

CINEMA AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE IMAGE OF NURSES IN THE FILM PEARL HARBOR

CINEMA E IDENTIDADE PROFISSIONAL: PERCEPÇÕES SOBRE A IMAGEM DE ENFERMEIRAS NO FILME PEARL HARBOR

EL CINE Y LA IDENTIDAD PROFESIONAL: PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LA IMAGEN DE LAS ENFERMERAS EN LA PELÍCULA PEARL HARBOR

Alexandre Barbosa de Oliveira ¹
Marília Gomes e Silva ²
Margarida Maria Rocha Bernardes ³
Ana Beatriz Azevedo Queiroz ⁴
Regina Maria dos Santos ⁵

¹ RN. PhD in Nursing. Professor. Federal University of Rio de Janeiro-UFRJ, Anna Nery School of Nursing-EEAN. Rio de Janeiro, RJ – Brazil.

² RN. Resident in Intensive Care Nursing. Rio de Janeiro State University – UERJ, Hospital Pedro Ernesto. Rio de Janeiro, RJ – Brazil.

³ RN. PhD in Nursing. Professor. University Center Augusto Motta. Rio de Janeiro, RJ-Brazil.

⁴ RN. Doctor in Nursing. Professor. UERJ, EEAN. Rio de Janeiro, RJ – Brazil.

⁵ RN. PhD in Nursing. Professor. Federal University of Alagoas, Nursing Department. Maceió, AL – Brazil.

Corresponding author: Alexandre Barbosa de Oliveira. E-mail: alexbaroli@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To analyze the perceptions of undergraduate Nursing students about the use of the image of nurses in the film Pearl Harbor, and to highlight the pedagogical contributions contained therein to discuss the professional identity of Nursing. **Methods:** a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory study, developed through film analysis and semi structured interviews with undergraduate students. The data collected were treated by Laurence Bardin's content analysis and discussed in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of the Social World Theory. **Results:** The study pointed to four categories, which covered several aspects inherent to the practice and identity of the Nursing profession, which were symbolically portrayed in the film in question. **Conclusion:** There is a need to broaden the academic debate about the effects generated by contemporary stigmas and stereotypes, through the cinematographic placement of the image of nursing professionals. In addition, Cinema was perceived as a strategic cultural and pedagogical instrument of distinction definition and valuation of the profession in the social field.

Keywords: Nursing; Motion Pictures as Topic; World War II; Disasters; Teaching.

RESUMO

Objetivos: analisar as percepções de discentes de graduação em Enfermagem sobre o uso da imagem de enfermeiras no filme Pearl Harbor e destacar as contribuições pedagógicas nele contidas para a discussão da identidade profissional da Enfermagem. **Métodos:** estudo de abordagem qualitativa, descritivo e exploratório, desenvolvido por meio de análise filmica e entrevistas semiestruturadas com graduandos. Os dados colhidos foram tratados pela análise de conteúdo de Laurence Bardin e discutidos à luz de conceitos da Teoria do Mundo Social de Pierre Bourdieu. **Resultados:** o estudo revelou quatro categorias que abrangeram diversos aspectos inerentes à prática e à identidade da profissão de Enfermagem, os quais foram simbolicamente retratados no filme em questão. **Conclusão:** há necessidade de se ampliar o debate acadêmico a respeito dos efeitos gerados por estigmas e estereótipos construídos na contemporaneidade, por meio da veiculação cinematográfica da imagem de profissionais de Enfermagem. Ademais, o cinema foi percebido como estratégico instrumento cultural e pedagógico de definição de distinção e valoração da profissão no campo social.

Palavras-chave: Enfermagem; Cinema como Assunto; II Guerra Mundial; Desastres; Ensino.

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RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar las percepciones de los discentes de graduación en Enfermería sobre el uso de la imagen de las enfermeras en la película Pearl Harbor y destacar su contribución pedagógica a la discusión de la identidad profesional de Enfermería. **Métodos:** estudio cualitativo, exploratorio, descriptivo realizado por medio del análisis de la película y de entrevistas semiestructuradas a los graduandos. Los datos recogidos fueron tratados según el análisis de contenido de Laurence Bardin y discutidos según los conceptos de la teoría del mundo social de Pierre Bourdieu. **Resultados:** el estudio indicó cuatro categorías temáticas que incluyen varios aspectos inherentes a la práctica y a la identidad de la profesión, que fueron mostrados simbólicamente en la película. **Conclusión:** debería ampliarse el debate académico sobre los efectos generados por los estigmas y estereotipos construidos en la contemporaneidad, por medio de la transmisión cinematográfica de la imagen de los profesionales de Enfermería. Además, el cine fue percibido como un instrumento cultural y pedagógico estratégico para distinguir y valorar la profesión en el campo social. **Palabras clave:** Enfermería; Cine como Asunto; Segunda Guerra Mundial; Desastres; Enseñanza.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on the use of Nursing image in movies are rare in the academic field, although it is recognized that the approach of the diverse ways of exploiting this profession imagery enables discussions about its collective memory reconstruction.¹⁻³

Furthermore, the collective memory not only represents a symbolic asset, but also an instrument of power and disqualification. Since it influences the procedural construction of identity and group consciousness, memory can become an instrument of manipulation, distinction and domination between social agents' relations.^{4,5}

As cultural production, cinema is thought in this study as an influencer of collective memory construction, especially if we consider that nurses are often characters in several films, portrayed in different eras and contexts.

In this sense, films can be treated as potent pedagogical and socio-historical sources. Genres that go from comedy to drama, from documentary to fiction, the more stereotypical or unrealistic cinematographic productions carry imagination, ideologies, practices, power relations and cultural patterns.⁶

Movies provoke interest, enjoy popularity and reach all social levels. In Brazil the American movies are mainly consumed. Hollywood film industry not only entertains but also influences and exercises the power of subjectivation and objectification of the subject.⁷

Through the socialization of the *American way of life*, Hollywood movies highlight a lifestyle that works as a reference of self-image for their viewers through the symbolic belief of the supposed social, cultural and political superiority of this country.⁸ The film *Pearl Harbor*, analysis object of this study, is supposed to be an example of that.

The film portrays the Japanese air raid to the American military base *Pearl Harbor* in December 1941, in Hawaii, a fact that put the United States of America in World War II. The movie shows the everyday life and the challenges faced by nurses during the conflict, in a plot that deals with the romance between two Army Air Corps pilots and a Navy nurse.

This film was chosen intentionally since it highlights the participation of a nurse as central character and portrays symbolic elements of professional image in a scenario that has expanded the

social, cultural and historical visibility of Nursing. This production was a North American success in 2001, its release year, being ranked as one of the most-viewed war films in history, including in Brazil.

The movie was integrated to an applied pedagogical activity with the Nursing undergraduate students of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in June 2016, in order to mediate the debate on professional identity that cinema can produce about Nursing, on the assumption that the movie also exerts influence on the production of meaning, construction of representations and incorporation of *habitus*.⁴

Considering that the films as educational support can stimulate interest in certain issues and help the formation of critical thinking, since related to the content of the subject and aligned to a clear didactic objective, this study investigated how undergraduate students understand the uses of the image of Nursing by the cinema, taking as a reference the film *Pearl Harbor*.

On the exposed, the following objectives were defined: to analyze the perceptions of Nursing undergraduate students about the use of the image of nurses in the film *Pearl Harbor* and highlight the pedagogical contributions of this movie to discuss Nursing professional identity.

METHOD

Study of qualitative, descriptive and exploratory approach, carried out within the subject Sources for Nursing History, of the Nursing Degree Course of the Anna Nery School of Nursing-UFRJ. The study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee (CAAE: 56149316.4.0000.5238), being observed the ethical-legal dictates of the resolution 466/2012, of the National Council of Health (Ministry of Health-Brazil).

At the beginning of the discipline, a lesson plan was structured with the methodology to be developed, accompanied by synopsis, data sheet, plot, guide topics for discussion of the film content and additional information, which supported the construction of data-collection instruments.⁶

Before the activity, the students watched the film *Pearl Harbor*. On the agreed date was showed a 17 minutes decouped

age of the movie in a classroom. The decoupage included the sequences with specific images of nurses and was exhibited in a large screen, with satisfactory acoustics speakers. The steps of the lesson plan were coordinated by two researchers/professors and assisted by a student of scientific initiation.

After the exhibition, an individual instrument was distributed to fill in, divided into three parts, with open and closed questions. The first part related to the profile of the participants of the study. The second included the image the subjects captured on the nurses portrayed and non-verbal communication dimensions, the scenes of the greatest impact, the practice of nursing in war and the qualities and deficiencies in view of the profession. The third dealt with the influence of cinema on the construction of professional identity of that professional area.

A total of 32 students participated, most female (90.6%), of the sixth semester of graduation (81.2%) and aged between 21 and 25 years old (81.2%). The reports were identified alphanumerically, in order to preserve anonymity.

About categorization and analysis of data, we used the technique of content thematic-categorical analysis by Laurence Bardin, in order to establish the interpretation and correspondence between the sociological structures of the discourses and thus, critically understand the sense of communication and its latent or manifest content.^{9,10}

To enhance the discussion, the concept of *habitus* developed by Pierre Bourdieu was a support. This concept relates to the ability of agents incorporating an established social identity, by means of provisions to feel, think and act. Thereby, the *habitus* captures how the society influences people in the form of durable provisions and captures also the creative responses to requests of agents surrounding social environment, where these responses are guided by the provisions apprehended in the past. Another concept used was of symbolic power, translated in imperceptibly and invisible power enforcement, thanks to the complicity of those who tend to ignore that are subject to it. This is, therefore, a power of reality construction that operates through symbols, making the social world sense consensual.⁷

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the documentary corpus, composed of 32 questionnaires, four categories emerged, which were structured according to the different topics present in the students' speech.

CATEGORY 1: VISUAL/AESTHETIC REPRESENTATION OF NURSING THROUGH THE CINEMA

This category represents 30.08% of the total units of analysis of the study record. The ones that refer to this representa-

tion were listed with focus on the social role of cinema in the production of meanings about certain professions.

The film is a portrait of what's in society; so, what happens in the daily life influences on cinema. The constant portrayal of Nurses in a negative way ends up influencing people's opinion about the profession (P6).

The film demonstrates the U.S. vision about the action of Nursing in war. From this, ideologies, behaviors, practices are disseminated to those who have never had contact with the profession (P19).

The cinema has the power to reach a large mass of audience and enhance Nursing as a profession (P26).

Through the control of memories, past experiences tend to be transferred to the memory of the individual who resort to them when there is new interaction with the same object.¹¹ Under this optic, it is necessary to know what experiences and world views the film production team has about a particular practice or profession. Thinking on memory control, then, we can emphasize that this field is a set of disputes, because those who hold the control of what should be remembered can impose hegemonic versions and interpretations of the events which, in a way, conditions social memory.^{12,4}

In view of this, images are formed as a result of the act of thinking when interacting with a particular object that, as a consequence, becomes responsible for the construction of mental representation. This knowledge passes to memory as well, whose image formed will function as a perceptual schema, activated when new interactions with the same object occur. Thus, the process of image analysis is not exhausted, i.e. is never complete, because there will always be the possibility of a new interpretation of the same image.^{11,6} Such ideas, in a way, were verified in the interviews analyzed:

Movies can be great influencers and opinion formers (P1).

Movies, series and soap operas have a key role in construction and deconstruction of concepts related to the profession. [...] It is necessary, then, to pursuit truthful information on the subject, so there is no propagation of ideas or erroneous concepts related to Nursing (P3).

Students proposed a more enhanced exploratory study by movie writers as a way to alleviate certain effects that may compromise publicly Nursing as a profession in such movies.

The treatment of the image of a profession is something very subjective. Movies' writers or directors are not in practical scenarios and therefore may not expose

properly the profession daily routine what can end up denigrating the profession. [...] Even those who are Nurses can have a vision that does not represent Nursing, in fact (P23).

Communication channels/media are opinion formers and influence the large mass. Every time you see a nurse in a movie, with a plot with inadequate moral values, we certainly will be seen as simply tasks performers (P18).

Such reports convey certain stereotypes that supposedly involve the issue of practice. Indeed, the symbolic violence lies in the fact that, sometimes, the professionals recognize themselves as, consciously or not, involving both in their speeches as in their *modus operandi*, features inculcated by the social media. It is up to the Nursing practitioners to preserve the identity of the profession from which they want recognition and valuation, in order to prevent precarious speeches to be reproduced and published. Breaking paradigms occurs in everyday life, by the contact with other professionals, the posture with the patient, improving skills and competencies in the social use of marketing strategies, understanding of Nursing as a social practice and, consequently, reproducing the consensus that Nursing is permanently necessary for individual's, collectivities' and populations' health.^{3,13}

In short, to distinguish a profession in the social field includes the selection of good strategies, which involves a symbolic proper fight. Furthermore, the image of a profession is shaped by dashes and transitional prints are deconstructed over time. This means to say that the professional *habitus* is structured from the construction of objective and subjective representations, in constant process of reinvention.⁴

CATEGORY 2: FUNDAMENTALS OF NURSING

Structured to contemplate the units related to the description of areas recognized as specific on Fundamental Nursing, this category represented 21.35% of all record units of the study. The units of meaning obtained were six: techniques/procedures (53.16%), risk (18.98%), basic care (12.65%), art (10.12%), ethics (2.53%) and work processes (2.53%).

On the film analysis about the elements of Fundamental Nursing, techniques/procedures (53.16%) were the most highlighted aspects. This data demonstrates that hard technology was curiously more perceived by students with emphasis on a technical vision of the profession.

They applied vaccines and did eye examination and give medicines, especially painkillers to relief pain of those soldiers who would not survive... (P13)

In contrast, 10.12% referred to Nursing as an art in situations concerning the application of light technologies for the development of practice, conceiving this practice as ephemeral, graceful and eternal art.³

They performed an effective nursing care, seeing the patient as a whole, not just the disease, in addition they shoe clinical reasoning (scene of the reaction with the vaccine), decision-making (scene of the arterial bleeding) and therapeutic conversation... (P2)

Indeed, by means of didactic-pedagogical experiences of "learn-to-be" to become a competent professional, the students showed they want to accumulate more than mere technical skills, as realized by some students.³

The perception of risk in assistance was 18.98%. The care environment includes multiple physical and psychic factors that tend to influence the survival of patients and the team and must provide security, even in scenarios of chaos, as highlighted in the film.¹⁴ The students showed concern since Nursing is showed in the film as an unsafe practice that is performed by unprepared people, characteristics that can be fixed on common sense due to the social uses of the profession by the cinema. The non-observance of fundamentals that govern Nursing is clearly featured in the following excerpt:

The nurse didn't check the patient's file and gave the medication to the wrong person ignoring the security protocols we have today... (P3)

Furthermore, assistance in chaotic environments increases the complexity of the communication, planning and decision-making processes, which does not necessarily preclude the realization of procedures with proper security and ethics. Some studies dealing with the practice of Nursing in emergency and disaster scenarios endorse this situation.^{15,16}

Other units of meaning, of a minor occurrence, relate to the provision of basic care (12.65%) with regard to the application of general and simple knowledge of Nursing in front of special situations; to ethics (2.53%), perceived by students as essential in Nursing activity; and work processes (2.53%), in which the highlighted aspects were related to work plans and specific managerial activities of nurses in the film.

CATEGORY 3: POSITIVE IMAGE OF NURSES

the mass media can influence in the marketing of certain areas of work, depending on the way the image of its professionals is positively or negatively explored and built.²

This third category grouped registration units referred to the positive image of nurses. Pre-selection used the criteria that each unit elected should contain an adjective assigned to nurses on the film, with meritorious and/or uplifting connotation. Of the four categories of the study, the third added 20.81% of total record units, distributed in five units of meaning: 40.25%), heroin (competent (28.57%), disciplined (18.18%), religious (6.49%) and leader (6.49%).

The characteristic most mentioned by students was competence (40.25%), since most of the sequences related to the difficult work done during the dramatic air strike.

In the film, Nurses are very dynamic in the war. [They showed] the competence, the scientific character and the ability of nurses (P11).

Nursing is shown as essential. After the attack to Pearl Harbor base [...], nurses appear with more professional attitude and maturity (P24).

The film features the nurse as a determined, committed, brave and dedicated professional. The performance of the nurses on the front line, in the base attack, was instrumental (P28).

