



“We are Neither Commies nor Volunteers”: How National Culture Influences Professional Identity Construction of CSR Professionals in South Korea

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Abstract

This paper draws on an institutional logics perspective to illuminate a hitherto underexplored context for CSR professional identity construction. It draws on an empirical study of 65 CSR professionals in South Korea and aims to deepen our understanding of CSR professional identity construction by investigating the contested nature of the CSR professional field between, on the one hand, societal-normative expectations of the profession, and, in the absence of stable professional logics, CSR professionals’ desired professional identity, on the other. Our study reveals how CSR professionals engage with, and respond to, this complexity through constructing one of three distinctive professional identities based on different logic constellations. This process reveals a snapshot of professional logics ‘in-the-making’.

Keywords Professional identity · Corporate social responsibility · Culture

Introduction

Professional identity is a multifaceted concept, reflecting a dynamic process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences, which involves an interplay among various levels including individual, organizational, professional, and the broader institutional, social and cultural context (Barbour & Lammers, 2015; Chreim et al., 2007). Professional identities are situated within historic, social and cultural contexts via discourses and cultural narratives (LaPointe, 2010), which can serve to constrain or enable professionals in how they engage in constructing a desired professional identity. The extent to which institutional, social and cultural contexts shape professional identity construction has gained scholarly

traction in recent years, with studies exploring how Islamic-Iranian cultural norms, manners, and values enabled the reinterpretation of Iranian teachers’ identities (Eslamdoost et al., 2020), how teachers navigated turbulent economic and political contexts to maintain a positive professional identity in Soviet Russia (Klimenko & Posukhova, 2018), and how healthcare professionals rediscovered the national heritage of Bosnia and Yugoslavia to enable a desired professional identity (Kyratsis et al., 2017).

Within professions, professional logics also serve as an overarching system of symbols and practices within which professionals make sense of their identity (Borglund et al., 2021). Professional logics guide professionals’ interpretation and legitimization of the field (Chreim et al., 2007). Established professions—law, medicine, teaching, etc.—often embody a shared and relatively stable professional logic that sets the parameters for the scope of practice, and performance and behaviour standards (Freidson, 1999; Goodrick & Reay, 2011). However, the notion of professional logics in some professional fields is more fluid (Mangen & Brivot, 2015) and unlike well-established professional fields, the CSR profession—our foci—has a more unstable and blurred professional logic (Borglund et al., 2021) and is also subject to divergent cultural interpretations (Jamali & Neville, 2011). Existing scholarship that has studied professional logics in the CSR field is relatively new but notable

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contributions have analyzed professionalism claims (Shin et al., 2022a), and how different institutional logics co-exist and combine to influence how professional logics emerge and are negotiated (Borglund et al., 2021).

Given the instability in the CSR professional logic, existing research has illuminated how CSR professionals actively engage in work on their professional identities (Gond & Moser, 2021), and they are often forced to compromise between their own desired CSR professional identities and the identities expected by the corporation (Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012). However, given the different conceptions of CSR in different national contexts, there is a need to shift the level of focus from the mismatch between the desired professional identity of CSR professionals and corporate and organizational level expectations to consider how CSR professional identity construction is influenced by institutional, social and cultural contexts. Existing research has begun to recognize the significance of this missing piece of the jigsaw—and recent studies have shown how national contexts matter in CSR scholarship (Meyer & Höllerer, 2016; Risi et al., 2022). For instance, “pre-existing and normative understandings” of CSR in Japan and Korea (p. 877) differentially shape the tensions CSR managers face (Fontana et al., 2022). However, while extant research has illustrated the enabling effects of institutional, social and cultural context upon professional identity construction, there remains limited scholarship that has explored its potential constraining effects, with notable exceptions relating to the experiences of stigmatized professional identities (Slay & Smith, 2011). Moreover, as professionals are likely to engage in a process of negotiating their professional identities when there is a mismatch between an individual’s desired professional identity and the frame of reference provided by the institutional, social and cultural context (Alvesson et al., 2008; Mangen & Brivot, 2015), an intriguing exploratory research question motivated us: *How do societal-normative expectations influence CSR professionals’ identity construction in Korea?*

To unpack this research question, we focus on an emerging professional field, CSR, where professional logics are blurred and so are unlikely to provide CSR professionals with an overarching and stable system within which to make sense of their professional identity. We draw upon an institutional logics perspective to investigate our interests as the CSR profession is characterized by logic pluralism (Brammer et al., 2012; Helms et al., 2012) and competing logics (e.g., Ahmadsimab & Chowdhury, 2021; Arena et al., 2018). Only a few recent studies have explored the role of institutional logics in shaping CSR professionals’ professionalization processes (Borglund et al., 2021; Jammulamadaka, 2020). Moreover, Borglund et al. (2021) argued that the professional logics of emerging professions, such as CSR managers, struggle to establish a coherent

professional logic and instead their professional logic can be understood through its relationship with other logics in the field. Given the nascency of CSR professional logics, there is a need to further explore how and when various logics interplay (Risi et al., 2022) and how they combine with institutional, social and cultural context to shape CSR professional identity construction.

We focus on the CSR professional field¹ in South Korea (henceforth Korea) as our empirical setting as the CSR professional field is less established than in Western countries, however, there are ongoing professionalization processes (Borglund et al., 2021; Jammulamadaka, 2020) in CSR in Korea. Our data relies on a rich dataset of sixty-five semi-structured interviews. Our research makes an important two-fold contribution. First, our findings advance the professional identity literature by showing how different professional identities in emerging professional fields are constructed. In particular, we add depth to the discussion relating to how *societal-normative expectations*² interplay with constellations of logics in the CSR field. We emphasize the contested character of CSR professional identity by showing how the emerging professional logic of CSR is entwined with market, bureaucratic and sustainability logics. This contested space gives rise to competing professional identities. Second, our study contributes to the understanding of the field of CSR at a micro-level (Gond & Moser, 2021; Gond et al., 2017; Tams & Marshall, 2011; Wright & Nyberg, 2012) by showing how CSR professionals navigate their professional identities. Our findings demonstrate three types of professional identity construction: (1) the humble CSR manager, (2) CSR marketeer, and (3) the social entrepreneur. Each constructed professional identity type shows different logic constellations (market, sustainability, and bureaucracy) to deal with the mismatch between their understanding of their professional work—their desired professional logic—and the societal-normative expectations of CSR professionals. These professional identity types reveal a snapshot of CSR professional logics ‘in-the-making’.

¹ CSR refers to an “umbrella” concept that includes “a diversified set of practices through which a company aims to meet the expectations of a broad range of stakeholders” (Arena et al., 2018, p. 345). We also use the term “the CSR professional field” or “CSR professionals” as an umbrella term that represent the broad professional field for CSR and sustainability. And in Korea, the terms “CSR” “sustainability,” and other terms like “ESG”, “impact business”, and “social venture” are sometime used interchangeably and broadly understood the same and similar concepts without clear distinctions.

² We use the term “societal-normative’ expectations towards the CSR profession as short-hand for the prevailing institutional, social and cultural context, and assume that, as per neo-institutional theory, that these expectations constrain action, and both prescribe and proscribe behavior (Kitayama & Park, 2007).

Our paper begins with a review of the existing literature on professional identity and professional logics. We then explore studies on professional identity and professional logic in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to develop our theoretical analysis and locate our research question. Next, we introduce the context of our study and explain our methodology. Finally, we discuss our findings and contributions and suggest potential areas for future research.

