PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING: AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL MEASURE FOR A STRUCTURAL THEORY

DISSE异议ATION

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ABSTRACT

Although much has been written about such important topics as teacher quality and professionalism, few discussions of these concepts draw upon theoretically integrated and empirically grounded formulations of professionalism in teaching. Most considerations of professionalism focus on individual-level characteristics rather than on properties of the organizations that contextualize the actual work of teaching. This exploratory study seeks to establish a theoretically grounded construct of teacher professionalism that can be validly and reliably measured. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from two dissimilar Midwestern high schools for the purposes of this exploration. Findings validated an individual level measure of teacher professionalism, and established its usability in future research of the construct at the organizational level.
To my parents, Tom and Betty McMahon, my first and best teachers,
in honor of the sacrifices they made for our education.

*Mol an páiste agus molann tú an mháthair agus an athair.*
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapters:

1. INTRODUCTION
   - Cultural and Political Setting                                      1
   - Teacher Quality and Professionalism                                   5
   - Professionalism and Professionality                                   8
   - The Professional Organization                                          13
   - Purpose of the Study                                                   13
   - Definitions of Key Terms                                               14
   - Significance and Limitations                                            15

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE
   - Professionality and Professionalism                                  18
   - Professionalization of Teaching and Teacher Professionalism           28
   - Relational Sociology and Social Networks                              39
   - Trends in Mixed-methods Research                                       46
   - Rationale and Hypothesis                                              63

3. METHODOLOGY                                                            67
   - Sample                                                                67
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Academic emphasis: Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Academic emphasis: Estimates, standardized estimates &amp; p-values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Academic emphasis: Model fit statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Self-enforcement of standards: Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Self-enforcement of standards: Estimates, standardized estimates &amp; p-values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Self-enforcement of standards: Model fit statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Effectiveness: Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Effectiveness: Estimates, standardized estimates &amp; p-values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Effectiveness: Model fit statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Contribution to a professional community: Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Contribution to a professional community: Estimates, standardized estimates, &amp; p-values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Contribution to a professional community: Model fit statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>Short form composite scale: Items representing the four subscales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>Short form: Estimates, standardized estimates, &amp; p-values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>Short form: Model fit statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>Internal reliability: Omega coefficients for short form and subscales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.17 Independent sample t-test: Professionalism and Professional esteem and gender………………………………………………………………119
4.18 Regression: Professional esteem in a highly functioning school………………122
4.19 Regression: Professional esteem in a poorly functioning school………………123
4.20 Split-sample comparisons: Linear regressions of professional esteem……….123
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Academic emphasis: Model diagram</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Self-enforcement of standards: Model diagram</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Effectiveness: Model diagram</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Contribution to a professional community: Model diagram</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Short-form composite: Scree plot showing unidimensionality</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Short-form composite scale: Model diagram</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although much has been written about such important topics as teacher quality and professionalism, few discussions of these concepts draw upon theoretically coherent and empirically grounded formulations of professionalism in teaching. Most considerations of professionalism focus on individual-level characteristics rather than on properties of the organizations that contextualize the actual work of teaching. Beginning with determinants of individual level professionalism that account for the important role of the organization in shaping the work of individual teachers, this study seeks to establish a theoretically grounded construct of teacher professionalism that can be validly and reliably measured.

Cultural and Political Setting

In June 1980, Time magazine featured on its cover a dramatic story of widespread incompetence among America’s teaching corps. In “Help! Teacher Can’t Teach,” Time asserted that Americans had come to acknowledge an educational crisis: “Like some vast jury gradually and reluctantly arriving at a verdict, politicians, educators and especially millions of parents have come to believe that the U.S. public schools are in parlous trouble.” Three years before the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983), the popular media had fastened on perceptions of educational failure as a matter of public interest.
Some twenty-five years later, debate persists as to whether this crisis is real or manufactured by those with interests in privatization of public schooling. Some argue that political agendas drove the stark rhetoric of *A Nation at Risk*, as it tapped into American notions of sovereignty and patriotism. The destructive potential of educational decline, the report maintained, could be considered tantamount to a breach of national security: “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.” Critics of the report have argued that such rhetoric was intended to garner support for a conservative reform agenda, piloted by the Reagan administration, focused on vouchers, tax credits for private school tuition, school prayer, and the eradication of the Department of Education (Bracey, 2003; Berliner & Biddle, 1997). The report did not so much document a crisis as manufacture one to serve a specific ideology.

Others argue that to dismiss the findings and recommendations of *A Nation at Risk* would be both misguided and irresponsible. At the 20th anniversary of the report, Guthrie and Springer (2004) considered both the immediate claims of *A Nation at Risk* and its broader implications for educational policy. The report itself was flawed and perhaps intentionally sensational, but much that was constructive for American students came out of it. Most notable of its positive effects, according to Guthrie and Springer, is that the report changed the focus of educational policy from funding to achievement:

[I]t triggered a move away from measuring the quality of schools by the resources they receive and onto a plane where school performance is judged on outcomes students achieve. This paradigm shift in perceptions regarding the relation of inputs to outcomes of education could, in the long run, render the nation’s education system more effective for students and more useful for the larger society (p. 9).
In causing additional scrutiny to be placed upon test scores, the report was also indirectly responsible for drawing attention to the achievement gap between lower-income, minority children and middle class, non-minority children.

In terms of actual educational achievement, the dire predictions of *A Nation at Risk* do seem to have been overblown. The National Center for Education Statistics reported in June 2005 that reading performance for 8th graders in 2003, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is higher than it was a decade earlier, and that math performance for the same cohort is higher than it has been in all previous assessments (NCES, 2005). The NCES does note that “U.S. 15-year-olds performed below the international average of 29 industrialized countries in both mathematics literacy and problem solving in 2003” (p. 7), indicating a cause for alarm for those who fear for the competitive readiness of our nation’s students. However, the calamitous economic decline predicted in *A Nation at Risk* seems not to have materialized.

What did materialize was a decline in public confidence in education. As the *Time* article shows, perceptions of school effectiveness, and particularly of teacher competency, were endangered before *A Nation at Risk*. The report did much to hasten the erosion of the American public’s faith in public schools. Guthrie and Springer note the extensive media coverage given to the report, citing the coverage of the 1954 *Brown* decision and the 1957 Sputnik launch as the only other watershed events in education to receive more public attention than *A Nation at Risk* (p. 12). The Gallup Poll’s Confidence Index, measuring confidence in the public school system, reflects the report’s impact as well. Before the report, more than 50% of those polled described high levels of
confidence in the nation’s education system; in September 1983, that number had fallen to below 40% (p. 12). The rhetoric of the report, linking the quality of public education to America’s prospects for future economic strength, clearly was absorbed into public consciousness, as the Gallup/Phi Delta Kappan polls conducted from 1983 to 1991 illustrate: “…the education system was routinely identified as the most important factor for determining America’s future strength,” more important to more Americans than “developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world” and “building the strongest military force in the world” (p. 13). Forty-one states drafted significant plans for reform, as opposed to five that had begun implementing reforms at a statewide level prior to A Nation at Risk (14). If currents of public doubt flowed before A Nation at Risk, the report swelled those currents to flood-like proportions.

Whether or not A Nation at Risk identified a legitimate crisis, widespread perceptions of American educational performance, and particularly of American teachers, have hardly recovered from its blows. Much of the anxiety regarding the quality of American public education locates on the teachers who administer that education. As recent alarms in the tradition of A Nation at Risk cite various discouraging statistics from TIMMS and NAEP data, some policy advocates focus on teacher quality as an important factor in poor performance. For example, the National Council on Teacher Quality, in discussing selected results from the NAEP (the “Nation’s Report Card”) and from the 1995 TIMMS study, directly attributed the results it highlighted to poor teacher quality:

Why such poor performances? One explanation is the predominance of teachers not qualified to teach. Research tells us that the influence of teachers is the single-most important factor in determining student achievement, even more so than socioeconomic status, which for years was deemed as having the highest correlation to academic success. Studies
also indicate that the impact of a teacher (for good or for bad) is cumulative, having a lasting, measurable effect on academic performance…(Suh & Fore, 2002, p. 2).

National policy reflects similar beliefs about the impact of individual teacher characteristics upon student achievement. Passed in 2001, the No Child Left Behind law, which Guthrie and Springer (2004) call “a legacy of the Education Department’s Nation at Risk report” (p. 32), emphasizes teacher quality as part of its accountability provisions. NCLB required all teachers of core academic subjects to be “highly qualified” by 2005-2006, and provides funding for states for programs “to help thousands of outstanding candidates enter teaching through alternate routes to traditional teacher preparation programs” (NCLB, 2005). The implication of these provisions seems clear: “outstanding candidates” don’t exist in high numbers in the pool of prospective teachers, and traditional teacher preparation programs do not adequately train those candidates they do have. American schools will only get better, so the logic seems to run, when they get better teachers.

Teacher Quality and Professionalism

In keeping with this line of thought, many of the remedies directed at improving schools target individual teaching characteristics, or individual teacher quality. Debates over credentialing, certification, alternative paths, merit pay, dramatic pay raises, and so on illustrate a focus on improving teacher quality that generally centers on individual-level skills, qualifications, or attributes. While these propositions may be collective in the sense that they seek to influence the teacher labor market as a whole, by affecting supply-and-demand, they are not collective in a broader sense. They focus on what a teacher has or earns rather than on the work a teacher does, or how that work is regulated by
organizational-level norms. They do not account for how professionals work together according to those norms. Or, to put it differently, they focus on schools not as professional organizations, but as organizations of professional individuals. The distinction, when it comes to attitudes, behaviors, and standards that directly affect the classroom experiences of students, is far from merely semantic.

A comparison to the medical profession proves illustrative. Modern medical practice has not, for some time now, featured individuals treating patients in isolation as the dominant model of caregiving. As Parsons (1951) notes:

An increasing proportion of medical practice is now taking place in the context of organization. To a large extent this is necessitated by the technological development of medicine itself, above all the need for technical facilities beyond the reach of the individual practitioner, and the fact that treating the same cases often involves the complex cooperation of several different kinds of physicians as well as of auxiliary personnel. (p. 372)

Parsons’ observations apply quite neatly to the prototypical image of the medical ideal that most Americans hold in their heads. Institutions like the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins Medical Center, or the Cleveland Clinic are almost iconic in American culture as benchmarks of excellence in medical care. Their prestige arises from widespread perception that the dense concentration of experts in their clinics improves patient care, particularly in difficult or life-threatening cases, when compared to a setting in which doctors with similar expertise work independently. The individual doctors in any other suite of offices may be equally adept practitioners as their counterparts in an idealized clinic like Mayo, but the Mayo Clinic’s orientation as an academy of physicians gathered to engage jointly in the problems of practice makes a difference in its effectiveness. Consider a patient with a syndrome that is particularly difficult to diagnose and treat,
involving several systems of the body at once. Consulting a series of specialized physicians separately constitutes a very different experience for that patient than consulting a team of coordinated physicians working together. When the patient himself is the only fixed point among his constellation of doctors, his care is clearly different than it would be if the doctors had strongly established working, consultative relationships independent of any one specific patient they happen to have in common. As a coordinated group, they and – more importantly – the patient, benefit from improved information flow and established norms for care. The difference is that between an organization of professional individuals and a professional organization, and the analogy clarifies why one orientation serves professional performance better.

In fact, scholarship in public health has borne out these generalized public impressions. Donabedian (1985) finds that setting matters for the quality of medical care. In fact, it matters more than many demographic characteristics of the patients involved: the study showed that quality of technical care went up in hospitals in which doctors coordinated with each other, and in hospitals with significant teaching functions. To be sure, the research shows that the training, experience and specialization of the physician is important (p. 284), but it seems well understood in health scholarship that “the performance of physicians is also influenced by the conditions in their own practices and in the organizations and institutions where they work” (p. 285). In other words, the organizational setting, as we might intuit, makes quite a bit of difference to effectiveness. The size of the hospital, for example, makes a difference in the quality of patient care, but even more important “by far,” Donabedian notes, “appears to be the teaching function of the hospital, particularly when that function is reinforced by a close affiliation with a
medical school” (p. 286). Thus, if the public perceives clinics like Cleveland, Mayo, Hopkins, and the like to be better because large numbers of scholarly doctors with access to the most up-to-date research can coordinate on patient care, then public health scholarship largely validates these perceptions. These are professional organizations, not merely organizations of professional individuals. There is something about the way they coordinate as an organization that appears to multiply the effectiveness these doctors might achieve as individuals.

For whatever reason, educational scholarship tends not to reflect this intuition. At the moment, the customary prescriptions for improving teacher quality (and thus school performance) by raising pay, removing barriers to entry, requiring more rigorous credentialing, and so on, neglect this structural, organizational perspective. But they do so at a cost. Such prescriptions are tantamount to arguing for the doctors in the disconnected suite of offices to have higher board scores, or a wider array of drugs to consider for treatment. These improvements might well make the doctors better as individual practitioners, and they would likely raise the quality of the individual doctors who make up the pool of candidates for those offices. But by themselves, these measures fail to maximize the professional performance of the doctors who continue to work in structural isolation from one another. By the same token, individual-level approaches to improving teacher quality will not do enough to enhance the professional performance of teachers if nobody attends to both the individual and the organizational levels of the problem.

Professionalism and Professionality

Any meaningful conception of teaching as a profession and teachers as professionals needs to be inclusive of both the individual and the collective dimensions of
professionalism. It must account for the study of a profession as a matter of description and definition, or *professionality*, and the study of *professionalism*, as a normative concept, in which people assess whether and how an individual lives up to the standards and ethos of her work as defined by internalized cultural expectations. The processes on the macro- and micro-social levels inform each other, as each profession’s attitudes about work reinforce, and are reinforced by, the social structures of the people who do that work. *Professionality*, or the extent to which a given field is granted professional status by society, depends largely upon the perception of the effectiveness of its practitioners in treating the problems of practice. *Professionalism*, or the extent to which practitioners live up to the expectations of work-related conduct and performance, depends largely upon the need to maintain the social legitimacy that confers professional status. Because the success of a profession’s jurisdictional claims relies so heavily upon proving its capability to society, the internal, normative standards for conduct and performance within any profession must be in tune with this crucial goal.

At the heart of winning public confidence, as the debates over the health of the educational system and teacher quality demonstrate, is the matter of perceived effectiveness, for both the profession as a whole and the individuals that make up that profession. When public confidence in the educational system is high, educators have domain over the practice of preparing children for a functional future in society. Other professions and their methods have limited roles in this process. When public confidence in education is low, as in the furor surrounding *A Nation at Risk*, educators are suspect, and society reconsiders whether they should be entrusted with the academic and social development of the young. Appropriate remedies for this problem of practice may come
from outside the education profession, and educators lose jurisdiction over education to non-educators. Charter schools represent exactly this dynamic of professional competition, as charter schools present rivaling claims to address particular educational contexts more effectively than existing schools. To the extent that traditional schools are perceived as effective in their communities, proposals for charter schools likely hold little sway. Similarly, in discussions of teacher quality, proposals to remove requirements for certification also represent a jurisdictional challenge to traditionally licensed teachers. When their effectiveness as educators is in question, their jurisdiction, as protected by the barrier to entry that licensure represents, is in jeopardy. For the profession as a whole, and for each individual teacher within that profession, the need to preserve jurisdiction creates the need to demonstrate at least a minimum threshold of effectiveness in practice.

As individual performance contributes to the profession’s ability to maintain jurisdiction over the problems of practice, each individual plays an important image-making role. In the public eye, individual distinctions among professionals tend to be lost, as all doctors become equivalent, all nurses, all teachers, and so on. Public opinion engages archetypes, not individuals. Because of the collective consequences of a group’s professional image, each individual professional necessarily monitors her own contributions to the image of the profession as a whole. Thus a key component of professionalism at the individual level, as derived from its consequences at the professional level, is the self-enforcement of standards. Individuals internalize public expectations for their conduct and performance, knowing that failures to meet these expectations undermine the entire profession’s legitimacy. Anecdotal horror stories, such as those in the *Time* magazine cover story from 1980, carry disproportionate weight with
the public as it reevaluates teachers as professionals; individual shortcomings become representative of teachers as a whole. Those teachers who aspire to be known as highly professional necessarily attend to the obligations of performance arising from the profession’s collective need to maintain public confidence.

The earlier analogy to academic medicine clarifies yet another component of individual professionalism that arises directly from the collective process of achieving professional status. Engagement with the best and most recent research in the field endows practitioners at prestigious medical centers with the stamp of expertise that inspires public confidence in the treatment they will receive there. People seek out these clinics when they feel their medical problems require the highest levels of expertise. When professions control the abstract and theoretical knowledge systems that govern the problems of their practice, they have greater flexibility and power in determining how those problems are understood, defined, and solved. Facility with relevant abstractions distinguishes a profession from a craft, for a craft possesses control over technique, while a profession possesses control over the abstractions that govern technique. Much of the direct patient contact in a hospital, for example, is carried out by nurses or aides, who presumably have mastery over such techniques as injections, blood draws, or wound dressing. But these techniques are not carried out except under the orders of a physician, who is endowed with domain over such decisions on the basis of superior claims to academic expertise relevant to dosage, diagnostics, or healing. Whether or not such exclusive claims are warranted, academic facility enhances the jurisdictional claims that make a profession a profession and not merely a craft; thus academic engagement is a necessary condition for professionalism at the individual level.
A fourth component of professionalism, contribution to a professional community, arises directly from the distinction between an organization of professional individuals and a professional organization. In order to be fully professional, an individual must participate in and contribute to a professional community. As the Mayo Clinic example illustrates, successful patient care, and presumably, successful teaching, relies not just upon generating the right answers to the problems of practice, but also upon synthesizing those answers into a comprehensive and coherent course of treatment. The problem of synthesis cannot be left to the patient, who has not accumulated the expertise necessary to decide which research findings bear upon which cases or which symptoms complicate a standard diagnosis. When the physicians are assembled as a body and cooperate as a team, as often happens in such contexts when difficult cases are presented on grand rounds or in group consultations, each expert brings his/her command of relevant abstractions to the discussion, so that the practitioners have a direct professional relationship. In the alternative model, the patient must bear the responsibility of carrying one expert’s opinions to the next, and should the patient neglect or miscarry the message, the link between the coordinating physicians is lost. What makes little sense for patients makes no more sense for students, as educational professionals likewise need to establish strong working, consultative relationships, so that they can communicate their substantive and pedagogical expertise directly to one another instead of relying upon students to synthesize their various prescriptions for a sound education. Teachers who are disconnected from the practices of their colleagues are compromised in their ability to give or to receive the benefits of collective expertise, to the detriment of the faculty’s overall effectiveness. Such unnecessary constraints upon the group’s capacity for
effectiveness undermine public confidence in educational institutions overall, at the cost of professional status itself.

The Professional Organization

Three essential qualities converge to provide a definition of a professional organization. As described above, individual level professionalism in teaching depends upon an individual’s effectiveness, academic engagement, self-enforcement of standards, and contribution to a professional community. To reach a normative standard of professionalism at the organizational level, a school must be characterized by high aggregate levels of individual professionalism. Secondly, a school must first be characterized by collaboration and professional communication in its professional networks, as colleagues forge multiple points of professional contact to reinforce norms and expectations, and transmit information that is crucial to performance. Finally, a school must be characterized by group-level normative processes that value and reinforce individual-level professionalism, so that exemplars of professionalism are rewarded, and those who do not meet that standard face some sort of sanction from the group. All three components—high aggregate levels of individual professionalism, collaboration and communication, and professional group norms—are necessary if a school organization is to be considered a professional organization rather than a collection of professional individuals. None of these components, in isolation, is sufficient.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to establish a conception of professionalism, and a frame of measurement for it that attends to both individual and organizational dimensions, in a manner that is consistent with scholarship in the professions. I identify a
theory of the professions that applies to teaching. From that theory, I derive an individual level measurement of teacher professionalism, and demonstrate its validity and reliability. Qualitative data both support the application of the source theory to actual school contexts, and also provide affirmation, amplification, complication, and motivation to the measurement models that support the reliability and validity of the individual measure.

Definitions of Key Terms

*Academic engagement:* The extent to which a member of a specific profession studies the abstractions that govern his/her work. Because academic engagement enhances effectiveness and signals expertise to clients, it is critical to a profession’s jurisdictional claims.

*Centrality:* A measure of importance based on structural position in a network.

*Betweenness* centrality is a measure of the number of communication paths that pass through a single node, or actor, in a network. Actors with high betweenness control information flow in a diffusion process.

*Contribution to a professional community:* The extent to which a member of a specific profession participates with other professionals in expanding the knowledge base and treating the problems of practice.

*Effectiveness:* The ability to accomplish or execute an intended result in the context of a problem. Effectiveness is the key to claims of jurisdiction by competing groups of professionals.

*Esteem:* Reputation of value or respect, conferred by a group on an individual or individuals who earn favorable opinion.
**Jurisdiction:** Power or authority over a specific control or domain; in this case, jurisdiction refers to the socially constituted right to diagnose and treat a problem.

**Norms:** Explicit or implicit rules that a group agrees upon to distinguish appropriate values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

**Professionalism:** The extent to which practitioners live up to the expectations of work-related conduct and performance.

**Professionality:** The extent to which a given field is granted professional status by society.

**Self-enforcement of standards:** The extent to which members of a specific profession monitor their own (and each other’s) performance and professional image, so as to win and maintain jurisdiction over a set of problems.

**Service orientation:** A disposition to regard one’s work in such a way that devotion to the client’s interests supersedes a personal or profit motive. Service orientation is seen by many scholars as the moral heart of professional status.

**Significance and Limitations**

In the persistent debate over the effectiveness of American public schools, as noted above, the focus on individuals (teachers) and individual-level attributes (teacher quality, credentials, pay, and so on) neglects a crucial component of educational success. It may well be productive and profitable to explore how each of these individual-level reforms affects instructional effectiveness, but it cannot pay to forget that each of those individuals inevitably encounters the school environment and culture when he/she begins teaching, and that he/she will be subject to strong ecological effects upon his/her teaching, for better or for worse, when that time comes. While scholars debate and re-
hash the various influences of individual-level innovations, the low-hanging fruit in the exploration of school success can be found at the structural level. Certainly, any improvements that can be made at the individual level should be made. But at the moment, improvements at the level of group norms and structure would seem to hold more promise for understanding and effecting the sorts of changes that would be most likely to win back the public’s confidence in the American public school system.

This construction of a professional organization, as distinct from an organization of professional individuals, offers a theoretical framework that attends to both the organizational and the individual levels of professionalism in teaching. Some of the hypotheses generated by this theoretical framework are not feasible to test in a study of this scope, but those that are within the purview of this research are crucial to setting the groundwork for incremental support of the framework overall. Before we can sustain larger claims, about the relationship of organizational professionalism and effectiveness for example, we need to establish support for a construction of professionalism that is firmly grounded in the theoretical foundations laid out in this study. Further research, perhaps with grander longitudinal ambitions or a greater number of cases, could proceed with such ambitions as measuring the professionalism of an organization, showing the over-time effects of norms and centrality upon individual professionalism, or linking organizational professionalism to effectiveness. But that research could not proceed without first testing whether the basis for defining these concepts has merit. As a project that could pave the way for this more ambitious research program, this study provides an empirical foundation on which to make an even greater contribution to the essential and ongoing question of what can make school organizations more effective. We may not
ever reach consensus on whether or not the purported crisis in American public education is real, but in either case, understanding and improving our effectiveness is of continual and crucial importance. This project begins that process by taking the first steps of a more grounded theoretical approach to defining and exploring both individual and organizational professionalism.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This conception of a professional organization, and the structural approach which distinguishes this study, originates in an existing literature that is both varied and vast. From the sociology of professions to normative processes in school organizations, this chapter highlights the theoretical foundations of this study.

Professionality and Professionalism

In a colloquial sense, the term “professional” is typically used to communicate a normative judgment of quality or performance. For example, people will describe a carpenter who carries out home repair as “professional,” if he has been punctual, reliable, effective, polite, and so on. Yet seldom does such usage imply an accompanying judgment upon the status of carpentry as a profession. That status, or the professionality of carpentry, is defined quite differently from the professionalism of a given practitioner, but the two concepts are importantly related. The social context in which the public grants legitimacy to a profession forms the basis for the norms we internalize as standards for professionalism. Thus it is necessary to explore the professionality of teaching as a theoretical foundation for professionalism in teaching.

Throughout the early work in the sociology of professions, teaching is generally regarded as “borderline” (Wilensky, 1964), not quite established as a fully-fledged
profession. This status results as much from the way early sociologists conceived of the professions as from the characteristics of teachers themselves, and even less from the characteristics of the work that teachers do. Early work on the professions focuses on professionalization, or the development of the professions and professional authority. As the occupational structure of a given society is embedded in other dynamics of the social system (Parsons, 1939), the status of teaching as a profession necessarily reflects the status of teachers as individuals in the social system. Etzioni (1969) cites these societal constraints in his discussion of the “semi-proessions,” which include nursing and social work as well as teaching. These semi-professionals claim professional status when they know they are not entitled to it, when they know that the status they seek is a lost cause: “…the semi-professionals’ efforts to change themselves, more fully to live up to the claim floated, generate a major source of tensions because there are several powerful societal limitations on the extent to which these occupations can be fully professionalized” (p. vii). Try as they might, the semi-professions cannot cross the border that society necessarily imposes without reference to the technical definitions of professionality which may come from academics: “The correct observation is that although the borderlines are not sharply delineated, the parties involved are not prevented from recognizing those who are manifestly, on several accounts, on one side or the other” (p. vii). Etzioni implies reproach for those who would make status claims to which they are not entitled, as they instigate inevitable rejection by “those who hold the [professional] status legitimately” (p. vii). Like Parsons, Etzioni locates the source of such divisions not within a theoretical context but within a social one, as part of the social system that lies outside the intervention of those who are charged with cataloguing and
describing it. Bledstein (1976) buttresses such an approach by equating historical claims to professional status to the social climbing of the middle class:

In 1860, the sentiment was heard that ‘Americans all wanted to be clerks, professionals or bosses, to drive something.’ Success in the middle class increasingly depended upon providing a service based on a skill, elevating the status of one’s occupation by referring to it as a profession. Funeral directors, for instance, seized the word—*professional*—when they decided not to follow ‘in the wake of broom makers, box and basket-makers.’ As legal agents certified by county boards of health, they proposed that the members of the National Funeral Directors’ Association be educated, examined, and licensed as professionals (p. 32).

In Bledstein’s example, professional status becomes a signpost of respectability for those who are attempting to navigate a precarious social landscape. Etzioni places teachers in precisely this category, as climbers who would “pass” into a realm of status to which real initiates know they are not legitimately entitled.

Despite the absence of clear definitional boundaries between professionals and posers, Etzioni does offer some criteria by which to recognize professionals when you see them. In his memo to his research team, the authors of the specific case studies on teaching, nursing, and social work that appear in his volume, he articulates a list of characteristics by which they might recognize who has professional authority and who has been conferred merely with administrative authority. Professional authority accrues from length of training (five years or more), whether questions of life and death or privileged communication are involved, and when knowledge is created or applied rather than merely communicated. Those exercising professional authority call upon different skill sets than administrators, who, Etzioni notes, “have skills and personality traits more compatible with administration” (p. xiii). To Etzioni, the ideal typical semi-professional organization is the primary school, where knowledge is not created but communicated by
a briefly trained corps of personalities suited to caring for children. The characteristics that distinguish a professional from a semi- or non-professional are firmly rooted at the individual level, and are apparently fixed deep within that individual’s sensibilities, capacities, and identity.

Scholars who adopted a more structural perspective on the history of the professions traced a sequential pattern in which professions went through distinct phases of development. Wilensky (1964) synthesized the “natural history” of professionalism into the following stages: first, people “start doing full time the thing that needs doing” (p. 142). From this full-time focus grows a recognition of the need for training, so the second stage of professional development is characterized by the emergence of a program for training, from which follows naturally the third stage, the formation of professional associations. Wilensky invokes the notion of jurisdiction in the description of the fourth stage, in which political organization evolves to win legal and administrative support for job territory. The fifth and presumably final stage in a profession’s development is the articulation of a formal code of ethics. (pp. 142-145) Wilensky calls for a more restrictive definition of professionality in the face of “the professionalization of everyone,” establishing two central criteria for those who would earn the distinction. First, he maintains, the job must be technical, “based on systematic knowledge or doctrine acquired only through long prescribed training.” Second, the “professional man adheres to a set of professional norms,” specifically a service ideal (p. 140). Altogether, these criteria form Wilensky’s essential standard for professional authority, linking technical expertise, a service ideal, and jurisdiction under one banner of professionalism: “Any occupation wishing to exercise professional authority must find a technical basis for it,
assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link both skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy” (p. 138). As illustrated by the enumeration of professional stages, Wilensky maintains that the professions reach this standard incrementally, over the course of their long-term relationships to society and its needs and confidence.

Like Parsons before him, who distinguished a professional mentality as “disinterested,” almost altruistic, in comparison to the business mentality that has come to dominate Western society (p. 463), Wilensky emphasizes the service ideal as the linchpin of professional authority. As individual professionals adhere to a coalescing set of professional norms, they converge upon a set of colleague norms, in which they live up to obligations they hold to other practitioners, and a set of service norms, in which they supplant personal or profit motives with devotion to the client’s interests. When clients disbelieve that the service ideal is dominant, they do not approach practitioners as professionals, but rather as tradesmen or merchants, “demanding a specific result in a specific time and a guaranty of restitution should mistakes be made” (p. 140). For Wilensky, the service ideal is absolutely crucial to the public confidence that professional authority requires. As he puts it, “the service ideal is the pivot around which the moral claim to professional status revolves” (p. 140). Scientists and businesspeople, to the extent that they subordinate the service ideal to the pursuit of truth or profit, compromise their professional authority accordingly.

Abbott (1988) represents a major turning point in the sociology of the professions, as he builds on themes that appear in the work of Parsons, Wilensky, and others, but unifies them under a coherent theoretical system. If earlier work assembled functionalist
definitions as a set of empirical themes, Abbott provides the mechanisms by which jurisdiction and the service ideal coordinate to form a coherent theoretical foundation for professionality. Credited with “renewing and redirecting the sociology of the professions” (Stinchcombe, 1990) and with creating “a major perturbation in the intellectual system of ideas on the professions” (Clarke, 1989), Abbott introduces decidedly theoretical intent into a literature which heretofore had been largely descriptive. Earlier conceptualizations of the professions, he claims, had less to do with theory building than with comportment with American public opinion.

Since those opinions were organized around the familiar examples of American law and medicine, definitions excluded things that didn’t look like law and medicine, like automobile repair, and included things that did, like accounting…The underlying problem is that for many writers, calling something a profession makes it one. People don’t want to call automobile repair a profession because they don’t want to accord it that dignity. This unwillingness probably has less to do with the actual characteristics of automobile repair as an intellectual discipline—which are conceptually quite close to those of medicine—than it does with the status of the work and of those who want to do it. When definitions aim to distinguish groups according to such an external agenda, they are disputed. When used to answer theoretical questions, they are not. (p. 8)

By orienting his examination less around boundaries than around the process that creates those boundaries, Abbott re-casts the study of the professions in a new mold. Whereas jurisdiction appears in Wilensky’s definition of professional authority, for Abbott’s model, jurisdiction is at the center of everything. As professionals satisfy the public that they have control over the knowledge and skill used to treat “human problems amenable to expert service,” (p. 20), they earn the professional authority that distinguishes their work from that of mere technicians. The success of a given profession at gaining control of these problems depends upon the profession’s domain over relevant
abstract knowledge systems with which to navigate them. The service ideal, the altruistic drive to prioritize clients’ interests in Wilensky’s conception of the professions, gives way to the problem-solving orientation at the center of Abbott’s model, an orientation for which the capacity for abstraction is crucial. Facility with relevant abstractions distinguishes a profession from a craft, for a craft possesses control over technique, such as auto repair. Had auto mechanics embraced a level of abstraction typical of what is now mechanical engineering, for Abbott’s purposes they would be a profession (p. 9). Unlike a craft, a profession possesses control over the abstractions that govern technique, which accords greater flexibility and power in a competitive arena in which such attributes confer an adaptive advantage: “Any occupation can obtain licensure (e.g. beauticians) or develop an ethics code (e.g., real estate). But only a knowledge system governed by abstractions can redefine its problems and tasks, defend them from interlopers, and seize new problems” (p. 9). Professions succeed based on the power of abstract knowledge systems because with those systems, they control the problems that make up their work.

Because of the emphasis on control over the problems of service, Abbott’s conception of the system of professions is necessarily, inherently relational, not based in the characteristics or attributes of a given individual professional, but in the process in which rival professions jockey for cultural legitimacy, contending with one another for control over the definitions of particular tasks. One profession asserts a specific construction of a problem, making diagnostic and treatment claims that can be countered by a rival profession staking its own claim upon the same problem. In the contest for public endorsement of its right to treat the problem, each profession must simultaneously bolster its own claims and subvert the claims of its rivals. This continuous competition
creates the professions, which are obviously not static, essential entities with
impermeable boundaries carved in stone. The boundaries shift as the societal
constructions of the problems of practice themselves shift.

For every profession, the problems that serve as the basis for professional work
have both objective and subjective dimensions. Objective dimensions of such problems
are tied to natural or technological circumstances, whereas subjective problems are
“imposed by the past and present of a culture itself” (p. 36). For example, alcoholism as a
problem has both objective considerations, such as genetic predispositions, organ
damage, rates of absorption, and so on, and subjective considerations, such as the social
construction of drinking as alternatively recreational, clinical, or sinful. Changes to the
objective or subjective character of a problem make a profession vulnerable to
redefinition by another profession staking its own jurisdictional claim over the problem.
If the public follows the reinterpretation of the problem, control of the tasks approved to
treat it likewise shifts, and jurisdiction is granted elsewhere. For example, whereas the
clergy once took primary responsibility for curing chronic drinkers when alcoholism was
seen as an affliction of the soul, they now share this jurisdiction with hospitals,
detoxification centers, and social service agencies, as the social construction of drinking
has shifted somewhat.

The process of subjective construction relies upon three distinct phases: the
classification of the problem, reasoning about it, and action. Abbott frames these as
diagnostic claims, inference, and treatment claims. If the public accepts a diagnosis, and
treatments prove effective, then jurisdictional control is secure. Because all three steps of
the process are embedded in the professional knowledge system, academic knowledge of
the profession plays a particularly important role. Academic systems operate predominantly on the level of abstraction, as scholars seek to clarify definitions and concepts, and link them together theoretically. For Abbott, the academic knowledge system serves a crucial legitimating function for a profession: “The ability of a profession to sustain its jurisdiction lies partly in the power and prestige of its academic knowledge…Academic knowledge legitimizes professional work by clarifying its foundations and tracing them to major cultural values…” (p. 54). In addition to legitimation, academics also serve their profession when they break down and analyze the components and contexts of work tasks, thereby reinforcing the constructions most favorable to jurisdictional claims. Dominant professions take control of their own instruction systems, so that others are conferred with the expertise to protect jurisdictional territory, and expand it. Ultimately, the academic system of a profession can serve as a fairly reliable indicator of the profession’s robust control of its specified jurisdictions, as Abbott notes: “…any effective abstract system would define the borders of professional jurisdiction with utmost clarity. It would be obvious what is and what is not part of the professionally claimed universe of tasks” (p. 56). Presumably, he means “obvious” both to the public and to other professions that might invade jurisdictional territory, signaling that the academic system is just as important to the durability of jurisdictional control as to the foundation of it within the system of abstractions.

Because Abbott introduces a mechanism by which professional boundaries are formed and re-formed, his framework represents both a major moment in the sociology of the professions, and a foundation for thinking about individual professionalism as a normative standard. If professions depend upon public confidence in their diagnostic and
treatment claims in order to be accorded professional status, the norms for individual professionals necessarily align with that objective. Abbott offers a plausible explanation for the seemingly altruistic motives that drive a service ideal under previous constructions of a profession: professionals solve problems because effective treatment of problems is key to professional status, in addition to any other altruistic or humanitarian motives they may have. As professionals seek to win and preserve control over the problems of their practice at the group level, individuals respond to those motives and orient their individual behavior and service accordingly. The foundations of professional status under Abbott also become the foundations for professionalism at the individual level. Each individual professional bears some responsibility in the image-making process of the profession as a whole, as public opinion engages archetypes, not individuals: “Public discourse must concern homogeneous groups. All doctors are equivalent; all nurses are equivalent. There is no distribution within the groups—no variation by skill, by specialty, by training” (p. 61). Because of the collective consequences of a group’s professional image, each individual necessarily monitors his/her own contributions to the image-making process. In order to do his/her part to maintain public confidence in the profession as a whole, the individual has responsibility to achieve and maintain academic facility in the field, to practice effectively, and generally, to contribute to the effectiveness and academic robustness of the professional community at large. While Abbott does not directly articulate such normative standards for professionalism at the individual level, they derive naturally from his theoretical framework, and extend the reach of his system of the professions from the organizational to the individual level quite fluidly. By orienting his system around the nature of the work professionals do and how
they define it, rather than considering who does that work in society, Abbott offers an opportunity to conceptualize both professionality and professionalism more coherently.

Professionalization of Teaching and Teacher Professionalism

As it happens, the literature in the professionalization of teaching, and in related areas of professionalism and professional development of teachers, largely does not avail itself of Abbott’s theoretical clarity. While there are echoes of some of the key features of Abbott’s conceptualization, particularly the need for teacher scholarship, underlying theoretical mechanisms behind these desirable characteristics are unclear. Discussions of professional development, professional learning, and professionalism tend to resemble disembodied wish lists rather than theoretically coherent systems. Even work that draws explicitly on the research tradition in the sociology of the professions fails to update that tradition to include the theoretical breakthrough Abbott represents.

Ingersoll (2001) describes the ongoing movement to professionalize teaching, dating back to the early 20th century, as a contentious struggle that could be largely resolved via closer attention to the sociological study of the professions. Puzzlingly, Ingersoll claims that sociologists have reached consensus on what defines a profession:

Although education reformers often disagree over what is meant by profession, professionalism, and professionalization, students of occupations, notably sociologists, do not. The study of work, occupations, and professions has been an important topic in sociology for decades, and researchers in this subfield have developed what is known as the professional model—a series of organizational and occupational characteristics associated with professions and professionals and, hence, useful to distinguish professions and professionals from other kinds of work and workers (p. 116; italics in the original).

By applying the professional model, we can see which occupations deserve the title “profession” and which do not. The components of the professional model he invokes are
largely familiar, and familiarly problematic, from pre-Abbott conceptions of professionalism. The characteristics that distinguish the true professions, Ingersoll asserts, are “rigorous training and licensing requirements, positive working conditions, an active professional organization or association, substantial workplace authority, relatively high compensation, and high prestige” (p. 116). Based on these criteria, like Etzioni before him, Ingersoll concludes that teaching is at best a semi-profession. Not surprisingly, the “traditional” professions, by which Ingersoll means to include “law, medicine, university teaching, architecture, science, [and] engineering,” constitute the best examples of the professional model (p. 116).

Recalling Abbott’s critique of atheoretical definitions that attend more to social status than theory-building, one wonders both what Ingersoll means by including “science” generically as a profession, and why prestige would figure prominently in a definition that, at least in part, speaks to prestige itself. Certain occupations win prestige as professions, the logic seems to run, partly because society grants them prestige. But if we avoid that circularity by removing “prestige” (and also “high compensation,” by the same logic) from the definition, what remains fails to distinguish meaningfully between medicine, one of Ingersoll’s exemplar professions, and hairdressing, which in most states would meet Ingersoll’s remaining criteria for professional status. Hairdressers face credential and licensing requirements for entry, experience induction and mentoring programs for entrants, participate in professional development, specialize, and possess significant authority over decision making. These criteria, which Ingersoll derives explicitly from the professional model (p. 116), ought as well to establish teaching as a bona fide profession, despite his ultimate conclusion that “almost all schools lack or fall
short on many of the key characteristics associated with professionalization” (p. 125). Absent the theoretical mechanisms that could explain why these characteristics, as opposed to others we might choose, should form the boundaries between the professions and other occupations, only arbitrary distinctions, based in relative willingness to accord social dignity, remain.

Talbert and McLaughlin (1994) likewise import a traditional notion of “the professional model” into their study of professionalism in local school contexts. In exploring the extent to which structures of local organization—namely high school departments, schools, and districts—undermine teacher professionalism, the authors employ a definition of professionalism that appears rooted most firmly in conceptions of the professions that lack theoretical heft. They argue that “teachers’ professionalism, considered in terms of generic criteria for professional work and authority, is highly variable and contingent upon the strength and character of local teacher community” (p. 124). Their claim may well be true; it seems difficult to assess given the problematic definition of professionalism they invoke to provide their warrant. Synthesizing the literature of the sociology of the professions, like Ingersoll, they derive a familiar formula for what constitutes a profession:

Primary among the conditions that distinguish a “profession” from other occupations are a specialized knowledge base and shared standards of practice, a strong service ethic, or commitment to meeting clients’ needs, strong personal identity with, and commitment to, the occupation, and collegial versus bureaucratic control over entry, performance evaluations, and retention in the profession. (p. 126).

Despite the fact that both Ingersoll and Talbert & McLaughlin cite Abbott in their review of the sociology literature, both arguments favor a list-oriented approach to defining a
profession over the model for professional authority that Abbott offers. Talbert and McLaughlin go on to point out that those who have applied similar conceptions of the professions to a study of teaching, most notably Etzioni, have concluded that teaching is at best a semi-profession (p. 126). As with Ingersoll, as with Abbott’s predecessors in the sociology literature, the process by which these criteria emerge, instead of others that might also serve to distinguish professions from other occupations, is a mystery. The list approach is straightforward to employ, but difficult to justify theoretically, as it fails to specify the mechanisms by which each characteristic lends itself to the attainment of professional authority. As Talbert and McLaughlin weigh the conventional wisdom with respect to each particular criterion in turn, they conclude that general trends point away from teacher professionalism. In consequence, local contexts offer the only hopes teachers have of functioning like professionals. Teachers in exceptional local circumstances may enjoy conditions that allow them to be professionals, but this will happen only in pockets:

Such limits on educators’ authority help to account for the generally weak levels of professionalism reported and observed among teachers. However, they also set conditions for local standard setting within teaching. In this regard, we know that the extent to which teachers collaborate and experience ongoing professional growth varies dramatically from site to site; this variability may well translate into differential professionalism across school contexts. Strong teacher communities are likely to engender the technical culture, shared commitment to student clients, and occupational commitment that characterize the prototypic profession (p. 128).

Their conclusion, that professionalism is variable and that teachers in some contexts achieve it while others do not, may be empirically true, but their premise, that the aforementioned criteria define the “prototypic profession,” is flawed. In my application
of Abbott’s theory, claims to jurisdiction are pressed more or less on the level of school districts.

While Talbert and McLaughlin’s and Ingersoll’s attempts to derive a definition of a profession may be insufficient, they stand out among other sources in the literature on teaching and professionalism in that they make such a definition explicit. Among the multitude of voices discussing standards for professionalism or professional learning, most include traits that overlap with features of Abbott’s theory, but few, if any, offer theoretically grounded rationales for why such characteristics or behaviors distinguish teachers as more or less professional. The reasoning behind such inclusions is left implicit.

Shulman (1999), for example, recalls the traditional inclusion of autonomy, or control over decision making, as a key component of professionalism, and even invokes a comparison to “traditional” professions, but offers little theoretical basis for this criterion:

We have come to understand that teachers are professionals precisely because they operate under conditions of inherent novelty, uncertainty, and chance. Although there may be curricula that strive to prescribe teachers’ behavior with great precision, for most teachers a typical day is fraught with surprises. This is also the case for most other professionals—physicians, attorneys, journalists, social workers, and others. Therefore, their work cannot be controlled by rules, even though it must be governed by standards (p. xiii).

This same description holds true of cable repairmen just as well as physicians, attorneys, teachers, journalists, and social workers, despite their exclusion from Shulman’s list of recognizable professions. This criterion not only offers little in the way of distinction for the professions, but it gives little insight into the process by which they might be distinguished if we worked our way back to the principles that drive the criterion itself.
The second time around, Shulman invokes a definition of professionalism that likewise fails to engage a theoretical basis for professional status: “Professionalism demands thoughtful, grounded actions under complex and uncertain conditions that are nevertheless guided by, rooted in, and framed by clear professional standards. A professional both acts wisely and can explain his or her actions” (p. xiii). To be sure, these are norms we would hope teachers should uphold, but why they relate to the status of teaching as a profession is unclear, and theoretical guidance is not forthcoming.

Ball and Cohen (1999) also represent an attempt to discuss the importance of professional development and teacher learning without sufficiently engaging what it means to be professional. Their account of professional education, which emphasizes learning situated in practice, overlaps with Abbott’s theoretical framework in that it features continuous learning in a communal setting. But because it does not proceed from a strong foundation in the theory of professions, it moves sharply away from what Abbott distinguishes as a key component of professional authority: control over abstractions that govern professional work.

Ball and Cohen decry the insufficiency of typical professional development schemes for teachers, noting that they seldom offer sustained benefits: “Participation in modal staff development is the professional equivalent of yo-yo dieting for many teachers” (p. 4). In order for professional learning programs to bear fruit, they assert, such programs must be continuous, rather than the familiar one-day institutes that have become commonplace, and must engage the problems of practice head-on:

To learn anything relevant to performance, professionals need experience with the tasks and ways of thinking that are fundamental to the practice. Those experiences must be immediate enough to be compelling and vivid.
To learn more than mere imitation or survival, such experiences must be sufficiently distanced to be open to careful scrutiny, unpacking, reconstruction, and the like (p. 12).

To the extent that learning experiences such as the authors describe can hone practitioners’ ability to make sharper diagnostic and treatment claims in their practice, this model for staff development is theoretically consistent with mechanisms specified in Abbott’s approach. Similarly, Ball and Cohen highlight the benefits that discourse confers upon the professional community as a whole, in a way that recalls Abbott’s description of how the academic knowledge sector has a bracing effect upon both the image and the practice of a given profession:

In the education of professionals, discourse serves additional purposes, which are related to building and sustaining a community of practitioners who collectively seek human and social improvement. The discourse of teacher education should also help to build collegiality within the profession and create a set of relations rooted in shared intentions and challenges (p. 13).

Thus the assumptions that Ball and Cohen make about what “professional” means share some consistency with established theory on the professions. But such overlaps seem to be a matter of happenstance rather than thoughtful application, because Ball and Cohen depart dramatically from the importance of abstract knowledge in their conception of professional learning, in a manner that signals their unawareness of (or disregard for) the theoretical importance of abstractions to jurisdictional authority.

Concern over a heavy emphasis on abstraction in educational preparation programs is nothing new, and Ball and Cohen make a reasonable and familiar argument when they point out that real learning about practice should at some point engage in
practice if it is going to be useful. In so doing, however, they completely subordinate, if
not dismiss, abstraction in favor of situated, concrete learning.

We emphasize the importance of situating professional discussion in concrete tasks or artifacts of practice, because they ground the conversation in ways that are virtually impossible when the referents are remote or merely rhetorical. Lacking such grounding, *a common analytic vocabulary, and strong norms of analysis*, professional conversation tends to become an exchange of buzzwords and slogans more than specific descriptions and analyses with concrete referents (p. 17, emphasis mine).

True enough, all too often professional conversation can become a hive of buzzwords, but the authors here seem to identify engagement with abstractions as the source of, rather than the solution to, the chronic emptiness in some professional development programs. If “a common analytic vocabulary and strong norms of analysis” are indeed lacking, *deeper* academic engagement would seem a more intuitive choice to address the problem than *no* academic engagement. How else might teachers obtain the requisite vocabulary and norms if not through engagement? In highlighting the importance of control over relevant abstractions, Abbott does not at the same time diminish the importance of employing abstract knowledge in practical contexts--quite the contrary. The abstractions in his system, far from subsisting disconnectedly, form the foundations for treating the problems of practice in ways that support jurisdictional claims and win professional authority. The abstractions are important primarily *because* of their application to the situated problems of practice, not *instead* of them.

In fact, Ball and Cohen seem to make this very point when they introduce a medical analogy to underscore the importance of the concrete.

Imagine physicians discussing the treatment of tetanus by discussing only how patients described their illness, how the physicians felt about that disorder, what patients said, how often they saw cases of tetanus, what
patients looked like, and the like. Few patients would get well, and many would die, because physicians’ discourse did not deal with any of the medically relevant issues (p. 17).

Clearly, the authors mean to illustrate the futility of trying to treat a problem of practice without ever addressing the specific case at hand. If all the doctors ever did was to sit around and talk about the generalities of tetanus cases, and never turned their attention to the sick patients themselves, surely cure rates would be disastrous, as Ball and Cohen note. But cure rates would surely not be any better if those same doctors attempted to treat their patients without a thorough understanding of the medically relevant abstractions such as the principles of contagion, absorption, immunities, etc. Medical training deals heavily in abstractions because doctors, having cured tetanus in one patient, move on to other patients presenting different symptoms that implicate contagion, absorption, or the immune system differently. What would happen to effectiveness if the doctor’s knowledge base were so situated that little could transfer when the next case walked into the office? The distinction between craft and profession, as articulated above, hinges precisely on this ability to apply abstract knowledge differentially in practice. By arguing for the subordination of abstract knowledge, rather than the reinforcement of it in staff development programs, Ball and Cohen unwittingly take exactly that which is professional out of professional learning. Of course they intend quite the opposite, but without a thorough engagement with the theory of professions, their position is vulnerable to this fatal theoretical inconsistency.

As a general matter, the educational literature that undertakes discussion of professionalization encompasses most of the pieces of Abbott’s framework of jurisdiction and public confidence, but somehow most seem to miss putting them all together in a
meaningful way. Implicit in calls for professionalization is this notion that somehow this is a goal for teaching’s future—we’re not there yet. Wise (1995) calls the professionalization of teaching a “revolution…aimed at developing the same sort of quality assurance procedures for teaching that are used in medicine, psychology, architecture, nursing, and the other professions” (p. 12). To reach this goal, he calls for attention to accreditation, licensing, greater recognition of teacher accomplishments in the classroom—all nice ideas, but all individual inputs. McLaughlin and Yee (1988) argue for school cultures that are more supportive places “in which to have a career,” suggesting that teaching is only sometimes, and contingently, institutionalized in schools as a pursuit that is worthy of professional status, as intellectually stimulating, collegial, etc. Darling-Hammond (1988) suggests that local governments and school boards might resist professionalization, indicating her view that currently, schools are not fully professionalized places already. Day (1999) notes that teachers’ claims to professionalism need to change in an accountability-based school culture, but he locates that professionalism in an old model, and does not put a jurisdictional model into play. And Troen and Boles (2003) aggressively document the woeful status of teaching as a desirable profession in the minds of college students and recent graduates. They cite ETS studies showing that when GRE scores are correlated with the intended professions of test-takers, teaching is at the very bottom of subsequent rankings of professions. The best and brightest, they are able to show, are not choosing teaching, presumably because teaching is not fully a profession in the minds of the general public. These studies speak to a (losing) fight for public confidence, and hence, jurisdiction, but they do not frame the issue quite in these terms.
Other scholarship manages to account for the importance of an organizational view of professionalism and teacher performance. Sergiovanni (1996) takes a step in this direction when he argues for professional teacher communities organized around learning, and promoting professional norms. Little (1993), Dilworth and Imig (1995), Sparks (1995) and Smylie and Conyers (1991) all speak to the need to attend more to group-level processes in professionalization, professional development, and teacher learning. Little and McLaughlin (1993) recognize the importance of school setting as an influence on emerging professional communities. Rosenholtz (1989) also frames her inquiry within the social organization of schools, noting that “the ultimate social organizational variable is the meaning that the organization has for those who work within it” (p. 3). McLaughlin, Talbert and Bascia (1990) would seem to concur, as they assert that school cultures, even more than district expenditures or student SES, make big differences in effectiveness. There is an inchoate movement in the literature for more attention to organizational level processes, even as a focus on individual inputs persists.

Some may recognize that the real action in learning about professionalism is at the organizational level, but there is still not perfect clarity about what needs to happen at that level. I found scholarship that hit on the various components of professionalism as seen through a jurisdictional lens, but they do not quite manage to pull the pieces together. Some time ago, Lortie (1975) hit on the jurisdictional process when he noted that teachers had a limited sense of shared technical culture; what he perceived could be characterized as a failure to act jointly to consolidate the knowledge base, in an effort to promote jurisdiction. Devaney and Sykes (1988) see professionalism as necessary to win public affirmation, but they do not recognize this as jurisdiction per se. Lieberman
(1988), Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992), and Little (1982, 1987) all discuss the issue of collaboration among teachers in schools: how collaborative cultures are necessary to school success; how teacher networks are key to expanding professional learning (with some consideration of norms); how privacy norms among teachers can inhibit professional sharing; and how positive norms of teacher sharing contribute to school performance. Corcoran (1990) offered evidence that teachers do engage in self-enforcement of standards, for purposes of maintaining effectiveness and keeping public trust. In a review of teacher responses to major national and state opinion surveys, he not only found that teachers decried the wholesale lack of opportunities for collaboration with colleagues, but that they held themselves to high standards when it came to extra work. The majority of teachers put in as many as sixty hours a week in planning, grading, and contacting parents, he found. Interestingly, he also found that teachers found professional development opportunities to be by and large less helpful than learning from their peers.

Overall, the professionalization and professional development literature reveals an uneven orientation toward group level processes, and an inconsistent application of the scholarship in the sociology of the professions. By synthesizing some of these trends into a more coherent model, one that is more firmly grounded theoretically, I hope to establish a more valid and usable construct of professionalism in teaching.

Relational Sociology and Social Networks

The theoretical model that Abbott derives for the system of the professions relies upon a particular approach to understanding social reality, known as “relational” sociology, that offers an alternative to a traditional “substantialist” approach. Some early
roots of relational sociology pre-date Abbott by fifty years, dating back to work by John Dewey and Arthur Bentley, who introduced the notion of “trans-action” to convey the importance of social contexts of individual action.

Dewey and Bentley (1949) offer three levels of human inquiry that make up “all human behaviors in and with respect to the world, and they are all presentations of the world itself as men report it” (p. 132). At the first level, that of “self-action,” things are viewed as acting under their own powers. The second level, inter-action, involves relatedness, as “thing is balanced against thing in causal interconnection” (p. 132). The third level is trans-action, “where systems of description and naming are employed to deal with aspects and phases of action, without final attribution to ‘elements’ or other presumptively detachable or independent ‘entities,’ ‘essences,’ or ‘realities,’ and without isolation of presumptively detachable ‘relations’ from such detachable ‘elements’ (p. 133). Or, to translate, trans-action represents a perspective in which it is impossible to separate entity from action, or individuals from the relationships that necessarily change them. Trans-action rejects the traditional notion that individuals contain an essence that could somehow remain unchanged in the course of social exchange. Boldly repudiating Aristotle, Dewey and Bentley note how this fallacy eroded over the course of the history of physics and philosophy, thanks to Galileo, Hobbes, Descartes, and Newton.

Aristotle’s physics was a great achievement in its time, but it was built around ‘substances.’ Down to Galileo men of learning almost universally held, following Aristotle, that there exist things which completely, inherently and hence necessarily, possess Being; that these continue eternally in action (movement) under their own power—continue, indeed, in some particular action essential to them in which they are engaged. The fixed stars, under this view, with their eternal circular movements, were instances. What did not, under the older pattern, thus act through its
inherent power, was looked upon as defective Being, and the gradations ran down to ‘matter’ on its lowest level, passive and inert (p. 134).

As Galileo led scientific inquiry away from this fixed essentialism, Hobbes, Descartes, and Newton proceeded in a dynamic tradition that emphasized processes over static attributes. Finally, with Einstein’s theory of relativity, scientific thought arrived at the trans-actional level, as Dewey and Bentley conceive it: “These steps were all definitely in the line of the transactional approach: the seeing together, when research requires it, of what before had been seen in separations and held severally apart. They provide what is necessary at times and places to break down the old rigidities: what is necessary when the time has come for new systems” (p. 134). That insight, of “seeing together…what before had been seen in separations and held severally apart,” represents a major contribution to the relational approach that characterizes this study.

Emirbayer (1997), applying the notion of transaction directly to social inquiry, helpfully updates Dewey and Bentley in championing relational sociology, contrasting the relational approach with a substantialist perspective that dominates the social sciences. Defining substantialism, Emirbayer locates the fundamental units of inquiry in things, beings, or essences: “Systematic analysis is to begin with these self-subsistent entities, which come ‘preformed,’ and only then to consider the dynamic flows in which they subsequently involve themselves” (p. 282). Substantialism has deep roots not only in social thought but also in the very grammatical structures typical of Western languages. Emirbayer cites Norbert Elias (1978), who comments upon the everyday “reduction of processes to static conditions” that is common among native speakers of such languages: “We say, ‘The wind is blowing,’ as if the wind were actually a thing at rest which, at a
given point in time, begins to move and blow. We speak as if a wind could exist which
did not blow” (p. 283). Theories of social action incorporate this mindset, as Emirbayer
describes the tendency toward substantialism that characterizes rational choice and game
theory perspectives: “…pre-given entities are seen to generate self-action; even as actors
game playing with other actors, their underlying interests, identities, and other
characteristics remain unaltered” (p. 284). Normative theorists who position themselves
as counterbalances to rational choice theory, including neo-Kantians who situate
individuals as norm-followers and free moral actors, likewise portray such actors as “self-
propelling, self-subsistent entities that pursue internalized norms given in advance and
fixed for the duration of the action sequence under investigation” (p. 284). Pervasive
though a substantialist approach may be in the social sciences, Emirbayer locates
dissenters and invokes them in his manifesto for a relational alternative.

Such an alternative is rooted in the fundamental proposition that “the very terms
or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the
(changing) functional roles they play within that transaction” (p. 287). For Emirbayer, it
makes no sense to divorce actors from the social contexts in which they are embedded,
and to do so promotes not understanding of the actor or the social context, but confusion.
Instead, social scientists need to understand social actors as embedded, a notion

Emirbayer invokes from Michel Foucault (1979):

Individual persons, whether strategic or norm-following, are inseparable
from the trans-actional contexts within which they are embedded; as
Michel Foucault puts it, ‘the soul is not a substance; it is the element in
which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the
reference of a certain type of knowledge.’ (p. 287)
The soul, like the rest of the individual, depends in part upon transaction, with other individuals and with society, to define itself. Not surprisingly, Abbott (1996) also endorses a relational approach as opposed to a “variable-centered” approach that features “a compelling imagery of fixed entities with variable attributes that interact, in causal or actual time, to create outcomes, themselves measurable as attributes of the fixed entities” (p. 286). The main criticism of such an approach, Emirbayer notes, is that it removes elements from context, which seems implausible and impossible. Instead, relations between actors are preeminently dynamic, unfolding, ongoing processes rather than staticties among inert substances (p. 289). Abbott captures these dynamics by noting the fluid process of change that transaction represents: “Previously constituted actors enter [transactions] but have no ability to traverse [them] inviolable. They ford [them] with difficulty and in [them] many disappear. What comes out are new actors, new entities, new relations among old parts” (p. 289). From this perspective, it becomes difficult to view central concepts, such as power, equality, freedom, agency, society, or even culture, in anything but relational terms. Certainly professionalism, as a system of values, can be profitably explored from a relational perspective, as Emirbayer notes when discussing the normative implications of relational sociology in his manifesto:

[V]alues are by-products of actors’ engagement with one another in ambiguous and challenging circumstances, which emerge when individuals experience a discordance between the claims of multiple normative commitments. Problematic situations of this sort become resolved only when actors reconstruct the relational contexts within which they are embedded, and in the process, transform their own values and themselves…. (p. 310)
For teachers and school leaders, who confront competing normative claims on a daily basis, the values that enter into and emerge from such relational contexts are the basis for professionalism itself.

