Alternative Discourses of Teacher Professionalism: 
A Study of Union Active Teachers and Teacher Unions

by

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Abstract

This study presents a qualitative cross-case analysis of the discourses of teacher professionalism amongst union active teachers in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Ontario. Data collection included interviews with 11 members of the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario and 13 members from the Alberta Teachers’ Association, which were grounded in a document analysis of various reports, member magazines, news articles, and press releases dating back to the 1990s.

The study reveals a triad of influences on the professionalism discourses of union-active teachers: engagement in teacher associations, the larger policy environment, and teacher agency. More specifically, participants’ inner drive to affect change, coupled with the capacity building experiences gained through their teacher association, saw many participants enacting and espousing discourses that positioned teachers as learners, leaders, advocates, and autonomous experts.
That being said, member discourses were also impacted by the organizational priorities of their teacher associations and the extent to which the associations had been able to sway discourses within the larger policy environment to be supportive of teachers. These discursive influences are not static, however, nor are they mutually exclusive. Rather, a complex, mutually reinforcing relationship exists between these elements that change over time as teachers, their unions, and governments respond to each other in new and evolving ways. This results in discourses of teacher professionalism “from within” and “from without” that are more akin to two sides of the same coin than they are to the juxtaposed manner which they are often conceived of. In this way the study illustrates the power of teachers and their unions to alter the balance between democratic discourses which position teachers as advocates, agents, and policy actors; and neoliberal portrayals of teachers as the objects of educational reform.
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Pam
Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction and Study Overview .................................................. 1
  1.1. Statement of the Problem: Neoliberalism and Discourses of Teacher Professionalism ................................................................. 3
  1.2. Research Purpose and Research Questions .............................................. 5
  1.3. Significance of the research ...................................................................... 6
  1.4. Epistemological Underpinnings ................................................................. 9

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature ............................................................... 12
  2.1. The sociology of professional work ......................................................... 12
   2.1.1. Professions ...................................................................................... 13
   2.1.2. Professionalization ......................................................................... 14
   2.1.3. Professionalism ................................................................................ 15
  2.2. The history and evolution of teacher professionalism .......................... 18
   2.2.1. The Age of the Post-Professional .................................................... 18
   2.2.2. Deprofessionalization or reprofessionalization? ......................... 25
  2.3. Teacher Unions and Educational Reform ............................................ 34
   2.3.1. Teacher Unions as Marginalized Agents of Reform .................... 35
   2.3.2. Teacher Unions as Reform Agents .............................................. 38
  2.4. Situating the Study in the Literature: Teacher Unions and Discourses of Professionalism .................................................. 43

Chapter Three: Theoretical & Conceptual Frameworks .................................. 49
  3.1. What is discourse? ................................................................................... 49
  3.2. Professionalism as an enacted discourse of power .............................. 50
  3.1. Theorizing the discourses of professionalism amongst union active teachers 53
   3.1.1. Agency and Sense of Agency ......................................................... 53
   3.1.2. Union Engagement ...................................................................... 55
   3.1.3. Broader Policy Context ................................................................. 56
  3.4. Summary ................................................................................................. 57

Chapter Four: Research Design ....................................................................... 60
  4.1. Qualitative Research .............................................................................. 60
  4.2. Case Study Methods ............................................................................ 63
   4.2.1. Site Selection .................................................................................. 64
   4.2.2. Participant Selection ...................................................................... 66
  4.4. Data Selection ......................................................................................... 70
   4.4.1. Interviews ...................................................................................... 70
   4.4.2. Documents ................................................................................... 73
  4.5. Ethical Considerations .......................................................................... 74
  4.6. Data Analysis .......................................................................................... 76

Chapter Five: The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario ..................... 80
  5.1. Introduction ............................................................................................ 80
  5.2. Ontario’s Policy Context (1995-2013) .................................................. 82
  5.3. Discourses of Teacher Professionalism and the Work of Teachers .......... 91
   5.3.1. Democratic discourses .................................................................. 92
   5.3.2. Mixed discourses .......................................................................... 98
  5.4. Supporting Discourses of Teacher Professionalism ............................ 101
  5.5. Limiting Discourses of Teacher Professionalism .................................. 109
  5.6. Summary ................................................................................................. 116
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Letters of Informed Consent ........................................................................ 199
Appendix B: Ethics Approval ......................................................................................... 204
Appendix C: Interview Protocol .................................................................................. 206
Chapter One: Introduction and Study Overview

Offered my first teaching placement before I had even completed my initial teacher education, I began teaching in September of 2002. Over the past twelve years, my career has been vast and varied. I completed a master’s degree in educational leadership, had a brief stint as a contract lecturer at a Canadian faculty of education, held a 2-year post as a Vice-Principal, and, most recently, embarked on a doctoral journey at OISE.

Although there are many facets to my career identity, first and foremost I am a teacher. Moreover, I describe myself as a life long learner, which, in my lexicon, is synonymous with being a teacher. Heavily engaged in my own professional learning though involvement in provincial marking boards, exam creation boards, academic and practitioner conferences, teacher leadership programs, graduate work, and participation in both my local and provincial teacher association, I perceive capacity building and the harnessing of the collective agency of all educational stakeholders as the keys to creating the best possible school environments for our students and our teachers.

My research is about practice in context – the who, what, and how of creating school cultures rooted in genuine collaboration where the contributions of all stakeholders are valued and data is used to enhance and expand teaching and learning experiences rather than constrain learning environments through narrow accountability measures. This is my vision for 21st Century education, embedded in a broad view of teacher professionalism and what it means to be a good teacher, notions which have been shaped by my experiences as a classroom teacher, an active member of my teacher association, an educational leader, and a graduate student.
It is my belief that being a quality educator goes beyond the four walls of any one classroom. It means engaging in stimulating professional learning and contributing to the development of policies around curriculum development, student assessment, and the professional growth of teachers. It means presenting at conferences and engaging in dialogues around what counts as knowledge, the kind of schools we want to create and how we can get there. It means conducting educational research, analyzing data, engaging in graduate work and participating in collaborative communities of practice. Involvement in any or all of these actions shapes the quality of education on a larger scale and, for me, defines the future of the teaching profession.

Yet, tight controls currently define popular notions of the work of teachers and the roles of so called teacher leaders. Innovation is often left to policymakers and those designated with formal leadership titles and positional authority. Limited teacher involvement in the broader context of educational change has left a wealth of teacher knowledge untapped and undervalued, often to the detriment of the creation of sustainable reforms. An advocate for genuine teacher voice in educational policy and educational reform, I present a comparative case study of discourses of teacher professionalism enacted by union-active teachers in Ontario and Alberta that explores alternative conceptions of teacher professionalism. These notions contrast traditional portrayals of teachers as implementers and objects of reform, highlighting the kinds of thinking that are paramount in realizing the significance of the contributions of teachers and their unions to successful educational reform. In this introductory chapter, I further describe the problems that my study addresses and outline my research questions and the epistemological and theoretical perspectives that shaped the goals of the study and influenced its design.
1.1. Statement of the Problem: Neoliberalism and Discourses of Teacher Professionalism

Teachers and teacher unions have long advocated for genuine teacher voice at all levels of educational decision-making (Basica, 2005; 1998; Lieberman & Mace, 2008, Hargreaves, 1994). Nevertheless, Bangs and Frost (2012) recently declared, “when it comes to policy making at both national and international levels, teachers themselves remain the ghost at the feast” (p. 1). In spite of claims that teachers are the most important in-school influence on student achievement (RAND, 2012), the role of teachers within the context of change is often relegated to “executing the innovations of others” (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001, p.140), rather than contributing to the innovations themselves. Moreover, much of the planning, research, and development of educational policy follows the technical-rational approach (Datnow & Park, 2009) that views the policy process as a series of discrete linear stages. Described by Elmore (1979/1980) as “forward mapping”, this approach implies a hierarchical decision-making process where policy making is largely conceived as the purview of official legislators and politicians, consistently situating teachers on the “far end of educational reform” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012, p. 1).

This particular policy environment has become even more prominent in education over the past thirty years as market-economies and right wing political agendas have increasingly become the primary drivers of educational reform around the globe (Ball; 2003; Compton & Weiner, 2008; Verger & Altinyelkin, 2012). Teachers are seen as “functionaries rather than professionals” (Codd, 2005, p. 201) amidst an onslaught of accountability and austerity measures promoted as bolstering student achievement through the creation of competitive educational markets.
Many authors have characterized the effects of this audit culture as the de-professionalization of teachers (Carter, Stevenson, & Passy, 2010; Compton & Weiner, 2008; Codd, 2005; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Poole, 2007), where the professional discretion and classroom expertise of teachers has been exchanged for teacher-proof curricula, narrow accountability measures, and standardized teacher competencies. Even teacher leadership, which “suggests that teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the ways schools operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 255), has been described as “a perk for teachers” and “a break from the routines of the classroom” (York-Barr & Duke, p. 259), rather than the appropriate professional purview of teachers.

This narrow view of the work of teachers has often been supported through the use of deficit discourses of teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2003; Thomas, 2005). Discourse encompasses more than the literal interpretation of spoken or written word. Rather, drawing from Foucault and Ball, Hilferty (2008) notes that discourse also refers to “what is thought, who can speak, when, and with what authority” (p. 241), a function of the power relations inherent in institutional practices and their accompanying social and cultural norms. In education, discourses have been specifically employed to shape the way teachers “think, talk, and act” (Sachs, 2003, p. 122) and, in the case of deficit discourses, used to construct a particular vision of the roles and responsibilities of teachers which firmly depicts teachers as the implementers and subjects of educational change rather than valued contributors and educational experts (Ball, 2003; Thomas, 2005).

Within these constraining circumstances, some teachers have persevered to overcome limited ideas about the work of teachers and teacher leaders through the enactment of alternative discourses of teacher professionalism that conceive teachers’ role in
educational change as extending beyond the four walls of their own classrooms. Most easily done as a collective venture, many of these teachers have enacted these discourses by becoming actively involved in reform-minded and proactive teacher unions who deliberately work to secure opportunities for their members to engage in the broader issues of schooling (Bangs & MacBeath, 2013; Bascia, 1997; 2000; 2008; Bascia & Osmond, 2012; Hilferty 2004; 2008; Kuehn, 2006a; Murray, 2004; Naylor, 2005; Rottmann, 2011). To this extent, teachers and their teacher associations have championed their own conceptions of teacher professionalism, enacted through their work both inside and outside of the classroom (Hilferty, 2008).

According to Evetts (2003), it is the ways in which these discourses play out in different occupational groups that is important in and in need of further analysis. As such, the purpose of this study is to explore the professionalism discourses of union-active teachers and examine the sociological influences that frame the evolution of such discourses. Based on the assumption that discourse takes shape within a highly politicized system of socialization where language plays a significant role in the maintenance of particular power structures and the cultures that support them (Hilferty, 2004), the study suggests that the discourses of teachers and their unions and those of government are not as mutually exclusive as they are often presented in the literature. Rather, discourses from within and from without are more accurately conceived of as being mutually influencing, evolving alongside and in relation to one another as governments, teachers, and teacher unions respond to each other in new and ever changing ways.

1.2. Research Purpose and Research Questions

This study explores the nature of the discourses of teacher professionalism enacted by union active teachers in the provinces of Alberta and Ontario, in the hopes of uncovering
counter narratives to prevailing neoliberal discourses of teacher professionalism. The goals of the study are to shed light on broader discourses around what it means to be a professional teacher and to theorize the manner in which the power struggles inherent in the creation of such discourses unfold in particular contexts within the teaching profession. To achieve this aim, the following research question guided the study:

- How do union-active teachers define and enact teacher professionalism?

More specifically, this phenomenon was investigated through an exploration of several sub-questions:

- How do union-active teachers perceive the roles and boundaries of the work of professional teachers?
- In what ways do teacher unions facilitate the enactment of alternative discourses of teacher professionalism?
- How have discourses around teacher professionalism taken shape in Ontario and Alberta? What institutional and historical cultures and structures are at work in each context?

1.3. **Significance of the research**

This research is important in several ways. First, while many academics have researched teacher professionalism, it “has been less common for educational academics to ask how teachers themselves understand professionalism as it relates to their own work” (Swann, McIntyre, Pell, Hargreaves, & Cunningham, 2010, p.549). For instance, in Canada, Rodrigue (2003) explored the discourses of professionalism espoused by 17 teacher unions, but interviews were limited to Executive Directors and teachers were not included in the study. Even fewer studies have explored notions of teacher professionalism to
understand how such discourses evolve alongside the prevailing discourses about teachers as defined by neoliberal approaches to educational change.

This study recognizes professionalism as a site of ideological struggle influenced by power and politics (Hilferty, 2004; Sachs, 2003) and sheds light on the ways in which union active teachers impact the balance of professionalism discourses in the teaching profession. The study also contributes to the body of literature that highlights teachers who are exerting leadership outside of systems-driven “teacher leadership” policy. In this sense, the cross-case analysis of discourses of teacher professionalism in Alberta and Ontario offers varied descriptions of the ways teachers in unique milieus navigate the cracks between the limitations of neo-liberal portrayals of the teacher as professional and the possibilities of alternative conceptions being played out in their own professional lives.

Secondly, according to both Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) and Ball (2003), one of the primary reasons for the failure of educational reforms is the continued use of top-down policies that do not consider capacity building or the process of implementation. “One-size fits all” mandates that often lack any consideration of local context, policies created by those at the top can be vastly disconnected from the day-to-day realities of the classroom. Osborne, McNess, and Broadfoot (2000) describe teacher responses to mandated reforms as including compliance (changing practice and ideology), incorporation (adapting existing modes instead of changing), creative mediation (taking control of changes and creating new practices), retreatism (changing practice but not ideology) and resistance (changing neither practice or ideology). Compliance and outright resistance are not the most common responses; rather, responses are usually some combination of mediation/incorporation that often results in a gap between the intention of a policy on paper and what is actually implemented in the classroom.
When reforms do not achieve their desired results, policy makers often point to a lack of effort and focus on the part of teachers. According to Bascia (2009), however, “Respectfully recognizing the agency and discretion that educators exercise can help us understand why policy has the effects that it does and why its effects may not be what was intended” (p. 789). To this end, the study attempts to engender broader, system-wide impacts including a better understanding of the link between discourses around teacher professionalism and effective policy development and implementation.

This study also challenges the body of research that positions teacher unions as obsolete roadblocks to educational change. Accused of putting the needs of teachers ahead of the needs of children, teacher unions have often been demonized by the media and highly criticized within the body of scholarly literature that explores their work. Although much of the work of teacher unions has traditionally focused on labour issues, their reach into professional issues is growing. As this study demonstrates, teacher unions are capable of positively contributing to the quality of education through both their foray into educational research and their commitment to providing their members with relevant and engaging professional development and leadership opportunities. While not all unions operate in this manner (Bascia, 2000), teacher unions that do are providing their members with a platform for the creation of new discourses around what it means to be a professional teacher (Bangs & Frost, 2012), positively impacting the quality of education on a broader scale.

The problematic nature of the use of the term “union” must also be noted at this time. Often used pejoratively by anti-unionists and governments in a bid to proletarianize teachers, some teachers prefer to describe their organizations as teacher federations or associations in order to highlight their professional mandate and disassociate themselves from labour. As will be discussed later in the cases, this is particularly true within the
Alberta context, and to a lesser extent in Ontario. However, considering that this study explores the power and politics of discourse, it is my preference to use the terms union, association, federation, and organization interchangeably, with the purposeful intention of broadening discourses around teacher unionism to include the work of proactive teacher organizations whose professional and reform agendas are redefining what it means to be a teacher “union”. In that sense, I do not use the term in its traditional form, which has come to be associated with selfish and greedy teachers, rather I use the term in the hopes of challenging the traditional discourse and opening doors to the creation of new understandings of the work of teacher unions and their members. That being said, being sensitive to participants, I use the terms federation (ETFO) and association (ATA) within the cases themselves when directly referencing ETFO and the ATA, although I collectively refer to them as being teacher unions (or organizations) throughout much of the remainder of the dissertation.

1.4. Epistemological Underpinnings

I was interested in science and exposed to the ideals of positivism from a very early age. As such, it wasn’t until I began my Master’s in Educational Leadership that I first began to question the notion of one objective reality. Positivism understands meaning to exist independent of human interaction and limits knowledge only to those ideas that can be scientifically tested. Inquiry is considered a quest for the truth and should be based on scientific principals of experimentation and observation, reproducible, and verified through deduction from the evidence gathered (Darlaston-Jones, 2007).

For years I had never considered knowledge to be anything but “truth” and “fact” discovered through scientific experimentation. When I began my Master’s degree I took my first course in research methodology. It was there that I was introduced to the
concept of epistemology and first began to understand the multiplicity of what constitutes knowledge. I was particularly influenced by the qualitative research I undertook as a research assistant during my masters. Interviewing teachers and exposing the diverse manner in which they had experienced the same phenomenon was eye opening. I had never really considered the profoundness of understanding the world in unique and different ways and was captivated by the notion of perception and multiple realities.

Since those days I have spent much time considering and reconsidering my epistemological stance and I now identify more with social constructionists and critical theorists than the positivists who influenced my earlier thinking. I conceptualize meaning as embedded within social interactions - subjective, experiential, interpreted in many different ways, and influenced by the presence or absence of particular cultural and social forces. I also acknowledge the importance of articulating my own epistemological perspectives since assumptions about the construction of knowledge and the world in which that construction occurs impact the agenda and design of my research (Merriam, 2009). In that vein, the social construction of reality serves as the epistemological foundation for this study and underpins the theoretical framework that guided both data collection and data analysis. Moreover, I acknowledge reality as being impacted by the dynamic power relations between agency and the social, political, and cultural forces that either support or limit the institutionalization of that reality in the dominant public sphere. As such, in this study professionalism is viewed as a social construct, the discourses of which are constantly being defined and redefined as social practice and public policy evolves and changes over time. Moreover, drawing on the work of Foucault, the power imbalance inherent in the educational landscape and the ways in which discourses are influenced by this imbalance are revealed, further supporting an exploration of the relationship between discourses of teacher professionalism that are used as a form of occupational control and those that assert the right of teachers to be active participants in
educational policy and decision making. This relationship is further explored in the next chapter, which outlines the three bodies of literature that inform the purpose, rationale, and design of the study.

Later, in chapter 3, I outline my theoretical framework for understanding the discursive influences around teacher professionalism and explore other frameworks that aided my conceptualization of teacher professionalism as dynamic and fluid, rather than insular and static. I describe the methodological approach of the study in chapter 4 and justify its use in achieving the goals of the study. Details around site selection, participant recruitment, data collection, ethical considerations, and data analysis are also provided. In chapters 5 and 6, I present the two cases, The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario and the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Each chapter describes the discourses espoused by the members of each organization as well as the influences that supported and limited their enactment. A cross-case analysis follows in chapter 7 where I explore the areas of similarity and difference between the cases and suggest how certain contextual and organization factors may have impacted the findings. Lastly, in chapter 8, I summarize the scholarly and practical significance of this study, outline its limitations, and suggest future areas of research. The analysis, synthesis, and writing contained in of all chapters are a product of my understanding of the data, as seen through an interpretivist lens and underpinned by a critical-constructionist orientation.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

In this chapter I explore the three primary bodies of literature that inform this study. Since the concept of professionalism is at the heart of the study, the first section of this chapter provides an overview of the evolution of the sociological study of professions and the appeal of professionalism to modern professions. This is followed by an examination of the theoretical and empirical literature that explores both the impact of neoliberal political agendas on teacher autonomy and discourses of teacher professionalism as well as the smaller body of literature that presents broader discourses around the work of teachers and their role in educational reform. The last section reviews the literature that outlines the work of teacher unions as reform agents and explores their role in creating and providing a platform for the construction of broader discourses of teacher professionalism amongst their members.

2.1. The sociology of professional work

Before exploring teacher professionalism, it is important to briefly examine the substantive views of the sociology of professional work in broader terms. While some authors describe this scholarship as declining since its initial rise to fame, MacDonald (1995) argues that a more accurate description is that the field has become “multi-centered, rather than dominated by one paradigm” (p. xii). More recently, Adams (2015) contends that divergent international foci has inaccurately led some researchers to prematurely announce the so-called “death of the sociology of professions”, arguing that scholarship around the professions has actually increased over the past decade, albeit along different empirical lines. Cognizant of this divergence, for the purpose of this study, I look to U.K. scholar Evetts (2003), who describes the study of the professions as
historically focusing on three concepts over time: profession, professionalization, and professionalism.

2.1.1. Professions

Rooted in the work of Durkheim and Weber, early explorations of the sociology of the professions were strongly influenced by functionalist theory, which viewed professions as a key element supporting the maintenance social order and preserving moral authority (MacDonald, 1995). Functionalists such as Carr-Saunders and Wilson (as cited in Evetts, 2003) emphasized claims of altruism and a specialized knowledge base as they attempted to create a distinct set of criteria and characteristics that set professions apart from non-professions. Within this view, many researchers questioned whether teaching was actually a profession at all. Lortie (1975), for instance, argued that teaching was, at best, a partial profession considering the subordinate role of teachers to their employers and Etzioni (1969) described teaching as a “semi-profession”.

This so-called “trait approach”, however, was often plagued by a lack of consensus over which specific traits separated professions, semi-professions, and non-professions. Moreover, as sociologists and positivism were increasingly rejected, by the late 1970s and 1980s the field began to shift away from defining the concept of profession and instead was more interested in professions as they related the larger bureaucracy (McDonald, 1995). This is evidenced in Adams’ (2015) list of the top ten themes in publications in the field since 1998, from which studies around defining which occupations are professions is noticeably absent. Rather, as pointed out by Hargreaves & Goodson (1996), professionalization, the process of becoming a profession, and the nature of state-profession relations began to take center stage. This has particularly been
the case in the US and the UK, although, in recent years, along different theoretical lines (Adams, 2015).

### 2.1.2. Professionalization

Historically, the movement towards exploring the process of professionalization was heavily influenced by the work of Hughes (as cited in MacDonald, 1995, p.7), who argued that the more fundamental questions in the study of professions revolved around “the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession and themselves into professional people.” Initially this line of scholarship gained prominence by researchers such as Larson (1977) who coined the term “professional project” to refer to an occupation’s attempt to develop and maintain the closure of the group and achieve elevated occupational status, and Abbott (1988) who looked at the differentiation of work to establish the legitimacy of a professions jurisdictional monopoly as part what he referred to as their “mobility project.” Activities such as adopting a code of ethics, establishing inclusion criteria for membership, the creation of schools of training, and the creation of professional associations came to be recognized as a part of the sequential stages of professionalization (Evetts, 2003). Within this view it became easier to qualify teaching as a profession.

Some theorists optimistically viewed professionalization as an occupational value. Classifying professions as “enhancing the legitimacy of nation-states in the modern era” (Adams, 2015, p. 160), one of the first to take this tact was Herbert Spencer (1898, as cited in Adams, 2015), positioning professions as a mutually balancing entity in the creation of a normative society. According to Adams (2015), Spencer’s work has heavily influence many modern-day UK scholars, including Evetts (see Evetts & Dingwall, 2002 and Evetts, 2002 for examples), while American scholars studying state-profession
relations have tended to be influenced by a range theories including Weber’s typology of organizational forms. Freidson (1973; 2001), for instance, emphasized the benefits of professionalization for both clients and practitioners and viewed professions as the “third logic” in the division of labour alongside the free-market and bureaucratic mangerialism. Occupational value, however, was not the only interpretation of professionalization by scholars studying this phenomenon. McDonald (1995), for instance, discusses a more pessimistic view referred to as the “power approach”. Sociologists who subscribed to this interpretation of professionalization viewed the autonomy of professions as a mechanism to dominate or exert power over others. Professions lost their “save the world from bureaucracy” status as the traits of public service and ethical standards were characterized as ideological myths (Evetts, 2011) and professions were interpreted as “wielders of power, not servants of the social good” (MacDonald, 1995, p. 6).

Moreover, as Evetts (2003) cautions, the ideology of professions as powerful, self-interested groups is rooted in the traditional professions of medicine and law and, more specifically, negates those occupations that had traditionally not been so successful in exerting power such as social workers and teachers. She also argues that some researchers had oversimplified Larson’s concepts and talked about “the” professional project “as if professions and professional associations do nothing apart from protecting the market monopoly for their expertise” (p. 402). Further to this, drawing on Foucault, Evetts (2003) situates the power struggle over control of the professions as a discursive issue, which is further explored in the next section.

2.1.3. Professionalism

Much of the more recent scholarship on professions analyzes particular discourses of professionalism in a range of occupations including medicine (Jones & Green, 2006;
Monrouxe, Rees, & Hu, 2011), education (Hilferty, 2008; Thomas, 2011), and nursing (Turkoski, 1995). Building on McClelland’s (1990) notion of professionalization from within and from without, much of this area of the literature discusses discourses of professionalism as both externally imposed as a means of control as well as internally enacted to contest the power of bureaucracy and assert autonomy. Associated with projecting an occupational identity of competence and trust, groups that have successfully been able to construct a discourse of professionalism “from within” (such as medicine and law) have historically seen substantial gains in terms of salary, status, and autonomy (Evettts, 2011). In this view of professionalism, professions create their own sets of professional values, which serve as a kind of self-regulation to ensure satisfaction in work performance from both the occupation and the public.

According to Evettts (2011), however,

In the case of most contemporary public service occupations and professionals now practicing in organizations, professionalism is being constructed and imposed ‘from above’ and for the most part this means the employers and mangers of the pubic service organizations in which these ‘professionals’ work. (p. 11)

In this vein, Adams (2015) notes that recent research in the UK has identified a decrease in public trust amongst the dominant professions in addition to the presence of regulatory reforms that have decreased professional autonomy such that professions no longer have the ability to self-regulate. Within this context, bureaucrats have used the appeal of professionalism to aspiring occupational groups to promote compliance to external occupational standards and limit occupational autonomy and control of work by practitioners. This sort of “organizational professionalism” (Evettts, 2011) is most often linked to the restructuring of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism and mangerialism (Clarke & Newman, 1997) where “arrogant” professionals were viewed as a barrier to the efficient delivery of public services. More specifically, de-unionization,
deregulation, new certification requirements, and the appeal of professionalism have all been strategically employed by managers to increasingly exert control over the work of “professionals”. Here discretion is replaced with standardization, and managerial controls of performance targets are the norm rather than trust and autonomy based on expertise.

It is important to note, however, that discourses of professionalism “from within” and “from without” are not necessarily dichotomous or mutually exclusive. For instance, researchers in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, maintain that, while self-regulation is in a state of flux, new professional groups continue to emerge and professionals retain the ability to influence policy, even if in a more limited capacity (Adams, 2015). Likewise, some sociologists have suggested that liberal states actually permitted professions as a way of regulating social order amidst increasing globalization of the market enterprise (Evetts, 2003) and exerting “control at a distance through the construction of ‘appropriate’ work identities and conducts” (Fournier, 1999, p. 281). Thus, regardless of their origin, discourses of professionalism are inscribed within a network of accountability where the professions are both the rulers and the ruled, which inevitably create tension over the particular typologies of professionalism that make their way into the public sphere. According to Adams (2015), “combining the insights of organizational theory and institutional analysis with the insights of theories of regulation and professional development could generate new theoretical synergies” (p. 161). Applying this notion to this study, discourses of professionalism from within and from without do not evolve in spite of each other but, rather, they evolve along side and in relation to each other.
2.2. The history and evolution of teacher professionalism

As noted repeatedly in the literature on the sociology of the professions, the notion of professionalism is very much a contested construct with discourses continually shifting over time. In education, governments have attempted to professionalize teaching through formal policies while teachers and teacher associations have also espoused and enacted their own conceptions of teacher professionalism (Ozga & Lawn, 1981). According to Mausethagen & Granlund (2012), “Although these social groups use the same terminology, and the conflict may seem disguised, the content is often disharmonious. This disharmony triggers political struggles, and the issue of professional autonomy is especially contested” (p. 815).

In some literature, this dissonance is reflected as a struggle between those who have attempted to “deprofessionalize” teaching and those who, in turn, seek to “reprofessionalize” it (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). The tensions around meaning of professionalism and the professional roles of teachers are further explored in the sections that follow. The first section details the literature that explores the ways in which governments create and promote particular discourses of teacher professionalism that assert a managerial agenda of accountability and external control of teaching. This is followed by an exploration of the literature that examines broader discourses of teacher professionalism where teachers’ role in educational change is seen as extending beyond the narrow confines of such discourses.

2.2.1. The Age of the Post-Professional

According to Hargreaves (2000), the evolution of the idea of teacher professionalism can be categorized into four broad historical phases: the pre-professional, the autonomous professional, the collegial professional and the post-professional. During much of the
first three of these phases, government involvement in teacher professionalism was somewhat distant (Day, 2002). Teachers and their unions were given responsibility for and granted considerable autonomy in establishing standards of teacher quality (Ozga, 1995), curriculum and pedagogy (Hargreaves, 2000). Conceptions of teacher professionalism focused on establishing cooperative relationships and becoming reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983) and teachers were considered partners in the improvement of education (Lawn & Ozga, 1986). According to Lawn and Ozga (1986), management of teachers was by indirect rule, which involved the rejection of direct prescriptive controls in favor of quasi-autonomous roles for teachers. In other words, while control of the profession still ultimately rested with the state, teachers were subtly co-opted through the appearance of decentralization and devolution.

Beginning in the late 1980s, however, in the so-called “Second Way” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) of educational reform, Lawn and Ozga (1986) proposed that the locus of control shifted and management of teaching became much more direct. Within this context, governments around the globe began externally imposing a particular discourse of professionalism in a more immediate and top-down manner as they began to move forward with right-winged, neo-liberal political agendas centered around market-economies and gaining a competitive edge (Hargreaves, 2000; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Robertson, 1996). More recently, Robertson (2012) has argued that this shift in control and governance of the work of teachers has occurred on a global scale. Moreover, she accused organizations like the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD,) McKinsey & Company, and The Gates Foundation of creating an artificial crisis in the teaching profession in their bid “to colonize the field of symbolic control over teacher policy” (p.586).
Sahlberg (2011) has also written about the transformation of the governance of the work of teachers, coining the phrase “global education reform movement” (GERM) to describe the phenomenon. Policy ideas rooted in the downsizing and privatization of the public enterprise in order to establish a free market enterprise based on “choice” (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1996); neoliberalism and GERM have dominated the educational landscape and the professionalization of teaching has increasingly become the purview of external regulatory bodies or government departments themselves rather than that of teachers and their unions (Beck, 2008; Ozga, 1995; Lawn & Ozga, 1986; