> You have to go in and do a good job of explaining why you're there and the big picture and how everything falls within the scope of the audit and why we need things as opposed to just demanding things. And, you know, I always try to do a pretty good job of giving them that overall picture as opposed to just going in and saying, "I need this, this and this." (CPA, 23)

In short, the tactic of informing permits professionals to smooth their interactions with clients.

Demonstrating. The next tactic, demonstrating, involves using behaviors and cues to illustrate the scope and complexity of professional work. This strategy, mentioned most frequently by APNs, involves proving one's skill on a wide array of professional tasks.

> You tell them what you are going to do and then you model it. You know, the ones you have the longest really get it. A short-term patient just knows that you were that really nice "doctor-nurse" (chuckle) with the red hair. You can't always explain it. I don't give them any pamphlets that say what an APN is,

TABLE 5
Problem-Focused Coping Tactics

Label	Description	Examples
Informing	Providing clients with information about the work itself (what we do) and about the process (how we do it).	Yeah they don't have any idea what the point of architecture is, why should they bother hiring [an architect] when their engineer friend is saying "Aww architects really just don't do anything"? In those cases I would want them to understand better what we do. Through constant interaction I would want to possibly change that perception. (architect, 16)
		One of the things, I take great pride in is trying to educate my clients in how stressful and how time consuming and how expensive and how sometimes unpredictable a trial process can be. (lawyer, 1)
Demonstrating	Using behaviors and cues to illustrate the true complexity and scope of the professional's work.	I think once they come in there and they see what I'm doing, that they kind of understand what I can do, or what a nurse practitioner can do. (APN, 4)
		When I was first in the nursing home, they'd never heard of a nurse practitioner. But then as they got to know me, they saw "Okay, she can do this." You have to kind of prove yourself. (APN, 7)
Relationship building	Developing connections and garnering goodwill with clients.	I think auditors definitely have a hard time. They're not the good guys, and I don't think anybody wants an auditor to come in. Sometimes it requires listening to management's position and making sure you have all the facts and not jumping to a conclusion too quickly without all the facts. And I think when you do that, you build a little bit of credibility. They understand you have to maintain the professional skepticism and you're going to do the right thing, but you're not looking to finding the most things that they did wrong, and I think that that's key. (CPA, 4)
		I think the whole technique of drawing all that information out of the client and negotiating things with them is a real art that you have to learn. It's really interesting like how each client is really different and you have to talk to them differently. If you can't learn how to do that, you can't be successful because your buildings won't be useful, like they won't be what was asked for, so they won't be fulfilling the need, that's the basis of the project. (architect, 20)

> you know. You just role model it and over time people will get more exposure to APNs and they'll get it. (APN 10)

Another APN described the importance of demonstrating for helping clients to value her role:

> People don't really think, you know, too much until they see you sort of doing it. And so, I think that's the way I try to help people understand about nursing. . . . I'm a nurse and this is the same thing that other nurses do as far as what we do at work. (APN, 2)

In short, through demonstrating their skill and competence during client interactions, professionals strive to enhance their clients' appreciation for the scope and complexity of their work, so that clients will assign greater value to the profession demonstrated.

Relationship building. Professionals also reported engaging in relationship building—developing personal connections and rapport with clients to ease the professional-client relationship—to manage image discrepancies. CPAs frequently reported using this tactic:

> Ultimately, it comes down to taking an interest in the client and what they do. So from simple things of understanding what their business does, that really goes a long way to developing those relationships and dispelling those beliefs. And ultimately one of the techniques that I use is basically just look at their desk and understand what they like to do when they're not at work and at some point you're gonna have some sort of connection with that person. (CPA, 11)

> I try to be very friendly to all of my client personnel, and I actually try to really, really develop a rapport with them because it's very easy to just complain to the auditor. What I found is the best thing is to kind of just completely shrug it off and be extremely nice and be extremely friendly to all of the client people.