Putting the relational perspective to work in its assumptions and methodology, social network analysis represents the “best developed and most widely used approaches to the analysis of social structure” according to Emirbayer (p. 298). Because network studies shift away from what White (1997) calls “self-actional approaches that begin with preconstituted individuals or groups”, they represent a transactional approach in that they prioritize “observable processes-in-relations” (p. 298). A network approach is particularly important for a study such as this one, in that it necessarily attends to the organizational level rather than limiting its focus to the individual. In describing some of the fundamental attributes of network analysis as it has evolved in recent years, Wasserman and Faust (1994) note that “the unit of analysis in network analysis is not the individual, but an entity consisting of a collection of individuals and the linkages among them” (p. 5). Network analysts focus on structural patterns more than individual attributes, so that “relational ties among actors are primary and attributes of actors are secondary” (p. 8). While some network models do focus on individuals, depending upon the substantive questions involved, they see the actor as embedded in a structure that provides either opportunities or constraints for that individual. Thus “actors and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent, autonomous units” (p. 4). Network researchers typically employ data collection methods that allow them to map the ties among individuals in order to observe structural patterns in the flow of information, resources, values, etc. within a population. One consideration that researchers have to
balance, Marsden (1990) notes, is whether objective or subjective social relations are of primary interest:

A central question is that of whether one seeks to measure actually existing social relations, or social relations as perceived by actors involved in them, sometimes called “cognitive” networks…Accurate knowledge of actually existing ties is arguably important to the study, for example, of certain diffusion processes while perceived ties might be more appropriate for studying social influences on attitudes or opinions. (p. 437)

Because this study primarily concerns itself with the normative processes involved in professionalism, “cognitive” networks will be particularly appropriate. For the central questions of this study, involving the extent to which professionalism at the individual level is valued in a given school culture, and the extent to which organizational structures allow for efficient flow of norms and information throughout the school culture, it will be crucial to explore ties that link individual teachers to one another on the basis of generalized esteem, friendship, contact, and professional esteem.

Network analysis provides us with an important tool in taking what information the surveys give us with respect to what the group values. One way to measure what the group values, or esteems, is to look at who is prominent in the esteem network. Prominence in this case will be measured by centrality; more specifically, by betweenness centrality, a measurement of network position based on the ability to mediate communications among others. Betweenness centrality gives us our sense of who figures most prominently in the esteem network in each school. When an actor “is strategically located on the shortest communication path connecting pairs of others, that person is in a central position” based on Freeman’s (1977) explication of betweenness (p. 35). Betweenness, following Friedkin (1991), gives us the “extent to which an actor
mediates the total effects of other actors” (p. 1491). Thus, betweenness centrality, when calculated on a network based in respondents’ esteem for one another as professionals, can tell us how central an individual is, or how much he/she is esteemed as an exemplar of professionalism.

Trends in Mixed-methods Research

This study purposefully engages a mixed-methods approach, combining principles in both quantitative and qualitative research design to gain greater leverage on questions of interest. The use of a mixed-methods approach implicates the debates and traditions of an emerging field, which I characterize below.

Paradigm Wars

In their *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* (2003), authors Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie announce that mixed methods research, as a distinctive methodological worldview, has arrived. They situate the field of mixed methods as the “third methodological movement,” following the respective heydays of quantitative and qualitative traditions. Mixed methods, they maintain, presents “a pragmatic way of using the strengths of both approaches” (p. ix). Like any emerging field, the field of mixed methods heretofore has lacked clear articulation of its major premises and guiding principles—a state of affairs Tashakkori and Teddlie attempt to set right both in their current *Handbook*, and in their 1998 volume, *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. While a single characterization of a diverse and developing field would be questionable, the origins and evolution of mixed methods can do much to illuminate the general trends and current issues in the field.
Roughly following Denzin and Lincoln (1994), who defined five “moments” in the history of qualitative research, Tashakkori and Teddlie identify three distinct methodological movements in the social and behavioral sciences: the positivist and postpositivist tradition represented by quantitative researchers, engaged primarily in numerical and statistical analyses; the constructivist tradition represented by qualitative researchers, engaged primarily in narrative analysis; and the emerging tradition in mixed methods, in which both paradigms are represented, and researchers are engaged in both types of analysis. The first of these movements dominated social research into the 1970’s, at which time its assumptions and premises faced critique from constructivists who advocated openness to a variety of qualitative methods. From the 1970’s on, with the growth of constructivism and the outbreak of the “paradigm wars,” mixed methods research, or the third movement in Tashakkori and Teddlie’s description, appeared with more frequency in the context of work on triangulation.

Yet Tashakkori and Teddlie point out that mixed methods work proceeded without comment or controversy during the so-called “traditional” positivist period (1900-1950), including the famous Hawthorne studies, which incorporated interviews and observations into an otherwise experimental design. Tashakkori and Teddlie note that the field of psychology embraced mixed methods designs outside of the more charged context of the paradigm wars that would break out later. Citing well-known research on end-of-the-world cults and cognitive dissonance (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956), the Robber’s Cave experiment and in-group/out-group hierarchies (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961), and Zimbardo’s Stanford prison experiments (1961), Tashakkori and Teddlie note that qualitative observations played important roles in
explaining and elaborating upon quantitative findings in these studies (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 6). Thus, even before critiques of positivism brought new currency to mixed methods as a field, mixed method approaches appear in prominent works in the behavioral sciences, signaling an existing pragmatic recognition on the part of some researchers that complicated questions can require a multifaceted approach to data collection and analysis.

The outbreak of the paradigm wars, which Tashakkori and Teddlie locate in the period between 1970 and 1990 (p. 6), introduced new scrutiny to the field of mixed methods, mainly through the articulation of the “incompatibility thesis,” put forth mainly by those Tashakkori and Teddlie label as “paradigm purists:”

Paradigm “purists” further posited the incompatibility thesis with regard to research methods: Compatibility between quantitative and qualitative methods is impossible due to the incompatibility of the paradigms underlying the methods. According to these theorists, researchers who combine the two methods are doomed to failure due to the differences in underlying systems (p. 7).

Obviously, many proponents of mixed methods reject the incompatibility thesis, pointing to the successful and recognized use of mixed methods in studies such as those cited above. If anything, researchers began to specify mixed methods designs explicitly, particularly as a means of achieving triangulation across methods. One early example of a mixed methods design, Campbell and Fiske (1959), chose a mixed methods approach expressly for this purpose: their “multi-method multitrait matrix” used multiple methods to measure a psychological trait, noting that they could in this way determine that the trait under study, and not the method used to measure it, actually accounted for the variance
they observed (p. 6). The approach they used, note Brewer and Hunter (1989), is not merely appropriate as a validation measure, but necessary:

But convergent, predictive, and discriminant validation require measures whose techniques are so different that any convergence found in the measures’ results could not possibly be attributable to overlapping sources of constant error. And to distinguish different focal concepts (discriminant validation) and to determine if concepts are related in theoretically predicted ways, measures must differ not only in their methods but also with respect to the concepts for which they are face- and content- valid. (And if two measures are different enough to be face and content valid measures of different focal concepts, then they are clearly too different to test one another’s convergent validity.) How then are all the necessary comparisons to be obtained and brought together in a single analysis? (Brewer & Hunter, 1989, p. 136, emphasis in the original).

Although they do not specifically use the term “triangulation,” Brewer and Hunter invoke very similar ideas to Denzin’s (1978) description of data triangulation, or the use of multiple sources of data, and methodological triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, to study the same social phenomenon (cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, p. 7). Whatever paradigmatic tensions exist among qualitative and quantitative methods, their differences prove more valuable, in the minds of some researchers, than their harmonies might, particularly for purposes of validity.

The so-called paradigm wars, which brought increased focus to the possibilities of mixed methods research, played out in the broad context of the social sciences, as many disciplines struggled with their own versions of the qualitative vs. quantitative conflict. In political science, for example, the debate has become known by the term “perestroikan,” after the pseudonym adopted by an anonymous critic of prevailing positivist and postpositivist dogma in hiring and publication. “Mr. Perestroika” sent an email to friends and colleagues in political science in October of 2000; the email ignited much debate and
discussion, and not a little discord, over the next several months, eventually receiving press attention in *The New York Times* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Amidst the ensuing rancor, a search for viable middle ground alighted upon what could generally be described as a mixed methods approach. In a particularly influential piece, Laitin (2003) called for “a tripartite method of comparative research—a method that integrates narrative… statistics, and formal modeling” (p. 165), a recipe that resembles a mixed methods approach to combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and design features in one project.

*An Integrative Approach*

Laitin confronts the position of Bent Flyvbjerg that social research is better conducted as a *phronetic* rather than an *epistemic* enterprise (Flyvbjerg, 2001, cited in Laitin 2003, p. 164). Flyvbjerg appropriates the term “phronesis” to hearken back to an Aristotelian notion of a grounded practical judgment that informs interpretation of cases. For Flyvbjerg, according to Laitin, phronesis entails “making reasonable judgments about the social world, based on a realistic view of power and sensitivity as to how that power is exerted” (p. 164). If case studies are careful enough, they can convey a contextualized feel for how political mechanisms bring about positive social change. In contrast, an epistemic approach to the social sciences mimics a natural science approach to methods and prediction, and, given the irreducibility of social context, is doomed to failure. While acknowledging the value of what Flyvbjerg calls phronesis in social research, Laitin rejects an either/or approach in which phronesis should replace traditional positivist social science. In Laitin’s view, both have much to offer questions of social importance, and both are necessary. Distinguishing and dividing the two limits our ability to gain
leverage on questions that are as complex as social reality typically can be: “The stark
distinction that Flyvbjerg draws between phronesis and the epistemic obscures the
productive complementarity of narrative, statistics, and formal analysis in social science”
(p. 175). A method that situates all three approaches as equal and necessary can do more
than one that relies upon phronesis alone, or one that merely pays lip-service to phronesis
as a subordinate, merely supplementary method to a dominant epistemic approach.

Emphasizing that in his model, the narrative approach is co-equal to formal theory
and statistical analysis, Laitin identifies three crucial roles for narrative analysis,
providing examples of research in which all three roles are exemplified. In the first role,
formal models rely upon narrative for a necessary “reality check:” “First, narrative
provides plausibility tests of all formal models, helping us to assess whether a game
theoretic model actually represents a set of real-world cases. Connecting a plausible
narrative with a formal model is a difficult and subtle task; doing it successfully adds
plausibility to a formal model” (p. 176). Narrative also serves the function of providing
insight into mechanisms, without which statistical analyses establishing cause can prove
rather empty. It is one thing for understanding social reality to know that an independent
variable causes a dependent variable; it means quite another thing for our understanding
of the social world to know how such causes work. Narrative increases the likelihood that
the “hows” and “whys” are as thoroughly understood as the effects themselves, and
without that understanding, many statistical models would be gravely underspecified.

Finally, in articulating the third crucial role that narrative plays in his tripartite
approach, Laitin offers a parallel to the negative-case analysis that informs some
standards for qualitative rigor: narrative allows for better “analysis of residuals” (p. 178).
Statistical and formal models are never complete, and narrative helps fill in what’s missing: “Never in social science is all variance explained, and even in powerful models, the amount that we are able to explain is often paltry. Narrative, by giving a more complete picture of a social process, fills in where statistical and formal models are incomplete” (p. 178). For Laitin, it makes little sense to privilege any one of the three necessary components of social research when all are crucial to understanding. What he advocates instead, namely “inter alia openness of procedures, internal coherence of argument, good measurement of variables, increasing attempts to unravel context, assiduous concern for valid causal inferences, and rewards for replication” (pp. 180-181), generally speaks to goals which qualitative and quantitative researchers share, and could also be characterized as an argument in favor of mixed methods, broadly understood.

**Defining Shared Standards**

Laitin’s standards include goals that many qualitative researchers might consider unimportant or implausible; for example, many qualitative researchers would question whether replicability is important or even possible given the truly contextualized nature of their practice. If Laitin remains perhaps overly faithful to a quantitative worldview in his version of a mixed methods approach, a more recent publication in political science widens the call for a methodological pluralism that extends beyond merely importing quantitative standards into a qualitative model. Brady and Collier (2004), in their edited volume, *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, explicitly set about to dismantle an approach to research methods that confers credibility to qualitative approaches only when they approximate quantitative principles. Many proponents of what they call the “mainstream quantitative approach” (p. 4) insist on norms appropriate
for regression analysis and similar tools, imposing a quantitative framework for all research:

Scholars who champion this approach often invoke norms identified with those tools to argue for the superiority of quantitative research, sometimes suggesting that qualitative research could be greatly improved by following such norms more closely. These scholars in effect propose a quantitative template for qualitative research. In doing so, they have made some valuable suggestions that qualitative researchers would do well to consider. (p. 3)

Even though it offers valuable contributions, however, Brady and Collier see such an approach as profoundly limited. Any meaningful discussion of methodology, they assert, “must be grounded in the premise that strengths and weaknesses are to be found in both the qualitative and quantitative approaches” (p. 5, emphasis in the original). If qualitative analyses sometimes suffer from “a lack of quantification and small numbers of observations,” quantitative analyses sometimes display “procrustean quantification and a jumble of dissimilar cases” (p. 5). If neither approach is perfect and each side has something to teach the other, then “the most productive way to reconcile these two approaches is not through the unilateral imposition of norms, but rather through mutual learning” (p. 5). The entire book is designed around that particular goal, with chapters authored by qualitative and quantitative researchers alike—a cooperative venture that mirrors the profiles and efforts of the two authors themselves, Brady being a quantitative survey researcher and Collier a qualitative comparativist. From divergent traditions and training, they converge upon the conviction that qualitative and quantitative researchers share the same essential challenge, to eliminate rival explanations. To that end, qualitative and quantitative researchers make different types of observations—what Brady and Collier call “data set observations,” or arrays of scores on specific variables,
and “causal process observations,” or observations about context, processes, or mechanisms. Both types of observations matter, despite their contrasting implications.

Research is about tradeoffs, Brady and Collier contend, and responsible researchers both recognize the trades they make, and respect the trades that others make:

Scholars who make particular choices about trade-offs that arise in the design of research should recognize the contributions of those who opt for different choices. For example, let us suppose that a scholar has decided, after careful consideration, to focus on a small N to carry out a fine-grained, contextually sensitive analysis that will facilitate operationalizing a difficult concept. A large-N researcher should, in principle, be willing to recognize this choice as legitimate. (p. 10)

The appropriate goal is not to champion one approach as superior to another, but rather to find shared standards by which to judge good research across both platforms. Research is about tradeoffs, but the trade is not between method and rigor, as Brady and Collier assert, “methodological pluralism and analytical rigor can be combined” (p. 7). With shared standards, researchers can combine the analytical strengths of both traditions, to the betterment of all.

While Brady and Collier evince genuine respect for qualitative methods and their contributions to social understanding, their stated convictions regarding the purposes of social research reveals a particular paradigmatic stance that does not resonate with all qualitative researchers. Brady and Collier make it clear that research is about explanation, thereby overlooking paradigms that are less confirmatory than exploratory, less concerned with *a priori* than with grounded theory, less concerned with theory-building and testing than with emancipation. Some basic conflicts at the paradigmatic level are unaddressed in their manifesto; Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and Greene and Caracelli (2003) explore paradigm-related challenges in more depth.
Laitin and Brady & Collier did not so much resolve the incompatibility thesis as ignore it. Their work does little to address the claim, voiced principally by Smith (1983), that qualitative and quantitative researchers suffer from irreconcilable differences:

One approach takes a subject-object position on the relationship to subject matter; the other takes a subject-subject position. One separates facts and values, while the other sees them as inextricably mixed. One searches for laws, and the other seeks understanding. These positions do not seem compatible. (Smith, p. 12, cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 11)

With this seemingly insurmountable distance between the two approaches, Smith sees little point in continuing dialogue. As in quantitative circles, the qualitative field is also inhabited by hard-liners who, like Brady and Collier’s mainstream quantitative scholars, assert not just the incompatibility of the two worldviews, but the inherent superiority of their own. Guba (1987), for example, painted quantitative researchers as hopelessly old-world in his remark that the qualitative paradigm precludes the quantitative “just as surely as the belief in a round world precludes belief in a flat one” (p. 31, cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 11). As it would be impossible to hold both beliefs simultaneously, the only sensible choice, to follow the analogy, would be to abandon the outdated view of the world represented by the positivists and postpositivists.

*Mixing Paradigms*

Others have sustained more of an effort at resolving the paradigmatic conflict, as Greene and Caracelli (2003) describe. Starting from the premise that all social researchers begin with some ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, Greene and Caracelli trace the various approaches some have taken to reconciling these assumptions in mixed methods work. They identify four distinct stances with respect to mixing paradigms: the dialectic stance, the new paradigm stance, the pragmatic (or context
driven) stance, and the concept driven stance. Of the four, the second two stances hold that the paradigms are not terribly important to inquiry decisions, that other considerations, such as the inquiry context or conceptual framework, should matter more. For the dialectic and new paradigm approaches, the paradigms do matter, and each stance offers an option for resolving, or at least overcoming, paradigmatic conflict.

Far from fearing or avoiding the necessary opposition of paradigmatic assumptions, those who take a dialectic approach find such tensions generative and expansive:

…different paradigms do indeed offer different, and sometimes contradictory and opposing, ideas and perspectives. In dialectic mixed methods inquiry, these differences are valued precisely for their potential—through the tension they invoke—to generate meaningfully better understandings. (Greene & Caracelli, 2003, p. 97)

Thus for the dialectics, assumptions matter, particularly as they guide inquiry and analyses, but they matter collectively more than any one set of assumptions matters on its own. Because all sets of assumptions offer “a partial but valuable lens on human phenomena,” looking through multiple available lenses stretches the vision of the research undertaking overall.

Apparently, paradigms now aren’t what they used to be, as a host of alternatives in the social sciences offer broader sets of beliefs and assumptions, and consequently, available methods, than the traditional approaches (p. 99). In order to transcend the incommensurabilities of these older paradigms, the new paradigm approach defines knowledge and reality in new ways. Greene and Caracelli note that a movement known as “commonsense or scientific realism” exemplifies this approach: “In commonsense realism, social reality is both causal and contextual, and social knowledge is both
propositional and constructed. To respect all facets of realism, multiple methods are not only welcomed but actually required” (p. 99, emphasis in the original). For commonsense realists, this way of viewing the social world offers a resolution to the paradigm wars. They advocate “a dual emphasis…on sense-making and value probing, with both of these understood as part of a naturalized epistemology. The dictum of a naturalized epistemology is that to understand how we should make sense of our world, it is important first to study how humans actually do make sense of the world” (p. 99). Since this approach privileges neither of the traditional paradigms over the other, “social inquirers can select multiple methods in support of the multiple sensemaking capacities of humans” (p. 99). Social reality in context is complex, and humans have developed multiple tools to help us understand and explain it. In the commonsense realism paradigm, all such tools are at the inquirer’s disposal. This approach has proven particularly generative in program evaluation, as Greene and Caracelli cite Mark, Henry and Julnes (2000) as an example of “sensemaking evaluation theory” (p. 100). In their approach, the qualitative components of the research program are essential to understanding the quantitative components, because factors leading to program success/failure are seldom immediately transparent, even with (especially with?) numerical data. They advocate a multilevel approach, and assert that particularly in organizations, the question of values is crucial to understanding success or failure. Furthermore, context matters tremendously, since issues like implementation, which are crucial to programmatic success, will differ dramatically across contexts.

One way to counter the incompatibility thesis is to set up a new paradigm in which statements about the nature of the truth and reality are far less important than the
contexts and experiences by which we come to learn about truth and reality. This would be somewhat descriptive of the pragmatic approach, in which research decisions are not dictated by paradigm but by the demands of the particular inquiry context (p. 101). If such contexts are complex enough to demand multiple methods, then pragmatists see no reason not to mix. For pragmatists, “the essential criteria for making design decisions are practical, contextually responsive, and consequential” (Datta, 1997b, p. 34, cited in Greene & Caracelli, p. 101). Pragmatists are freed from the allegiances required in adherence to any given paradigm that subverts the research context and the demands it imposes upon inquiry to an abstract set of concepts that become larger than the research itself:

After all, much of pragmatic philosophy (e.g., Davidson, 1973; Rorty, 1982; Wittgenstein, 1958) is deconstructive—an attempt to get philosophers to stop taking concepts such as “truth,” “reality,” and “conceptual scheme,” turning them into superconcepts such as “Truth,” “Reality,” and “Conceptual Scheme,” and generating insoluble pseudoproblems in the process. (Howe, 1988, p. 15, cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 12; emphasis in the original)

Because such concepts, and superconcepts, are downplayed in the pragmatist paradigm, differences regarding the nature of truth, reality, and conceptual scheme become inconsequential, so that disputes at the heart of the paradigm wars are rendered irrelevant. The incompatibility thesis fades, and mixed methods are not only appropriate but warranted when the research context demands them.

Like the pragmatists, those who favor a concept-driven approach to research forge a resolution of the incompatibility thesis by choosing to emphasize different priorities. In their case, the substantive agenda takes precedence over epistemological or ontological demands of a given paradigm:
In this final stance, inquiry decisions are not made for their congruence with particular sets of philosophical assumptions but rather for their ability to further the substantive agendas of the inquiries. In this stance, the nature of the concepts being studied leads the inquirer’s field decisions. (p. 103)

While it can be difficult to separate substantive concepts from their often-related paradigmatic underpinnings, concept-driven scholars assert that distinctions can be made. In their minds, the tradeoffs involve deciding which philosophical loyalties to honor: the broad assumptions that inform the paradigm, or the more contextualized substantive assumptions that define the research undertaking. Or, as Greene and Caracelli put it:

It involves the difference between making inquiry decisions so as to minimize error variance due to differences across study contexts (or, alternatively, to fully understand the complexities and contingencies of each study context) or to make better sense of the concepts being studied. (p. 103)

Provided the theory in question is explicit and carefully detailed, proponents of the concept-driven approach find that leading with theory can allow for more efficient design and informed interpretation of results, and allows for integration of methods that might otherwise be considered paradigmatically off-limits.

While some mixed methods researchers are more concerned with paradigmatic compatibility and others are less concerned, virtually all need to confront issues of design and validity that apply uniquely to mixed methods approaches. With respect to design, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) note that there has been a proliferation of various mixed methods designs over the last few years; in an attempt to establish a common nomenclature for the field, they define and organize these designs into what they hope will be a definitive typology. They begin by distinguishing “multimethod designs” from “mixed method designs” under the general banner of “multiple method designs” (pp. 28-
29). By multiple method designs, they intend designs that incorporate either more than one method or more than one worldview. Such designs can be multimethod, which utilize more than one method but are restricted to one worldview, or mixed method, which use both qualitative and quantitative (QUAL and QUAN) collection procedures or approaches. Among mixed method designs, Tashakkori and Teddlie further distinguish between mixed model and mixed method approaches. Mixed method research involves mixing QUAL and QUAN approaches in the methods stage in a study; mixed model research involves mixing QUAN and QUAL approaches in multiple or in all stages of a study. Others have advocated similar but distinct versions of their own typologies; Tashakkori and Teddlie opt for their approach because it is “based on ‘procedure’ or method of study rather than on priority of orientation, purpose of study, theoretical perspective, and so on” (p. 28). They see such a typology, whether their own or one of those proffered by Greene and Caracelli (1997), Creswell (2002), Morse (1991), or Morgan (1998), as advisable so that mixed methodologists can adapt a common nomenclature that transcends QUAN and QUAL orientations. Typologies also heighten legitimacy by underscoring designs that are clearly distinct from either QUAN or QUAL designs, and by providing a teaching tool by which students can learn the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches.

The typologies of mixed method designs prove more useful as an organizing tool for seeing what other researchers have already done than as a guide for understanding how to undertake mixed methods designs of one’s own. To guide such decisions, Brewer & Hunter (1989) articulate what has become known as the fundamental principle of mixed methods research:
Our individual methods may be flawed, but fortunately the flaws in each are not identical. A diversity of imperfection allows us to combine methods not only to gain their individual strengths but also to compensate for their particular faults and limitations. The multimethod approach is largely built upon this insight. Its fundamental strategy is to *attack a research problem with an arsenal of methods that have nonoverlapping weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths.* (p. 17; emphasis in the original)

Johnson and Turner (2003) cite this principle as vital to the process of inquiry decision-making, and offer three main reasons for adhering to it, all of which resonate with earlier discussions of triangulation. First, the principle allows for designs that obtain convergence or corroboration of findings. While so doing, the principle also allows the researcher to eliminate or minimize key plausible alternative explanations during analysis of data. Finally, because the principle pushes designs to be expansive, it allows the researcher to elucidate divergent aspects of the phenomena under study (p. 299).

*Validity and Authenticity*

Design decisions necessarily implicate questions of validity in any research, and for mixed methods researchers, the issues of validity can be complicated by the need to speak to two competing paradigms. In the quantitative tradition, validity typically refers to the extent to which a study has controlled for or eliminated rival hypotheses. The qualitative counterpart to validity is generally understood to be credibility, or alternatively, trustworthiness, which, although defined in various amounts of detail, boils down to the notion of convincing one’s audience that the inquiry is worth paying attention to and has been fairly conducted. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) propose an emphasis upon inference quality as opposed to validity or credibility, seeing a need to forge a nomenclature that transcends QUAN and QUAL traditions. By using “inference
quality,” Tashakkori and Teddlie combine essential features of validity and credibility, noting that the two concepts share some important common ground:

The concepts of internal validity and credibility appear to be highly similar because both processes involve determining the degree to which a researcher believes that his or her conclusions accurately describe what actually happened in the study. In one case, the researcher rules out alternative explanations through research design and logic. In the other case, the investigator uses a variety of techniques, the most important of which is to ascertain whether the research participants find the investigator’s conclusions “credible” (i.e., member checks). (p. 36)

Inference quality, Tashakkori and Teddlie assert, serves as an umbrella term that orients the question toward the final outcome of a study, which may be conclusion, understanding, or explanation. This inclusive construction of inference allows room for both deductive and inductive processes, and even, more broadly construed, emancipatory intentions.

Borrowing from Lincoln and Guba (2000), who proposed “rigor in application of method and rigor in interpretation” as two basic criteria in determining the authenticity of findings from qualitative research (p. 37), Tashakkori and Teddlie propose two similar dimensions of inference quality. They emphasize “design quality, which comprises the standards for the evaluation of the methodological rigor of the mixed methods research, and…interpretive rigor, which comprises the standards for the evaluation of the accuracy or authenticity of the conclusions” (p. 37). Design quality relies upon established best practices from both QUAL and QUANT traditions, including attention to such matters as sampling criteria, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, and dependability audits. Acknowledging that interpretive rigor presents a less straightforward challenge, Tashakkori and Teddlie link it to notions of consistency when they define four criteria for
evaluating inference quality. The four criteria include within-design consistency, which pertains to design quality; and conceptual consistency, interpretive agreement (or consistency) and interpretive distinctiveness—all of which pertain to interpretive rigor (p. 40). These criteria engage particular questions in the process of evaluation along the standard of interpretive rigor: Are the inferences consistent with each other and with the known state of knowledge and theory? Are answers to different aspects of the research question consistent with each other? Are global inferences consistent with results from both QUAL and QUAN strands of the study? Do other scholars agree that the inferences are the most defensible interpretation of the results? Do the results make sense to participants? Are the inferences distinctively superior to other interpretations? Are there other plausible explanations for the findings? (pp. 40-41) Unlike other scholars who have designed typologies to account for method dominance or priority, Tashakkori and Teddlie see these questions as the central issues regarding quality of inference, and they apply in the same way whether the study is dominated by a qualititative approach or a quantitative approach. Consequently, method priority is not a priority for their approach to validity.

Rationale and Hypotheses

From the foundations in the scholarship of the professions, teacher professionalism, relational sociology, network analysis, and mixed-methods research this study converges upon the following research goals. As the review of the literature has shown, there is a clear need to strengthen the theoretical basis for understanding both teaching as a profession and professionalism in teaching. This study hopes to lay the foundation for understanding professionalism at both the individual and organizational levels.
The first move in this project is to define a theory of individual professionalism that is consistent with the theory of the professions rooted in the process of jurisdiction. The review of the literature shows that current constructions of individual professionalism currently operational in educational research do not rely upon the theoretical engine of jurisdiction to explain why we expect what we do expect from teachers we consider to be highly professional. This study seeks to locate notions of individual professionalism more squarely in the theoretical frame that emphasizes the importance of jurisdiction in professional status.

We can derive individual standards of professionalism in teaching from a jurisdictional model because the model gives us the mechanisms that contribute most directly to professional status. The literature seems to show quite clearly that teachers have only inconsistently succeeded in establishing theirs as a profession according to traditional notions. A central assertion of this study is that teaching is more likely to achieve that status with more attention to jurisdiction. By coordinating their efforts and orienting their standards to the jurisdictional process, individual members of the teaching profession do more to establish both their personal jurisdiction, as effective teachers who are experts in the particular problems of their practice, and the jurisdiction of the teaching corps en masse, as the profession best equipped to effectively educate the children in their communities. Thus, when we measure individual professionalism, we define our standards according to the four central mechanisms that are key to jurisdiction: academic engagement, self-enforcement of standards, effectiveness, and contribution to the professional community. Teachers who embrace these standards most thoroughly are those who do most to secure the public confidence that is at the heart of jurisdiction.
Those who do not embrace them at all contribute to the vulnerability of the teaching profession to competing claims for the right to educate the community’s children. In many districts, that vulnerability is best represented by the proliferation of charter schools, as parents seek alternatives to school systems that have surrendered their claims to effectiveness and expertise.

At present, conventional notions of teacher professionalism occasionally overlap with those put forth in this study. The literature does show many instances in which some, but not all, of these four critical components are addressed in the leading research. This study, however, distinguishes itself from earlier approaches by calling for a purposeful adaptation of the jurisdictional model into an individual-level set of standards. Such an adaptation, put into operation, comprises the first step of this research project: an instrument that can validly and reliably measure professionalism at the individual level. Thus, the first and most fundamental hypothesis of this study concerns measurement:

\[ H_1: \text{Individual professionalism is a construct that can be validly and reliably measured by an instrument theoretically derived from the model of the professions articulated by Abbott (1988).} \]

If that individual level measure functions as it should, we should be able to observe other relationships, between professionalism and other concepts that locate professionalism within a group or organizational setting. If a fundamental proposition of this study is that a professional organization is more than merely a collection of professional individuals, we should also be able to see professionalism interacting differently with school-level variables in different school cultures. In a highly functional professional environment, for example, we would expect professionalism in teaching to
be the primary basis for esteem. Esteem will not be predicated on such issues as friendship, or years of experience (as a variable divorced from performance). In a dysfunctional professional environment, we would not expect professionalism to be the primary determinant of esteem. In its place, we would expect to see other traits, not related to teaching performance, such as friendship, or survival in a chaotic climate. Thus, other hypotheses for this study concern the relationship between professionalism and other characteristics not directly related to performance:

\[ H_2: \text{In a highly functioning school, professional esteem will not be significantly related to extraneous factors, such as years of experience or friendship in itself.} \]

\[ H_3: \text{In a highly functioning school, professional esteem will be significantly related to individual professionalism (as measured by the instrument referenced in } H1). \]

\[ H_4: \text{In a poorly functioning school, professional esteem will be significantly related to extraneous factors, such as years of experience or friendship.} \]

\[ H_5: \text{In a poorly functioning school, professional esteem will not be significantly related to individual professionalism.} \]

The chapters which follow describe the methodology undertaken in this study, the results of the inquiry, and the conclusions we can derive from this research, as well as implications for further investigation.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This study employed mixed-methods research to investigate the concepts of individual and organizational professionalism. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to gain leverage on the normative processes and collegial interactions that characterize school cultures. Surveys and interviews delved into individual beliefs and behaviors regarding the work and performance of subjects and their colleagues. This chapter describes the selection and composition of the sample, the instruments used to gather data, and the ethics and politics that governed procedures and practices in the study.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of two Midwestern high schools, one set in a large city, the other in a suburb of that same city. The two sites are of comparable size: the suburban school enrolls about 770 students, while the urban school numbers around 860. The schools were chosen with an eye to contrast, so as to better explore how normative culture would track professionalism. Other than the size of their enrollments, they are quite different educational and professional environments. The suburban school has been deemed “Excellent” by the state board of education, having met all twelve of the twelve indicators on the 2006 state school report card. Its counterpart in the urban setting received the designation “Continuous Improvement” on its report card, meeting four of...
the twelve indicators. While both schools have met federal standards for Adequate Yearly Progress, performance index scores, which are calculated using the scores of every tested student, indicate that many fewer students in the urban school are achieving at “advanced” levels: 8% are designated as advanced, whereas 39% of students in the suburban school have reached that designation. 10th Grade math and reading scores also reveal substantial differences in school performance. In the city school, 67% of 10th graders score at proficient levels in state math tests, as compared to 93% in the suburban school. In reading, the gap is narrower, but still notable: 84% in the city school, compared to 96% in the suburbs. In both schools, 100% of core academic subjects are taught by teachers with the proper credentials. In the suburban school, 88.2% of teachers have a Master’s Degree. In the urban school, 67% of teachers have a Master’s. Thus from these data we can see that the schools are significantly different in their levels of student achievement, though less dramatically different when it comes to teacher inputs such as credentials.

As a further check that the two schools genuinely fit into a “most-different” case selection approach, items were included on the questionnaire to distinguish the schools on the basis of organizational effectiveness. These items were drawn from the Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness (IPOE), which asks respondents to rate the effectiveness of their school along dimensions like quality and quantity of product, efficiency, adaptability, and flexibility (Miskel, McDonald, & Bloom, 1983). The validity of the IPOE in school research has been established by Hoy and Ferguson (1985). Sample items, answered on a 5-point Likert scale, include: “How informed are the people in your school about innovations that could affect the way they do their work?” and “How
responsive are people in your school to changes in methods, routines, or equipment?”

Eight such items were included in this study; factor scores were calculated, and the means of the two schools compared. The difference in means was substantial and significant: the urban school’s mean was lower by 1.575 (.8824 versus .6933), \( p = .03 \). The standard deviation for the pooled sample was 3.06; thus, the difference amounts to roughly half a standard deviation. This measure, which differs from all other items on the survey in that it asks individual respondents about the organization itself and not their own teaching, further distinguishes the two cases in the sample as dissimilar educational and professional environments.

The schools also feature very different racial and class profiles. The suburban school is 88% white, with 5.7% economically disadvantaged, again according to the state report card. The urban school is 81% African American, and 75.4% economically disadvantaged. Whereas 9% of students in the urban setting are of limited English proficiency, virtually none of the students in the suburban school carry that designation—there are few enough LEP students that the actual percentage is not even calculated. The schools look very different inside and out, and present very different challenges to the educators and administrators within their walls. These cases were chosen purposefully, on the basis that each school offers unique opportunities to see how different normative cultures interact with individual professionalism.

Individual subjects completed two distinct surveys, and some agreed to participate in face-to-face interviews with the researcher. Response rates at the two schools were comparable: of fifty-seven individuals solicited for participation in the suburban school, thirty-three returned completed surveys. Of seventy-eight individuals solicited in the
urban school, forty-two returned completed surveys. These translate into response rates of 57% and 54%, respectively.

Interview subjects were chosen with attention to gender balance, representation across departments, and diversity with respect to years of experience. These efforts at balance were crossed somewhat in the urban setting, as institutional characteristics interfered with my ability to contact participants. Teachers do not have phones and are not directly accessible, except through the school’s main switchboard, which is often manned by student aides who proved unreliable when it came to messages. Teachers also do not have regular access to email at this school, complicating efforts at solicitation. In the end, I was able to balance the interview roster with respect to gender, departments, and experience. However, efforts at racial balance were stymied by these communication difficulties. One subject who agreed to participate misunderstood the scope and nature of the interview, and wished to conduct it in his classroom with students present (presumably completing seatwork). As this was out of the question, I had to forego that interview, and he would not reschedule. I was not able to find a replacement. Consequently, the sample from the urban school is one subject short—there are four interviews for that site, compared to five from the suburban site. This would have made racial representation congruent with the makeup of the faculty. In all other respects, interview participants generally represent a cross-section of the faculties they discuss in our conversations.

Instruments

The variables under examination in this study were explored through two distinct surveys: the “Teacher Attitude Survey,” a conventional questionnaire consisting of forty-
three Likert-type items, and a roster-format network survey. Both surveys were administered under conditions designed to scrupulously protect confidentiality. Each subject, in both sites, received a sealed envelope with the two surveys, a letter of introduction and explanation, instructions for completion of the instruments, and a return envelope. The surveys and return envelopes were numerically coded, so that subjects’ names were blind to the researcher, as data were entered by a research assistant who kept the case identifications in a locked office elsewhere on campus. Subjects were instructed to complete the surveys at their convenience, at a time and place in which they felt comfortable and confident in the confidentiality of their responses. They then returned the completed surveys either by U.S. Mail, or to a locked collection box in each school’s main office. Only the researcher had the key to this box, which was checked regularly. Those who had not responded were solicited twice more for participation, then left alone. Ultimately, a total of seventy-five individuals completed both surveys; thirty-three at the suburban school and forty-two from the urban school. In both sites, some who had chosen not to participate in the written survey did agree to be interviewed instead.

*Professionalism Survey*

The “Teacher Attitude Survey” (somewhat blandly named so as not to overtly signal the attitudes under study) was developed through a pilot process in the months before the actual data collection for this study. Theoretical implications of the jurisdictional processes behind professionalism gave rise to the four subscales, *Academic emphasis*, *Self-enforcement of standards*, *Effectiveness*, and *Contribution to a professional community*. For each subscale, I wrote ten to fifteen potential survey items, which were examined by a panel consisting of the researcher, the researcher’s advisor,
and an outside scholar experienced in survey construction. The main criterion for inclusion on the pilot survey was unanimity among the three regarding the face validity of each item. (For more on the face validity of the items that actually appear on the final version of the survey, see Chapter 4.) This initial draft of the survey was administered to seventy subjects, virtually all practicing teachers, all students in principal’s licensure courses at three different universities, in New York, Ohio, and New Jersey. Analysis of item loadings allowed us to cut those items that loaded at less than .3; because this initial sample was small, we chose this cutoff rather than a more stringent one, especially for items that appeared to have strong content validity. To maintain balanced scales, we wrote some new items to round the total to forty-six, and proceeded to gather a second wave of pilot data.

This second version of the instrument was administered to seventy-two subjects, none of whom had participated in the first pilot, all of whom were students in principal’s licensure courses. Analyses of item loadings revealed that two subscales needed more revision. These revised scales were administered to twenty-four students in an Introduction to Education Administration course; after panel members were confident in both content validity and item loadings for these subscales, the final version of the instrument was compiled for the last round of the pilot.

Students in principal’s licensure courses at five different universities completed the final pilot survey, for a total of 115 subjects. These surveys were completed in New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Virginia, offering some degree of regional representation to the pilot study. The final version of the instrument contained thirty-five items distributed across the four subscales, and balanced for scoring direction. In
addition, eight items from the IPOE, described above, were attached to the questionnaire as a further check on case selection decisions.

*Network Survey*

The network survey was collected by use of a questionnaire, which is the most common method of network data collection (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). A roster format, in which respondents were provided with a faculty roster and were asked to select names of individuals with whom they share ties, allowed for collection of four distinct networks in the same survey: professional esteem, generalized esteem, friendship, and contact. Each respondent could choose as many names on the roster as he/she deemed appropriate in response to four specific prompts. Professional esteem networks were gathered with the question, “Of the teachers on this list, whom do you regard as positive examples of professionalism?” The generalized esteem network, which was included to distinguish between esteem based on professionalism and esteem driven by other dimensions of school life, was elicited by the following prompt: “Of the teachers on this list, whom do you recognize as individuals who are just generally good for the school?” Respondents provided the friendship network of each school when they replied to the prompt, “Of the teachers on this list, whom do you regard as a friend?” The contact network, which measures information flow as a mechanical, not an evaluative, process, arose from responses to the prompt, “Of the teachers on this list, whom do you interact with in the course of conducting your job-related responsibilities?” To monitor for over-response, which sometimes occurs in network surveys that explore socially desirable characteristics, a fictitious name (“Joseph Wilson”) was added to rosters in both schools (following Paxton & Moody, 2003). In each case, the number of respondents nominating
this nonexistent colleague for any of the four networks was negligible (3 respondents in each school), suggesting that over-response is not a significant problem for this study.

From these networks, we were able to determine the centrality of each individual in each of the four networks, in each school. As far as network measures go, centrality is perhaps the most intuitive: it tells us who is at the “center” of the network for any given type of tie. Thus, in a high school popularity network, for example, the most popular students would be represented in the center of the network graph, while those marginalized would be represented on the periphery. Network position is determined as a function of the nominations from the surveys: those whom many nominate as friends or professional exemplars will be more central. This notion of centrality, based in the number of ties or nominations, is known as degree centrality, and it is the simplest type, but there are others.

One particular type of centrality, known as betweenness centrality, lends itself notably well to this study, because it accounts for the other actors who often mediate a relationship between one individual and a colleague. Intuitively, we know that often messages must travel from one person to another via other parties—the children’s game “Telephone” is a simple but clear example. These other parties, or “actors in the middle” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 188) have varying degrees of influence on the messages their colleagues receive. Actors who have a lot of influence are those who are “in the middle” of a lot of social transactions (hence the name, betweenness). This view of centrality is a particularly good fit with one of the core insights of this study, which is that professionalism has as much to do with situatedness within the group as with the individual attributes any one teacher brings into the group.
Betweenness centrality shares another affinity with the Telephone game, in that it acknowledges the greater clarity of messages that travel over shorter paths. Betweenness centrality is a function partly of the geodesic distance between one actor and all the others to whom she is connected. The geodesic path is the shortest distance between two actors. If three other people are needed to connect the first actor with the second, those three intermediaries are said to lie along the geodesic of the other two. In order to have a large betweenness centrality, then, as Wasserman and Faust (1994) explain, “the actor must be between many of the actors via their geodesics” (p. 189, emphasis in the original). This index estimates how “between,” or how central, an actor is in terms of probabilities—if an individual sits on no geodesics, the probability that she would be involved in important communication, to follow our Telephone example, is zero. If, on the other hand, a teacher sits on all geodesics in the network, that probability approaches one. Because the measure sums these estimated probabilities over all other pairs of actors, it’s possible to estimate an individual’s betweenness centrality even when the graph is not connected. This is a big advantage when complete data sets are hard to come by.

If we think about the spread of norms through a building, we see that betweenness centrality offers a lot of leverage on understanding a given teacher’s influence in the communication of expectations and beliefs. Wasserman and Faust (1994) link centrality closely to prestige, noting that the two are synonymous when ties that an actor receives, and not sends, are considered. (This can only be true, however, when the substantive nature of the tie in question is compatible with prestige. Centrality in an antagonism network, for example, would hardly make sense as a measure of prestige—we would not
call the central object of antagonism “prestigious,” exactly.) In this study, in light of these associations, betweenness centrality is utilized to form the measures of *professional esteem* (centrality in the professional esteem network) and *friendship* (centrality in the friendship network). These measures figure prominently in our understanding of normative cultures in the schools, and of the relative importance of professionalism as a predicate for esteem. In Chapter 4, I explore findings in which individuals who are highly esteemed may or may not be those who exhibit high degrees of professionalism. This insight gives us a lot of information about the normative culture of the school itself; thus, betweenness centrality is one of the key variables of this study.

**Interviews**

If network data provided a structural view of normative culture, comparable to an aerial photograph or map, the ethnographic data provided an “on the ground” look at the behaviors and attitudes that are valued in practice. Furthermore, analysis of network data requires translation of subjects into nodes, of persons into positions, of relationships into dyads. Qualitative data collection methods balance the structural approach by preserving subjectivity and personhood. The interviews offered subjects the opportunity to characterize professional norms and relationships in their own voices. The richness of that data, presented in Chapter 5, speaks to a level of depth not typically captured by a series of paper-and-pencil surveys. These conversations were of roughly one hour in duration, and followed an unstructured format, because, as Schwandt (2001) notes, “these allow the most flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both respondents and interviewees” (p. 135). In all, data were collected from nine interviews—four at the urban school, and five at the suburban school. Morse (1994) suggests 30-50 interviews for
ethnographies; however, “finding themes and building theory may require fewer cases than comparing across groups and testing hypotheses or models” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 780). Though future research may more systematically test hypotheses deriving from this study, the current research is explicitly theory-building in its focus.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and coded thematically. Patton (1990) distinguishes between case analysis, in which the researcher writes a case study for each subject, and cross-case analysis, in which central issues or themes from across respondents are grouped together. I opted for the latter approach, deriving themes both inductively and deductively. Miles and Huberman (1994) endorse such an approach, in which the researcher starts with general themes from the literature, and adds and expands the themes once she has engaged in the data. In this case, a priori, themes flowed naturally out of the theoretical approach to jurisdiction that guided this study’s conception of professionalism. The four subcomponents of professionalism naturally generated codes for analysis of the interviews. Other codes, however, emerged from patterns apparent in the interviews themselves, which had not necessarily been perceived or fully realized in theoretical considerations. These emergent codes lent themselves to analysis of divergent data, or what I termed, “complicating evidence.” They also figured prominently in consideration of “amplifying evidence,” in which I explored patterns that I had only partially theorized a priori, and in “motivating evidence,” in which the socially compelling power of the data was so powerful as to warrant special mention as the driving motivation behind this research. These sections are developed fully in Chapter 5.

As Norman Denzin (2000) puts it succinctly, “Words matter” (p. 902). The written representation of ethnographic data was painstakingly undertaken, in hopes that
the accounts should “possess depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, and coherence” (p. 902). The finicky balancing act that Denzin describes plays out in Chapter 5, in which I struggled to keep theory about the social processes of schools and the multiple truths of subjects’ lived experience equally in view. Throughout the writing process, I also wrestled with another balancing act, between a desire for accuracy and a recognition of the limits of my understanding. As Schwandt (2001) notes, “Few such inquirers cling to naïve realism and argue that their accounts are a literal mirror or representation of an external reality; few, however, would also abandon the idea that their portrayals, depictions, or descriptions, although fictions (in the sense of invented or crafted), should not also be accurate” (p. 227). The press for accuracy was easier in some respects than the more humbling admission that my pictures of the social world, like all others, are blurred. In the ultimate structure of Chapter 5, however, both impulses are served equally by the inclusion of disconfirming evidence that merits a whole section of the discussion.

Trustworthiness

Efforts to establish the trustworthiness of this study represent a good faith but occasionally messy project of uniting the participants’ and the researcher’s interests. Two principles, reflexivity and triangulation, guided the procedures employed to make this study trustworthy; in neither case did the actual practice of the research meet the ideals I had in mind when I began. Ultimately, however, efforts to ensure confidentiality, to engage in negative case analysis, to conduct member checks, to keep a researcher’s journal, and to participate in peer debriefing render this research essentially, if not perfectly, trustworthy.
**Reflexivity**

The principle of reflexivity, as described by Lincoln and Guba (2000), involves acknowledging the shifting, expansive, pervasive presence of the self as researcher at the center of the study. Placing the researcher as the object of scrutiny as much as participants are, Lincoln and Guba define reflexivity as “a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself” (p. 183). The researcher’s journal and peer debriefing were excellent contexts in which to take a reflexive stance and face up to my situatedness during data collection and, especially, analysis and write-up.

**Researcher’s Journal**

The researcher’s journal plays an interesting role in this study, as I kept it for a multiplicity of reasons. Some of the entries are simply documentary: I note to myself precisely what steps I took to develop the pilot questionnaire, to which universities I have sent copies, to which professors I am indebted for their help in returning their students’ responses. I describe how we fussed over semantics, whittled down lists of items from fifteen to ten to six in some subscales, and so on. I made entries weekly, describing my progress on Human Subjects review procedures, efforts to contact principals, and meetings with a sociology professor over the finer details of network survey data. Throughout the weeks and months of planning before data collection, the journal, initiated upon the recommendation of my adviser, inscribed much of what I considered the “grunt work” of the research process. I never thought to question its basic utility, as I knew I would find it hard to remember precisely how I executed each step of the pilot
process, for example, unless I had written it down someplace. As I wrote the earlier section of this chapter in which I describe those steps, my faith in this function of the journal was affirmed.

As this is a mixed-methods study, however, the research journal serves another critical purpose as well, one much more deeply rooted in the process of reflexivity. The journal serves both its qualitative and its quantitative masters, and what is notable now is the extent to which these purposes commingle throughout its pages. Fine et al. (2000) note that “There has long been a tendency to view the self of the social science observer as a potential contaminant, something to be separated out, neutralized, minimized, standardized, and controlled” (p. 108). Upon review, this urge is apparent in some of the entries—the language is very clinical, very technical, dispassionate, with references to alphas, factor loadings, listwise deletion, and so on. Obviously some agent is present behind this language, establishing criteria, making decisions, running analysis. But entries of this type generally indicate a containment mentality consistent with what Fine and the others describe.

Other entries, however, are much more overtly “subjective,” as it becomes clear that the journal is also the repository for fears, exultations, frustrations, and fatigue. Particularly when subjects spoke of incidents or views that angered or outraged me, the journal displays my natural and intense reactions. Some of the stories I heard, or even witnessed, many of which did not “survive” into the final write-up in Chapter 5, linger in the journal, with all my attendant reactions. I chatted agreeably for twenty minutes or so with a very engaging sophomore in the principal’s office one afternoon while waiting for an interview. The principal had taken this young man under his wing and was trying to
forge a mentoring relationship with him; this was an eminently likeable kid and the principal’s warmth and regard for him was obvious. But when the boy finally went to class, after much hectoring, the principal asked if I hadn’t noticed the electronic monitoring bracelet he had clamped around his ankle. He had as much as admitted to the principal (much to the principal’s dismay, as he feared being called to testify) that he was the triggerman in a drive-by that killed a sixteen-year-old, and was awaiting trial. The principal expected him to agree to a plea deal at some point. This story, and my jolted reaction, filled a page or so of my research journal, in an entry that reaches quite a bit more deeply into my self than do my descriptions of pilot data.

In other entries, the journal exhibits the kind of reflection that shows me trying to understand myself better as a researcher. In an entry right after the one describing my conversation with the triggerman, I found myself exploring the possibility that I enjoyed some sort of voyeuristic fascination with some of the data I encountered. Years ago I student-taught in a school setting not unlike one of my research sites, and after this recent experience I recalled a student essay that displayed breathtaking talent—perhaps the most beautifully and powerfully written student piece I have ever seen. It was equally notable for its content as its prodigious skill, however; it detailed the young man’s reaction to having killed someone in a gang fight. Linking the two experiences in the journal, I questioned whether I found such “data” compelling because they are so distant from the rest of my teaching life. In the entry, which others might see as ponderous hand-wringing, I questioned the professional choices that took me away from boys like these, who somehow seem so much more moving and interesting than their counterparts in the SAT-obsessed school cultures I am used to. In the very next paragraph, I wondered if
there wasn’t something equally problematic, something voyeuristic or sensational, in my responses to these interactions. I charged myself with “othering” them. In an entry like this, the research journal is my main vehicle for reflexivity of the type and for the purpose that Fine and others describe. Its primary function is to engage the self, and not to contain it.

In retrospect, what appears less frequently than I would like in the journal is in-the-moment recognition of how my own attitudes and convictions—my own self—might be influencing my reception of my participants’ words. In that sense, the journal is perhaps more revealing for what it doesn’t contain than for what it does. I don’t see entries that describe awareness during the interviews of just how much I was personally as well as intellectually responding to what I heard. What I can see now in the transcript, what I hear on the tape, suggests I was reacting, which would be obvious. But in the journal I never wonder about whether this is communicated to the subjects, or how much it influences the tone of my next questions, or whether that cues them to what I, at some level, want to hear, what I identify with, or whether they try to conform to those cues. I can hear how much I want to show that I am one of them. I can hear myself revealing anecdotes from my experience, partly to elaborate on a question, or help the conversation flow, but also to let them know that I am like them. When a teacher at one school returned a blank survey with a note questioning my understanding of what it is like to teach high school, my reaction in the journal was highly indignant. I can see how much I wanted to be able to respond to this unnamed dissident, how much I wanted to assert myself as knowing, as qualified, as not other, as legitimate. The journal records all of that venting, but not necessarily reflexively. I did not look back at this entry at that time and
examine how much these reactions revealed a self that was also present in the interviews themselves. I found, and still find, myself reacting strongly to stories or comments that reflect unprofessionalism, that shortchange kids. I know this must have been apparent to subjects at some perhaps muted level—after all, none of those I spoke to revealed very much that would taint my view of their professionalism. It can’t be an accident that none of the people I talked to was a “bad teacher,” and while I wouldn’t expect my subjects to overcome our powerful need to represent ourselves as favorably as possible, I can’t believe that I wasn’t somehow complicit in whatever filtering there might have been. The research journal doesn’t show that I explored this at the time, nor even later, when I engaged in the initial write-ups and coding.

*Peer Debriefing*

If reflexivity in the research journal was uneven, it was at least in play as a self-conscious practice throughout much of the research process. So too, the process of peer debriefing provided opportunities to examine the fidelity of the coding and analysis process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) see peer debriefing as a way of “exploring aspects of inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 309). This characterization captures the heart of the peer debriefing process for me, as my debriefers required me to surface and articulate assumptions that might have otherwise gone unexplored. I relied upon three peer debriefers, two with whom I met occasionally and one with whom I met regularly, to problematize design, observations, and analyses. Two of these debriefers are fellow graduate students, both well-versed in the logic of qualitative inquiry. I met with each of them separately, twice, to discuss plans for data collection and write-ups. With one of these women, this was an exchange: I serve a
similar function in her research, which is still in process. Conversations with these women focused on my use of the data corpus, issues of inclusion and representation, and procedures for protecting participants’ confidentiality. In one instance, a peer debriefer reviewed a transcript with me, to help me insure that I was faithfully recording participants’ voices, even as I removed some “verbal throat clearing” or grammar errors from the text. In another instance, a debriefer questioned a decision I had made passively, by not including some of my reactions to survey nonresponse in my research journal, though I had described them to her. “You can treat those experiences as a data event,” she asserted, and upon reflection, I realized that it had never occurred to me that this was fully a decision, rather than an oversight.

The other debriefer is a professor in another discipline, with expertise in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. With him I met regularly, relying on his feedback and critique particularly in substantive interpretations of statistical data, and importantly, synthesis of insights from both data realms. His rigorous questioning forced me to explain why I included certain quotes and not others in the discussion of qualitative data. In at least one case, the answer to the question had to do more with my personal feelings about what had been said than with my sense of responsibility to either the participant or the inquiry. In another instance, he prompted me to include a connection to quantitative findings that I had not emphasized. Throughout the quantitative data section, he challenged me to reconsider interpretations that over- or undersold a faithful representation of what the numbers mean. Partly due to his emphasis on precision, I feel more confident now that I am not claiming more than is warranted for those results.
**Triangulation**

The principle of triangulation overlaps importantly with reflexivity, to the extent that procedures like peer debriefing prod the researcher to attend to multiple perspectives throughout the research process. Stake (2000) notes that qualitative researchers, to reduce potential misinterpretations, “employ various procedures, two of the most common being redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations.” These procedures serve the purpose of “using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 443). In one sense, the use of a mixed-methods design inherently serves the purposes of triangulation, in that it places a burden on the researcher to consistently explore ways in which qualitative findings and quantitative findings reinforce each other. However, as we see in Chapter 5 of this study, this isn’t always the case: the qualitative data surfaced important but unaddressed patterns in the subjects’ experience, which complicated theoretical propositions, or revealed holes in the quantitative data field. Openness to such emergences leads to one practice designed to institutionalize this kind of surfacing as an important part of the research design.

Negative case analysis represents a form of discipline that researchers owe to the participants, to readers, and to the inquiry itself. At least as challenging, the process of member checking also requires discipline, as the researcher needs to be prepared to share control of the data, and its representation, with those with whom it originated in the first place.

**Negative Cases**

Negative case analysis, or the exploration of discordant or disconfirming data, promotes triangulation in that it requires the researcher to adopt a stance committed to
falsification—a very different perspective than that of verification. Strauss and Corbin (1998) note that this process strengthens a grounded theory model by exercising the theory’s flexibility and variation. In this study, negative case analysis was a consideration in developing the initial coding schemes, as discordant data received its own set of codes. This precommitment to attentiveness sharpened my abilities to hear off-notes during the transcription and coding processes. Some of these off-notes converged into a pattern across subjects, even across sites. Such was the case with the continued appearance of the service orientation as a theme; this matter receives significant discussion in Chapter 5. This example represents the deep value of negative case analysis in precisely the fashion that Strauss and Corbin describe, as the consideration of this pattern initiates a reconsideration of the theory that can only make it stronger.

Member Checks

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the member check as the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). It may also be the hardest. I struggled with the member check for several reasons. It was hard, in some cases nigh unto impossible, to schedule conversations with participants after the school year had ended. In one case, the teacher had been laid off right before the interview, which occurred three weeks before school dismissed for the summer. The building administrator took another job out of district, though ironically enough, this made communication with him easier. In a somewhat bizarre circumstance, yet another participant got married over the summer and changed her name. In phone calls to the school the following fall to schedule a member check, I found that the student aides who answered the phones did not know whom I wanted to call. I never learned her new name, and they apparently didn’t
recognize her by her old one. A new principal, who had much to do and little interest in following up on an inherited research project, did not return messages (though it’s highly likely he never received them—I had experienced this difficulty during the data collection process as well). Likewise, the one participant whose name and presence in the building I could ascertain, did not return phone messages. In his case, I relied upon the U.S. Postal Service to deliver a copy of the transcript with a note inviting him to discuss it if he wished. I have not heard anything back from him, though I might yet.

Communication in the other school being considerably less random, I was able to schedule member checks with each of those participants. In face-to-face meetings I reviewed portions of the transcripts, and offered to provide the rest if subjects wished to review them in their entirety. All but one declined this offer, largely out of a sense that they were too busy to go over it very carefully. None had objections or significant concerns with what they saw, though most offered further contextualizing information for their examples. One participant feared some of his descriptions of a colleague might have made him identifiable, but he did not ask me to remove the remarks from the transcript or the write-ups.

I found member checks difficult not only because they required some sleuthing in order to execute them, but also because they forced me to surrender control over a part of a research project that has dominated my life for two years. So strong is the researcher’s sense of ownership by the time she reaches the write-up stage, that it becomes profoundly difficult to yield the most sensitive part of the study to someone who might not share her interest. It is precisely this difficulty that makes the member check so necessary; if it were easy, it would be less necessary. The very core of trust is a willingness to make
oneself vulnerable; if the participant is willing to take this step, the researcher, in order to
worthy of that trust, must take it too. It may be easy to pay lip service to the notion of
placing participants’ interest alongside the researcher’s interest, on an equal footing, but
it’s quite another matter when doing so means possibly losing what you have come,
however misguidedly, to see as exclusively yours. The member check is humbling
because it is a public recognition that the data are not yours, that you are borrowing them,
and that you are beholden to treat them with care, and return them if asked. If you cannot
make that public recognition, why should participants trust you with their things? This is
the fundamental challenge of the member check, and the very core of credibility in the
research process.

This chapter described the sample, data collection, and trustworthiness of the
research process. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present the results, both quantitative and
qualitative, of that process, and what the results mean for our understandings of
professionalism.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The work of this chapter will be to show that this Professionalism scale does, in fact, measure something; that the scale measures that something reliably; and that the something it purports to measure really is what the scale claims. In other words, this chapter shows the results of tests of model fit, and addresses questions of reliability and validity.

Four distinct factors combine to form the construct, individual professionalism, as follows the theoretical foundations of the construct outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. All four components relate directly to the model of professionalism that depends upon successful claims for jurisdiction. Academic emphasis, the first of these, gauges the extent to which the individual teacher engages the knowledge field that informs the field. Facility with research in both content area and pedagogy distinguishes more professional teachers from their less scholarly colleagues. Because academic accomplishment conveys expertise to parents and community members who make decisions about teachers’ professional status, and because academic skill enables greater effectiveness, academic engagement is a key determinant of jurisdiction and thus of professionalism. Self-enforcement of standards is another component of individual professionalism, and it measures the extent to which
members of a profession self-regulate, with an eye to the importance of their professional image in winning jurisdiction. Teachers who monitor their own (and each other’s) performance and behavior to win and preserve jurisdiction will score highly on this dimension. Effectiveness, the key to successful jurisdicitional claims, makes up the third dimension of individual professionalism. Contribution to a professional community rounds out the subscales of this construct. This measure captures the extent to which an individual teacher recognizes the importance of collaboration and coordination in increasing the effectiveness of not only his/her own teaching, but of the school organization as a whole. Each of these four dimensions is measured by its own subscale.

In addition, following Paxton and Mughan (2006), I developed a short-form composite scale, representing each of the four subscales, for the sake of versatility in future research. The short-form scale consists of 8 items, as compared to 27 in the long form. The scale is balanced and has desirable psychometric properties. Discussion of the measurement models for each of the four subscales, plus the short-form composite, comprises the first section of this chapter.

Next, I address questions of reliability, introducing the omega coefficient as a measure of internal reliability. Omega is a better choice than Cronbach’s alpha for estimating reliability in structural equation models, and I discuss its assumptions and calculations below, in addition to providing omega estimates for the four subscales and the short-form composite.