Literature Review

Professional Identity, Societal-Normative Expectations, and Professional Logics

Professional identity is defined as "an individual's self-definition as a member of a profession" (Chreim et al., 2007, p. 1515) which involves an interplay among various levels including individual, organizational, professional, and the broader institutional context (Barbour & Lammers, 2015; Chreim et al., 2007). Even though professional identities reflect an individuals' efforts in making sense of themselves (Wright et al., 2012), professional identities are influenced by socialization processes and societal trends (Goodrick & Reay, 2010; Nelson & Irwin, 2014), as identities are constituted and given meaning in discourse within social and cultural practices (Gergen, 1991). Chreim et al. (2007) demonstrated how the broader institutional context of a professional field constrains and enables professionals to engage in constructing their professional identities. Kyratsis et al. (2017) also emphasized the significant role of the broader social context in shaping professional identities by showing how social changes with regards to culture and history embedded in a given country can influence the ways in which healthcare professionals construct and reconstruct their identities.

Professional identity draws upon the cultural and discursive resources at its disposal in a particular historical setting (Haynes, 2008). For instance, Eslamdoost et al. (2020) show how Islamic-Iranian cultural norms, Islamic-Iranian characteristics and identities, Islamic manners, and the values of Islamic revolution influenced Iranian teachers' identities. Furthermore, despite high-levels of public prestige, the context of a deteriorating economic situation created risks for maintaining a positive professional identity for teachers in Soviet Russia (Klimenko & Posukhova, 2018). Kyratsis et al. (2017) also revealed the positive nature of culturally bound professional identities when shifting to new identities by showing how healthcare professionals rediscovered the national heritage of Bosnia and Yugoslavia and used them as cultural repositioning strategies to justify their new professional identities.

However, social context can limit the ways in which professionals make sense of who they are and what they do. For instance, stigmatized identities imposed on Black ethnic-groups influence how African-American journalists construct their professional identities by negotiating between their cultural heritage and the societal and cultural expectations of their identities, as well as the shared understanding of how to perform their work and the purpose of their profession (Slay & Smith, 2011). Professionals engage in changing or constructing professional identities from the mismatch between an individual's self-understanding of themselves as professionals and the frame of reference provided by the societal ideals that define their historic and social context (Alvesson et al., 2008; Mangen & Brivot, 2015). From this mismatch, professionals modify their prior beliefs about self and narratives of themselves through iterative interactions (Mangen & Brivot, 2015).

Professional logics are another important source for professionals to construct their professional identities as the overarching system of symbols and practices that professionals use to make sense of their work (Kyratsis et al., 2017). Professional logics unpack how professionals think of and understand their work (Thornton et al., 2012) as action-guiding principles shared by professionals (Borglund et al., 2021). An established and traditional profession has its ideal type as the ways in which its work would be organized if it was controlled only by the profession (Freidson, 2001). In the ideal professional logic, professionals know how to control knowledge, the scope of practice, entry to practice, education/training, control of work processes, employment status, and performance standards (Freidson, 1999; Goodrick & Reay, 2011). The professional logic of lawyers, for instance, is associated with expert niche knowledge (Von Nordenflycht, 2010) consisting of two sets of norms: (1) ethical conduct and dedicated service requiring self-discipline (Leicht & Lyman, 2006) and (2) norms of self-regulation requiring autonomous decision making (Evetts, 2013). However, the notion of professional logics even in well-established professional fields does not have a fixed meaning (Mangen & Brivot, 2015) as their professional logics are often challenged, modified, and influenced by the broader social context or institutional changes (e.g., Borglund et al., 2021; Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Greenwood & Lachman, 1996; Kok et al., 2019). For instance, the professional logic of a particular profession can be challenged by market reforms which bring the market logic into the professional field (Borglund et al., 2021). The professional logic is also affected by the rise of managerialism (Kitchener, 2002; Olakivi & Niska, 2017), which is often framed as the bureaucratic or organizational logic that highlights rules, routines, policies, and structures within a given organization (Borglund et al., 2021). As managerialism challenges the professional logics of

established professional groups, even these well-established professions experienced identity crisis; thus, they attempt to recover or re-construct their professional identities (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006; Mangan & Brivot, 2015; Costas & Fleming, 2009; Gill, 2015).

In navigating the interplay between different logics influencing professional identity, various forms of identities can be constructed. Bureaucratic logics can be both embraced (Doolin, 2002) and resisted (Llewellyn, 2001) in professional identities by balancing or blending managerialism and professional logics (Iedema et al., 2004; Noordegraaf, 2007). For instance, in Australia, a professional identity of doctor-manager was constructed within the hospital-medical milieu that reflects the professional-organizational intersection (Iedema et al., 2004). In public management in Germany, public professionals combine different social identities in collaborative projects to construct three types of identities related to professional logic: the protective professional (classical professional identity), the tripartite professional (a blend of classical professional, managerial and citizen-centered collaborative identity) and the collaboration professional (citizen-centered collaborative identity) (Aschhoff & Vogel, 2019). On the other hand, a new logic can disrupt professional identities (Sanders & McClellan, 2014). In healthcare professions, when the market logic was introduced to the health care sector and replaced the dominant medical professional logic, medical professionals constructed hybrid identities on the basis of maintaining an appearance of complying with the bureaucratic logic while retaining their clinical autonomy (Reay & Hinings, 2009).

However, within existing studies examining the influence of the interplay of different logics influencing professional identity construction, how micro processes of professional identity is constructed within the dynamics of socio-historico-cultural contexts and professional logics remain underexplored. Alvesson and Sandberg (2013) highlighted how important it is to consider not just professional logics but also the broader societal institutional environment that can facilitate internalized values, norms, and conditions influencing professional identity construction (Kasperiniene & Zydziunaite, 2019).

Professional Identity and the Professional Logic in the CSR Field

Unlike well-established professional fields where professional logics have been settled by professional associations that have guided professionals how to perform their work based on requisites for education and qualification, specific knowledge of the field, the standards, and the quality of the work performance, the CSR professional field has a more fluid professional logic (Borglund et al., 2021). A fluid professional logic can create a complex background for the

interplay between the broader societal context and professional logics influencing professional identity construction. As the CSR field is also nascent and blurred (Brès et al., 2019; Shin et al., 2022a) and subject to divergent cultural interpretations (Jamali & Neville, 2011), the professional logic of CSR professionals does not have fixed and widely-shared discourses, which may create some contested situations (Brès et al., 2019; Shin et al., 2022a). For example, Shin et al. (2022a) show four different professionalism claims of CSR professionals based on different underlying values, which are reflected by how CSR professionals understand their work and their identity. Borglund et al. (2021) investigate the professional logic of CSR managers in a complex and contested context of various underlying action-guiding logics (e.g., sustainability, bureaucratic and market logics) by focusing on how those logics interact with each other in CSR managers' role and work.

The interplay of normative expectations within a societal context (Haveman & Gualtieri, 2017) and professional logics in shaping professional identity construction is particularly relevant to the CSR professional field. Some studies have demonstrated the importance of different societal contexts that could influence CSR work and its meaning in a given national context (Meyer & Höllerer, 2016; Risi et al., 2022). Jamali et al. (2017) highlight CSR meanings and development patterns can be bounded within a given national context, which create different tensions for organizations and individuals. Fontana et al. (2022) show how “pre-existing and normative understandings” of CSR in Japan and Korea (p. 877) shape the tensions of CSR managers differently in those two national contexts. However, how professional identity is constructed in the context of a contested space between societal-normative expectations and the professional logic of CSR at a micro-level remains underexplored.

Micro-CSR research has been interested in exploring how CSR professionals work on their emerging professional identities (Gond & Moser, 2021). CSR professionals sometimes compromise between their own idealized CSR identities and the pragmatic choice in the corporate and business context (Carollo & Guerci, 2018), create a hybrid identity (Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012), or rely on other professional identities (Shin et al., 2022a). Such micro journeys of CSR professionals' choices, discourses, and actions regarding their professional identity construction have been depicted in a vacuum by focusing on how they understand themselves as professionals—self-identification. A recent study by Iatridis et al. (2021) brings our attention to the social and relational aspects of professional identity construction—professional socialization—that lead to distinct forms of CSR consultants' professional identity construction in addition to professional self-identification.

Our discussion of the extant literature highlights that institutional, social and cultural context matters in enabling or constraining CSR professionals' professional identity

construction. Moreover, CSR professionals face challenges when relying upon professional logics to guide this process due to their fluidity and nascency. How CSR professionals negotiate the process of constructing professional identities provides a snapshot of professional logics 'in-the-making' This assertion motivated us to consider: *How do societal-normative expectations influence CSR professionals' identity construction in Korea?*

Research Context and Method

Research Context—the CSR Professional Field in Korea

We chose the Korean CSR field as our empirical setting for three reasons. First, the Korean CSR field is still young, unstable and fluid (Shin et al., 2022a), without established professional associations like some other advanced countries (e.g., Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) in the US, the International Society of Sustainability Professionals (ISSP), the European Association of Sustainability Professionals (EASP)). Thus, CSR professionals in Korea do not have established protocols to rely on for professional identity construction. Second, the meaning of the social responsibility of business existed as an embedded feature in Korea even before the term "CSR" arose (Shin et al., 2022a). The word "CSR" was introduced as an English abbreviation for the first time in Korea in 1996, which referred to "a hot topic in the mainstream business academy" by associating with a Korean traditional value, the "Daedong (大同)" spirit—the Great Unity—,³ which highlights the values of solidarity. Based on this, CSR emerged in the early 2000s but the field has become more institutionalized with the emergence of corporate CSR managers, CSR service consultants as well as social entrepreneurs officially registered by the Ministry of Employment and Labor since 2010 (Shin, et al., 2022a) Third, during the military authoritarian administrations of President Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan between 1960 and 1980s, many civil society and democracy movements and corporations were framed as socialist or communist by the government (Kho, 2011). Even after the election of a democratized government, social welfare movements have played a role in the classification between conservative and far-right groups, and progressive and left-wing groups in Korea (Jung & Lee, 2015). The politically associated image of CSR as

progressive and left-wing was reinforced with the election of Kim Dae Jung as the first president from a progressive party in Korea in 1998 and he was a symbolic figure of Korea's democracy. His election coincided with the financial crisis and the IMF intervention when public criticism against *chaebol*⁴ companies peaked (Ju & Tang, 2011). During his presidency, many civil society movements and NGOs were stirred to call for the reform of chaebols primarily led by NGOs with financial support from the government (Ju & Tang, 2011). Their key messages about economic redistribution and equality pressured large corporations to take more social responsibility (Kim, 2019). From this background, various values such as social welfare and environmentalism became highly politicized (Kim, 2012).

Data Collection and Analysis

Following existing studies that investigate professional identity in the CSR field, our study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews to make sense of how CSR professionals understand their professional field. Sixty-five full-time practitioners working in the field of CSR in Korea were interviewed. Our respondents work in three organizational settings (e.g., in-house corporate CSR team, external CSR service firms, social enterprises), but they all self-identified as "CSR professionals". Table 1 shows the background details of our interviewees, using pseudonyms.

We initially recruited our interview participants via various channels, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and online CSR forums. We then developed our total sample based on a snowball technique between September 2012 and April 2019, and the interviews were conducted in person, each lasting for 45–75 min. The interviews were guided by Patton's (2002) framework of questions unpacking knowledge, background, and distinguishing questions. The open-ended questions we used are shown in Appendix 1. These covered the interviewees' understanding of the professional CSR field, their professional and personal lives, key moments in their career, conflicts and tensions, and their responses to professional challenges. All interviews were recorded and transcribed in Korean and translated to English by the second author who is a native Korean speaker. Although the data collection occurred across multiple years, we met with interview participants on multiple occasions to check for any new insights related to our line of questioning. We saw repetitive discourses from the interviews across the

³ This term appeared publicly in an article published at the Maeil Business Newspaper on 19 August 1996 for the first time when describing the business philosophy of a successful Korean entrepreneur.

⁴ It refers to a distinctive form of dominant business organization that has been a main economic actor in Korea, managed by family members—large family-owned and run conglomerates (Whitley, 1991).

Table 1 Interviewees profiles

	Pseudonym	Organization (current)	Type of CSR work	Title ^a	Gender
1	Aaron	Korean CSR service agency A	CSR research/service/consultancy	Director/co-founder	M
2	Dexter	Korean CSR service agency A	CSR research/service/consultancy	CEO	M
3	Anthony	Korean CSR service agency B	CSR research/service/consultancy	Vice president	F
4	Kim	Korean CSR service agency B	CSR research/service/consultancy	Researcher	F
5	Julia	Korean CSR service agency B	CSR research/service/consultancy	Research analyst	F
6	Conner	Korean CSR service agency C	CSR research/service/consultancy	Researcher	M
7	Flo	Korean CSR service agency D	CSR research/service/consultancy	Researcher	F
8	Deborah	Korean CSR service agency D	CSR research/service/consultancy	Researcher	F
9	Frankie	Korean CSR service agency E	CSR research/service/consultancy	Head of team, CSR	M
10	Freddie	Korean CSR service agency F	CSR research/service/consultancy	Executive director	M
11	Seth	Korean CSR service agency G	CSR research/service/consultancy	Manager, consultant	M
12	Stan	Korean CSR service agency G	CSR research/service/consultancy	CEO	M
13	Ethan	Korean CSR service agency H	CSR research/service/consultancy	Sustainability standard consultant	M
14	Theo	Korean CSR service agency I	CSR research/service/consultancy	CEO	M
15	Zack	Korean CSR service agency J	CSR research/service/consultancy	CEO	M
16	Sheldon	Korean CSR service agency K	CSR research/service/consultancy	Chief consultant	M
17	Austin	Korean CSR service agency L	CSR research/service/consultancy	Sustainability consultant	M
18	Thomas	Korean ESG service agency A	CSR research/service/consultancy	CEO	M
19	Jenny	Korean ESG service agency A	CSR research/service/consultancy	Executive research analyst	F
20	Adam	Foreign sustainability service agency A	CSR research/service/consultancy	Sustainability team director	M
21	Lewis	Foreign sustainability service agency B	CSR research/service/consultancy	director, sustainability service	M
22	Arthur	Foreign CSR service agency C	CSR research/service/consultancy	director/lead assessor	M
23	Luke	Foreign CSR service agency C	CSR research/service/consultancy	Verifier/marketing manager	M
24	Tyler	Foreign sustainability service agency D	CSR research/service/consultancy	Senior manager, climate change and sustainability service	M
25	Eva	International CSR NPO	CSR research/service/consultancy	Senior researcher	F
26	Daniel	Korean CSR NGO A	CSR research/service/consultancy	Director, CSR Department	M
27	William	Korean CSR NGO A	CSR research/service/consultancy	Research fellow, ESG team	M
28	Henry	Korean CSR NGO B	CSR research/service/consultancy	Researcher	M
29	John	Korean CSR NGO B	CSR research/service/consultancy	Secretary general	M
30	Emily	Korean tobacco company	In-house CSR management	Manager, general affairs	F
31	Amelia	Korean steel company A	In-house CSR management	General manager, group CR Department	F
32	Paul	Korean steel company A	In-house CSR management	Senior manager, social worker, CR team	M
33	Sienna	Korean steel company A	In-house CSR management	Manager, CR team	F
34	Grace	Korean steel company B	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	F
35	Hugo	Korean car manufacturer	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	M
36	Jack	Korean telecommunication company A	In-house CSR management	Team leader, CSR team	M
37	David	Korean telecommunication company A	In-house CSR management	Team leader, CSR team	M
38	Helen	Korean telecommunication company A	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	F
39	Elliott	Korean conglomerate company A	In-house CSR management	Project leader, CSR team	M
40	Sophie	Korean conglomerate company A's corporate foundation	In-house CSR management	General manager	F
41	Justin	Korean conglomerate company A's corporate foundation	In-house CSR management	General manager	M

Table 1 (continued)

	Pseudonym	Organization (current)	Type of CSR work	Title ^a	Gender
42	Jason	Korean conglomerate company A's corporate foundation	In-house CSR management	Manager	M
43	Albert	Korean electronics company	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	M
44	Lian	Korean engineering company A	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	M
45	Teddy	Korean engineering company A	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	M
46	Blake	Korean bank A	In-house CSR management	Manager, social contribution team	M
47	Alex	Korean bank B	In-house CSR management	Manager, social contribution team	M
48	Mat	Korean telecommunication company B	In-house CSR management	Senior researcher, CSV team	M
49	Isabelle	Korean telecommunication company B	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	F
50	Louis	Korean telecommunication company B	In-house CSR management	Manager, CSR team	M
51	Jenson	Korean airline company	In-house CSR management	Assistant manager, general affairs	M
52	Michael	Korean conglomerate company C	In-house CSR management	Deputy general manager, CSR team	M
53	Ryan	Korean transport company	In-house CSR management	Manager, social contribution team	M
54	Toby	Korean engineering company B	In-house CSR management	General Manager, CSR Department	M
55	Mia	Korean engineering company B	In-house CSR management	Assistant manager, CSR Department	F
56	Tommy	Korean conglomerate company B	In-house CSR management	General manager, CSR Department	M
57	Julian	Korean automotive parts manufacturer	In-house CSR management	Team manager	M
58	Chloe	Automotive parts manufacturer	In-house CSR management	Junior staff, CSR team	F
59	Scott	Korean steel company A' Research Centre	CSR research/service/ consultancy	Group leader, sustainability group	M
60	Tom	Governmental agency (CSR)	CSR research/service/ consultancy	Director	M
61	Chris	Social enterprise A	Social venture and business	Founder	M
62	Emma	Social enterprise B	Social venture and business	Founder	F
63	Elisa	Social enterprise C	Social venture and business	Founder	F
64	Dennis	Governmental agency (Social enterprise)	Social venture service and consultancy	Manager	M
65	Ella	Private social enterprise investing Co	Social venture service and consultancy	Head of R&D	F

^aTitle was at the point of the interview conducted

timeframe of data collection and therefore we coded the data cross-sectionally.⁵

We designed a three-stage data analysis process. At the first stage of analysis, we approached our data with our research question in mind. At this stage, we recognized that the narratives of our respondents highlighted their struggles as CSR professionals arising from the mismatch between the societal-normative expectations of CSR work and how they make sense of their work. We focused on the

societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals in Korea in this first stage of coding. From their narratives we generated themes related to societal expectations such as “left-wing”, “communist”, “humble”, or “virtuous”.

This led us to our next stage of analysis where we turned to theory and focused on an institutional logic lens. At this stage of analysis, we relied on the three different institutional logics (e.g., the market, sustainability, and bureaucratic logics) embedded into the CSR field, and which were related to the professional logic of CSR professionals in work by Borglund et al (2021). We were mindful to remain open to look for evidence of other logics in our data. Through analyzing our respondents’ explanations and understanding of the dominant societal-normative expectations of CSR work and their narratives of the professional logic, we were able to assess correspondences to each logic and to look for mismatches and discrepancies (Goodrick & Reay, 2011).

⁵ The authors recognize that the societal-normative features in a given context are not static. and that further research could explore the interaction between societal-normative expectations and professional logics longitudinally. However, our repeated interactions with participants during the period of the study did not reveal any substantive differences in responses when viewed longitudinally during the timeframe of our study.

In our final stage of analysis, we re-examined the transcripts to analyze how CSR professionals negotiated the discrepancies between the societal-normative expectations and three logics embedded within their professional logic. We found three responses that involved different engagements with the market, sustainability, and bureaucratic logics. Through this stage of analysis, we were able to identify three CSR professional identity construction mechanisms, which involved three logic constellations (the three stages of our analysis are displayed in Appendix 2).

Findings

A Mix of Logics in the Emerging Professional Logic of CSR Professionals

From our analysis of CSR professionals' narratives, we found that the professional logic of CSR in Korea was 'in the making' through CSR professionals' understanding of the field and their work. Our respondents acknowledged that the field of CSR was a mix of different logics, particularly the logics of sustainability, market, and bureaucracy (Borglund et al., 2021), which guided them to understand the nature of their emerging professional logic. They believed that the core of their emerging professional logic should be to find a balance between sustainability and market logics based on the understanding of their organizational system and structure (bureaucratic logic). The representative quote from one respondent below demonstrates that CSR professionals understand the complexity of logics. He used to work as a social worker in an NGO in Korea, but since he decided to become a CSR professional, he thought he should know about the market and organizations.

I came to work as a CSR manager in a corporate in-house company. I knew my work as a social worker [his previous occupation prior to a CSR manager] would not be enough to make me understand how CSR works and what CSR professionals should know and do. I know the social part from my previous work, but I needed to know how a business organization was operated and managed, how money was used, and the for-profit sector works. (Paul)

He added that an ideal CSR professional would know not only the social sector [sustainability logic] but also the business [market logic] and the organizational system [bureaucratic logic].

Some of our respondents who did not have a background in the social sector, but rather had experience in the private sector, gained experience of the CSR profession by learning about social and environmental issues through formal

education (degrees) or study groups. For instance, Hugo used to work in a marketing and PR department in his firm, but after he had started working in a CSR team and decided to develop his career as a CSR professional, he enrolled in a postgraduate program in social welfare to know more about the social sector. Some other respondents explicitly argued that the professional field of CSR was an umbrella that should embrace both business and society, and this interplay attracted them to the profession. The quote from Kim, a CSR consultant, also shows the embedded complexity of different logics of the field and its emerging professional logic.

I was looking for something I do for the society and make money. I liked volunteering activities, but I did not want to do this for my career... Then, I came across some CSR, sustainability, and social enterprise by chance, and I started looking for a job in that field exclusively. And I found [the name of her current employer—a local CSR service agency]. (Kim)

Although our respondents believed that different logics should be harmonized in their work and they needed to find a way to balance them, they acknowledged that they often needed to deal with mismatches among different logics (e.g., sustainability logic vs. market logic) at work. For instance, Paul had to think how he should publicly promote his firm's CSR program. He struggled because the top management of his organization wanted their photographs to appear in pictures in the press for better marketing effectiveness, however Paul felt uncomfortable due to his opinion that this type of marketing and PR instrumentalized CSR. Our respondents often shared with us that the CSR professional field is not well-established and does not have a professional association, and as a consequence the professional field and its emerging professional logic are fluid and often misunderstood by those outside the field and in wider society. They perceived that wider society did not understand the complex nature of the field with underlying dynamics of sustainability, market, and bureaucratic logics. Instead, our respondents believed that societal expectations were misguided:

In Korea, CSR is still considered to be asking for corporate charitable activities and people see only "social values" from CSR. (Jack)

Therefore, societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals emphasized the sustainability logic, whereas CSR professionals perceived the field as more complex: a constellation of sustainability, market and bureaucratic logics. These discrepancies in expectations created a contested space. In the next section, we zoom into the mismatch between societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals and how these expectations are contested by emerging CSR professional logic in the making.

Normative Expectations of CSR Professionals and Discrepancies with the Emerging Professional Logic

From our analysis of CSR professionals' narratives relating to how their professional field has been understood and perceived at the societal level in Korea, we found distinctive societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals. These expectations generated pressures for how CSR professionals *ought to* be or behave. These expectations were different from the ways in which CSR professionals think of and understand their work—the emerging professional logic in the making. These normative expectations have been shaped by the Korean socio-economic history and culture and include:

1. Working in the CSR field is associated with a progressive and left-wing political stand, which is attached to socialist and communist values;
2. CSR professionals should pursue a humble life both at workplace and outside of work; and,
3. CSR professionals should be virtuous, kind, and moral.

Our respondents believed that these expectations represented the sustainability logic of the CSR field, but that this denied other logics. Such expectations conveyed certain expected professional images of CSR professional identity in Korea.

Societal-Normative Expectations: The Politicized Nature of CSR

Our respondents confirmed a politicized nature of CSR in Korea. There was a perception that working in the CSR field was associated with left-wing politics, even communism, even though respondents remarked that they were politically neutral and often conservative. Jack, a CSR manager of a large conglomerate confirmed the societal understanding of CSR, which highlighted the politicized nature of the field:

It [focusing only on social elements of CSR in Korea] can be against corporate pure profit-seeking intentions in the capitalist society. I admit that even some people working in CSR underrate capitalist values or [Milton] Freidman's view on corporate responsibility that focuses on its economic responsibility. That reflects how CSR has been understood in Korea. [...] When I start talking about CSR [as a CSR manager], I become an enemy of my organization [because of this nature]. (Jack)

However, our respondents were not motivated by left-wing agendas for their work or career. Only a few of our respondents (3 out of 65) stated that were left-wing

supporters and shared their political motivations behind their career choices and development. Most of them said that they wanted to do something good for the society by finding a way to achieve a symbiotic relationship between business and society. Some acknowledged that they were rather conservative. Hence, our respondents shared their uncomfortable feelings about the politicized nature of the CSR field. For instance, Thomas, the CEO and founder of an ESG service agency, acknowledged that his job and organization itself would make him seen to be lefty, but he felt uncomfortable with such images. He stated that:

I am not ideologically lefty. But I need to admit that CSR, ESG [Environment, Social, Governance], environmental issues, human rights and labor issues have been developed and led by the left. Hence, I could be probably seen [by others] to be in the progressive camp. To be frank, this makes me feel bad to be politically interpreted. (Thomas)

Juila, who worked in a local CSR service agency as a CSR consultant, shared her struggles with the political interpretation of her CSR work. She was often called a "communist" because her job was in the CSR field. Even though she enjoyed her career as a CSR professional, she sometimes doubted her career choice because of political and cultural conceptions of CSR work.

In Korea, oddly, people in the CSR field are easily regarded as commies. Politically, I am even moderate rightist, but people often ask me if I am a commie only because I am talking about social business and social responsibility. [...] That [facing such an image] is the most difficult thing to be a CSR consultant. (Juila)

Even our respondents who expressed their progressive political backgrounds highlighted that such a societal-normative expectation towards CSR work has become a barrier for their work and the development of the field. Theo, the CEO and founder of a CSR service firm, had worked in a progressive political campaign camp before he started his business, but he also believed that the CSR field has been politically framed and this has become a problem:

Well, the progressive parties raised such issues [CSR issues] as key political initiatives a few decades ago, and I, and people working in this field, are still trapped in that frame even until now. (Theo)

Societal-Normative Expectations: Humble Lifestyles

We also found the societal-normative expectations of CSR professionals was associated with humble lifestyles. The respondents claimed that s society expected them to live a humble life and to actively reject affluent lifestyles associated

with business or economic success. However, most did not choose a CSR career to live humble or to reject a luxurious or financially successful lifestyles. Many of them chose a career in CSR to make business better by doing good for society, and societal-normative expectations resulted in feelings of guilt or frustration about how to live and act. For instance, if CSR professionals owned something luxurious this would be interpreted to be wrong or “*hypocritical*” (Theo) because it reflected excess and self-interest. Julia explicitly expressed her anger and unease feeling about the social pressure she had to handle. She believed that it was not fair:

My job helps companies to be more socially, economically, and environmentally responsible, but this does not mean that I am a “good” person and have to keep my living standards low. My friends sometimes think that people like me should not carry Chanel bags or luxury brands. I get where this is coming from though. However, I have Chanel bags in my closet, which I bought before I joined this firm. I have no reason to throw away such things that I already have!! (Juila)

Elisa, a social entrepreneur, also perceived similar pressures and expressed an uncomfortable tension by referring to this societal-normative expectation as “*wrong prejudice*”. She explained:

I have had to read others’ countenance because of my car, Jeep Renegade, which has been always my dream car. [...] It is not even too expensive, but it is a “foreign” label on the car [which seems to be luxury in Korea]. The more I dedicate myself to this social business and activities, the more I recognize prejudice against people doing “social” jobs. (Elisa)

Elisa felt pressured not to drive her car because of its “too luxurious” image. Chris, another social entrepreneur, pointed out such a bias towards CSR workers pervades Korean society:

People think social entrepreneurs and people working in this [CSR/sustainability] field are poor, or more precisely must be poor by saying “you are talking about sharing profits together, which is against business.” (Chis)

They believed that they were perceived as less ambitious and unlikely to be successful as their work was associated with “social” values.

Our respondents were also judged by their friends and family when they decided to pursue a CSR career. For instance, some in-house CSR managers who had volunteered for a CSR role within their organizations acknowledged that their choices were not typical. Aaron, the Co-founder of a local CSR and ESG service and consulting agency, had a difficult time to persuade his parents to support his career

choice, which would not have been a conventional choice for a top-university graduate in Korea.

[As a graduate from a top Korean university] it was very difficult to persuade my parents to accept that was my “job”. When I started, it was the same issue when I met in-house CSR managers who are in my parents’ generation. These elder people including my parents did not see how CSR can be a proper business for living. They thought I was having fun with my friends. (Aaron)

Theo, the founder and CEO of a local CSR service agency, is another example that shows a struggle between societal-normative expectations and the behaviors of CSR professionals. He believed that he ran a business that helped his clients implement more environmentally friendly and sustainable actions into their business in a practical way. He admitted that there might be more dedicated CSR professionals who tried to match their personal lives and their professional lives by constraining what they consume in line with social expectations. However, he did not believe limiting his personal desires simply to satisfy social expectations was the right action. The representative quote from him demonstrates:

People don’t want to see me wearing a leather jacket because “I am talking about environments and sustainability”. I like going skiing, but they blame me for going skiing and buying a car. They make me guilty and uncomfortable about what I love. (Theo)

Societal-Normative Expectations: Virtuous CSR Professionals

The last aspect of the societal-normative expectations of CSR professionals is associated with being virtuous and morally flawless. When the Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice and the People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) organized various civil society movements with the support of the progressive governments during the post-financial crisis period, they criticized corrupt firms, particularly chaebols. The activists from those movements asked for structural reform of the chaebol firms and pressured them to be more “socially responsible” (Kim, 2012). Since CSR professionals were considered “*opponents of for-profit companies*” (Tom), they were also expected to be “*virtuous*” and “*perfectly flawless*” human beings to be legitimate enough to work in the field. Therefore, many respondents believed that they were obliged to keep the highest-level of moral principles:

We, social entrepreneurs, are almost seen as semi-public officials. We have a pressure to keep our face as a good person. We need to behave or take an action

considering ourselves to be public characters. We have such a pressure to take the highest-level of responsibility like public officials [...]. We had no choice but to follow some unreasonable or seemingly unfair rules as we have the "social" enterprise label. (Elisa)

Ella also faced the same pressure and took this uncomfortably.

I need to think about keeping my reputation working in this [CSR] sector because of the uniqueness of this sector. People often told me "your job is doing good, but why aren't you not that good or kind", which is quite non-sense, but I have to handle this. (Ella)

However, they were expected to be generous and kind even in all situations. One respondent demonstrates:

It is quite ridiculous, but people want me to be "nice" to everyone and calm about everything. [...] I have to watch my behaviors towards people, which isn't easy. [...] People are surprised by me upsetting or being difficult in work, saying "how come a person working in CSR could be like this." I can be difficult and annoying as I am professional and have to do my work well! (Emily)

Coping with the Mismatch Through Three Distinctive Types of Logic Constellations of Identity Construction

In this section, we present how our respondents cope with the discrepancies between the societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals and their emerging professional logic in the making. We found that they engaged with different professional identity construction mechanisms, which involved three distinctive types of logic constellations. Our respondents worked with logics of sustainability, market and bureaucracy in the CSR field to ease the mismatch and to balance these three logics in different ways.

Blending the Sustainability Logic with the Market Logic

The first professional identity construction mechanism involves blending the sustainability logic that arises from the societal-normative expectations with the market logic within organizational contexts (the bureaucratic logic)—especially present in Corporate CSR managers in chaebol firms. The respondents who engaged with this blending identity construction mechanism to deal with societal-normative expectations admitted that these societal expectations led to a misguided professional image focusing solely on the sustainability logic—without adequate consideration of other logics, particularly the market logic. They also agreed that these expectations were not necessarily in line with

what they believed as CSR professionals—the professional logic. However, they also believed that the market logic was already salient due to their corporate context (many CSR professionals with this perspective worked in in-house corporate CSR teams of chaebol firms). Hence, their organizational system—the bureaucratic logic—were deeply entwined with the market logic, so they perceived the need to blend the salient market logic with a sustainability logic to achieve balance. When Jason was asked how why he accommodated the societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals he answered:

There is not much I can do with this [biased images or social expectations]. Our firm is a chaebol-firm, so working in its CSR team cannot make me seen too social anyway. (Jason)

Therefore, Jason decided to comply with societal-normative expectations and to show himself as a humble and morally principled CSR person as part of his professional identity due to the over-prominence of the market logic in cheabol firms. This over-prominence needed balancing with a sustainability logic expected by wider society. Justin, another in-house CSR manager, even tried to magnify societal expectations (e.g. being nice, kind, and humble) when he worked with people from the social sector, like NGOs. He thought complying with what people wanted to see from him could help his CSR work better.

I try to keep my kind, nice, and smiley face, which is quite important. [...] It helps talk to people in NGOs. (Justin)

Our respondents in this "blending" group accepted the societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals and tried to meet those normative expectations, which could lead them to balance the market logic arising from their organizational context (the bureaucratic logic). For instance, Ryan, a CSR manager, understood the sustainability logic of the field was valued highly at the societal level. Thus, he tried to develop his professional skills by taking some courses about social welfare and participating in volunteering programs during his non-working hours:

I think this [learning social welfare and trying to fit in the expected images] helps me to become a better CSR expert. I am not there [the expected ideal CSR professional identity] yet, but I am trying. (Ryan)

Prioritizing the Market Logic

The second mechanism involves prioritizing the market logic to dilute the sustainability logic arising from societal-normative expectations, an identity we found

narrated by CSR professionals in CSR service firms and CSR-focused consultant organizations. Our respondents who engaged with this mechanism prioritized the market logic of their professional field by actively denying the societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals. This group positioned themselves as businesspeople who delivered new business ideas and concepts as they believed that this was fundamental to their desired CSR professional identity. Through highlighting the market logic, two representative quotes show the typical identity construction discourse of this group.

People think that my firm is just good, nice, and kind. Well, I am not denying that people can have such an impression from me and my firm. However, my job is completely from a business perspective. In the end, my job involves doing good for society, but I and my firm are not social or politically attached at all. What I do and what we do is a business that purely focuses on money. (Julia)

When I work, I highlight how my approach and work are aligned with business itself. [...] I am not working in the social or NGO sector. I and my firm cannot offer what NGOs can do as we don't know much about NGOs. (Dexter)

These examples highlight that Julia and Dexter rejected societal expectations towards CSR work, as it did not represent who they were and what they did—their desired professional logic. Thus, they fully connected themselves with the market logic when constructing their professional identity. Flo, for instance, resisted the societal understanding of the CSR field and shows a more business orientation of her work.

In Korea, CSR is simply regarded as a responsibility of a firm and its corporate citizenship that focuses on social contributions solely. Actually, CSR should be about an interaction and mutual growth between business and stakeholders in the society. *What I do is about generating a positive impact on society through business.* (Flo)

Likewise, another respondent, Austin, suggested that the sustainability logic that has been associated with the CSR field is “problematic” and he said, he tried “to think from a business point of view” to convince the top management of his client firms by claiming CSR would be a new business opportunity. Our respondents associated the market logic with their professional logic as they believed that the market logic had been culturally neglected in Korean society. They believed that their professional field had been politically skewed against the market logic as Deborah, CSR analyst working in a local CSR service firm, confirmed, “people often forget we are not an NGO, but a firm”. Therefore, they tried to highlight the market logic of their work by using new

business terminology, such as “impact business” and framing themselves as “business experts”. For instance, Austin, who worked in a local CSR service organization, claimed: “Using the term, ‘impact business’ for CSR seems right to me when describing what we do and what we should do.”

Hence, this group intentionally avoided societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals as they believed it would not help the development of a professionalized CSR identity. Thus, they deliberately positioned themselves as market actors, even though they knew their work embraced the nature of a sustainability logic. For instance, Theo, the CEO and founder of a CSR service firm, intentionally did not attempt to register his firm as a social enterprise despite all the financial support that he could have received as he felt it would reinforce a political image. He decided to stay a “*business*” without having a “social” label.

I can easily make my firm certified as a social enterprise and become a social entrepreneur [In Korea, social enterprises are managed by the government with a certification system], but I don't want to let me be framed as a “social” person in Korea, which can be translated politically. (Theo)

Compartmentalizing Logics of Sustainability and Market

The third mechanism involves compartmentalizing the logics of sustainability and market in different situations and contexts. This identity construction mechanism involved instrumentalization of the dual nature of the CSR field where the sustainability and market logics were used to appeal to different stakeholder groups (Borglund et al., 2021). Our respondents who engaged with this mechanism accepted the societal-normative expectations and de-emphasized the market logic of the CSR field even though it was important for their desired professional logic, yet in only certain situations where highlighting the social and environmental aspects of their identity were important to their ambitions. In some other occasions, they actively highlighted the market logic of the field and expressed how the societal-normative expectations prevailed in the Korean society were misplaced.

Our respondents in this group strategically chose either to accept and magnify aspects of the societal-normative expectations or to highlight their market-oriented nature of the profession according to whom they talked to and interacted with. For example, when they meet external people from the government who supported them financially or who evaluated their businesses to keep their certifications, they positioned themselves as “*good and humble*” CSR professionals, complying with the normative expectations which de-emphasized market-oriented aspects embedded into their professional logic. Even though they thought that such expectations were misplaced, they were willing to

comply with what society wanted to see from them to sustain their social business network. The case of Elisa shows a representative example. She modified her behaviors to meet certain expectations to be humble and morally principled:

No one actually says something to me, but I have such a pressure more and more. I see myself not driving this car [a foreign car] at least when I meet my clients or deliver a presentation. (Elisa)

However, she did not fully accept the expectations. In neutral contexts where she was free from those societal-normative expectations, she highlighted her job and career were not only for social value creation, but also for business success. She said: "*What I do is not a pure volunteering activity, but a business*". She also tried to enlighten her employees to have more business-like behaviors and to dream to have a luxurious car like other successful entrepreneurs. She believed that her aspiration to be rich through their business did not harm her "*social business*."

In contrast, when they needed to talk to business associates, they enacted the business-side of their identity by highlighting the market logic of their work:

I can be a businessperson or should be the one to convince people from the business sector. It irritates me of course as I sometimes have to pull all my "businessman identity" from the bottom of my heart and overshadow it in order not to be seem working in an NGO or as a social worker. (Emma)

Our respondents in this group believed the professional field and their work were fundamentally straddling the social and business sectors; thus, they would not belong to either sector completely as confirmed by the quote from Chris.

Some people that evaluate my business [for governmental support] simply do not understand the key missions and values of my business. They examined my business without understanding what I really do and wish to do. [...] For business-people, I am not business enough. However, for social people, I am not social enough. What I do is social *and* business, so it is. It is hard to fit in. (Chris)

Discussion

Our study enables us to offer two important contributions. First, the complex nature of the emerging professional logic of CSR and its professionalization process (e.g., 'in the making') is significantly influenced by the distinctive societal-normative expectations of the Korean society and culture. It is embedded in a milieu of logics of sustainability,

market, and bureaucracy. How these logics entwine and are prioritized illuminates the contested character of the emerging CSR professional logic in the space between societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals and the desired professional identities of CSR professionals. Second, with this contested background, our findings also show how this contested space, influenced by the societal-normative expectations, led CSR professionals to engage in the construction of three distinctive professional identities through three different types of logic constellations in the process of developing an emerging professional logic of CSR.

The Contested Space Where Desired Professional Logics Are Challenged by the Societal-Normative Expectations of CSR Professionals

Our findings reveal that CSR professionals in Korea are navigating a contested landscape where societal-normative expectations clash with their desired professional identities. This has led to the adoption of different professional identity construction mechanisms, which we conceptualize as *blending*, *prioritizing* (market logic), and *compartmentalizing* sustainability and market logics. Through these mechanisms, CSR professionals engage in work to construct their professional identities, as there are no clear guidelines or established norms for professionalism in this emerging field. Our study highlights how professionals in CSR must negotiate diverse and sometimes competing logics, while also considering the socio-cultural context in which they operate. This shows how the interplay between multiple logics and societal-normative expectations can limit or facilitate an individual's ability to resist and negotiate conflicting logics (Reay & Hinings, 2009). The plurality of logics within a professional field of a particular society can provide the space within which actors can elaborate or manipulate these cultural and material resources (Thornton & Ocasio 1999; Greenwood et al., 2010), thus transforming professional identities. Our study highlights how social-normative expectations impact on a professional field, where there is a complex interplay of logics that resonate in the complexities of social identity and professional identity construction (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). This highlight how professional identity construction can rely on individual agency (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016) which has been largely overlooked by institutional research.

Furthermore, the contested space between the societal-normative expectations of CSR professionals and the emerging professional logic of CSR in the making contributes to the literature on professional logics as a non-monolithic logic in professions (Borglund et al., 2021). Although professional logics remain fundamental to map out the professional field and to unpack how professionals think of and

understand their work (Thornton et al., 2012), it is challenged by other logics when there is an interplay with different logics and norms. Previous studies have focused on the interplay of professional logics with organizational level logics such as the market/or commercial logic, the bureaucratic logic, and consultation logic (Borglund et al., 2021; ten Dam & Waardenburg, 2020) without examining the impact of the dynamics of socio-historico-cultural contexts on emerging professional logics. Our study responds to Alvesson and Sandberg (2013) argument that it is important to consider not just professional norms/logics but also the institutional and societal environment that can facilitate internalized institutional values and norms within the field by highlighting how professional logics are challenged by the normative expectations of a society.

The Construction of Three Distinctive Professional Identities Within the Contested Space of CSR

Our study contributes to an understanding of the field of CSR work at a micro-level (Gond & Moser, 2021; Gond et al., 2017; Tams & Marshall, 2011; Wright & Nyberg, 2012) by showing CSR professionals' experiences of navigating their professional identities within the contested space of the CSR field, contributing to limited studies that have explored the interplay of societal-normative expectations and emerging professional logics influencing professional identity construction (Cardoso et al., 2014; Pritchard & Symon, 2011). We extend and deepen existing understandings of CSR professionals' micro-experiences and their contextual negotiations in CSR work (Fontana et al., 2022; Gond & Moser, 2021; Gond et al., 2017; Tams & Marshall, 2011) by illuminating how the interplay between societal-normative expectations and desired professional logics can shape the process of identity construction of CSR professionals.

In CSR research, how societal values or expectations influence an individuals' CSR engagement and how CSR professionals negotiate societal norms and pressures in their CSR practices have been underdeveloped (Gond & Moser, 2021; Risi et al., 2022). Most CSR studies that have focused on CSR professionals' experiences often look at the struggles of CSR professionals and the way in which they cope with the disparities between business and social goals (e.g., Hunoldt et al., 2020), organizational practices and individual values and belief systems (e.g., Hahn et al., 2015; Shin et al., 2022b); and managerial control and genuine CSR initiatives (e.g., Wright & Nyberg, 2012). Our study shows the societal-normative expectations towards CSR and CSR work that have been created and developed through time in a given context influence CSR professionals' experiences of identity construction. Beyond confirming the role of societal-normative expectations in influencing CSR work and its meaning (Meyer & Höllerer, 2016; Risi et al., 2022),

our study shows how normative expectations towards CSR in a given societal context could be mismatched with what CSR professionals really think about their field and professional work—their desired professional logic—and act as a source of tensions for them (Fontana et al., 2022), and finally how this discrepancy led them to construct different professional identities at a micro-level.

The three distinctive professional identities of three different groups of CSR professionals were constructed in response to the three different types of logic constellations. By conceptualizing the three distinctive professional identities, our findings extend prior research that shows how societal expectations towards a professional field influences professional identity construction (Kyratsis et al., 2017), how expectations can influence desired professional personas (Fournier, 1999), and the way in which individuals negotiate their professional identities according to such institutional frames (Côté & Schwartz, 2002; Eslamdoost et al., 2020).

Through blending logics, CSR professionals who accepted the societal-normative expectations towards their profession complied with expected professional images by embracing and magnifying the sustainability logic of their CSR work. This resulted in a desired professional identity of the *humble CSR manager*. This professional identity type arose from blending the sustainability logic expected by societal-normative expectations with the market logic within their organizational context (the bureaucratic logic). This blending mechanism occurred primarily in chaebol firms where the market logic is embedded and predominant (Shin & Kim, 2020; Whitley, 1991). CSR professionals in chaebol firms accepted and emphasized the societal-normative expectations despite discomfort with the mismatch between those expectations and how they perceived they should perform their work. As chaebol firms prioritized the market logic, CSR professionals believed that emphasizing the sustainability logic in their identities was a way to counteract and balance an organizational emphasis on markets and financial outcomes without due concern for social and environmental outcomes. As such, the humble CSR manager professional identity is a way to blend and balance the logics of sustainability, market, and bureaucracy within the emerging professional logic by magnifying the sustainability logic of the field.

CSR professionals who actively denied and resisted the societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals constructed another professional identity, which we call *the CSR marketeer*. They deliberately tried to dilute the politicized aspects of CSR work by fully embracing and over-empathizing the market logic within the Korean CSR professional field. The CSR marketeer primarily worked as CSR consultants, and they acknowledged that the societal-normative expectations focusing on the sustainability logic would be more salient for them than CSR professionals working in

corporate CSR organizations. Thus, as a counteraction, CSR service consultants tried to highlight how commercialized and market-oriented they were by diluting the sustainability logic in their work and field. Our case of CSR marketeers is rather a strategic action for them to recover their desired professional logic and professional field from societal-normative expectations, which have neglected or even negated the market logic in Korea.

The last group of our respondents primarily owned their own social business, or worked in a social venture where social and commercial purposes were treated as comparable. These CSR professionals—the *social entrepreneur*- compartmentalized sustainability and market logics depending on the context; thus, they strategically summoned two different compartmentalized professional identities—a CSR professional that complied with societal-normative expectations or a market-orientated entrepreneur—by focusing on one or the other. For instance, when social entrepreneurs engaged with stakeholders from the social or public sector, they foregrounded the societal-normative expected professional identity of being “good and humble”. However, when the market logic was deemed to be important, such as within business networks, they highlighted the market logic related to their professional logic and foregrounded a market-oriented professional identity. We conceptualize the identity of these CSR professionals as the social entrepreneur. Such a compartmentalizing strategy shows how professionals can instrumentalize the complex nature of the CSR field by enacting different professional identities depending on which stakeholder groups they deal with (Skelcher & Smith, 2015). The identity of social entrepreneurs managed the mismatch between societal-normative expectations and their aspirational professional logic through focusing on either the sustainability logic or the market logic, which led them to call on two professional identities for their situated contexts.

Conclusion

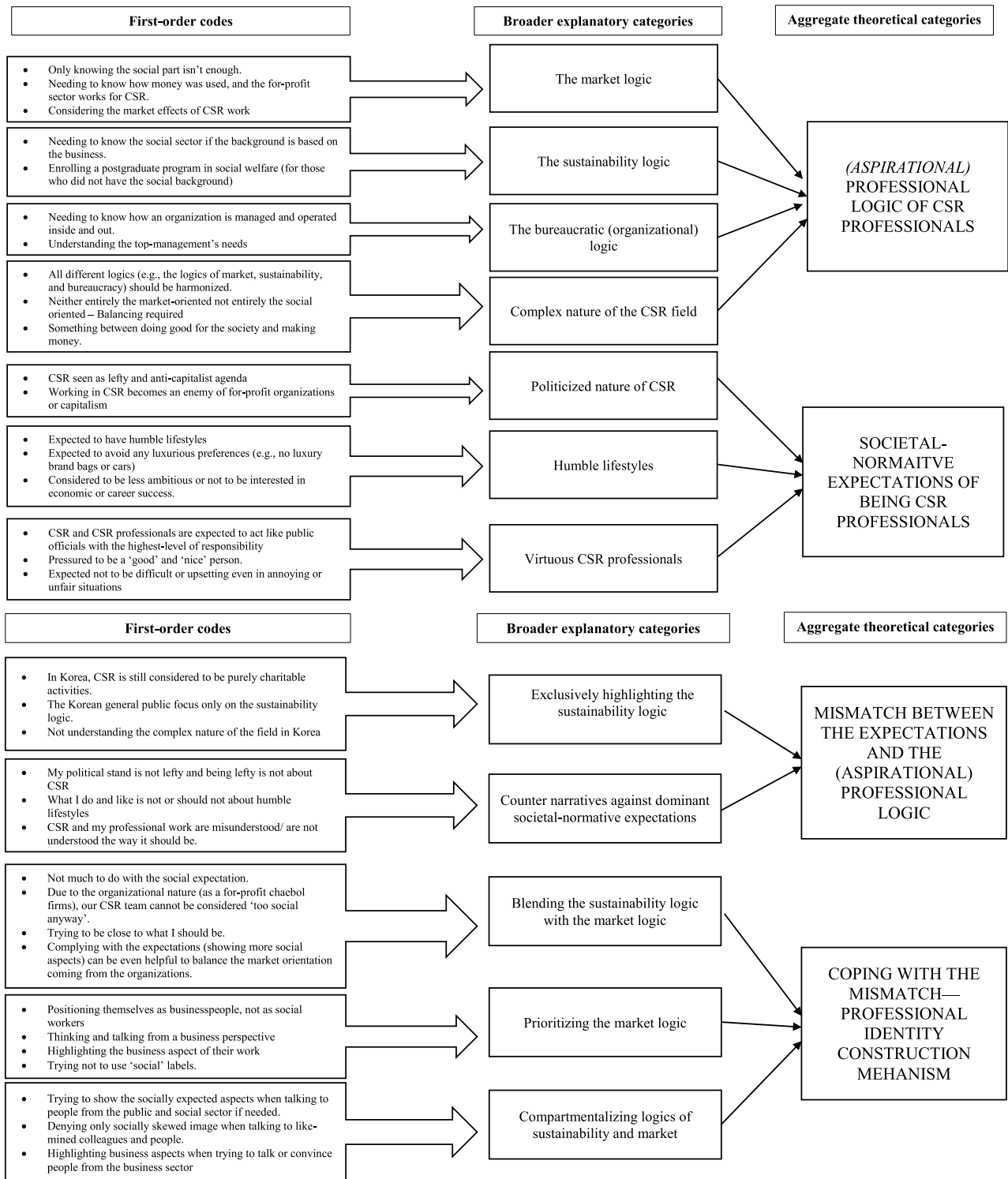
Our study explored the contextual meaning of CSR professional identity, and we shed new light on how CSR professionals navigated and selected different professional identities by negotiating different constellations of logics. Our study is not without its limitations, which provides opportunities for future research. We have not been able to examine how other individual factors contributed to ways of constructing professional identity and in dealing with struggles and expectations (e.g., age, gender, role seniority, etc.). Our study suggest that CSR professional identity construction is connected to different organization types: in-house corporate CSR teams in chaebol firms, CSR service consultants and

social enterprises. This link between CSR professional identity and organization type needs unpacking in future research. How CSR professional identities differ, not just in different societal contexts, but in different organizational contexts, can help add further nuance to research on CSR professional identities. In our three different organization settings, we noted different professional identity types rooted in different engagements with logics. Particularly, our theorization of compartmentalization of professional identities seems to offer a fruitful avenue for future research. Finally, future studies may explore CSR professional identity in different national contexts with different societal-normative expectations and political orientations to unpack the complexity of professional identity construction. Our focus on the Korean setting provided us with a unique setting to examine the influence of societal-normative expectations towards CSR professionals. However, the Korean setting is contextual, with its own political and cultural history, and which calls for further studies that explore the professionalization of CSR.

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

1. What is your personal professional and career history? (e.g., how did you start this career?; what motivated you to do this work? Any training and education? How’s your life as CSR professionals, which is a quite new and emerging occupational role?)
2. What is your role and work in your organization? (e.g., tell me about your work and role as well as its development throughout your career timeframe, tell me about your CSR team or organizations with respect to CSR, and its evolution)
3. What is your view of the current CSR field and CSR in your organization?
4. What does CSR or working in CSR mean to you?
5. Any major changes in this field in Korea?
6. What are the major challenges for working in this field? (e.g., what makes or made you struggle to work as CSR professionals?)
7. How do you handle or cope with those challenges?
8. Which skills, competence, or knowledge have you used as CSR professionals? Which skills, competence, or knowledge should a CSR professional have?
9. What are your major sources and tools (guidelines, frameworks, standards, etc.) when working on CSR projects?
10. What is the most important thing for you as a CSR professional or anyone who work in this field?
11. How would you expect your career and the CSR field as a professional field in the future? Any changes you wish to see in the field?
12. Any questions or anything you want to add

Appendix 2: Data structure



Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Human and Animal Rights All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

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