> It's like if you took a little teddy bear, and it was like a cute, little teddy bear, there's no way you could take a really cute teddy bear and try to stab it with a knife. (CPA, 3)

An APN describes how she builds relationships with patients by making sure to leave them with either a tangible item or a valuable piece of information on each visit:

> One thing that I truly try to do with every encounter with a patient, I try to leave them with something, whether it be a little piece of knowledge . . . or I say "Let's make a plan on what we're going to do to address the problem." . . . I have patients who, you give them a physical tangible item, like a blood pressure cuff, and they think you've done something really big for them. . . . If you give them something physical, tangible, then they're more likely to buy into the system and work with you. (APN, 8)

Professionals reported actively managing their relationships with clients to overcome preconceived notions and ensure a streamlined working relationship for the future. They did so through getting to know the interests and preferences of clients to provide a more personal interaction or through actively illustrating their goodwill toward clients in an attempt to overcome client concerns regarding professionals' intentions.

DISCUSSION

Adopting Oscar Wilde's view of cynics, some have argued that an accountant is an individual "who knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing." While such perceptions may be the grist for humor, we find empirical evidence, based on in-depth studies of four professions, that role-based professional image discrepancies also have significant implications for the productivity of professionals. In fact, in all four cases, professionals linked perceptions of their profession with consequential outcomes for how they performed their work. While there were some differences across groups, our emphasis on the shared relationships across professions shows that the implications of image discrepancies for professionals are not limited to one profession. Below, we explicate the theoretical and practical implications of our work.

Theoretical Contributions

The central finding emerging from our data was that professionals experience role-based image discrepancies. Given the literature's emphasis on character-based images and discrepancies (e.g., Operario & Fiske, 2004; Polzer et al., 2002; Swann, 1987), our focus on role-based images and discrepancies adds to theory in several ways: (1) delineating the similarities and differences between role-based and character-based image discrepancies, (2) highlighting the specific productivity implications of these discrepancies for professionals, (3) illustrating a more varied set of mechanisms for managing discrepancies than have previously been identified, and (4) identifying the specific tactics professionals use for managing these types of discrepancies.

To begin, character-based and role-based image discrepancies have some similarities. Most basically, each type of discrepancy is an oversimplification—either of the character of the target of the discrepancy (see Macrae & Bodenhausen [2000] for a review) or of the target's role. Further, discrepancies of either variant are often negative. That said, even potentially positive discrepancies (e.g., some impracticable expectations) can be problematic and result in productivity costs. Ultimately, no matter what form they take, discrepancies matter to individuals. What is perhaps surprising is how much role-based discrepancies matter.

People likely view discrepancies involving character, for example, as internal, stable, and difficult to change (Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009). As such, character-based discrepancies may be difficult to ignore and manage. Responding to role-based discrepancies, by contrast, may be easier. Given the historical importance of autonomy to professions, professionals could choose to perceive roles as relatively changeable. However, in spite of this autonomy—and the fact that changes to meet client needs could bring rewards—we did not find professionals changing to meet others' expectations, and thus taking an approach central to resolving character-based discrepancies (Lemay & Ashmore, 2004; Snyder, 1984; Swann & Ely, 1984). Even if one takes a more modern view of professions as groups increasingly accountable to external bodies (Dent & Whitehead, 2002), then professionals could perceive role enactment as externally imposed and blame these external regulations, systems, and actors for discrepancies. However, we did not find this response either. These nonfindings make sense, however, in light of the central place of roles in establishing identity, especially among professionals (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). Threats to identity may be perceived as a threat to

something both relatively stable and internal—such as character. Certainly, descriptions of role also seem to invoke identity in our data (see Table 1). By contrast, role-based image discrepancies may be less threatening in occupations in which identities and roles are not so intertwined. In lieu of this finding, future research on image discrepancies should account for the possibility that members of different occupations may respond to role-based discrepancies with unique tactics and to varying degrees, depending on how central roles are to their occupational identity. More generally, we suggest that future research in this area needs to expand its scope regarding the types of discrepancies that exist in the workplace, the types of workers that experience them, and to consider whether and how different types of discrepancy may interact with each other.

Next, our focus on role-based image discrepancies widens understanding of the consequences of image discrepancies more broadly. For professionals, their ability to deliver high-quality service and to uphold the goals of the profession hinges on their interactions with clients. When clients do not have an understanding of the professional role that is consistent with professionals' own perceptions, it can negatively impact the process of collaboration, the ability of professionals to collect their fees, and clients' use of the profession in general. Each of these implications represents important outcomes for professions and expands current understanding of what impact image can have on work. Further, identifying linkages between role-based images, client evaluations, and productivity costs helps to enrich literature on the professional-client relationship—a body of work that has identified the importance of client expectations on perceptions of service quality (Brown & Swartz, 1989; Kadushin, 1962; Ojasalo, 2001) by addressing the origin of such expectations. We suggest research on professional productivity, especially with regard to studies of professional-client interactions, needs to consider role-based image discrepancies.

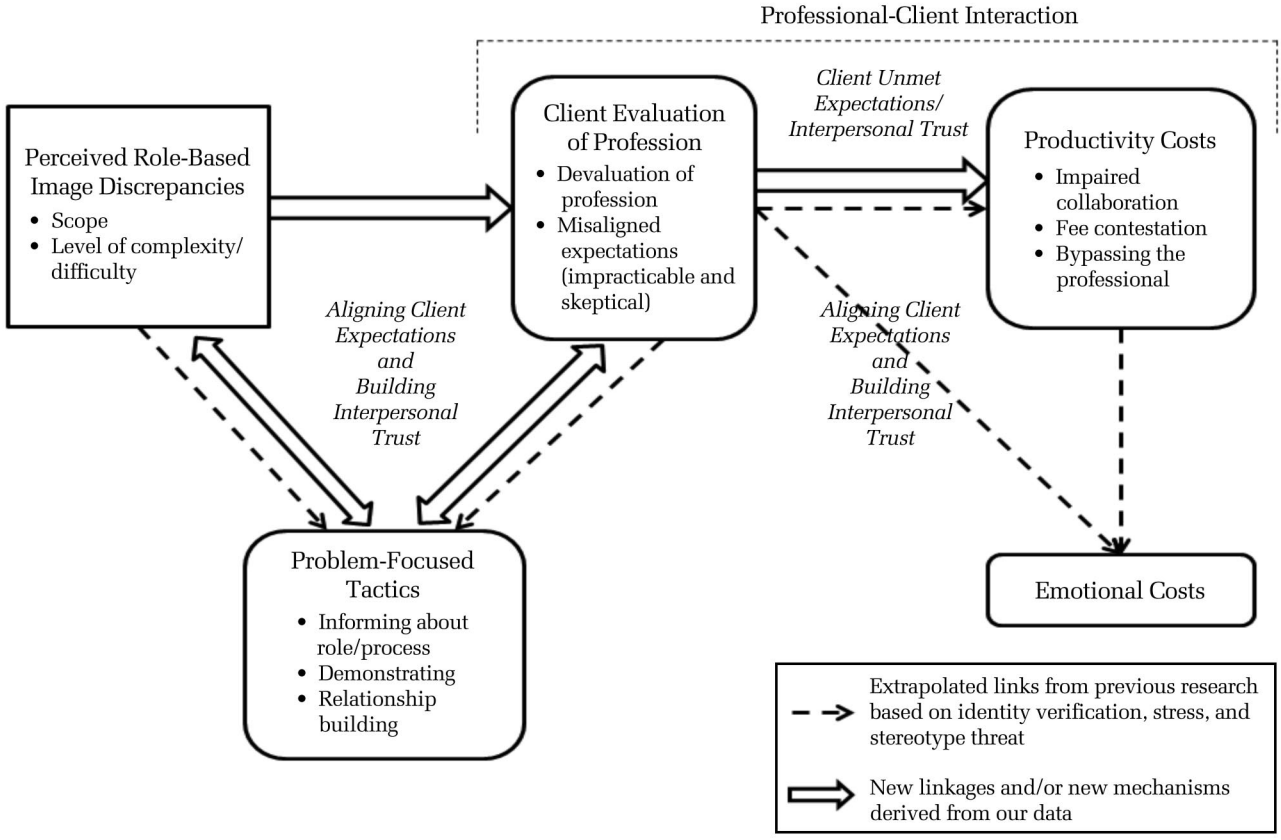
Drawing on our findings, it is worth considering further the mechanisms that may explain the relationship between role-based discrepancies and productivity costs. Figure 3, a modified version of Figure 2, illustrates the role *unmet expectations* and *interpersonal trust* play in this relationship. To begin, while unmet expectations are often tied to people's initial work encounters rather than to professional image, a central tenet of research on this topic is that when expectations are not met, parties are dissatisfied (cf. Irving & Meyer, 1994; see Wanous, Poland, Premack, and Davis [1992] for a review). Used here, we suggest that role-based image discrepancies and client evaluations are also linked to productivity costs, at least in part because the discrepancies distort expectations: client misperception of the scope and level of complexity of professional roles are likely to lead to impracticable role expectations that are, by definition, impossible to meet. As a client works with the professional and begins to experience unmet expectations, he or she may become dissatisfied or even skeptical. The dissatisfaction resulting from these unmet expectations, in turn, may cause impaired collaboration, bypassing of the professional, and ultimately fee contestation.

The other mechanism that appears to be in play for role-based image discrepancy management is interpersonal trust. Trust is conceptualized as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998: 395). Unlike people in occupations entailing very little client contact (e.g., manufacturing), professionals ultimately interface with clients. These clients, in turn, must accept vulnerability (e.g., allow a nurse to draw blood) for the professionals to do their jobs. For this reason, interpersonal trust is crucial for effective professional-client interactions, as it is for anyone attempting to span boundaries in performance of their work (Williams, 2007).

The issue of trust becomes even clearer when one understands that people base trust on such factors as ability, integrity, and benevolence (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). In parallel with our arguments about expectations, we argue that narrow perceptions of scope and complexity likely diminish clients' perceptions of professionals' abilities. To illustrate, lawyers' clients doubted the abilities of lawyers who could not favorably settle cases before trials even began. Another discrepancy-related issue—skeptical expectations—can strongly influence perceptions of benevolence. For example, a client's belief that CPAs are out to "catch them in a wrong doing" would likely hinder trust. To the degree that client perceptions of roles do not match what professionals do, professional behavior may seem disingenuous (e.g., APNs "pretending" to write prescriptions), thus raising issues of integrity. In the absence of trust, productivity costs such as impaired collaboration and bypassing the professional are understandable.

FIGURE 3

Theoretical Mechanisms Driving Professional Image Management



Unmet expectations and interpersonal trust extend beyond previous explanations for the image-performance relationship. Two extant explanations of this relationship (illustrated in dotted lines in Figure 3) are (1) individuals facing identity threats are unable to focus on performance because of the *depletion of cognitive resources* focused on the threats (Croizet et al., 2004; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995) and (2) individuals who fail to *self-verify* in the eyes of others will experience stress as a result of the uncertainty that comes with not knowing how to act in interactions with others who do not see them in ways similar to how they see themselves (Polzer et al., 2002; Swann, 1983; Swann & Read, 1981). The logic underlying unmet expectations and trust fulfillment indicates there is another set of processes through which image may influence performance that takes the form of a vicious, self-reinforcing spiral.

The cycle begins as a client enters a professional-client relationship with inaccurate or unrealistic beliefs about how the professional will perform the work and, potentially, with relatively low levels of trust. The professional may further damage the client's trust if he or she is unable to meet the client's needs (Rousseau et al., 1998). Consequently, the client may then restrict his or her investment in the relationship (e.g., effort to provide information, payment), which in turn devalues the professional and makes fulfilling expectations even more difficult. xAs the professional struggles to meet client expectations, the client's skeptical and impracticable expectations may strengthen, mistrust continues to grow, and the client may even withdraw if it seems that the professional is doing little or doing it incorrectly. As such, barring intervening actions, the professional-client relationship may deteriorate. In these cases, the issue is not about depleted cog-

nitive resources or interpersonal uncertainty. Rather, it is a more functional issue around engendering trust and being able to satisfy the expectations of a vulnerable other. Consequently, forthcoming studies of professional image need to consider more closely the interplay of unmet expectations and client trust when explicating the impact of these images.

Our final area of interest concerns how professionals respond to and cope with role-based image discrepancies. We found that professionals manage these discrepancies through three problem-focused tactics aimed at either aligning client images with professional realities or shifting client evaluations of their profession. Informing is similar to the "confronting client perceptions" tactic that Ashforth and colleagues (2007) described in their findings on dirty work. However, the other tactics, demonstrating and relationship building are less evident in previous work. We find that professionals not only explain their work and its value to others, but that those in professions in which the work can be more easily displayed through the manipulation of tangible objects, such as nursing, intentionally perform work in sight of the clients to reassure them it is being done and that he or she is an able executor of the work. In addition, and in contrast to Ashforth et al. (2007), who found that stigmatized workers reported distancing themselves from their clients, professionals across the contexts studied here reported actively building relationships with clients via identifying similarities of interest and creating interpersonal rapport. These tactics enable professionals to show benevolence toward their clients, thus helping improve trust and humanize themselves in the eyes of the client. This aspect of our findings may reflect a structural difference between professions and many stigmatized occupations: professionals must work intimately with their clients to achieve desired outcomes, but this may not be the case in other occupations. As such, building relationships represents a particularly important tactic for professionals attempting to manage client evaluations. In light of this finding, we recommend that researchers examining image management in workplaces be sensitized to this tactic and remain open to uncovering both new and common ways that professionals and other workers cope with image discrepancies.

Practical Implications

In considering the practical implications of our findings, we note that professionals must remain attuned to the importance of taking action to prevent the vicious cycles or self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1948) that may result from image discrepancies in professional-client service relationships. As we articulated earlier, without intervention such a relationship may disintegrate; professionals may need to work proactively early in each relationship to ensure that clients understand the roles and duties associated with their profession. In particular, our findings indicate that informing clients about the nature of a profession, demonstrating professional work to clients, and building relationships are all methods of aligning images. Even in situations in which it appears that clients do understand a profession, it may be appropriate for a professional to manage clients' expectations to maintain initial trust, as gaining trust back after it has been lost may be even more difficult than gaining trust in the first place (Kim et al., 2004). Therefore, we suggest that professionals should make it a practice to engage in these tactics with all of their clients upon initial contact.

Even more specifically, these findings also indicate the type of information professionals should convey to their clients. Our informants suggested that clients often had narrow views of the scope of their work, as well as inaccurate understandings of the complexity of professional roles. Accordingly, professionals should seek to close the gap around these two issues, providing clients with a big-picture overview of their profession as well as being explicit about their particular areas of expertise within the profession. What is not necessary, our findings suggest, is attempting to teach clients detailed technical knowledge underpinning a profession. These attempts will likely backfire for at least two reasons. To begin, utilizing the complicated jargon necessarily to impart professional domain-level knowledge may confuse, and ultimately, alienate a client. In addition, if the client believes that the content of professional knowledge can be easily learned, the need for the professional is undermined. Thus, we suggest that professionals focus on describing their profession in terms of its scope (e.g., this is the range of what CPAs do); clarify their own niche within the larger profession (e.g., not all CPAs do taxes); and emphasize the credentialing process (e.g., I went to graduate school and passed "x" number of exams) to show clients the difficulty and complexity of their work.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has a number of limitations that suggest avenues for future research. To begin, while we believe drawing from four different professions strengthens this article, we had different levels of access to the professional contexts, meaning that across professions, data are uneven. Accordingly, we were hesitant to draw strong distinctions between professions, fearing that differences we uncovered might be a result of limitations in our data rather than actual differences. Through future research, scholars could compare and contrast professions to highlight additional boundary conditions of our theorizing. In doing so, they might focus on potentially important differences in the productivity costs faced by each profession. In particular, the architects and lawyers we studied worked on a billable hours system, so they were more susceptible to contestation of fees. Further, architects and APNs worked closely with allied professionals, leaving them more susceptible to bypassing.

A second and related limitation concerns our use of a pooled sample. Pooled samples have a number of benefits—including the option of comparing contexts to increase confidence in data—and are beginning to emerge in the literature (Howard-Grenville et al., 2010; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). However, they also have some limitations. First, because the accountant data set only became evident after data collection was complete, we were not able to include those data in the same iterative process of moving between analysis and data collection that we used for the other three data sets. However, the researcher who collected these data did engage in a grounded theory approach. Thus, we used a similar methodology to collect and initially analyze each of the data sets. A related issue concerns the advisability of pooling various samples that arise from different protocols. As described in the Methods section, we took a number of steps—including comparing protocols and having one author read all of the interview transcripts—to increase our confidence that the data in each sample were getting at the same constructs. The consistency of findings across settings concerning the importance of role-based discrepancies for professionals, the link between role-based discrepancies and outcomes, and how professionals managed discrepancies further enhanced our confidence about combining these data sets.

A third limitation is our ability to theorize about process given that we did not collect longitudinal data (Langley, 1999). We based our ordering of findings and our graphing for Figures 2 and 3 on narrative causality (Polkinghorne, 1988) (see also Appendix B). That is, when describing the costs of role-based discrepancies, professionals first described that the discrepancies existed. Moreover, they tended to talk about problem-focused coping tactics in the context of repairing client relationships. In adopting a longitudinal approach, researchers could further examine how this process develops. This would allow for an examination of additional questions, such as, How successful are the various role-based image management tactics in reducing or mitigating the costs of role-based discrepancies over time?

A fourth potential limitation of this investigation concerns generalizability. We cannot make direct claims about role-based image discrepancies in other professions or occupations because inductive research is intended to generalize to theory rather than to entire populations (see Pratt's "From the Editors" in this journal [vol. 52: 856–862]). However, through analytical generalizations—reasoned judgments about appropriate comparisons from one case to another context (Kvale, 1996)—we can begin to draw some tentative comparisons across contexts. For example, despite the fact that only two of our professions could be considered "tainted" (e.g., APNs deal with human waste, and lawyers may deal with undesirable people), there were some parallels between the tactics we found and those identified by research on dirty work (Ashforth et al., 2007). Tactics such as "informing about roles and processes" may be analogous to "confronting the client." Through future research, scholars may examine to what degree tactics used by dirty workers are motivated by managing taint versus managing misunderstandings more generally.

In terms of potential boundary conditions, our focus on professionals suggests that our findings may apply to other occupations to the extent that the other occupations have high levels of client interdependence, visibility, and complexity. As the professional-client relationship is central to our model, analytical generalizability may be most likely for contexts that rely on high levels of client-professional interaction involving substantial information exchange. To illustrate, our findings may apply to real estate agents, but not to bartenders. We also suspect that the more visible an occupational group is in popular culture and the media, the more susceptible occupational members will be to image discrepancies because—owing to high

levels of exposure—individuals outside of the occupation may believe they have a complete and accurate understanding of it. In addition, our findings may be applicable to occupations with relatively high complexity. If the work done by an occupational member is straightforward, then the general public may have a fairly accurate understanding of the nature of the work, limiting the extent of image discrepancies. These dimensions point to an opportunity for future research to look beyond professional settings to understand the extent and impact of role-based image discrepancies across occupational contexts.

In addition to the suggestions above, a number of avenues remain for research stemming from our findings and model. In particular, it occurred to us that the management of image may constitute a particular type of domain expertise (Dane, 2010)—one that professionals acquire through certain job-related experiences. However, our data did not illustrate the specific avenues by which professionals learn how to manage clients' images (via the tactics described here). While we suspect that one may attain such expertise via informal and tacit means—possibly through the observation of other members of the profession—there was some indication that more explicit and formal means may be at play. For example, members of both the architecture and nursing professions indicated having taught novice professional members about the importance of image management. Through future research, scholars could explore further the processes by which professionals learn to manage role-based images.

Finally, while we do not have direct data to support this assertion, we believe that we may be viewing in our data the microlevel "fall out" of some of the broader social trends (e.g., lower confidence, deterioration of exclusive knowledge bases, deprofessionalization) that threaten the legitimacy of professions—or the degree to which "the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). In particular, given that professionals have always mastered esoteric bodies of knowledge, and may therefore have always been vulnerable to professional image discrepancies, we wonder if these issues may be particularly troubling today, given these legitimacy threats aimed at the professions themselves. In particular, it may be that threats to professional legitimacy intensify the impact of image discrepancies for professionals; that is, the weakening of professions might make the stakes for image discrepancies higher. Looking at Figure 3, we suggest that these macro forces—such as deprofessionalization—influence the relationship between discrepancies and evaluations, making discrepancies more likely to lead to negative views rather than positive ones (e.g., a professional "mystique"). By implication, these dynamics may influence our newly proposed mechanisms, such as trust. As Dent and Whitehead noted, in their book on the "new" professional, these macro forces mean that "the ability to trust in professional judgment, despite being a key aspect of social cohesion, becomes an elusive quality" (2002: 2). More generally, while these dynamics surrounding legitimacy have been examined at the level of professions and institutions (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Elsbach, 1994; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), less work has been done on legitimacy and threats to it at the micro level (see Ellemers, Wilke, and Van Knippenberg [1993], Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway [2006], and Tyler [1997] for exceptions). Scholars could direct future research toward bridging these macrolevel processes with their microlevel correlates.

Conclusion

Organizational scholars have long been interested in issues of image, primarily with regards to specific individuals (e.g., leaders) and organizations. Increasingly, scholars are recognizing the importance of professional image (e.g., Roberts, 2005). In this work, we contribute to this emerging literature by illustrating how perceived client views of the professional role have implications for a professional's productivity, via impaired collaboration, fee contestation, and bypassing. In so doing, we highlight that image is not restricted to perceptions of characteristics, but also includes beliefs about what is done in the course of enacting a role. We believe these findings set groundwork for a new approach to studying image at work.

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APPENDIX A

Comparison of Two Protocols Used for Data Collection

Question Content	Protocol 1: Architects, APNs, Lawyers	Protocol 2: Accountants
Outsider perceptions of professional/professional work	When non-[professional members] think of your profession, what do they think of?	What are the most commonly held perceptions that other people have about accountants?
	What do people outside of your profession think that you do?	How do people respond when you tell them you are an accountant? Are there perceptions associated with your particular type of accountant? (audit, tax, consulting)
Discrepancies?	In what ways are the perceptions of others about your profession similar to or different from your experiences?	
Implications for self	(If the informant notes discrepancies) Do these differences matter to you? Why or why not?	Does that perception impact you or influence you in any way?
Implications for profession	If the impressions of your profession are wrong, why do you think they persist? What might be the implications for the profession? Is there any way the profession might benefit or be harmed from these perceptions?	
	Do the perceptions of outsiders impact the way you feel about your work or how you act at work? Why or why not?	Do these perceptions influence your work in any way?
Tactics to deal with perceptions		How do you respond to these perceptions? Are there tactics or strategies you use when you can tell they have a specific stereotype of your profession?

APPENDIX B

A Narrative Example of Role-Based Image, Its Costs, and Its Management

The people that don't know anything, I get, "Oh, so you do a lot of taxes, huh," and I say, "I'm an auditor," and they have no idea what that is. But I think most people's perception is that it's very boring and kind of reclusive. It really depends on what type of person you're talking to, but I've definitely gotten a lot of, "*Oh, that's awful*" *or, you know*, "How could you do that all day," *or* "How do you stare at a computer all day," *or those kinds of reactions are pretty common . . . I always get that*, "Can

you do my taxes," *you know. I get that reaction a lot, and I'm like, "Well, no, actually I don't do taxes." [When I enter a client organization] it's funny 'cause it's always kind of like an, "Oh, no. Here are the auditors." You get that a lot, especially for the clients that you work for. If you're in somebody's office and someone else in the company walks by, they're like, "Uh oh, what did you do wrong?" something like that*. Like it's normally friendly and jesting, but you do get an "Oh, no" kind of thing, like, "Here they come, and they're coming for me." . . . I think that they see the tax person as, at least, helping them, where we're there to make their job more difficult, you know. We're there to make them show us how they did something, do something twice, asking them for documentation, to explain something. We're there to basically be intrusive. . . . *I've been in places where they just, you walk in, and it's like you've ruined their whole day, and that's very hard on me*. I know a lot of people feel the same way . . . *I feel like it slows me down at work a lot, not wanting to push too hard*, and it just really depends on who you're working with. . . . I've been told a number of different times that I need to be more comfortable going to somebody and, you know, interrupting their work and, you know, really, really pushing them to try and get me things. Especially at my level *that's really hard because one thing we actually do try and do is build a rapport with someone so that you can feel comfortable going and asking them for things*. I'm just not that type of person. I just feel like it's such bad manners sometimes, you know, if somebody's doing something, and we don't try and make things difficult by any means, but if somebody doesn't want me in their office, it's really hard for me to be there. *Usually you need, like, one topic to kind of like break the ice. You know, if they have, you know, a mascot or something in their office, a lot of times I'll bring up, "What school did you go to," and I feel like just by making ourselves more human and not there to, like, punish them. Just being friendly, a lot of times, people will kind of be like, "Oh, they're not here to make me miserable," or I'll joke, "I'm really not trying to be difficult. Would it be better if I came back later?" I feel like those things go a really long way with people*.

–CPA 26; emphasis is ours

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