The development of skills and professional competence to act in chaotic scenarios involves notions of health care, team work, proactivity, leadership, accepting challenges, time management, attention, commitment, cooperation, courage, attitude, emotional balance, flexibility, insight, resolution, responsibility, humanity, a sense of readiness, sense of urgency and execution techniques.¹⁶ In emergencies and disasters, such characteristics are fundamental to perform a highly qualified practice.

The heroin nurse was cited 28.57%. Certainly, such image was reinforced by the warlike context shown in the film. In fact, the wars are recognized as important vectors of professionalization of Nursing which may reinforce the myth of nurse hero.^{17,13} That probably influenced the adoption of this representation by the cinema also present in the students' speeches.

The nurse was seen as an authority on health. They were respected and admired. [...] I have the impression that there was a certain kind of heroism which was attributed to nurses in the wars (P30).

The work is shown as relevant and positive (P22).

Discipline appeared in 18.18% of the record units, very associated with the fulfillment of duties and responsibilities. The discipline was an important characteristic related to Nursing

over the years to structure their practice by their bodies, gestures, attitudes, outfits control. Not for nothing, Nursing incorporated educational schemes from military and ecclesiastical institutions, in which discipline, hierarchy, tradition and culture are strategic elements to form behaviors and codes of conduct. This idea is reinforced in the accounts:

The film shows the professionalism. The nurses imposed and separated the entertainment from work (P27).

Nurses with more professional attitude and maturity (P24).

In the movie, the patriotism of the nurses is very explicit. It shows, besides the love for the motherland, the great dedication to the profession (P26).

The symbolic marks of discipline within the social practice of Nursing appear both in the use of representative objects, such as the white uniform and service control documents, and in more abstract elements, as the fulfillment of duties and the exercise of authority, and show a culture of this profession.¹⁷ So, the *habitus* of the nurse assumes a special preparation which requires submission to values, hierarchies, and censorship of their field.

Perceived in a positive way, the religious image (6.49%) is associated with the idea of students about the value of the profession in helping other people, as well as preparedness and human needs service.

In those times it was something really connected to the charity, piety, and always doing the possible and the impossible to provide comfort and care to patients (P14).

The image of leader (6.49%) was placed in the spotlight by the recognition of the ability in making decisions in the work management process and interpersonal relationship effectiveness.

In the scenario of war, just a nurse was portrayed as leader and able to act even in a chaotic scenario of disaster and emergency (P23).

If they didn't have the nurses to provide first aid, most soldiers would not have bear the injuries (P32).

The positive image referred to in some students' speeches, consciously or not, is associated with the construction of a symbol of power. This is, therefore, a symbolic strategy that comes to a critical pedagogical training process and may lead to a change of posture or even the incorporation of a professional *habitus* oriented by a benefactor conduct.⁴

CATEGORY 4: NEGATIVE IMAGE OF NURSES

This category represented 26.76% of the record units and generated four units of meaning: sex symbol (50.5%), unethical (28.28%), incompetent (11.11%) and domestic (10.10%). The four units were structured from unworthy/precarious adjectives used to describe the nurses.

Addressed in half the record units (50.5%), nurse's image as a sex symbol had the greatest emphasis. This poor image of the profession, systematically exploited by the cinema, is partly explained by the still slow evolution of new thoughts about the social role of women.¹⁷ For a long time, women in public spaces, in institutions marked by male domination were usually excluded or, when included, assumed less noble positions, which refer to those in private spaces like family care, cleaning or cooking.

At the beginning of the film they are seen as sexy and attractive women (P1).

All the girls seemed little interested in the job and more in meeting men. Symbol of sexuality, with loose hair and red lipstick (P6).

In the students' speeches marks of the image of nurse associated with sexism were revealed:

Nurses struggles to lose the fetish and submissive stereotype (P4).

In general, to this days, the image of the nurse in the portrayed movies is of sexual symbol, leaving aside the scientific nature of the profession (P7).

In the professional field, such image is reflected in a more tenuous way because it implies the consideration of certain actions that women traditionally perform for the benefit of their children, parents or husbands, as taking their clothes off, giving bath, drying and putting on their clothes, acts which involve the explicit body touch. Such acts of care are practiced in private environments, which may give an aura of intimacy beyond that needed for the proceedings, which may build an imaginary full of sensuality during care.¹³

On the other hand, the romance between military personnel and nurses in the film could be associated with different elements: helplessness, loneliness, family separation, risk of death and desire to survive. The nurses often are the closest to the patients, which tends to associate more affective characteristics to care. In fact, as well as the military male shown in the film, they were also in the same situation of helplessness, loneliness and desire for security. Other war-themed films also demonstrate that, as is the case of the book "Heaven is my witness"

(1957 production), starred by the legendary Deborah Kerr and Robert Mitchum, playing an Irish nun and a U.S. soldier, and "The English Patient" (1996), award-winning film that tells the love story of a Canadian nurse, the actress Juliette Binoche, and an English soldier starred by Ralph Fiennes.

The image of unethical professional appeared in 28.28% of the units, especially associated with the scene of the character Evelyn Stewart, who approved a military nurse to be a pilot of the U.S. Navy, without the demanded pre-conditions as he didn't obtain success in the visual acuity test. The intimate involvement of the nurse with the soldier surpassed the nurse-patient relationship, episode which refers to the idea of specific standards transgression, according to students' perception.

The nurse adopted a person in the eye test, influencing his entrance as a pilot, because she had some feelings for him (P23).

In the film, the nurses are also portrayed as incompetent (11.11%) and domestic (10.1%). The lack of technical skills is observed in several scenes and permeates some passages, such as the mistaken vaccine administration in one of the soldiers, the improvisation of materials during the air strike and the unpreparedness to perform in high-pressure situations.

The image of a domestic nurse was related to the submissive posture before the doctors, especially during the scenes of war. The students felt that the autonomy of the nurse was ignored and she was unsatisfactory and subordinate.

Women unprepared for war. [...] They had no care to perform certain techniques, such as application of vaccines (P15).

In the film, Nursing is seen as a profession without value, subject to Medicine that does not have their own voice and is not taken seriously (P27).

Nowadays, it is believed that the precarious stereotypes created over time induces the less demand for the profession and adversely influence the imagination of patients and society.¹

With regard to the processing of data related to categories 3 and 4 (positive and negative), the image of the nurses in the film wavered between good and evil, showing the influence of the symbolic effects of the socially constructed stereotypes and values.

Ultimately, movie reviews in academia tend to awaken new ideas and mobilize reflections that can be used positively as an active methodology to address phenomena that show care to the evolutionary process. Movies that portray themes with relevant issues such as bioethics, health-disease process, patient-professional interactions, intersections and environ-

ment-man-power relations, can be used to contemplate curricular demands of the health area, in order to enhance and amplify the critical and reflexive vision about care.^{6,18}

CONCLUSION

This study presented pedagogical considerations about how cinema addresses issues relating to Nursing and health. We need to pay attention to the approach adopted when using films as a pedagogical resource as well as the movie chosen and the possible forms of exploiting the filmic language and content, in order to generate a rich, enjoyable and useful activity. The film must be articulated with curriculum items to contextualize the activity and use its meaning as the object of dialogue.

In the light of these aspects, the exhibition and analysis of the film *Pearl Harbor* provided the use of a strategy capable of dealing with the phenomena related to care. Situations involving emotions, thoughts and judgments appeared, provoking critical reflections on questions related to practice, ethics and identity. It also enabled the students to perceive the retraction of certain fields of Fundamental Nursing.

Regarding some stereotypes about the profession, they were symbolically used to characterize the characters nurses as mere technicians, even though competent and disciplined.

The positive and negative image of nurses was measured through worthy and precarious qualifications about the practice in various sequences of the movie, what demonstrates not only the religious image of strong moral appeal but also the need for discussion on the ethical, correct and effective attitude in Nursing.

New studies with methodological perspectives of teaching of “care-art”, based on artistic works and directed not only to the acquisition of technical knowledge, need to be developed, including those that use the cinema. This tool can support the promotion of debates about how the religious, moral, psychological and societal aspects tend to influence in the construction of professional identity, as much as the essence of care.

On view of this, educators must promote frequent discussions with the students to think about the public image of Nursing and watch for a more favorable construction of professional and social self-representations and deconstruct pejorative and negative images of the profession.

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