Finally, this chapter discusses issues of validity, establishing content validity for subscale items. I then turn to construct validity, demonstrating that the measurement functions as predicted when analyzed in conjunction with other concepts. Specifically, I
address the substantive predictions set forth in Chapter 2, regarding the relationship between individual professionalism, esteem, and friendship, gender, and experience. To conclude the section on validity, I discuss Lather’s (1991) notion of catalytic validity, which charges researchers with the responsibility of demonstrating the transformative potential of the research in question. I attempt to meet that responsibility with an examination of gender disparities in professional esteem in both schools under study.

Measurement Models

Confirmatory factor analyses for the four subscales were conducted by running the models as measurement models in a structural equation modeling framework. Each model for each subscale posed a latent variable measured by six or seven survey items as indicators. The composite scale, consisting of eight items selected from the subscales, serves as a composite or summary scale measuring the construct of Professionalism itself.

Academic Emphasis

The measurement model for the first subscale poses Academic emphasis as a latent construct, with Items 6, 18, 20, 23, 27, 30, and 32 as measurable indicators:
Item #
6  “I spend time reading and developing curriculum during vacations, even if I don’t get extra compensation for it.”
18  “I don’t read for my courses over the summer. That’s MY time.”
20  “It’s just not that important for a teacher to be an intellectual.”
23  “You don’t have to be an academically inclined person to be a good teacher, as long as you have basic common sense.”
27  “I regularly set aside some time to learn new techniques and strategies for teaching.”
30  “I believe it’s very important for every teacher to read up on the latest practices in his/her field.”
32  “Teachers who are intellectually engaged in their subject matter are generally better instructors.”

Table 4.1: Academic emphasis: Items.

The latent variable is scaled to Item 6, “I spend time reading and developing curriculum during vacations, even if I don’t get extra compensation for it.” The errors for some of the items are correlated, based on theoretical affinities in their content: “It’s just not that important for a teacher to be an intellectual,” (Item 20) and “You don’t have to be an academically inclined person to be a good teacher, as long as you have basic common sense,” (Item 23) have obvious theoretical kinship. The same principle also justifies correlating the errors of Item 23 with Item 32, “Teachers who are intellectually engaged in their subject matter are generally better instructors.” On the topic of ongoing professional learning, Items 27 (“I regularly set aside some time to learn new techniques and strategies for teaching”) and 30 (“I believe it’s very important for every teacher to read up on the latest practices in his/her field”) would also seem to have sound theoretical basis for correlating their errors.
Initial analysis shows the model’s substantive fit to be promising: the coefficients have the proper signs and the estimates are largely significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Standardized Estimate</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 32</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 30</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 27</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.447</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 23</td>
<td>-.275</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.330</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 20</td>
<td>-.224</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>-.255</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 18</td>
<td>-.719</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>-.756</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>.924</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Academic emphasis: Estimates, standardized estimates & p-values.
The fit of the model to the data is very strong, with a highly nonsignificant chi-square of 5.186 ($p=.92$). Other fit statistics also bear out the model’s excellent fit: the GFI is .981, and the AGFI, which is less forgiving of small samples, is still within conventionally acceptable levels, at .951. The NFI, from a different “family” of fit indices, typically indicates a very good fit at .95 or better; this model has an NFI of .958, even as larger samples tend to register stronger NFI’s than do smaller samples. The IFI and CFI tend to be more robust to problems with small samples; both typically range from 0-1, and in both, some models exceed 1. The IFI for this model is 1.05. The CFI, which is forced to 1.0 if it exceeds 1, is 1.0. The noncentrality parameter, or NCP, exhibits a very narrow range at the 90% confidence level, and spans zero; this indicates that 90% of the values of the NCP fall between zero and 1.413. Thus even in the worst-case scenario, the NCP, which is similar to the chi-square, would be only very small. Similarly, the 90% confidence range for the RMSEA also captures zero. At best, the RMSEA is zero; at worst, it is .042, which is still well within acceptable limits for a well-fit model. The RMR, at .053, is just above what would be standard for a very well-fitting model at .05. Taken as a whole, the fit statistics, from different families, and with different properties with respect to the mean of the sampling distribution, converge to tell us that this model is a very strong fit to the data.
Chi-square                     5.186 ($p = .922$)
Noncentrality parameter (NCP)  90% C.I. = 0-1.413
Root-mean residual (RMR)       .053
Root-mean square error of      .000; 90% C.I. = .000-.042
approximation (RMSEA)          
Normed fit index (NFI)          .958
Incremental fit index (IFI)     1.051
Comparative fit index (CFI)     1.000
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)     .981
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) .951

Table 4.3: Academic Emphasis: Model fit statistics.

Self-enforcement of Standards

The measurement model for the second subscale, Self-enforcement of Standards, poses a latent construct with 7 indicators—Items 4, 8, 12, 14, 16, 19, and 36:

Item #                    
4  “I’ve done my job when I’ve met the provisions of my teaching contract.”
8  “Even good teachers have a responsibility to get better.”
12 “I go beyond what my contract requires when it means doing a better job for kids.”
14 “Teachers have a responsibility to improve public perceptions of our profession.”
16 “Professional development is usually a waste of time.”
19 “I resent it when administrators expect us to put in time that’s not covered in the contract.”
36 “I would continue my professional development through coursework, even if my district did not require it or reward me for it.”

Table 4.4: Self-enforcement of standards: Items.
The model is scaled to Item 12, “I go beyond what my contract requires when it means doing a better job for kids.” Two items offer theoretical justification for correlated errors: Item 16, “Professional development is usually a waste of time,” and Item 36, “I would continue my professional development through coursework, even if my district did not require it or reward me for it,” are sufficiently similar to warrant such correlation.

Figure 4.2: Self-enforcement of standards: Model diagram

Substantive properties suggest that this model works as it should: the coefficients have the proper signs, estimates are mostly significant despite the lack of statistical power, and loadings are of reasonable size with good p-values.
Table 4.5: Self-enforcement of standards: Estimates, standardized estimates & p-values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Standardized estimate</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>-.378</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>-.222</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>-.549</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>-.238</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>.842</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.808</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-.753</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>-.391</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures of model fit indicate a reasonably good fit to the data. The chi-square is well within the acceptable range; at 12.858 (p=.459) it is solidly nonsignificant. Other model fit statistics also offer support for this model, although the liabilities of the relatively small sample size are more apparent in this model’s fit statistics than in those for the previous model. The RMR, for example, is affected significantly by sample size—residuals for the same model appear larger in small samples such as this one. This model’s RMR of .075 is somewhat larger than the conventionally acceptable level for a good fit of .05. Other fit statistics present this model in a more favorable light, however. The GFI, at .951, hits the high standard of .95 for very good fit, while the AGFI, more stern than its counterpart in the matter of small samples, essentially meets the standard of .90 for an acceptable fit, registering .895 for this model. Measures that are more robust to sample size issues, such as the IFI and CFI, at 1.002 and 1.000 respectively, are unequivocal indicators of a good fit for this model. In that same family, however, the NFI, which is known to underestimate fit in small samples, is .828, which is low. The NCP is encouraging; the .000 NCP is ideal, and the 90% confidence interval spans zero.
Even at 12.542, the highest value at 90% confidence, the NCP is still close to zero, with a reasonably narrow range between its highest and lowest values. The RMSEA of .000 is also favorable, and the 90% confidence interval spans zero, though the range is somewhat broader—the upper bound of the 90% confidence interval is .114. An interesting supplement to this reading of the RMSEA, however, is the p-value for a close fit, as opposed to the p-value for an exact fit. PCLOSE offers an alternative to holding the model up to a standard requiring an exact fit to the data. (Most statistical packages provide both.) This model registers a PCLOSE of .626, which represents the p-value for the null hypothesis that the RMSEA for the population is less than .05. The p-value for a close fit should be >.50, a hurdle which this model’s RMSEA straightforwardly clears. Thus, the overall fit statistics for this subscale, despite occasional static from the relatively small sample size, nevertheless signal a reasonably good fit for this model.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-square</strong></td>
<td>12.858 (p=.459)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Root-mean residual (RMR)</strong></td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)</strong></td>
<td>.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)</strong></td>
<td>.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incremental fit index (IFI)</strong></td>
<td>1.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparative fit index (CFI)</strong></td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Normed fit index (NFI)</strong></td>
<td>.828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noncentrality parameter (NCP)</strong></td>
<td>.000; 90% C.I. = .000-12.542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)</strong></td>
<td>.000; 90% C.I. = .000-.114</td>
</tr>
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Table 4.6: Self-enforcement of standards: Model fit statistics.
**Effectiveness**

For *Effectiveness*, the latent construct is measured by six indicators, Items 1, 5, 9, 10, 15, and 17:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“On many days in the classroom, I feel I’ve been successful if I’ve just managed to keep them under control.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Good teachers embrace evaluation of their teaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>“Parents generally regard me as an effective teacher.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>“I dread having administrators come to evaluate my classes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>“I consider myself an effective teacher.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>“I welcome feedback on my teaching.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Effectiveness: Items.

Items 9 (“Parents generally regard me as an effective teacher”) and 15 (“I consider myself an effective teacher”) are so similarly structured as to justify a correlation of their errors, as the model specifies. The model is scaled to Item 17, “I welcome feedback on my teaching.”
Figure 4.3: Effectiveness: Model diagram

As in the previous models, the substantive properties of this subscale are promising: coefficients have the proper signs, estimates are acceptably significant despite low statistical power, and the loadings are of reasonable size. Typically, .200 is something of a threshold for effect size, and Item 15, at .190, is just below that mark. Admittedly this is on the low side, but the model overall works well, and the face validity of this item, which is only marginally below this threshold, argues for keeping it in the scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Standardized Estimate</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 17</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 15</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.306</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>-.630</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>-.349</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>.594</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>-.562</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>-.213</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Effectiveness: Estimates, standardized estimates & p-values.
Fit statistics for the *Effectiveness* model are also favorable. The chi-square is 5.621 ($p=0.690$), which is highly nonsignificant. Standard measures of goodness-of-fit indicate that this model does fit the data fairly well: the GFI is 0.976, while the AGFI, less forgiving of small sample sizes, is 0.936. Convention holds that models registering above 0.90 on these indices are considered adequate fits, while models above 0.95 are considered very good. The RMR, at 0.049, falls within the standards for a well-fit model, despite the fact that residuals show up more clearly in small samples than in large ones. From the incremental fit family of indices, the NFI, IFI and CFI are all within acceptable levels, at 0.928, 1.034, and 1.000, respectively. The noncentrality parameter, or NCP, spans zero at the 90% confidence interval, and at its highest, is quite low at 6.654 for the high end of the 90% confidence range. The RMSEA is 0.000; at 90% confidence, the range for RMSEA spans zero, with the highest value at 0.106. The PCLOSE for RMSEA, measuring the probability of a close fit rather than an exact fit, is quite high, at 0.788. Ideally, the PCLOSE for RMSEA is greater than 0.50. Thus while the range for the RMSEA at 90% confidence is broader than it could be, the probability for a close fit is reassuringly high. Altogether, the fit statistics for the *Effectiveness* model are reasonably good, especially considering the small sample size, and indicate a basis for confidence that this model fits the data well.
Chi-square 5.621 ($p=0.690$)
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) .976
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) .936
Root-mean residual (RMR) .049
Normed-fit index (NFI) .928
Incremental fit index (IFI) 1.034
Comparative fit index (CFI) 1.000
Noncentrality parameter (NCP) $0.000; 90\% \text{ C.I.} = 0.000-6.654$
Root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) $0.000; 90\% \text{ C.I.} = 0.000-.106$

Table 4.9: Effectiveness: Model fit statistics.

Contribution to a Professional Community

The final of the four subscales, Contribution to a professional community, poses a latent construct with seven indicators: Items 3, 13, 24, 26, 31, 33, and 35.

Item #
3 “Sharing ideas and practices with my colleagues makes all of us better teachers.”
13 “Teachers have a responsibility to participate in curriculum decisions in the district.”
24 “I don’t have the time to help other people with their classes because my own take up so much time.”
26 “Curriculum and assessment policies are basically matters for administration, not teachers.”
31 “I don’t share teaching ideas and strategies with my colleagues very often.”
33 “I prepare for my teaching mostly in isolation from my colleagues.”
35 “I withdraw from departmental discussions of curriculum and/or assessment because they don’t pertain to my classes.”

Table 4.10: Contribution to a professional community: Items.
The errors of two items, 24 (“I don’t have time to help other people with their classes because my own take up so much time”) and 35 (“I withdraw from departmental discussions of curriculum and/or assessment because they don’t pertain to my classes”) are correlated. The latent is scaled to Item 31, “I don’t share teaching ideas and strategies with my colleagues very often.”

![Diagram of Contribution to professional community](image)

Figure 4.4: Contribution to a professional community: Model diagram

The substantive properties of this model are sound: coefficients register the proper signs and are highly significant despite a lack of statistical power. Loadings are of reasonable size.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Standardized estimate</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 35</td>
<td>1.050</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 33</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.491</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 31</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 26</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 24</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13</td>
<td>-.518</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>-.521</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>-.383</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>-.455</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11: Contribution to a professional community: Estimates, standardized estimates & p-values.

Fit statistics for this fourth model are also favorable. The chi-square of 15.287 is nonsignificant (p = .290). Goodness-of-fit measures show an acceptable fit to the data: the GFI, at .945, approaches the ideal standard of .95, and is well within the acceptable range above .90. The AGFI, which can be somewhat harsher than the GFI on small samples, is very close to the desired standard of .90, at .882. Similarly, the RMR, which often registers higher residuals for small samples than for large ones, at .054 is very close to the desired standard of .05. With a larger sample than the one obtained in this pilot, these fit indices would likely fall neatly within the conventionally accepted range for a good fit.

The baseline family of fit indicators reveals a similar picture of this model: the IFI, at .979, and the CFI, at .977, are quite solid, while the NFI, which is not as robust to limitations in sample size, is just off the standard of .90, at .873. The NCP, or noncentrality parameter, is low at 2.287, and the 90% confidence interval spans zero, with the upper bound at 16.298. Similarly, the 90% confidence interval for the RMSEA spans zero, with its upper bound at .130. The estimated RMSEA is .049, which falls
inside the informal threshold for a better-than-adequate fit. Taken together, the fit statistics do not present a picture of outstanding model fit, but they do indicate a fit that is quite adequate to our purposes here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Value/Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>15.287 (p=.290)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)</td>
<td>.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)</td>
<td>.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-mean residual (RMR)</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental fit index (IFI)</td>
<td>.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative fit index (CFI)</td>
<td>.977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed fit index (NFI)</td>
<td>.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncentrality parameter (NCP)</td>
<td>2.287; 90% C.I. = .000-16.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)</td>
<td>.049; 90% C.I. = .000-.130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12: Contribution to a professional community: Model fit statistics.

*Short-form Composite Scale*

A combination of theoretical and empirical criteria guided construction of a reduced scale of 8 items that would be more suitable than the long-form scale for incorporation into future research. Seven criteria were used in selecting from the original 27 items: (1) theoretical correspondence to the latent concept, *professionalism*; (2) high internal reliability in the final scale; (3) representation from all four subscales; (4) retention of items with desirable psychometric properties; (5) balance in the scoring direction of items; (6) adequate structural fit for the composite model; and (7) high correlation to the full model.

The resulting composite scale is balanced, with two items each from the four subscales. Each pair is also balanced in the scoring direction of its items. They have an
average interitem correlation of .30, which is well within acceptable limits (Paxton & Mughan, 2006). Furthermore, the short-form composite scores correlated with the second-order factor analysis of all 27-items at r=.92. Thus, the short-form captures the universe of items extremely well, while cutting the length of the scale by over 70%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“I spend time reading and developing curriculum during vacations, even if I don’t get extra compensation for it.”</td>
<td>Academic emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>“I don’t read for my courses over the summer. That’s MY time.”</td>
<td>Academic emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>“Professional development is usually a waste of time.”</td>
<td>Self-enforcement of standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>“I would continue my professional development through coursework, even if my district did not require it or reward me for it.”</td>
<td>Self-enforcement of standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>“I welcome feedback on my teaching.”</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>“My colleagues do not give me a lot of credit for being an effective teacher.”</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>“Teachers have a responsibility to participate in curriculum decisions in the district.”</td>
<td>Contribution to a professional community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>“I withdraw from departmental discussions of curriculum and/or assessment because they don’t pertain to my classes.”</td>
<td>Contribution to a professional community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: Short-form composite scale: Items representing the four subscales.

The short-form composite is also clearly unidimensional, as demonstrated by a screeplot, which decisively indicates a single dimension. The first eigenvalue is 3.16, followed by 1.0, .96, .83, and .68, with the ratios showing a precipitous descent from the first component, then leveling off.
The factor analysis model for the short-form composite is scaled to Item 13, and correlates the errors of Items 18 and 17. This correlation is empirically grounded, as it results in a significant difference on the chi-square difference test ($p=.054$), testing the difference between the model without the correlation, and the model with it. Similarly, the errors for Items 22 and 35 are scaled. For this correlation too, the chi-square difference test showed a significant improvement of fit ($p=.006$) when this tie is specified in the model.

Figure 4.5: Short-form composite: Scree plot showing unidimensionality
Figure 4.6: Short-form composite scale: Model diagram

Substantive properties of the short-form composite model are solid. The coefficients register in the expected directions, and loadings are of substantial size. The p-values are also solid, as all items are significant at the $p<.05$ level, and all but one are significant at $p<.01$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Standardized estimate</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 36</td>
<td>1.460</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>.481</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 35</td>
<td>-1.347</td>
<td>.440</td>
<td>-.473</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 22</td>
<td>-1.145</td>
<td>.467</td>
<td>-.348</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 18</td>
<td>-2.556</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td>-.782</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 17</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 16</td>
<td>-1.636</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>-.422</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>3.196</td>
<td>.784</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14: Short form: Estimates, standardized estimates, and p-values.
Fit statistics for the short form model are good. The chi-square is nonsignificant at 20.188 ($p=.322$). The GFI is .937, the AGFI at .873, though it should be remembered that the AGFI is not as robust to small sample sizes. Similarly, the NFI, from the incremental family of fit indicators, also reflects its tendency to register lower marks for smaller samples, at .868, but the IFI is quite solid at .984. The CFI is .982. The NCP is low at 2.188, and its 90% confidence interval spans zero, with the upper bound at 17.464. The RMSEA is within acceptable limits at .041; PCLOSE is .523, above the threshold of .5 for this indicator of probability of a good, rather than exact, fit. Though the RMR is high at .075, as noted above, root-mean residuals tend to be higher for models with small samples. The same model with a larger sample would undoubtedly fare better on the RMR. Overall, the fit statistics for the short form model are quite supportive, indicating that this abbreviated form of the scale offers a good fit to the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Statistic</th>
<th>Value/Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>20.188 ($p=.322$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)</td>
<td>.976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)</td>
<td>.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed fit index (NFI)</td>
<td>.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental fit index (IFI)</td>
<td>.984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative fit index (CFI)</td>
<td>.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncentrality parameter (NCP)</td>
<td>2.188; 90% C.I. = .000-17.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)</td>
<td>.041; 90% C.I. = .000-.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-mean residual (RMR)</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.15: Short form: Model fit statistics.
Reliability

Fundamental questions of reliability for a scale such as this one require us to consider this crucial question: Are the items of this scale related to each other in a way that is consistent, i.e., are they measuring one thing efficiently (without too much error)? When re-tests, alternative forms, or split-halves methods of assessing this consistency are not feasible, as they are not here, statistical measures of internal consistency can provide estimates of reliability in a single administration of the scale. Most often, people cite Cronbach’s alpha, which relates the variances of the individual items, the number of items in the scale, and the total variance of the scale, in a range from 0 to 1. The closer alpha is to 1, the more consistent the scale.

Alpha represents the floor for reliability; all items are treated as equal contributors to the construct. Alpha assumes an unweighted scale, and thus represents a conservative estimate of reliability. However, the assumption in alpha that all items will measure a given construct equally is somewhat unrealistic. Factor analysis provides for an assessment of reliability that is less restrictive, in that it provides for non-uniform measurements across items. Theta, a reliability coefficient based in principal components analysis, is interpreted by Carmines and Zeller (1979) as “a special case of Cronbach’s alpha. Specifically, theta is the alpha coefficient for a scale in which the weighting vector has been chosen so as to make alpha a maximum. In other words, theta may be considered a maximized alpha coefficient” (p. 61).

Like theta, the omega coefficient also assumes a factor analytic approach, though it analyzes communalities estimated through maximum likelihood, rather than relying upon principal component analysis. An advantage of this approach is that omega
explicitly models error by assuming a common latent factor. Citing Raykov (1997), Schumacker and Lomax (2004) note that “the reliability of a composite score (scale score) when estimated under the assumption of a single common factor model is a better true indicator of internal consistency than the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient” (p. 179). Because of its suitability for estimating reliability in structural equation models, omega represents the most appropriate choice for estimating the internal reliability of both the short-form composite, and of the four subscales. Omega is calculated according to the following formula:

$$\Omega = 1 - \frac{(a - \Sigma h_i^2)}{(a + 2b)}$$

where a is equal to the number of items, and b is the sum of the correlations among the items, and $\Sigma h_i^2$ represents the sum of communalities.

For the four subscales, as well as for the short form overall model, analysis of omega shows that the scales measure up to commonly accepted standards of reliability. Each is at or above .70, widely regarded as the threshold for acceptable reliability, established by Nunnaly (1978). Especially gratifying here is the high (.81) coefficient for our composite score, indicating a reliability recommended for new scales to be used externally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Omega coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short form</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic emphasis</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-enforcement of standards</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to a professional community</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.16: Internal reliability: Omega coefficients for short form and subscales
Validity

The scale developed at the heart of this research poses interesting challenges with respect to validity. Content or face validity should be relatively straightforward to establish, as the subscales and the items that constitute them were derived explicitly from the theoretical foundation of the study. But more conventional approaches to validity can be less straightforwardly applied here, as traditional variables associated with professionalism, with which I might otherwise attempt to establish concurrent validity, rely on precisely those theoretical assumptions that this study seeks to overturn about professionalism as exclusively an individual level concept. This discussion of validity focuses first upon issues of content validity, before turning to issues of construct validity, which are framed such that they validate the general theoretical approach I advocate in this thesis. Further issues of validity will also be addressed in the discussion of qualitative data in Chapter 5.

Content Validity

Though there are no numbers to cite that would establish content validity of the individual level scale, it should be straightforward to argue that the items it contains, as a group, do capture the “universe of content” implicated in the abstraction it purports to measure. Carmines and Zeller (1979) define content validity as dependent upon “the extent to which an empirical measurement reflects a specific domain of content” (p. 20). In this study, I can establish content validity for my scale by showing how the items it contains reflect the critical dimensions of professionalism. To make this case, I draw the connections between the specific scale items and the theories behind them.
The Academic emphasis subscale derives directly from the contention that control over the abstractions that govern a profession’s work enable professionals to maintain society’s confidence, and thus their professional status. Thus, items in the Academic emphasis subscale tap into teachers’ commitment to the growth of their professional learning. The subscale was designed so that teachers who score highly would be those who study teaching as a craft, use theory to guide practice, and model continuous learning and engagement. The items on the short-form, in addition to having desirable psychometric properties, also speak directly to this theoretical priority. “I spend time reading and developing curriculum during vacations, even if I don’t get extra compensation for it,” taps directly into a teacher’s inclination to engage the abstractions that govern practice. In the other direction, “I don’t read for my courses over the summer. That’s MY time,” signals that a teacher who strongly agrees places little value upon independent engagement with theory as it relates to practice. Of course, the teacher’s role imparts many obligations; this academic emphasis subscale is meant to capture a teacher’s inclination to accept those obligations that are particularly related to studying and refining the craft and practice of teaching.

The Self-enforcement of standards subscale was designed to represent the process by which individual members of a given profession seek to maintain and reinforce the public’s perception of fitness to treat the particular problems inherent in teaching practice. Items on this scale focus on how much teachers internalize a conception of what professionalism means in teaching, and how much they hold themselves to that standard, even if supervisors don’t. Teachers who score highly on the subscale are those who are self-motivated and self-regulating, and who feel implicated in the public’s
perception of teachers overall. Thus, the scale contains items such as, “I go beyond what my contract requires when it means doing a better job for kids,” or, in the other direction, “I’ve done my job when I’ve met the provisions of my teaching contract.” On the short-form, the items focus on that self-regulating tendency as it pertains to professional development: “I would continue my professional development through coursework, even if my district did not require it or reward me for it.” In the other direction, “Professional development is usually a waste of time,” signals a teacher who only meets this standard requirement because the district enforces participation. When teachers motivate themselves to reach and maintain high standards, they win and keep public confidence in them, and in the profession as a whole.

The Effectiveness subscale, perhaps the hardest to write, focuses on instructional quality and a willingness to subject one’s teaching to scrutiny and receive feedback. Because professional status is rooted in the public view of professionals as effective in treatment of a particular area of practice, indicators of instructional quality, and the reputation arising from it, are important barometers of a teacher’s professionalism. Though measuring effectiveness through a subject’s self-reporting on an anonymous survey poses a real challenge, the items in this scale were calibrated so as to tap into behaviors and attitudes that would indicate at least a disposition to effectiveness. Some of the other items focus more directly on reputation itself. The scale was designed so that teachers who scored highly would be those who emphasize instruction as a priority over other domains of a teacher’s job, such as being liked by students. Teachers scoring highly on this dimension also welcome scrutiny and evaluation, as their performance generally supports claims to effectiveness. Thus, on this scale, we find items such as “Good
teachers embrace evaluation of their teaching,” or, in the other direction, “I dread having administrators come to evaluate my classes.” Another negatively scored item speaks to instructional success: “On many days in the classroom, I feel I’ve been successful if I’ve just managed to keep them under control.” On the short-form, “My colleagues do not give me a lot of credit for being an effective teacher” gets at the teacher’s reputation as an effective instructor, while “I welcome feedback on my teaching” indicates a willingness to subject his/her practice to the scrutiny of others.

The Contribution to a professional community subscale recalls the crucial distinction between the professional organization and an organization of professional individuals. Achieving professional status is a collective process, and teachers embedded in the professional community participate and contribute to that process—sharing expertise and upholding norms that conduce to the group’s overall effectiveness. Teachers who score highly on this subscale understand the part they play in collectively and effectively working through the problems of practice. The scale contains items that obviously speak to this theme: “I generally believe that working together is important for an effective faculty,” and “Sharing ideas and practices with my colleagues makes all of us better teachers” would be two clear examples. On the short-form, “Teachers have a responsibility to participate in curriculum decisions in the district” and “I withdraw from departmental discussions of curriculum and/or assessment because they don’t pertain to my classes,” though scored in opposite directions, both pertain directly to the individual’s participation in the collective work of attaining professional status.
Construct Validity

The most critical validity question to answer in this research is that of construct validity, which puts the burden on the researcher to show that the theoretical properties that underlie the scale translate well into empirics. Do the observed phenomena match up well with what the theory behind the measurements would predict? Carmines and Zeller (1979) define construct validity as “the extent to which a particular measure relates to other measures consistent with theoretically derived hypotheses concerning the concepts that are being measured” (p. 23). Trochim (2006) more simply calls construct validity “truth-in-labeling,” suggesting that we know what we need to know about a scale’s validity when we can show that what it does in measurement, on its own or in conjunction with other relevant concepts or attributes, is what we have said it would do when we laid out our theory.

A traditional approach to establishing the validity of a professionalism scale would undoubtedly look to explore links between individual scores on this scale and ordinary variables associated with professionalism, such as years of experience, etc. Traditional approaches to professionalism suggest that experience, for example, would play a significant role in an individual teacher’s scores—conventional wisdom, and the salary schedules of most school districts in the country—asserts that length of tenure should correlate with professionalism. But the theoretical foundations that underlie this study suggest that we should not necessarily expect a positive relationship between professionalism and years of experience. In keeping with the familiar joke in schools, that there is a difference between a teacher with 35 years of experience and a teacher with 1 year of experience, repeated 35 times, this construction of professionalism seeks to move
away from a model that is narrowly based in individual attributes rather than in behaviors and dispositions of performance. The process of establishing validity for this construction cannot make use of traditional assumptions about professionalism because these assumptions are precisely what this study seeks to undercut.

In fact, when we explore the relationships between scores on the *Professionalism* short-form composite and other variables of interest, we see that the data behaves not so much as conventional wisdom would predict, but rather in ways that this theory would suggest. Following the logic of Abbott’s model for professional status, there is no reason to suspect that teachers become any more effective, and hence more professional, merely by virtue of years of service alone. If those years of service are characterized by continuous learning, self-regulation and concern for high performance, increased instructional effectiveness, and embeddedness in a professional culture, we could expect to see scores on the *Professionalism* scale to rise. But the years alone ought to make little if any difference. A simple bivariate correlation bears this out: the correlation of -.108 is negative, but not significant ($p=.179$). A negative correlation may be surprising, but is not implausible, given the well-known phenomenon of burnout, or other factors, such as a negative normative culture, that might affect an individual’s professionalism over time.

We might expect similar results if we considered the effects of other features of traditional salary schedules on professionalism. Though this study did not gather data on the academic backgrounds of subjects, we would be likely to see little correlation between number of credit hours, *per se*, and professionalism—it is not unheard of, in schools with salary schedules that reward accumulation of credits without somehow connecting those credits to classroom performance or preparation, for teachers to pick up
credits for the sole purpose of increasing salary, and with no interest or regard for professional learning. Variables like these would ordinarily be of some value as validation for more conventional notions of professionalism, but they do not offer much validation for this study.

And yet, the theoretical departures this study makes from these traditional conceptions of professionalism are sustained by other notions of validity—particularly catalytic validity, which Lather (1991) defines as “the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it” (p. 68). As described in Chapter 2, this project advocates a shift away from a discourse of professionalism that is essentializing and focuses on the social status that individuals carry with them into a profession. Until Abbott’s introduction of a new frame for examining the processes of jurisdiction as the key to professional status, literature in the sociology of professions documented and replicated social structures that allowed for inequities in awarding professional status. This research offers some evidence that both validates and compels a new theoretical approach that moves away from traditional assumptions about professionalism. One notable result speaks to the perception of professionalism, and how it relates to gender. Professional esteem, a variable computed by calculating the centrality of individuals who were nominated in the network survey as professional exemplars (see Chapter 3), measures the group’s judgments about which teachers in their midst best represent ideals of professionalism. The Professionalism short-form composite score, as described above, measures an individual’s attitudes and behaviors according to the four subscales derived from the theory of the professions. An independent samples t-test, to compare mean short-form composite score, tested for
significant differences between men and women. Women had higher scores: a mean difference of .164 yielded a p-value of .05 (73 degrees of freedom). This suggests that women have, on average, higher levels of individual professionalism than men, in this sample. However, a means comparison between men and women on professional esteem reveals they are generally not rewarded as such by their colleagues. Men had higher scores on esteem: a mean difference of .197 yielded a p-value of .09 (73 degrees of freedom).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>-2.022</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-.16407</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional esteem</td>
<td>1.682</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>.19716</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.17. Independent sample t-test: Professionalism and Professional esteem and gender.

When measured according to a scale that is theoretically based, women have no problem distinguishing themselves as professional; socially-based perceptions of women as professionals, however, are quite different. In terms of its potential for catalytic validity, when this result would be shared with participants so that they may begin to address it in their professional lives, this finding seems quite compelling.

This disparity, between measured professionalism and perceived professionalism, persists when the sample is split to consider the subject schools separately. In fact, split sample comparisons provide the main evidence of construct validity, as several predictions flowing out of the structural theory are borne out upon analysis. As discussed
in Chapter 3, the sample consists of two schools, one of which is highly functional, the other almost completely dysfunctional. One might think, just on the basis of school performance, that one school is populated by much more professional teachers than the other. According to conventional notions of professionalism, this would be what we should expect. However, a critical insight in the view of professionalism I am advocating is that on its own, aggregate levels of individual professionalism will not simply equate to a more professional organization. Thus we might expect some difference in individual professionalism across these schools, but not the dramatic differences implied by conventional theory. In fact, the mean difference on the Professionalism short-form composite score was not significantly different at conventional levels: the mean difference in an independent samples t-test was .093, with $p=.258$. This amounts to roughly one-fourth of the standard deviation of the pooled sample, which was .35. Though not substantively trivial, such a modest difference in individual level professionalism is hardly enough to account for what amounts to profound differences in school culture (as I develop further below).

Instead, the theory asserts that the real engine driving professional culture will be the school’s normative structure, and when we look at individual professionalism in relation to variables such as esteem, we see this is the case. In the highly functioning school, we would expect that esteem will track individual professionalism, reflecting norms that reward effectiveness, collaboration, self-motivation and academic emphasis. We would also expect that experience alone, divorced from effectiveness or contribution to the community, would not contribute significantly to professional esteem. And we would expect that friendship, as measured by the network survey, would also not be
conflated with professional esteem. In a highly professional environment, we would expect professional esteem to reward professionalism for what it is, and not for other variables that are not directly related to the conceptual framework on which it is based.

In the poorly functioning environment, with suspect norms, we would expect professional esteem to track social forces other than professionalism. We would expect that individual professionalism would not be a significant contributor to professional esteem. We would expect that years of experience, as a measure of survival in a calamity-ridden environment, would register as a contributor to professional esteem. And we would expect friendship, which is on its face not related to professional performance, to be much more of a contributor to professional esteem. In an environment in which norms do not function as they should, we could expect to find norms of professionalism replaced by norms of survival, which would lead people to reward friends and allies more than true professional exemplars.

Of these six predicted relationships, all six proved true, despite limited statistical power due to a small sample, and sparse network data, which induces a lot of random error. In the highly functional school, a linear regression of professional esteem upon individual professionalism, gender, years of experience, and friendship revealed relationships exactly in the direction predicted. The strongest effect was for individual professionalism—for every standardized unit increase in individual professionalism, professional esteem increases by a massive .432 ($p=.012$). This is an eye-catching level of significance for a sample with an $n$ of only 33. Clearly, professional esteem is caused principally by individual professionalism, as we would expect in an environment where we have external reason to believe that professional norms function as they should. Also
as predicted, years of experience had no significant effect upon esteem (standardized coefficient = .167; \( p=.319 \)), nor did centrality in the friendship network (standardized coefficient = .092; \( p=.582 \)). Primarily, then, in this school, perceived professionalism is more or less close to reality: those teachers who score most highly upon the *Professionalism* short-form composite are those most likely to be esteemed as professionals by their peers. (Interestingly, and dishearteningly, the gender disparity is heightened in this school, as gender has a marginally significant effect upon professional esteem in favor of men (coefficient = -.274; \( p=.10 \))—though, importantly, not a greater effect than individual professionalism has.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Std. coefficient</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>.282</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-.146</td>
<td>.885</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>.440</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.423</td>
<td>2.675</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>1.014</td>
<td>.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.207</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>-.274</td>
<td>-1.698</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 33; Adjusted \( R^2 = .183 \)

Table 4.18: Regression: Professional esteem in a highly functioning school.

In contrast, in the poorly functioning school, the same linear regression, of professional esteem upon individual professionalism, gender, years of experience, and friendship, produced very different results. Individual professionalism had a much smaller effect upon professional esteem, and the result was not statistically significant (standardized coefficient = .140; \( p=.38 \)). Years of experience did have a significant effect upon professional esteem (standardized coefficient = .369; \( p=.01 \)), and the effect of friendship was marginally significant as well (standardized coefficient = .266; \( p=.07 \)).
Though not statistically significant, the gender disparity persists in this school as well, registering a greater effect size upon professional esteem than individual professionalism (standardized coefficient = -.155; \( p = .33 \)). Thus the picture of this school reveals a dynamic in which friendship and survival matter more in garnering esteem than does professionalism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Std. coefficient</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.896</td>
<td>.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>1.842</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.187</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>-.155</td>
<td>-.992</td>
<td>.327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 42; Adjusted \( R^2 = .212 \)

Table 4.19: Regression: Professional esteem in a poorly functioning school.

These findings, as they are consistent with external measures that distinguish the high- from the low-functioning school, do offer construct validity to both the theoretical basis for the *Professionalism* short-form composite, and to the scale itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Friendship</th>
<th>Individual professionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-functioning</td>
<td>b = -.207 ( p = .101 )</td>
<td>( \beta = .167 ) ( p = .319 )</td>
<td>( \beta = .092 ) ( p = .582 )</td>
<td>( \beta = .432 ) ( p = .012 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-functioning</td>
<td>b = -.187 ( p = .327 )</td>
<td>( \beta = .369 ) ( p = .018 )</td>
<td>( \beta = .266 ) ( p = .073 )</td>
<td>( \beta = .140 ) ( p = .376 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20: Split-sample comparisons: Linear regressions of professional esteem.
Taken together, the results of the checks on validity, the demonstration of internal consistency that warrants claims of reliability, and the favorable tests of fit show that this model of professionalism taps into real phenomena in schools. The *Professionalism* short-form composite, grounded in theory, performs well enough empirically to justify use in future studies. Further evidence of validity, both of the scale and the theoretical framework that generated it, can be found in exploration of the qualitative data collected as part of this study. The discussion of qualitative material in Chapter 5 will reinforce and further compel the new conceptualization of professionalism at the heart of this thesis.
CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The qualitative section of this study holds an equal role to the quantitative section, with different leverage on the central task, which is to define and validate a theoretically grounded, measurable construct of professionalism in teaching. Like the quantitative section, this discussion investigates relationships between theoretical concepts and the school contexts in which they are actualized. Unlike the quantitative section, this discussion allows individual subjects to describe and elaborate upon their experiences as professionals in their own terms, rather than relying upon their survey responses taken in the aggregate. With a different type of data come different inferences; one strength of this study is that most of these inferences are consistent across data types. Working together, the qualitative and quantitative sections of this study support the theoretical bases for the construct and its measurement.

In particular, this qualitative section serves four vital functions in this study: confirmation, amplification, complication, and motivation. First, data gathered from interviews of subjects in both schools confirms or reinforces specific assumptions and predictions made in the theory as I have articulated it. These affirmations are necessary to
justify the claim that the theory has practical as well as statistical significance—users of this research will understand the statistical data one way, and will understand the substance of this qualitative data another way. Each individually serves the study’s validity, and together, they reinforce it.

Second, the qualitative data *amplifies* understandings from the quantitative and theoretical sections of the study, by suggesting mechanisms the theory alone had not necessarily predicted, but can accommodate. One example, upon which I will elaborate below, involves a subject’s speculation that negative school cultures actually defeat the scholarly impulse in a teacher. In considerations of academic emphasis as a component of professionalism, I never predicted or foresaw this discovery, but it makes sense in terms of the ecological effect I posit at the heart of organizational professionalism. Moreover, it signals a process that practicing administrators would need to understand as they seek to regulate norms of professionalism in their schools. Recognition of these unanticipated but theoretically plausible discoveries is necessary for both practice and for further scholarship, as succeeding researchers can be aware of these as they apply the construct in different contexts.

Third, the qualitative data *complicates* interpretations and applications of the theory, in that subjects said unexpected things that necessitate reconsideration of some assumptions. For example, my discussion of professionalism marginalizes the role of the service orientation, prominent in most traditional scholarship in the sociology of the professions. Yet interviews revealed that this orientation is powerful in most of my subjects, and in their perceptions of their colleagues and what motivates them. I will elaborate on this example below, but if I am claiming to capture the full theoretical
domain in my operationalization of professionalism, I have to speak to this finding, unforeseen in my original conceptualization. Again, this function is necessary for future research, so that the theory is validated as flexible and workable. This function of the qualitative data, in presenting disconfirming evidence, is also necessary for the trustworthiness of the research.

Finally, the qualitative data motivates the research in a way that dispassionate analysis of measurements often does not. This is social research, with attendant social responsibilities. The dispassionate analysis is necessary for one kind of conviction; the deeper exploration of subjects’ experience is necessary for another. I would submit that both sorts of conviction are necessary for social research that aspires to have an impact on social reality.

Affirmative Evidence: The Importance of Jurisdiction

The qualitative data underscores the importance of jurisdiction as the basis on which professionalism is grounded. As discussed at length in Chapter 2, Abbott (1988) makes much of the process by which professionals convince society that they have the expertise to treat effectively a specific domain of problems. Winning the public’s confidence confers professional status, so that relationships with parents and community members are of paramount importance for teachers and administrators seeking or maintaining legitimacy. This continuous push for jurisdiction appears frequently in teachers’ remarks in interviews at both research sites.

At one site, teachers spoke of the pride teachers and parents take in the district’s success—pride that is focused principally upon academic outcomes. These outcomes translate into a continued mandate to direct the educational futures of the community’s
children. One teacher commented specifically on how teachers read community support as a source of pride, a mark of approval of continued effectiveness:

There’s a lot of pride in this district, because it is phenomenal...academically, it’s a phenomenal district. A lot of success. So I think, overall, for everyone, there’s great pride in that. Yes, I work here, I work in this district that values education, that supports it, with tax levies and that type of thing.

Another echoed that sentiment, noting that the academic strength of the school, so prized in the community, builds on itself as a normative target for successive generations of teachers:

[It’s] a culture of expectation here, where you really do feel the pressure that you’re part of one of the stronger schools in the area and you want to keep it that way. There’s a certain pride that goes with it and I think that’s probably what’s lacking at the school my daughters go to. There really isn’t any pride—there’s really nothing to be proud of. So what difference does it make if I go into school one day and I feel kind of tired so I decided to watch tv or look at magazines instead? That kind of thing. I don’t know, but that kind of stuff just doesn’t happen here. And I have such tremendous respect for the people I work with. I feel like they’re so smart, and they know so much about their subject area, they know so much about pedagogy, about pursuing information and testing information and all that kind of stuff. They truly are professional in every way, and that’s like a heritage here. At this point it’s been going on for decades, and I don’t foresee it dying, ever, really, because that’s part of the culture.

This teacher’s remarks highlight a key finding of the study: in her school, professional respect is earned on the basis of individual excellence. This individual excellence extends beyond the reach of just this one teacher and her students, however, as it motivates people to live up to that standard elsewhere throughout the building, and over time. This anchors excellence in the school, and in the community’s perceptions of it, which is key to the jurisdictional process. She further describes how this heritage is the product of
years of interaction with a community that insists on, and receives, high-quality service from its teachers.

I think it has to do with the community itself and the fact that the people that live here have a strong educational background and strong educational expectations. So the kids from the time they were born have been raised in that atmosphere, so when they come here, they’re not at all surprised to find that their peers have strong educational background and expectations, and that their teachers are the same.

Other teachers describe similar phenomena, and one cited the presence of a designated parent liaison as a mechanism by which the school continually justifies its jurisdiction to the members of the community. Teachers in this school also felt empowered enough to defend their jurisdiction when they felt it was threatened or compromised. In one instance, a teacher described a board policy, on the use of films in the classroom, which had rankled many who felt their professional judgment had been impugned by a vocal minority. The teacher cited the film policy as an instance in which teachers felt confident enough in their judgment, and the general trust they were accorded by the public, to assert their professional authority.

I would say that this community has felt that teachers were capable of making decisions, appropriate decisions for students, and supported them. And so, part of our concern about this film policy is that there are a few parents who would like to, in a sense, run the show now. And we’re not willing to budge on that, you know, in the sense that we feel that, you know what, we still are going to have your kids’ interest at heart. And we also have a vested interest in making sure that whatever we’re teaching is appropriate, and thoughtful and educational. And we don’t want big layers of people deciding whether or not we can do something in the classroom if we think it’s appropriate and can justify it and we think it’s alright…

These remarks offer a virtual case study of the process of jurisdiction: the professionals win public trust to educate their children skillfully. That trust confers professional
authority, which is carefully attended to, taken seriously, repeatedly reinforced, and ultimately, durable enough to trump milder preferences on the part of the larger clientele. The film policy represents an example of a problem of practice in which teachers reserve the right to determine the appropriate prescription, even if the “patient” prefers different medicine. The interactive, continuous process plays out much like Abbott suggests it would, and much in the way that this theory of professionalism would predict.

Teachers at the other research site also grapple with questions of jurisdiction, albeit from the other side of the quandary of public trust. There, many teachers and one administrator commented upon the ideology of pupil control that governs much of the interaction between students and teachers. One attributed the overwhelming focus on issues of discipline, almost to the exclusion of issues of instruction, to the need to respond to a lack of public trust, represented by many families’ departures for charter schools. Teachers, this individual noted, are very aware of how their district is portrayed in the media (usually negatively). This has an influence on how they go about their work:

I think what it does is, it strengthens our feelings about certain issues such as discipline, because they hear so much that, for instance people are leaving [our district] to go to charter schools. And one of the issues identified by parents and the kids is, it’s a tough reputation…they did a survey of parents and they know that discipline is one of the issues that parents have left for. And I think what that does is strengthen the way the teachers see what they see as the main problem, which basically is discipline. And unfortunately, it also creates a big distortion. Because discipline is not the only major problem, but that’s what teachers see.

From this teacher’s point of view, schools choose to emphasize discipline because they perceive their loss of jurisdiction to stem from this failing. They neglect other pressing educational issues because decision-making is strictly reactive; this teacher would prefer to see a different emphasis—on high performance. “This is a big problem of mine, is I
really believe in the culture of service. We need to see ourselves like UPS. UPS is a union, a very successful union that orders high service. We don’t have that culture here.” Presumably, if they did, they would establish effectiveness as the basis of public trust, losing fewer students to charter schools in the end anyway. Thus these teachers struggle with issues of jurisdiction just as their counterparts do, albeit with far less success. Both sites offer considerable support for the quest for jurisdiction as a principal mechanism in the process of constructing professionalism.

Affirmative Evidence: Ecological Effects and Professional Group Norms

This study asserts that group-level processes, frequently neglected in discussions of teacher professionalism, have substantial influence upon professionalism as it is manifested at the individual level. Data gathered through interviews resoundingly supports this contention. In both positive and negative directions, ecological effects upon individual performance and attitude are unmistakable, in both research sites. While one group of teachers alluded to the struggle to excel when colleagues appear to have given up, and in some instances even discourage individual effectiveness, other teachers spoke of the importance of the culture around them in motivating individuals for excellence.

An administrator at one research site described a specific teacher as “a barnacle; she’s attached herself to the bottom of the boat…[there’s no scraping her off] without getting under the boat, under water, and that just makes it really, really difficult to do.” At an individual level, this teacher’s impact on students alone would be cause for serious concern. But the administrator was pointedly aware that the “damage” this teacher inflicts upon the school extends beyond her individual reach, to the detriment of school culture
overall. Her presence, and the presence of those like her, drains colleagues of their own effectiveness and professionalism:

Well…she’s not alone. There are a number of people. I think people like that, people who struggle in the classroom, instill a sense of…there’s this inherent sense of apology that people take on…People feel a need to constantly apologize for those people. I mean, they know it. You know, they know that, and it’s frustrating because good teachers want the organization to thrive, and good teachers know that the organization can’t thrive as these other teachers are embedded in the organization. And so they feel this sense of futility, a sense of frustration, and I think there’s, you know, a way they feel like they need to apologize to students. And, what they try to do, they try to make up for that. And they try to work extra hard to make up for it, and then they get physically worn out, and they get emotionally worn out. So, I think that’s the cost of having people like that in the building. When the building, in general, wants to be, you know, something dynamic. So you end up with people working extra hard to cover.

This administrator went on to lament the injustice of recent layoffs, announced earlier in the week of this particular site visit. Despite her shortcomings, this teacher’s job was secure, by virtue of length of service. In contrast, a teacher in the same department, whom the administrator described as “the classroom teacher probably as good as we have…a standout,” was let go; it was only her second year in the building. This somewhat validates findings elsewhere in the study, that longevity, or survivorship, and friendship contribute more to esteem in this school than does actual measured professionalism. In this instance, the layoffs mirror this pattern of esteem—which on its face seems dysfunctional. In any case, the norms here subordinate professionalism to other, less desirable teacher attributes.

Other teachers spoke directly of the dampening effect of dysfunctional school norms upon their own investments in their jobs. As the administrator described, they felt tired that they seemed to be trying when others were not. In fact, some spoke of direct
confrontations with colleagues arising from a perception that they were trying too hard.

One teacher actually whispered her most honest observations of her colleagues, rather than speak them aloud. She described trying to organize supplemental classes for students whose graduation was jeopardized because they hadn’t passed state tests. She failed to get the class going, she said, because the union discouraged the extra work. She had tried to enlist colleagues to help her, but they would not. “They’re not here for that,” she said, apparently meaning, “to help kids.” When asked if they felt any social pressure or sanction for not being more student-centered, she replied emphatically:

No, it’s to the contrary—there’s social pressure on me…I’m hearing, “Why is she doing that? Why are you here during the summer? We’re not getting paid for it.” Whatever. “You’re gonna give the district ideas, that we will give stuff up for free.” Well, it’s not about me in a battle with the district. It’s about the kids.

Another teacher reported similar social pressure—in exactly the opposite direction from what group norms in a highly-functioning school ought to accomplish. This teacher spoke of what it takes to gain or lose respect in this school:

You would have to demonstrate a willingness to not separate yourself, you know, by placing burdens on other people, like have to cover your classes and, you know. You come to work and you do those basic kinds of things. But also by not separating yourself by getting close to students…I hear that from veteran teachers who notice when younger teachers are getting too close to the students. You know, in their minds…the young teachers just build rapport. But that—rapport with students is not what’s valued. For the most part it’s keep your distance, be the adult in the situation, exercise your authority. And it just kinda comes back to the, “don’t distinguish yourself too much in your classroom because you might end up making somebody else look bad.”

Teachers may pay a social cost for excelling in this school, but they do not pay a social cost for lack of performance or irresponsibility. In comments echoed by the administrator, one teacher spoke of a high absenteeism rate, particularly on Mondays and
Fridays. The administrator, who distributes pay stubs from direct deposit on Fridays, waved an envelope in the air and observed, “This lady…I haven’t actually given her a check since November. She’s never here on Fridays...hope she doesn’t need ‘em.” (It was May.) The teacher spoke of colleagues’ disregard for the burden this absenteeism places on those who actually show up for work (leaving aside, for the moment, the burden it places upon students).

Today. Look at today. I mean, we have days where we have a quarter of our staff gone. And that really is—if there is a concern by those who take all those days off about what it does to the rest of us, I’ve never heard it. I mean, when you have a quarter of your staff gone, it creates massive discipline problems all throughout the building. And it invariably occurs conveniently on Monday, and Fridays. You know, when that happens, what you have is a sense that there is not a whole lot of buying-in by individuals about, what’s that do to us? I’m a little bit of an anomaly, because I haven’t taken a single sick day this year. But I clean up all the messes from people that do.

As the comments above illustrate, some teachers do persist against the tide of defeating social norms, and they do offer help after school, or insist upon high quality teaching from themselves. These teachers exemplify the distinction made in Chapter 1, between the virtuoso, who offers an estimable solo performance, and the professional, whose individual contributions are magnified, not depleted, in concert with his/her colleagues. Over time, according the characterization offered by the administrator, the virtuoso wears down. Certainly the teachers in these interviews felt compromised in their professionalism by this lack of support. Yet they continue to hold themselves to high standards, despite circumstances that might make it understandable if they did not. One teacher spoke proudly of his independence:

I’m a person who does not require approval to a great degree on how I evaluate myself. I’ve always been somewhat of a loner personality in
some regard. So to that extent, I evaluate myself and that’s part of the attraction to teaching, too...And also just personal satisfaction, you know...I make about half to two thirds of the paperwork I give my students, because I believe that the stuff that’s given by the books is rather poor quality. I won’t associate myself with poor quality. People don’t realize, a lot of teachers do very, very excellent work because they personally associate themselves with what goes on in the classroom. They may have negative feelings about the district, and they may have negative feelings about their building. They may not necessarily do their jobs totally when they have to do things like hall duty or whatever that involves, other aspects of the building, but when they get in the classroom...then it’s suddenly, it becomes about them.

In fact, this teacher was named by the administrator as one of two outstanding classroom teachers in the building. Notably, the administrator went on to point out that the staff as a whole would not have distinguished them as the best teachers in the building. Describing “isolated incidents of excellence in the classroom”, the administrator underscored that those who do excel are not rewarded for it. Instead, as noted above, the overall group norms favor stern notions of discipline and pupil control.

Excellence does not get rewarded. In fact, and I do know that as days run on, I’m constantly conscious of that. But [one teacher] is the classroom teacher probably as good as we have as a classroom teacher. [Another teacher], this is a classroom teacher who is as good as we have. Those two stand out. But you would never get that from the staff. You would never ever get that from the staff. The people, if you were to put it to a vote, you know, who are the outstanding teachers on the staff, it would be...you know the teachers who, they teach, they do their job, but by God, they’re iron-fisters, you know. They don’t let the kids get away with anything. And you’ll hear things like that. “You know the kids don’t get away with anything in [another teacher’s] class”...but it doesn’t necessarily mean they’re learning...Control trumps learning, is a fair general statement.

In fact, we did have a vote—the network survey measuring professional esteem. Esteem did not track professionalism, as the administrator’s prediction is borne out. Instead, survival and friendship translate into respect. Future research might profitably explore whether the “iron-fisters,” who presumably have dominant pupil control ideologies, fare
better than the teachers he singled out here. Teachers who place a premium on instructional effectiveness, and service to students, are, by several accounts, outliers in the dominant normative culture of the school. This isolation, and the pressure and discouragement that comes with it, can’t help but produce drag on the individual teacher’s effectiveness, and by extension, professionalism.

As might be expected, a very different set of norms governs expectations at the other research site; what both show, in dramatically different ways, is that the ecological power of norms, to either deplete or enhance an individual’s professionalism, is unmistakable. Teachers at the second site spoke of a different sort of social pressure they faced in their work. As cited above, one referred to the “culture of expectation,” that has grown a “heritage” that teachers strive to maintain. Another teacher spoke of the markedly learned culture of scholarship that pushed him to keep up. Of his colleagues, he noted:

One has a Ph.D. And you know [one teacher] has been teaching AP classes forever, and is very, very intelligent. [Another colleague in his department] was a James Madison Scholar, and [yet another] went to Duke. And there’s me, which, you know, this is unusual—this is a group of people in which I feel among the least academically…not as academically focused. But I feel, I’m usually very into school, and because of the graduate program and stuff like that…well, I always like to talk about ideas. And, this is the first time I’ve ever had people who have more ideas than I do. They’re heavyweights.

Not only do the professional norms in this school inspire new teachers to reach high standards, but they act as a mild deterrent to teachers who might otherwise violate them. In both schools, teachers expressed unwillingness to directly confront colleagues who shirk their responsibilities; in this school, however, teachers did express awareness of how they would be perceived if they did transgress norms for performance. More than
one suggested that this social sanction, though informal, carried more weight than intervention from the administration, which was perceived to be lacking. Moving from generalities to specifics, one teacher puzzled over why a delinquent teacher was not directly confronted:

You know, there are pockets in every single department that are weak. But that’s, to me it’s an administrator’s job to get in there and find it and do something about it. I’m not always happy because I don’t think the administration always does that…That’s annoying to me because I do see a lot of people working very, very hard. And well, yes, you might get your pat on the back or something like that, but there are also people who are doing next to nothing, and that seems to be excused…Most of us would be able to name those people to you right off the tops of our heads. And with some derision and laughter, you know, and stuff about the kinds of work they supposedly do in their classroom. And how I find it annoying. How I find it questionable as to why nothing is done about it when I’ve known about it, I’ve only been here [a few] years and I know about it. So people who’ve been here for the whole 20 years or 30 and watch this happen, and it’s still continuing, that’s questionable to me…

[Is there any reputational cost?]

The person himself? I don’t know. I don’t know. I would be so embarrassed I couldn’t stay.

And though this teacher subsequently stepped back and chastised herself for being “judgmental”, the norm was still clearly being exercised in her view of her own work, her colleagues’ work, and the standards that should be maintained in this professional environment.

This frustration with colleagues who don’t live up to their responsibilities pervaded the comments of another teacher who talked of feeling personally offended when colleagues flouted rules or obligations. The affront ultimately was rooted in a sense that these colleagues compromise the school’s mission on behalf of students.
I’ll be honest about it, in this particular school, and I’m a cynic about it, even though I get along with everybody…there are people who say to me…they see me put my lesson plans in the folder and they say, “You still do lesson plans? I haven’t turned them in in 3 years!” Now I know the special ed department depends upon our lesson plans to help them plan with kids who need help with structure. I have nothing to say in response to that. My response would be, “I can’t believe you’re not doing lesson plans. I can’t believe someone hasn’t said something to you.” But that was their line to me, thinking that I wouldn’t be offended by it. But I AM. I AM offended by it.

In these remarks, the teacher demonstrates that the norms of professionalism have been internalized, which is exactly the sign we would look for if we believe that the professional cultural norms are interacting with individual level professionalism. Moreover, his remarks speak clearly to the interrelatedness of professionalism: one teacher’s failure to live up to expectations directly influences another’s ability to serve students.

Later, this same teacher went on to make the analogy to speeding traffic, to express how teachers are expected to regulate their own compliance with expectations, but sometimes fail to do so. When they do fail, they earn the disrespect or derision of their colleagues, as noted above. Key in his remarks is the sense that these transgressions shortchange students, which clearly violates group norms.

You know, it’s human nature. You’re out on the highway and you’re speeding because you don’t see any cops. You’re breaking the law but you’re speeding. You see the cop and you slow down and you hope that they won’t notice you, for a while, but you’ll pick up the speed again. And I think most teachers are the same way. Is that unprofessional? Yeah. But I think people say, “I can arrive at the last minute, I can arrive at school in homeroom and still get attendance taken. Which means I’m not available for kids who need to see me in the morning.” And in their minds they’ve rationalized it and no one has said, “You need to be in your homeroom.” So. I don’t mean to paint this picture as if this is an epidemic here, but there are pockets of it everywhere.
In one school, teachers feel anxiety over colleagues not showing up on time; in another, teachers feel defeated when their colleagues don’t show up at all. In both cases, norms are transgressed, but what stands out here is that clearly, norms are the switch that flips to amplify individual level quality in one case, and to defeat it in another.

Finally, one teacher in this school pointed to a visual symbol to illustrate how glaring it is when someone violates the norm of rigor and responsibility. This teacher spoke of a colleague who has a recliner parked in his classroom, laughingly noting how impossible it is to ignore the connotation captured nicely by the popular brand name, “La-Z-Boy.” This particular teacher earns negative distinction exclusively due to his perceived indifference to the craft of teaching, and his apparent willingness to put his popularity ahead of his effectiveness. For this, he is described as just short of a laughingstock, professionally, whose reputation is well-known throughout the school.

Well, he’s been using lesson plans from like the last 25 years, you know? And so he’ll give the kids an assignment and then he’ll kinda doze or whatever, sleeping in the class, the story is…He leaves 7th period, for the day. And, well, these are just the things I’ve heard, though I’ve seen some of them too. And the administrator made a comment…so I think that gives you a sense of, if an administrator’s saying that, I think it’s out there. It gets into meetings, you know? But, he’s a nice guy, you know?...So I think in many ways, I don’t know if it’s cognitive dissonance, but there’s definitely a separation between this view of him as a teacher and then, he’s a nice guy, the kids like him…I can see how responders would put that he was good for the school. Some. A lot wouldn’t, I don’t think at all. But I can see how some would. I would have a hard time seeing how anybody would put him down as a professional. [referring to the distinction on the network survey, between someone who is a “professional” and someone who is “generally good for the school”]

This teacher took pains to point out that this colleague is exceptional, and that others are “resentful of it, to a certain extent,” primarily for his failure to challenge the kids academically. In their turn, the students see this teacher, albeit affectionately, as
“pathetic, and, I mean, that’s the saddest thing. He doesn’t realize that, I don’t think. But I’ve heard them laugh, and to me, that’s the saddest thing of all.” As a somewhat recent hire, this teacher is exposed to a very instructive case study of this building’s professional norms at work. The new teacher learns the dominant norms, and witnesses teachers earning approval and respect from peers for fulfilling these expectations; the new teacher also witnesses the cost paid, however unwittingly, by the worst-case transgressor of these norms—even when official sanction by the administration is missing or ineffectual.

To comment merely upon the differences between these two schools in the norms themselves provides us with little leverage in understanding professionalism. In both cases, we are witnessing teachers coping with colleagues who do violate standards. The “La-Z-Boy” teacher is glaring evidence that “good” schools also have sub-par teachers to contend with. But in his school, teachers like him are marginalized, not valorized. The critical point of these observations is not the norms themselves, but the evidence we see that the group-level norms operate powerfully, in one direction or the other, upon individual teacher performance. They have a formative influence on teachers around them. When so much of the discussion of teacher professionalism revolves around individual level attributes, dispositions and practices, this evidence shows clearly organizational level processes also matter, at least as much as individual level dynamics. As much as we should attend to those individual level processes, we waste our efforts if we do not also attend to the contexts in which those individuals are situated.

Affirmative evidence: Academic Emphasis as a Cultural Phenomenon
This construct of professionalism asserts the importance of academic emphasis as the key to professional authority, not only because academic proficiency is the core work of schools, but because professionals are those who exercise facility with the abstractions that govern their work. Thus, highly professional teachers manifest concern and regard for continuing knowledge, for expanding their scholarship—in their content areas but particularly in pedagogical matters. These priorities were apparent in much of the qualitative data, from teachers in the high-performing school who expressed pride in their colleagues’ academic heft, and from teachers in the low-performing school who expressed dismay that their colleagues did not value the academic dimensions of effective teaching. From these interviews, we see that academic emphasis is the key to jurisdiction, the key norm that regulates teachers’ views and expectations of their work and their colleagues, and the major distinguishing point between the two research sites.

At the root of professional esteem at one research site, according to subjects, is academic prowess. Teachers may like and even forgive their “nice” colleagues for professional shortcomings, but those they respect are those who model learning for their students, and insist upon it in the classroom. One teacher defined academic distinction as the principal criterion in hiring decisions in his department:

One of the really fortunate things about [this] high school is that last year they got 160 resumes, is what I’ve been told—for one position. And, you know, this year, we got…countless. And so, I don’t remember the number this year, but I’m sure it was something similar if not more. So, we can really pick and choose. And so, what we value is strong academic focus. That’s kind of what I think we all have in common, that’s what we all see as important. [On the hiring committee] every single person would comment about lack of transcript [in applications]…We look for somebody who’s a teacher first, as opposed to say, a coach first. It’s fine to be a coach, but the focus is on the teaching, and reading, being intellectually interested. One of the questions they asked me in my
interview was how would I plan a lesson on the Congress of Vienna. No explanation of what the Congress of Vienna was, and the expectation was that I would know. And fortunately I did. But you get the sense then…and they asked me what books I was reading currently, you know…So the message I got, that’s what’s really valued. Much more than the extracurricular stuff.

These remarks signal a strong emphasis on academic proficiency in content area, but teachers also value pedagogical learning highly in this school. Consistently, as they were asked to define what professionalism looked like in a teacher, their responses included academic accomplishment, specifically with respect to the practice of teaching. “But I also think it has to do with keeping up with the methodology,” one remarked, “with keeping yourself current with what’s going on in the wider world of education and things like that. I think that’s entailed in being professional.” Another teacher led with academic background as the primary ingredient of professionalism: “Well, to me, first of all, the first thing would be an academic background. You have to know your subject area. Secondly, it would be a genuine interest in helping students learn. That’d be the second one. And then the ability to facilitate learning somehow in your classroom. I’d expect those three qualities from people.” Another teacher hit on the subject of professional growth in remarks about the importance of networks. The key cost of a disconnected network, in this teacher’s opinion, is the lost opportunity for professional learning:

What I see from people in this building, I think they do embrace learning, either with technology or with their particular area of interest, or AP stuff. I mean, I see that. I think they always want to feel challenged, and feel like they have state-of-the-art information, so to speak…so if you’re not connected to it, you’re not open to hearing that information. Even if you’re not part of maybe a workshop, or a class or something like that, that you could do over the summer, or even during the school year, your colleagues can come back and share information, share what they learn, you know, give you websites, handouts, things you can utilize in your classroom, or utilize in your area, and so if you’re disconnected, you’re not hearing that,
you’re not taking that on line, you’re not honoring that information. You’re not seeing that it is a benefit, could be a benefit for you.

Thus teachers who miss out on opportunities to share their colleagues’ learning experiences learn less in their turn. This puts them at odds with the norms of the school, which signal the greater belief that continuous learning keeps one from being left behind.

In the other research site, subjects described a decided lack of academic focus, which, disturbingly, trickled down to students. One teacher said flatly, “I’m not aware that there are teachers here who I would think are scholars.” Later, he speculated why, in terms that speak directly to the importance of academic emphasis to professionalism:

[In response to the question, “What would you say a teacher who is a true scholar would look like?”]

I think they’d always be learning about their subject. I think they’d always be an investigator into what their subject is doing and changing from year to year…I think, you know, teaching is not like being a professor. Professors, I think, to some extent, don’t deal with people, you know, cussing them out on a regular basis and things like that. I think that kind of creates a self-image in a teacher as a semi-educated person and also something of a glorified babysitter.

It would be hard to assert professional authority as a teacher if one thought of oneself as a glorified babysitter, not as an engaged learner in the field. If teachers really do construct a self-image in the way that he describes, they concede jurisdiction by relinquishing control over the knowledge base. In the mind of this subject, it is uncommon for teachers to partake of academic subjects at all. This he explained in a description of his initial reaction to the invitation to participate in this research.

You know, I don’t want to depress you or anything, but…one of the things I thought about immediately when I thought about this interview is, who’s going to read it? You know, because there’s an extent to which teachers simply do not follow educational research. For the most part they don’t. In the medical field, it’s, you know, front-line news if Nature or the
*American Journal of Medicine* comes out with some new study and you’ve got doctors who may be very slow to take it in, but eventually it starts to have its way or works its way through. There’ve been all kinds of studies about effective and non-effective [*sic*] teaching methods that are being done for a long time that are totally ignored or violated every day in the classroom. There’s not even awareness of the journals. I think if you would ask people in this building to name the main journals of education, I wouldn’t think that a single one could name maybe even more than one.

*And if I asked members of the English department if they were members of NCTE or receive English Journal?*

I think you’d get blank stares.

In precisely the analogy I invoked in Chapter 1, this teacher frames a comparison unfavorable to teaching. To the extent that teachers do, in fact, neglect the academic side of their practice, they are diminished as professionals. This does not escape notice, as this teacher goes on to articulate, in somewhat quaint terms, just how much this academic disengagement compromises effectiveness.

What’s strange is that a lot of the teachers are basically doing a lot of work, which, if they’d studied the scholarship, then they wouldn’t have to do so much work…bad techniques and grading a bunch of stuff. Teaching, kind of like, “Whack-a-Mole.” You know, well, “he didn’t pass the test, well I’ll grade him bad,” this kind of thing. And if you put a lot more on the line and go out into how you instruct, then you really shouldn’t have to spend a lot of time in how you evaluate them. Because if you improve instruction to a certain degree…you know, with a lot of teachers, instruction isn’t that great, and then they spend forever grading. And there’s kind of a disconnect. They wind up doing lots of work and they get burned out and get angry at their students.

From this teacher’s point of view, when his colleagues neglect their own professional learning, the learning of their students suffers in turn, as nobody could benefit from “Whack-a-Mole” teaching. At the cost of their effectiveness, and thus of their ability to win jurisdiction from skeptical parents considering a move to a charter school, these
teachers don’t seem to see continuous academic engagement as part of their responsibility.

In another telling interview, this teacher’s colleague indicated, perhaps unwittingly, that few members of this teaching faculty see academic leadership as an integral part of their role. This teacher described the circumstances leading to lack of engagement, noting that the students drive the faculty’s academic press, instead of the other way around:

I mean, every teacher’s different, every teacher’s gonna have a slightly different focus. But, I mean, one thing I’ve learned from being here, and in this district, is that...we’re more teachers here. Like if I were at [another school, suburban, high-performing] maybe I would be more of...an instructor. Like it would be more important what I knew because the kids would be questioning it. Because the kids think that we’re gobs of knowledge...It’s just like, wow! It’s, wow! Everything that you tell them. You are so knowledgeable...And I’ve heard teachers multiple times say “I get dumber every day that I’m here,” which is a horrible thing to say, but it’s kinda true. Not in like a derogatory sense, but, these kids don’t challenge us. If I was in a different district, I’d say honestly, they would challenge me, you know. I would, they would be coming up with questions and I’d be, “I’m not sure. I’m gonna look that up.” I almost never get that.

These comments seem to echo earlier remarks that suggested teachers see themselves on some sort of continuum between “real” academics and “glorified babysitters.” Somehow, this teacher—and the comments attributed to colleagues suggest this view is not restricted to this speaker—has inverted the structure of academic leadership that should see teachers establishing learning targets, for students and for themselves. In the terms of professionalism as it is defined in this study, a real professional would not depend on students to push him/her to learn. A real professional understands that it needs to be the other way around.
The interviews showed that teachers in this school have largely replaced true academic leadership and engagement with credentialism—a focus on earning credit hours or degrees to advance in the salary schedule, not to enhance teaching practice. When asked if the staff could be described as “a learning staff, academically inclined among themselves, or intrinsically interested in learning,” the school administrator repeatedly answered no, interrupting the question several times with emphatic negatives. When asked if they tried to learn more in content area, or in pedagogical approaches that might make them more effective, he replied clearly:

No, I don’t perceive that. I don’t. I don’t get that sense. I think they are a learning staff in relationship to credentialism, in that by getting a Master’s degree, it will appear on the scale. They’re very utilitarian in that regard, but not, not for the sake of learning. I don’t get a sense of naturally curious, exploratory minds, you know?

While extrinsic rewards do motivate teachers to obtain credit hours, norms in this school do not reward the type of intellectual cultivation that might make teachers more effective, and more professional. When asked how the staff might respond to a teacher who did exhibit a genuine inclination toward scholarship, the administrator noted that “there are some,” but that they are not distinguished as such by their colleagues: “It would be perceived neutrally. It’s not a bad thing, but it just has no—there’s zero value to it. Zero value.” This statement, consistent with the observations of other interview subjects in this building, reflects perhaps the most striking contrast between the normative cultures of the two schools. Consistent with the theory that governs this specific construct of professionalism, the emphasis on academic engagement is a crucial distinction between the school community that hires and rewards teachers as scholars, and the school community that is indifferent, at best, towards scholarly individuals. As much as the
measurement models showed that academic emphasis was a critical component of individual professionalism, the interview data explicated here clearly affirms the important role academic emphasis plays in the professionalism of the organization.

Affirmative Evidence: Disrupted Networks and Compromised Effectiveness

Teachers at both research sites spoke of the importance of connected networks to transmit information, as well as norms, that would enhance their instructional effectiveness. At both sites, teachers lamented the lost opportunities that gaps and breaks in the networks represented. One teacher noted how excited his students get when his lessons connect with what they are learning in other classes—then went on to describe what was lost when he learned too late about overlaps he could have better exploited:

The payoff is when the kids are watching “Nicholas and Alexandria” in my class and they talk about the Ides of March, which is when Nicholas abdicated, and the kids are like, “The Ides of March! That’s like the Julius Caesar thing!” Of course in the way that only a freshman could. I kinda point out that that was exactly what he was intending to refer to (though it’s a different calendar so it wasn’t actually March 15 but whatever)…These kids are so excited about making these kinds of connections. We did …a project on the industrial revolution…a poster presentation with different options, and they all wanted to do the art history option. Because they’re all taking art history. I didn’t even know. And they all did these great presentations which I think they largely pilfered from their presentations for art, which is okay. I mean, next year I know to do things a little bit differently. But, at the same time, here’s a great opportunity for connections that I had no idea about. And it was purely accidental. And I found out from the kids. And I do that all the time—find out from the kids what they’re learning.

This teacher could not have known that he was describing precisely the phenomenon captured by the medical analogy in which the patient is responsible for informing each specialist what the other has done to treat his symptoms. A lost link between the industrial revolution and J.M.W. Turner may not be life-threatening, but it does represent
a missed chance to reinforce those links that students find so meaningful. Over time, these lost opportunities would surely add up to significant differences in effectiveness.

Another teacher’s remarks remind us that sometimes the loss is seemingly more critical than the link between the czars and the Roman emperors. She pointed out that many teachers in her building don’t know one another’s names, and that the survey itself had prompted awareness of this circumstance: “When your thing came out, people were walking around grabbing nametags…like, ‘Oh, who are you? What are you teaching?’” Which I thought was kind of interesting and good.” She also decried the lack of basic tools for communication among her colleagues: “There’s no email in this building, we do not have phone numbers in this building. I cannot call any of my colleagues unless I have personally sought that information.” These may seem like management issues tangential to instruction, but she noted how difficult it made her “Herculean” efforts to stay connected with those teachers with whom she had students in common. She, too, put her quandary in medical terms, equating special-needs students with intensive care patients who get little follow-up care:

…then you just give ‘em walking papers to the street. There’s no step down. There’s no tertiary care, no visit, no nothing. No support services. I mean, it’s very depressing. These are great medical analogies, but they work. Because the kids aren’t supposed to be responsible. You know a kid with an IEP shouldn’t have to go around and tell each teacher. And it’s important that they advocate for themselves, but most of ‘em are not capable, and that’s why I try so hard.

For these students, the stakes of teacher miscommunication seem more critical than losing a link between Romantic painting and British industrialism. This is enriching knowledge, to be sure, but broken networks fail students in more fundamental ways than that, as this teacher’s comments suggest.
More direct evidence of student costs of insufficient teacher networks appeared in other interviews. Students watch their teachers intently for lessons not just academic, but social as well. Thus students are poorly served when they see their teachers isolating themselves:

Students will see that. They’re gonna observe where you’re going when the bell rings, and they’re gonna see you, whether you’re with a colleague at lunch or talking to them in the hall, or is your door closed all of the time. You know, why don’t you interact with so-and-so, or I’ve never seen you talk to anyone, or maybe there’s a dinner or awards banquet or something and they’re never a part of it. That does stand out.

This teacher felt that modeling that kind of behavior was undesirable. A colleague of hers pointed to more direct costs to students if their teachers did not interact meaningfully and establish solid lines of communication.

This is a huge problem at this school…other people possess information about students that if you had had that information, it might have made a big difference in how you handled a certain situation, or just in general how you instructed that kid, how you dealt with that kid…So yeah, if you had more contact with other people you might get more of that kind of useful information. And I’m not saying that we want to know that kind of stuff at all so we can gossip or anything like that. But for example, say there’s a kid who’s suicidal, maybe the kid even tried to commit suicide at some point. You would want to know that…But any information like that can be helpful, and it doesn’t have to be personal information like that. If a kid does better when you give him a special job to do in that class, it’d be good to know that. Maybe somebody figured that out over in industrial technology or something. They figured that out and you don’t have that information because they’re out in their wing and you never see that person. That would be really helpful too.

These remarks speak to the payoff in effectiveness that could come when we attend to structures that encourage collaboration. The individual professionalism scale measured a teacher’s disposition towards collaboration, but the individual scale cannot so cleanly measure the organizational landscapes that allow for smooth flow of information.
Teachers seemed to agree across the board that this information flow is vital to their effectiveness in serving students.

Some spoke of costs felt more directly by teachers themselves, incurred when they spend time developing materials that others could have shared with them if networks had enabled such transactions. One commented on his disappointment at learning that his colleagues did not forge professional, collaborative relationships: “The thing is, you think that you come to a place and everybody’s got all this experience over the years, and they’ll share it. And they don’t. You learn, and you make the same mistakes all over again. And you’re always re-creating the wheel.” One point to make about these comments involves inefficiency, and the opportunity costs of all that redundant energy. But a more crucial point involves organizational learning: we frequently reward teachers for having more years of experience or more education to move them along in the salary schedule. From an organizational perspective, this use of money is unleveraged if all that experience and education is never transmitted across networks to the rest of the organization. The answer is not to stop rewarding learning and experience, but rather to attend more to the networks that are necessary to capitalize on that learning and experience.

Each of the sections above roughly corresponds with one of the four subscales from the individual professionalism scale, highlighting some symmetry between the individual and group-level conceptualizations. The qualitative data show that the processes of jurisdiction, the ecological importance of norms on individual performance, the emphasis on academic engagement, and the need for connected networks contribute to organizational professionalism, just as academic emphasis, self-enforcement of
standards, effectiveness, and collaboration contribute to individual professionalism. Each section shows how data we would have expected, based on the theory as it has been articulated above, appeared in subjects’ own remarks about their experiences and observations in school. The following section will explore how these remarks also amplify implicit propositions in the theory, as subjects discovered phenomena that are theoretically consistent, if unanticipated in original specifications.

Amplifying Evidence: School Culture and the Defeat of Scholarship

Original descriptions of organizational professionalism tended to understate the importance of school culture specifically with respect to academic emphasis. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence bore out the contention that the academic emphasis of the individual would contribute significantly to individual professionalism, and that the academic emphasis in school culture would be an important signal of organizational professionalism. Implicit in the latter process is the importance of norms, but its real potency emerged most clearly in the interviews. Originally, I suggested that cultural rewards for scholarship would either promote, or not, those who are academically proficient as recipients of professional regard. In original considerations, I saw this moving principally in one direction, or not moving at all—if the school environment did not move academic emphasis in a positive direction, its effect would be neutral. But some interviews suggested that school culture has an even more potent influence upon academic engagement, in negative as well as positive directions.

In the earlier discussion of academic emphasis, a teacher’s comments spoke to a submerged belief that teachers engage the knowledge base mainly at the level of their
students—if students ask challenging questions, teachers study; if students do not, teachers do not bother to learn more about their subjects. In this portrayal, teachers cede control of the governing knowledge of the discipline, however unconsciously. Other interviews also revealed related beliefs; more problematically, these suggested that teacher scholarship does not simply remain flat in a situation in which it is not perceived as necessary to effectiveness. One went so far as to suggest that these environments not only fail to stimulate but actually defeat the scholarly impulse that teachers might bring with them into the profession.

Maybe [teaching] doesn’t attract the kind of person that’s a scholar to begin with, to a great degree. Or maybe once they have the flames are kinda snuffed out just a little bit, because why would you cast pearls before swine? That kind of thing. Why would you spend all this time coming up with more and better ways to do something? Unfortunately that develops that kind of attitude.

As much as the formulation, “pearls before swine,” may grab one’s attention, the theoretically crucial point in these remarks is captured by the image of the flames of scholarship being “snuffed out” in teachers who may well have come into the profession with academic accomplishments and dispositions. The teacher goes on to elaborate on how the circumstances of the job lead to compromises not just in academic dedication, but in the very principles that form the foundations of a teacher’s mission in the first place:

I believe that in every classroom there are two fundamental groups, basically. …One is the…mass, that’s just trying to get out and do the least amount possible to survive, and then I think there’s a smaller group that is thoughtfully interested, and probably will be more likely to vote. And…there’s a concept in Black history, of W.E.B. DuBois, the “talented tenth.” And I guess to some extent I have had problems with that. In teaching I was always trained to teach one hundred percent of the material to one hundred percent of the kids, and I just am no longer doing that. And
it’s only been recently that I’ve realized that, maybe one hundred percent of the kids…maybe about 80 or 70 percent of them are truly nice people, but they really aren’t gonna take this and do much with it…I also realize that there are a lot of other things these other people are not going to know and remember. So as such, in my lesson, I try to do something to include everybody, but I also do some stuff I know that just is basically geared to ten percent, because I don’t want them to be left behind because I’m always catering to the lowest common denominator.

At some point in a career that may have as many as twenty-five years left in it, this teacher by his own description abandoned whatever democratic beliefs about education he once may have held at the outset of his professional experience. Teachers in his circumstances face such unenviable dilemmas when the school environment is at a point of crisis, and at some level, his attempts to differentiate instruction would be laudable, if they were not complicated by the surrender of two-thirds or more of his students. From a comfortable critical distance, his retreat looks different than it might in the moment.

Such remarks, however, are most illuminating because they throw into relief a process that is deeper than the original description of the theory suggests. Original specifications imply that academic emphasis aggregates into group level processes. In fact, it’s more complicated than that, and more disturbing. Academically inclined teachers don’t just stagnate in a negative culture, they get beaten down. Though unforeseen, this revelation is consistent with the intuition that tells us we misallocate resources when we focus exclusively on individual teacher attributes, such as level of education. As this teacher’s experiences illustrate, individuals with greater inclinations toward scholarship are perhaps more vulnerable to such defeats in an environment pernicious to academic engagement. Give this man a Ph.D. and it is unlikely that he would have found his choices less difficult. But put this man in a culture that does more
to sustain academic achievement in its teachers, and that offers professional resources to channel inquiring impulses into his teaching practices, and perhaps he won’t have to negotiate with himself about which percentages he will save and which he will surrender.

My original conceptions of the theory captured the importance of norms for driving academic emphasis upward, but they underestimated the extent to which damaging school environments could destroy existing stores of scholarly will in individual teachers. I described the virtuoso teacher who never fully maximizes his potential, for lack of collegial synergies; here, the academic virtuoso not only fails to maximize, but he is actively diminished. It seems that the problem is not simply who gets hired in schools like this, but also what happens to them once they are indoctrinated. This is consistent with the fundamental insights of this study, but remained implicit until interview data brought these circumstances more clearly to light.

Amplifying Evidence: Negative Networks in the Context of Dysfunctional Norms

Thus far, discussion of networks in this study has featured connections that are almost unambiguously positive. Interview questions followed a line of reasoning, based in theory, that focused on whether schools had sufficient structures to allow information and norms to spread. Though the importance of norms has surfaced repeatedly throughout the study, in this context, I failed to emphasize how much destructive power networks can have if the norms they transmit are corrosive to professional culture. Subjects at both schools saw networks as a mixed blessing—occasionally as likely to spread “bitching” as constructive information and ideas for helping students.
One teacher noted that while on balance it was generally good for teachers to have informal relationships, at lunch or outside of school, at times these relationships allow for negativity to cascade in destructive ways: “This year I see the luncheon activities run into a more negative type of thing where [people say], ‘Let’s go upstairs and vent about the principal.’ And you say, ‘Oh, I don’t want to be part of that; let me go back to my own territory or domain.’ It can evolve into that negativity, and people start feeding off that.”

So by this teacher’s description, the negativity, accelerated by these connections, actually produces disconnection as people drop out of the group. Another teacher echoed these observations, albeit at a different school. Describing a need to eat lunch alone, this teacher cited the tendency of lunch to turn into a “bitch-fest” as a central reason for pulling back: “I don’t eat in the faculty lounge because I don’t like the cattiness generally…I just feel like there’s just this negative energy. When a group of teachers get together, almost nothing positive is ever said, I feel.” In these teachers’ experiences, when the credit of social contact is exceeded by the debit of negative energy, they withdraw from the group.

Other teachers objected to what they saw as the inevitable negativity toward kids, which snowballed when small group numbers multiplied. In one case, an interview subject longed for meaningful professional networks that could help her reach her students more effectively. “We’re all pretty much running in our own world,” she lamented. Later in the same conversation, she spoke of perhaps being better off without the networks that did exist, noting, “I think that they interfere sometimes with children’s success.” Elaborating, she described a network process that facilitates teachers advocating against, rather than for, students:
You know, somebody’s nominated for something and I really don’t like student Q, and I spend a lot of time badmouthing student Q and giving that kid a really bad image. And that kid needs letters or something, and I start out by announcing…whatever, very negative. I really think it can have a pretty down trend. And I know kids who haven’t gotten things. When I think, okay, maybe student Q’s really difficult. Maybe he or she acts up. Maybe he or she has days when they’re like, “Well, screw this! I hate this school! I don’t want to be here!” I think, well, that’s not good, it’s immature, we need to work on it. Work’s in progress. And what [a specific colleague] says, it’s true—I like his approach, that most of them are probably pretty fine material. They just need some polishing. Get some of the tarnish off…But I do not like speaking badly about a child.

In her description, one can read a network of social and emotional support for teachers, one that in different circumstances, might offer crucial validation and affirmation in a tough job. Under these circumstances, with dysfunctional norms governing appropriate responses to student behavior, the network becomes almost a weapon to punish students who prove challenging.

In another conversation, a school administrator discussed concrete plans to dismantle a network structure that had proven more problematic in this regard than it was worth. In his building, teachers had been organized into a grade-level team as a pilot program to facilitate exactly the kind of professional sharing and strategizing that ought to foster effectiveness and professionalism. In his observation, it had worked out to be more harmful than productive.

Here’s an example—social networks without leadership. We have what is called a freshman team. These are teachers who teach exclusively freshmen, the same freshmen. And the freshman team is little more than a social network in that teachers get together at third period every day, and they will do a whole lot of complaining about individual students…They claim to be planning and they claim to be problem-solving and intervening, but really, it is little more than, “Geez, you know I’m having trouble with so-and-so…and oh, so-and-so is a pain in the ass.” And, “Oh, I know. You know what he did the other day?” You know, it’s just that kinda stuff. And that’s my fault, because absent effective leadership,
absent someone to go in there and actually lead the group and help them to understand what they should be doing, it would be just little more than a social network.

What he reveals, whether he realizes this or not, is that the network functions so destructively because the group has no normative direction—or rather, has a negative normative direction. The norms that allow for such conversations, according to this administrator, privilege what he calls “custodialism” and “adultism” over the kinds of professional values he would like to see the network structures promote. He makes this distinction explicitly, and somewhat passionately.

Let me back up here. They will talk about things like, “My kids don’t do their homework.” And “I’ve got X number of kids failing.” You know, “they don’t turn their work in, they don’t study for their tests.” And some may argue, well, that’s instruction-oriented discussion. But it’s really not. Because the issue is that the kids are not doing what the teachers want them to do. It’s a control issue. It’s not about, “This is what I teach, this is how I’m teaching, this is content, this is how I’m delivering the instruction. I’ve thought about these kinds of assessments, I’ve got this kind of information but I don’t know what to make of it. Can you help me make sense of what this is?” It’s not that.

His assessment of the situation resonates powerfully with the statistical finding, noted in the previous chapter, that friendship does more to predict esteem in this school than does actual measured professionalism. These teachers believe they are engaging in professional networking, but by his description, they are “social,” not professional. Friendship behavior replaces professional collaboration. In this administrator’s estimation, the reality of this network structure falls so far short of the ideal for which it was implemented that his recommendation is to dismantle the team entirely. It imposes a burden on scheduling, he maintains, and does not deliver what it should for the effectiveness of the instruction it is meant to enhance.
In retrospect, these insights into networks as a complicated good should be unsurprising: networks are crucial to organizational professionalism because they conduct professional norms. We see clearly they conduct unprofessional norms as well, and they do so in both school environments under study here. One key distinction seems to be a matter of volume—in a flourishing normative culture, positive expectations will drown out negative expectations flowing along the network. In the culture of the school that struggles, fewer positive currents are present to dilute the effects of negativity. Administrators like the one cited here may logically and appropriately disconnect the network to short-circuit that negativity, but doing so also arrests the possibility that teachers receive positive normative signals from their peers. It’s not clear that this strategy effectively reduces the “bitching,” but it does seem clear that it obstructs subsequent efforts to recapture effectiveness at the organizational level. As originally posed, the theory behind this study recognized the consequences of such disconnection. These interviews helped to reveal possible mechanisms behind it.

The preceding two discussions explored findings that were consistent with theoretical discussions, but were somewhat incompletely perceived in original specifications. The following section discusses findings that are productively problematic, in that they present issues that challenge some of the theoretical presumptions in previous discussions, but inspire questions for future research, or further considerations that could ultimately strengthen the theory. In any event, this apparently disconfirming evidence needs to be addressed, so that our understanding of professionalism on both individual and group levels moves forward.
Complicating Evidence: The Durability of a Service Orientation in Teaching

In my review of the literature, I described scholarship in the sociology of the professions that pre-dated Abbott’s insights into jurisdictional processes and their reliance upon academic emphasis and effectiveness. This scholarship tended to feature a service orientation, among other elements, as a key part of the definition of a profession. In my discussion, I put the service orientation in the background, because it didn’t seem theoretically grounded in the process of achieving professional status. Empirically, however, I find I need to reconsider, as the service orientation keeps appearing in interviews. Subjects often spoke of the importance of their relationships in the way they viewed and respected (or not) their peers. There does seem to be an expectation among teachers that “professional” teachers, those who distinguish themselves (at least in functional school cultures) are the ones who will act selflessly, who genuinely care about students and their relationships. The affective dimension of teaching figures much more prominently in the interview data than I had accounted for in my theoretical explorations. Teachers returned to this theme time and again, when they were defining what a professional teacher would look like, when they described how they responded to colleagues who were seen to neglect the relational elements of their job, and even when they softened their stances on teachers who failed in other dimensions of the job, but brought care and regard to the table instead.

Teachers were quick to define caring as an integral part of professionalism. For some, this was the first characteristic that came to mind, as in the case of one teacher who sees a professional teacher as first and foremost, an advocate for students: “When I think
about what constitutes a professional…first of all they are advocates for young people in
the best possible way. They go to bat for kids and want to see them succeed but don’t use
artificial means to foster self-esteem.” This teacher talked about high expectations and
clear messages about achievement and effort, but even his emphasis on expectations had
little to do with maintaining rigor for its own sake, and everything to do with empowering
students to succeed in life. In that sense, we can see he forms his priorities for teaching
out of a sense of mission, or a service orientation. Another teacher highlighted these
characteristics when she thought of the building’s exemplar of an effective teacher.

I can think of a person who, if you look at the way he relates to students,
the care and concern, a love of his subject. I think he’s probably really
effective. And I think the kids really love him, can really relate to him,
probably learn from him. Some of the language he uses would not be
considered professional, but I think looking at the kids that relate to him,
yeah.

In this case, her exemplar might not seem professional on the surface, but the depth of his
effectiveness, in her estimation, is tied to his ability to show students authentically that he
cares about them and his subject.

Yet another teacher added to the teacher’s relational responsibilities, accounting
not just for the way the teacher treats her students, but also for the way she insists that
students treat others respectfully in her room. Referring to a blue placard with a yellow
equal sign placed in the front of her room, she noted the importance of sending caring
and respectful signals to all students:

I think that’s a visual cue, for people who are in the classroom. You can be
comfortable here, you know, I want to make sure that you’re happy and
that you fit in and that no one’s gonna be saying anything to you that
would degrade you. I think another element of that is…respect toward
everybody in the classroom…That would be something that would be
important to me, as far as professionalism is how you treat kids. If you
treat them as kids, if you treat them as equals, if you treat them respectfully, all those elements would fall in that for me.

For this teacher, who followed these remarks by citing the importance of academic engagement, the first duty of any professional teacher is to the personal well-being of her students. Many educators intuit that without that well-being, everything else they try to accomplish in the classroom can fall by the wayside, but this teacher explicitly puts affective regard at the forefront of the teacher’s mission. This trend exceeded my expectations in theorizing and designing scale items.

Not only do teachers admire those among them who combine relational proficiency with academic facility and effectiveness, but they find that caring for students can mitigate other professional shortcomings. Those who talked specifically about the “La-Z-Boy” teacher hastened to describe his warmth and genuine connection with students. They were genuinely moved by his contributions in this area, and struggled to reconcile their conflicting values when taking both his considerable strengths and considerable shortcomings in view. One pointed him out as an example of someone who brought something to the table that others, who might be more focused on academics, might have missed:

I have learned that being judgmental about someone’s presentation in content area and academics, is not always the best judge of a teacher. Because…catching kids, is part of the teaching profession too. Being alert enough to rescue a kid who might be going under, or a kid who’s having tragic emotional problems, somehow some of us cannot see that. And sometimes these other people are the ones who do catch ‘em. And I am always surprised. I can say I’m always surprised, because it feels like I should have been able to do that, and the kid was in my class, and I didn’t do it…[and here I am] the overachiever who’s always looking for that…Well, I’ll miss ‘em, and those people will show up in those other areas and that person will have caught ‘em. And then, I have a whole ‘nother view of them as a teacher. It’s not the academic part of ‘em, it’s
what they’ve done to rescue a kid. And so there is that other side that I always have to back off, and I have to sit back and say, you know what, they do bring something to the mix. And I need to accept that too, and just realize that their role is different than mine. So I try not to be judgmental. And it’s hard for me.

This teacher struggles with a balancing act because the service orientation jockeys for position with her sense that professional teachers must principally be serious about the academic side of their job. The service orientation is important enough to rival, if not quite overpower, effectiveness and academic engagement in her conception of what a professional is. She is not alone in this balancing act, as others spoke of the same conflicting values. Another teacher, when asked if the “slacker” teachers in his building were forgiven if they were caring and affirming for students, did feel that their genuine regard for kids did redeem them somewhat, though he did say they were diminished in their professionalism.

[So that person who goes home at 3:30 and arrives at the last possible minute will be forgiven by peers if it’s clear that they fill that role for kids, that they’re caring and affirming?]

That they care. They care about the students…Philosophically I feel very strongly about the way that some people run their classes…But if the question had to do with where do we all cross paths on professionalism, I think that’s that we’re here for students…Those people that I’ve described who don’t seem to work very hard and do still connect with kids…I’m not necessarily saying that they’re educating. They’re just connecting with kids.

[Does that make them less professional as teachers?]

Oh yeah. In my mind it does.

Interestingly, this teacher goes on to note that the teacher on the other end of the spectrum, the “person who is demanding and…shrewish would not be the word…somebody who is very impersonal and very exacting and shows no real sign of
personality or caring…” is also diminished as a professional. Even if the latter teacher is academically rigorous and impeccable in his fulfillment of responsibilities, he is still less of a professional. I ought to have asked this teacher which he would choose if he were forced to accept one or the other into his building; I genuinely don’t know which he, or his colleagues who wrestled with similar dilemmas, would choose—a circumstance which speaks to the evenness of the struggle within them.

If teachers wavered in their responses to kind and caring colleagues who were ineffective in the classroom, they were far more surefooted in their reactions to colleagues who violated affective norms. Earlier citations documented, for example, an administrator’s dismay over the ascendancy of “iron-fisters” at his school. Other teachers cited harsh colleagues as negative exemplars of professionalism, who not only offended their relational ethos but also generated negativity and animosity among students that spilled over into the broader culture. One teacher described her shock at a colleague’s tendency to shout at his students. He was the first person she thought of when asked to consider an example of someone who was unprofessional:

The only person that I can really think of specifically is a person that I thought he was not professional in most occasions, in my department. I’ve heard him say, you know, screaming “shut up” at the kids, which, I don’t know, that’s just, sort of crazy, you know? And then you ask him, “Oh, are you having a bad day?” “No, no I’m fine.” And I’m like, whoa.

[So that’s normal for him?]

That’s normal, yeah. So that was kinda crazy. I didn’t think that was particularly professional. I understand that we all think it, but…That’s probably the least professional I’ve ever seen anyone.

Other teachers described feeling offended by colleagues who treated students badly, wondering why these individuals chose or stayed in a profession that demanded more
from them personally or emotionally than they could handle. One interview subject expressed precisely those sentiments: “There’re definitely teachers who I think need either a change in direction or…to rest. Or, you have to ask them, what are their career goals, what is their daily goal, why do they come to work, you know? Just to yell at kids?” Implicit in such remarks is a definition of professional teaching that places a premium on high quality interactions with students, perhaps as much as on high quality instruction. Part of being a professional teacher is relating positively with students, affirming and cultivating constructive relationships. Teachers who violate that standard stand out among their peers, and there is reason to believe that these transgressors are seen as less redeemable than their jolly but ineffective counterparts.

These interviews revealed a strong tendency among teachers to view their work as principally for others more than themselves, and as a role that requires affective as well as academic proficiency. This view is consistent with the service orientation that figures prominently in earlier definitions of professions, which I have found problematic. But it is impossible to ignore the frequency and fervency with which teachers spoke about the importance of relationships in their ideas of professionalism, and my scale measures this dimension only incompletely. If we consider that authentic relationships with and genuine regard for students translates into higher instructional effectiveness—which, intuitively, seems highly likely—the development of the professionalism measure does account for this dimension somewhat. However, none of the scales speak directly to these concerns, and it seems clear that further research and development of the measure would need to explore this feature of teachers’ values and experiences more carefully. Adding this consideration to the existing measure might more comprehensively discriminate
among teachers who protect and advance the claims to effectiveness and jurisdiction that the profession makes more generally, and those who represent the profession poorly to the public who confer that jurisdiction. Theoretically and empirically, there might be room for this expansion of the concept of professionalism, and there would be an opportunity for greater consistency with traditional scholarship in the sociology of the professions. Then again, the qualitative evidence presented here suggests that the service orientation may be orthogonal to the other four subscales, such that adding it might damage internal consistency of the construct. Some teachers high on professionalism as currently measured appear to be high on service orientation; others high on professionalism appear to be low on service orientation. The same seems true of teachers low on professionalism. Service orientation could be a separate dimension that runs parallel to, but does not fit inside, this construct. In any case, this whole question illustrates the interdependence of the qualitative and quantitative explorations of the concept, as they often inform and, occasionally, check each other as we mine them for inferences.

Motivating Evidence: What’s At Stake When Teachers Are “Pirates”

It goes without saying that factor scores speak to us differently than faculty members’ interviews. The factor scores, and other data from measurement models and network analysis, can help us to speak with some conviction that the theory’s crucial propositions are supported by the data. The interviews strengthen these convictions: professional teachers do value an academic orientation, norms in professional environments do sanction behavior that seems likely to compromise efforts at winning and keeping jurisdiction over educational problems. But the qualitative data also
emphasizes a conviction of another sort: the conviction that this research explores questions of real social, not merely academic, significance. More pointedly perhaps than a regression table, the interviews offer an urgent reminder of what’s at stake.

Thus far, any discussions of consequences, of failures in professionalism in teachers, or in failures to recognize the distinctly organizational dimensions of professionalism, have been framed in terms of academic losses (of understanding), or organizational losses (of effectiveness). The real costs, however, are obviously borne by the students and families whose educational needs are failed. When we fail to recognize the true dimensions of professionalism, we fail to intervene on their behalf, and whether they are the “talented tenth” or the surrendered ninety percent, the academic experiences about which we theorize at a distance are up close and personal for them. Obviously, most educational researchers care somewhat about the welfare of the students standing behind their studies. But in the midst of variables and procedures, the student experience is sometimes easily forgotten. The three anecdotes that follow represent an attempt to bring them back into the foreground.

Teachers in some interviews were frustrated that school cultures dampened their willingness to stand up to colleagues who failed to live up to the standards of the job. In one egregious case, a teacher described a colleague who brought a six-pack into his classroom and sampled it illicitly throughout the school day. Colleagues knew of this behavior, but kept their silence. (Apparently, so had previous administrators, who were also believed to be aware.) One might feel a twinge of sympathy for teachers who are so disempowered they feel they can say nothing, whose sense of professional efficacy is so inconsistent that they are ineffectual in this basic sense. But any real sympathy in this
situation rightly goes to this man’s students, on whom the real damage is inflicted. They have no agency in a circumstance that harms them directly, perhaps irrevocably. The teacher’s colleagues, on the other hand, are vested with that agency on behalf of these students, and fail to exercise it. It’s not that such things would never happen in a more functional school. They probably do happen, though at what frequency it would be hard to tell. But by and large, it’s unlikely that they persist to become part of the culture, to settle gradually down to some seabed of silent resignation. The teachers in this school have abdicated their role as professionals responsible for monitoring themselves to insure effectiveness, or even merely acceptability. It may be their surrender, but it is clearly the students’ loss.

Another teacher’s comments indicated that the loss involved in failures of professionalism, organizational or individual, are far from merely theoretical. She spoke of the messages, explicit and implicit, that students get in her school. Her comments seem directly tied to the sense of resignation that represents a complete breakdown in professionalism.

As far as my sense of identity of this place, [there’s] the taught, you know, what they’re telling you, and what you learn. I would say our identity is jocks at best. I don’t know…it’s not a very academically oriented school. Sort of the school that kids go to, to socialize and, this isn’t the school where you go if you’re college bound, this is where you go if you think you’re gonna get a football scholarship. This is just where you go if you’re just getting through. That’s the message I get, and that’s the message the kids get, which sucks. But I mean, on the “Progress” thing [referring to a school slogan to inspire a positive attitude]…well, it’s all good, but, well, our message is “peace.” You know, “stop the violence.” Well. Our message should be, you know, “go to college.” I don’t know. That’s kinda uncomfortable. Even though it’s a good message and everything, still, it feels like the bar is very low. And I think the kids get the message loud and clear. And I think the staff does too.
Later, describing what these low expectations meant for students in their real lives and futures, she spoke of the wholesale absence of understanding that their life chances weighed in the balance.

I have them do this analysis, what grade did you get? Why did you get it? What do you want? What goals do you have in your life? How’s your grade in this class going to help you? All this stuff. Most of their goals are, “finish high school.” Really. Almost all of them. “Finish high school, get through high school.” They don’t know that they’re burning bridges. I don’t know if they even think that they can go to college. College is for other people, not them.

It might be tempting to attribute such low expectations to attitudes and examples students carry with them when they enter a school. Perhaps such things are external—messages of low achievement in some contexts surely begin well before ninth grade. It would be unjust in some respects to hold schools accountable for containing values abroad in the greater community before students even walk in the door. But a professional organization in this context makes a jurisdictional claim, to be able to treat educational problems. If those problems inscribe low academic expectations, professionals address themselves and their tools to treating low expectations, along with everything else that presents during the course of treatment. Again, the issue seems one of costly surrender—the profession fails to claim jurisdiction over educational problems faced by those most vulnerable in our society. In this case, the failure means telling, subtly or not so subtly, three hundred students a year that “college is for other people, not them.”

Many educators enter the teaching profession because they seek to overturn disadvantage, not to compound it. And yet, in the worst-case scenario of collapsed professionalism, teachers can be the agents of disadvantage, not the enemies of it. One
teacher made this point metaphorically, casting teachers as occasionally “pirates” in her students’ lives.

I think there are people who…I believe that there are some people who are in the wrong profession, and I do believe there are people who burn out. But I can’t, I don’t want to say that to a kid who I’m trying to get hooked in…I also tell them, if things aren’t going well, with teachers, I tell them, it’s your job to get along with the teacher. You know. This is your job. You come to school, this is your job. You have to get along, because otherwise, you’re letting somebody else mess up your future. You’re in charge of your future, I tell them. Or more ridiculous, you’re the captain of your ship. I tell them, any time you let someone get you so upset you can’t steer the ship, that’s a pirate you brought on board. And you’re facilitating your own takeover…

[I don’t think that’s ridiculous…]

Well, they’re always like, “oh no, not the pirate thing!” But it’s so concrete it helps them think. I tell them everybody gets on the shoals, everybody gets pirates on there once in a while. But when the pirate is a family member or a teacher, or drugs, or friends who are pulling you down, your job is to clean house and get back up. So, here’s the deep water, here’s where we’re going. Know where you’re going. I tell them everybody has a different destination, but you’re in charge.

Her metaphor is perhaps more troubling than she knew. She sees it as necessary to counsel her students about destructive teachers, just as she sees it necessary to counsel them about drugs or negative peer influences. This is hardly the company professional teachers want to keep in their students’ lives. To the extent that this woman really is offering advice that is salient to her students, to the extent that they actually need to be coached on how to navigate around their teachers along with any other threatening forces in their lives, to that extent teachers have failed in the very core tenets of professionalism. So far from offering helpful treatments to these students’ educational problems, these teachers become the problems themselves.
If representative of more than just this particular school environment, this portrait is compelling on behalf of just about everyone involved. One feels moved by the plight of the students, first and foremost, but also for the teachers, who have degraded the standards of professionalism to such extent. And one feels for the other teachers in the organization, who are placed in the pitiable position of having to distance themselves from, and, as one subject suggested above, apologize for, the “pirates” who have also boarded their organizational vessel. None of those concerned can realistically be rescued unless we adopt a more expansive notion of what professionalism means, and begin addressing our efforts to both individual and organizational determinants of it.
Any teacher who has had to stand in front of a room full of parents at a school open house, any principal who has had frustrated or angry parents in her office, any superintendent who has had to lead a campaign for a school levy knows that winning public confidence is absolutely critical to the success of a school’s mission. This is such common knowledge to school professionals that it hardly bears mention among them. Explicitly or implicitly, most school decisions at every level are made under the influence of this need. One goal of this research is to promote a deeper, more theoretically grounded consideration of the role of public confidence within our discussions and understandings of professionalism. An important theoretical move of this study is to link the norms and ethos of professionalism with the push and pull of jurisdiction, which is at the heart of professional status. This is an important move, to consider the teaching profession at both the individual and the social level, and from this fundamental basis in recent considerations of the sociology of the professions, all of the implications within this study and beyond it take root.
As the debate about the effectiveness of America’s public school system progresses, we see increasing validation of a jurisdictional approach in the proliferation of charter schools in many American communities. The jurisdictional process is essentially competitive, and as confidence in public schools has waned, the market for charter schools has burgeoned, especially in cities. If jurisdiction is predicated on a perception that professionals merit domain over a set of problems on the basis of effectiveness, this loss of jurisdiction should tell us something about the status of our profession—again, especially in cities. It can also give us clear signals about paths to take to restore or strengthen our professional status among those in society who can still be convinced that schools and the people in them serve democracy well.

This study was conceived in the hope that it might establish a productive first step in a broader research agenda. It represents a first pass at an approach to a substantive problem in education that is clearly relevant, and at an approach to measurement that is integrative and generative. This concluding discussion reviews, in broad terms, the theoretical foundations, situation within the field, logic of inquiry, and findings of the study, as well as its more particular implications for future research.

Theoretical Grounding

In contrast with the trend in discussions of teacher quality that focus on individual prescriptions for improvement, this study advocates a framework that distinguishes a professional organization from an organization of professional individuals. Recognizing that every teacher is situated in a heavily influential professional context, this study looks both at individual attitudes and dispositions, and at the norms that help to shape them at the level of the school building. With so much attention paid already to individual
attributes, the organizational level represents the low-hanging fruit in the exploration of school success.

This integration of individual and organizational perspectives follows a groundbreaking movement in the sociology of the professions, in which Abbott (1988) calls our attention to the importance of jurisdiction in the process of winning professional status, or marking professional boundaries around a particular problem of practice. When professions are able to demonstrate that their treatments of these problems are effective, in a sense they “own” these problems as their professional domain. This proprietorship lasts as long as does their ability to fend off jurisdictional claims from competing professions, and to convince the public that their treatments continue to be the best choices available. Abbott maintains that professions in the best position to win and keep jurisdiction are those that control the knowledge systems that govern the field. If the academy within the profession houses the discourse around the abstractions most relevant to practice, Abbott asserts, the jurisdictional propriety of a given profession is probably quite safe.

Knowing that the key to maintaining their status is their effectiveness and scholarship, professionals self-regulate, establishing norms that reinforce behaviors suitable for retaining public trust. Professionals monitor themselves to live up to these norms, to safeguard professional status in continuous reference to public opinion. Throughout their practice, furthermore, they rely on colleagues in collaborative, cooperative relationships, to help reinforce norms, to contribute to scholarship, to consult on difficult problems of practice so that treatments are effective and represent the profession well. Professions that coordinate their members to conduct themselves in these
ways are those with the most durable claims to jurisdiction, those with least susceptibility to alternative definitions or treatments of their problems of practice.

Following Abbott, I apply these principles to the practice of teaching. I refer to the extent to which a profession is granted jurisdiction over a specific set of problems as *professionality*; this is distinct from *professionalism*, which is the extent to which members of the profession live up to the expectations of performance and conduct that pervade their practice. Those professional expectations arise from the processes of professionality, in that professions coordinate their norms on the basis of what is likely to win and keep the public’s confidence. So the definition of professionalism in teaching, at the individual level, corresponds to teaching’s professionality: the standards that make an individual teacher professional are oriented toward the continuous process of winning jurisdiction. The individual standards are inherently tied to the broader social process.

Thus, building from this foundation, the theoretical model for individual professionalism in teaching consists of four main components: *academic engagement*, following the need to control the knowledge systems relevant to teaching practice; *self-enforcement of standards*, following the need to self-regulate adherence to norms from within the profession itself; *effectiveness*, following the continuous need to win the right to treat the problems of practice; and *contribution to a professional community*, following the need to coordinate expectations and communicate standards across the profession. Within the school building, teachers who consistently manifest these dispositions and behaviors would, for the purposes of this theoretical model, be more professional. These four components, when expressed via survey questions, constitute the four subscales of the individual level measurement of professionalism described below.
Situation Within The Field

A review of the literature reveals that professionalism is not typically studied with quite so coherent a theoretical foundation. Many scholars publishing on the subject in recent years have neglected the most recent approach to understanding professionality in the sociology literature. They tend to follow more conventional literature, dating back to Parsons (1939), among others, that focuses more on the attributes of the people in the professions than on the work they do or how that work is organized. Thus in the early literature, teaching is a “borderline” profession, or in some discussions, a “semi-profession.” Because these approaches to defining what is and is not a profession were more descriptive than theoretical, they often reflected social respectability or class associations more than they reflect actual distinctions among groups based in the way they carry out their work. Undoubtedly, the overwhelming feminization of the teaching corps at this time contributes to the uncertain professional status of teaching into the late 20th Century.

Abbott makes a convincing case that many of these early approaches to professionality are insufficiently theoretical. Typically they are list-based, or criterion-based: a profession is a profession when its members undergo rigorous training, for example, or when they meet stringent requirements for licensing. Really, these criteria merely reflect issues of social status rather than those of work: Abbott notes that automobile repair, by some criteria, would certainly be considered a profession rather than a trade, except that society generally does not wish to confer that status. The academic project of defining the professions, prior to Abbott’s innovations, tend to serve identifiable social agendas rather than intellectual ones. His addition to the discourse
forces attention to the professions not at the level of individual characteristics of their members, but at the level of interactive social processes that influence individual performance. We can understand the professions better when we attend to both levels at the same time.

If sociologists attend too exclusively to the individual level and not enough to the interactive or social level, the same can generally be said about educational researchers. Discussions of professional development, professional learning, teacher quality, and professionalism tend to resemble wish lists rather than theoretically coherent systems. Many attempt to follow the sociological literature, but end up importing its theoretical shortcomings, and suggest that teaching follow models based on “traditional” professions such as law, medicine, university teaching, architecture, etc. (see Ingersoll, 2001, for example). Overall, such trends in educational scholarship neglect the necessary theoretical mechanisms to create coherent boundaries between teaching as a profession and other occupations from which it would like to distance itself, presumably on the basis of social status. Even as many researchers grasp core elements of the theoretical model I advance here, few if any assemble all the pieces meaningfully enough to account fully for the jurisdictional processes in play in schools. As such, their helpfulness in guiding the profession to more secure jurisdictional ground is limited.

Logic of Inquiry

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to gain leverage on the normative processes and collegial interactions that characterize school cultures. In a comparative case study consisting of two contrasting schools in the Midwest, I collected surveys and conducted interviews to delve into beliefs and behaviors regarding the work
and performance of individual subjects and their colleagues. One school, designated as “Excellent” by its state board of education, presented me with the opportunity to explore professionalism in a highly functional normative culture. The other school, designated to be on “Continuous Improvement” status by the state board, presented a culture with decidedly less functional norms. The cases were further distinguished by their means on an organizational effectiveness measure validated by Hoy and Ferguson (1985). On other school variables, such as racial mix, percentage of students designated as economically disadvantaged on the state school report card, and percentage of students with limited English proficiency, the schools were likewise very dissimilar. The cases were chosen purposefully, with an eye to contrast, on the basis that each school offers unique opportunities to see how different normative cultures interact with individual professionalism.

Individual subjects contributed to the study in two major ways: through surveys, of two types, which were administered and collected anonymously, and through face-to-face interviews conducted one-on-one with a small group of volunteers at each school. Response rates on the individual surveys were acceptable if not stellar. In general, interview participants generally represented a cross-section of the faculties they discussed in our conversations.

The individual surveys consisted of a questionnaire on professional attitudes and behaviors, and a roster-format network survey. I developed the professionalism survey through a series of pilot administrations to establish reliability, and the final version was administered under conditions designed to protect respondents’ confidentiality. The survey was developed so that the questions fell into four subscales derived from Abbott’s
theory of the professions. The network survey for each school consisted of a roster of teachers and administrators, and a series of 4 questions, in response to which respondents placed a check next to their colleagues’ names if they fit the criteria elicited in the questions. From these surveys I was able to construct the friendship, professional esteem, contact, and generalized esteem networks for each school. I used betweenness centrality, a network measure indicating an individual’s structural position, in the professional esteem network, to construct the variable “esteem.” Later, I related this variable to professionalism, friendship, and years of experience to explore the bases of professional respect in each school, and whether or how much esteem was tied to professionalism in each school.

Interviews provided an “on the ground” perspective on school cultures in a way that balanced a structural approach. Subjects characterized professional norms and relationships in their own voices, at a level of depth not typically captured in pen-and-pencil surveys. These unstructured conversations lasted about an hour each, and provided incredibly rich data to both inform the theory-building process and validate some of the quantitative findings. Affirmative data and disconfirming data alike were carefully examined and analyzed, as part of a good faith effort at establishing the trustworthiness and quality of inference of the study. In addition, careful attention was paid to the principles of reflexivity and triangulation to protect participants’, as well as the researcher’s, interests during the course of this study.

Discussion of Findings

This study was undertaken with the major goal of defining and validating a measure of individual professionalism that was theoretically grounded in the best
research in the sociology of the professions. Part of that validation process involved showing that the results of that measure perform as they should in relationship to other concepts implicated in the theory. Analysis of data collected according to the methods described above shows that the instrument does indeed measure individual professionalism validly and reliably, and that it performs as we would expect it to, with respect to esteem, friendship, and years of experience.

Confirmatory factor analyses of each of the four subscales—*Academic engagement, Self-enforcement of standards, Effectiveness,* and *Contribution to a professional community*—show that each scale has promising substantive properties and is an acceptable to good fit to the data. Similarly, a confirmatory factor analysis of a short-form composite scale also has solid substantive properties and is a good fit to the data. Calculation of the omega coefficient for the four subscales and the short-form established reliability, as each scale was at or above the minimum threshold of .70 for acceptable reliability.

I establish content validity by demonstrating how each of the subscales and the items that comprise them were derived explicitly from the theoretical foundations of the study. Construct validity puts the burden on the researcher to show that the theoretical properties that underlie the scale translate well into empirics. When we explore the relationship between scores on the short-form composite, our measure of professionalism, and other variables of interest, we see that the data behaves much as theory would predict. We hypothesized that in a normative culture that is highly professional, esteem would be predicated upon actual measured professionalism, rather than on characteristics such as friendship (measured by betweenness centrality in the friendship network) or
survival (measured by years of experience). On the other hand, in a normative culture that is not highly professional, esteem would be more likely to track these other variables, and not actual measured professionalism. This turned out to be the case: professionalism was not a statistically significant predictor of esteem in the poorly functioning school, but it was in the highly functioning school. Years of experience and friendship did not have significant influence upon esteem in the highly functioning school, but in the poorly functioning school, years of experience was a highly significant (p<.02) predictor of esteem, and friendship was marginally significant (p<.10). These findings offer construct validity not only to the individual level measure that this study set out to define and validate, but they also validate the theoretical foundations on which this study was based.

A third measure of validity, catalytic validity, expresses the transformative potential of the research to help participants effect change in their lived reality. Catalytic validity in this study comes in the form of some interesting results regarding the perception of professionalism and gender. Though women tended to have higher scores than their male colleagues on the Professionalism short-form, our measure of actual (as opposed to perceived) individual professionalism, they were less esteemed. When measured according to a scale that is theoretically based, women have no problem distinguishing themselves as professional; however, socially-based perceptions of women as professionals are quite different. Recalling the critiques of traditional criteria-based approaches to defining the professions, which were largely reflective of social status and its attendant inequities, this finding clearly suggests that the current approach to professionalism is not only more theoretically coherent, but it is also likely to be more fair to women. In terms of catalytic validity, this finding seems quite compelling.
The qualitative section of the study holds an equal role to the quantitative section, with different leverage on the central task of validating a theoretically grounded, measurable construct of professionalism in teaching. The qualitative section serves four vital functions in the study: confirmation, amplification, complication, and motivation. I begin by exploring what I call “affirmative data,” or data that reinforce specific assumptions and predictions made in the theory as I flesh it out in earlier chapters. Data discussed under these auspices affirms the central role of jurisdiction in professional practice, the ecological importance of professional group norms in schools, the significance of academic emphasis as a distinguishing feature of each normative culture, and the importance of collaboration and coordination in teachers’ professional performance.

In the discussion of “amplifying evidence,” I explicate findings that are consistent with, but understated in, initial discussions of the theoretical framework. Amplifying evidence receiving significant attention in this section includes the possibility that negative school cultures can actually defeat the scholarly impulse in a teacher. I also look at how networks, which are vital to effectiveness in a school culture with professional norms, can be negative or even destructive in the context of dysfunctional norms. This makes sense given the importance of networks for normative spread: if norms are negative, then networks can act as an accelerant of exactly that which we would rather did not spread. This potential is implicit in the theory but was incompletely perceived until this data surfaced it with more clarity.

I also discuss “complicating evidence” in the qualitative section, confronting evidence that necessitates reconsideration of some assumptions in the theory. For
example, my discussion of professionalism marginalizes the role of the service orientation that is prominent in most traditional scholarship in the sociology of the professions. Interviews, however, revealed that this orientation is powerful in most of my subjects, and in their perceptions of their colleagues and what motivates them. Not only is this section very important for the credibility of the study, especially as it undertakes theory-building, but it is vital for the viability of the theory for future research.

The final discussion of the qualitative findings addresses what I call “motivating evidence,” or evidence that compels the research in a way that dispassionate analysis of measurements cannot. With an eye to the social responsibilities attendant upon social research, this discussion underscores a type of conviction distinct from that generated by more traditional analysis. This deeper exploration of subjects’ experience serves to remind us that the research has an important purpose, and to put us on notice about what is potentially at stake.

Implications for Future Research

As described above, this study was begun in the hopes that it might successfully shift the discussion of professionalism in teaching into a more habitable theoretical realm. I set about it with a broader long-term research agenda in mind; this particular study represents the first step in that program. Thus, as it concludes, I have some notes on where we are now, and where we go from here.

Hopefully, I have demonstrated not only the relevance of these theoretical foundations of professionalism, but also their importance. I believe this theoretical approach is not only better than what has come before it, but also necessary, for the sake of our profession’s evolving jurisdiction over the problems of modern educational
practice. Whether the rhetoric indicting our effectiveness as educators is fair seems to be immaterial: it is a question on the ground that we need to answer with demonstrative proof that we deserve to hold the stewardship of our nation’s learning. I doubt this study will silence debates over things like alternative paths to licensure or merit pay, nor should it. But I hope it might at least generate some awareness that we might profit more from discussions that focus on the ecological effects of school culture on professionalism. We have a way to measure the professionalism of individual teachers now, with an instrument that is theoretically grounded, valid, and reliable. It may seem ironic, or at least counterintuitive, to say that this individual level measure, is the start of ongoing research into professionalism at the organizational level, but this is exactly what I have in mind. The organizational level is where the interventions most likely to succeed have to be directed. Moreover, the individual level measurement already begins to bridge to the organizational level in its conception—Contribution to a professional community, for example, already references the individual’s situation within the broader organizational context. Now that we have a grounded, workable scale to start with, we can begin to see what happens when group-level properties are considered more systematically.

One approach to a more systematic exploration of professionalism at the organizational level involves refinements of measurement; another approach involves expanding some of the substantive questions that are implicated any time we talk about normative processes in schools. We can learn a lot from the insights and tools of network analysis to deepen our understanding of school organizations and their social structures. Status hierarchies, for example, or structural cohesion, or measurements of social amplifications of quality judgments—these are possible research topics that open up to us
if we consider a structural approach to studying school culture. With some refinements in data collection techniques, we can capitalize on the findings of this study to design further explorations of the normative networks of schools. Substantively, we could also look at other concepts, such as collective efficacy, for example, that are inherently normative processes. We can build upon existing measurements of such concepts to learn more about what happens at the group level, which is where practicing administrators would be most likely to put their attention and efforts for improvement. We can look at how these constructs interact with professionalism, now that we have a functional individual level measurement. Indeed, this study introduces findings that represent just such an approach, when it explores the group-level perceptions of professionalism, as compared to professionalism measured at the individual level.

Finally, I believe this study also validates the potency of a mixed-methods approach. Not only did the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods and inferences provide much greater leverage on the questions of interest than either could have done alone, but the two approaches together also underscore the stakes involved for teachers and students alike. Together, the qualitative and quantitative data produced synergies that would not have been possible for either platform on its own. I know it is an emerging field with many questions yet to be resolved, but I would hope that this study’s success might be some small testament to the efficacy of such an approach in future research. In retrospect, it would be hard to imagine learning nearly as much as I did in this inquiry if I had conceived it in any other way.


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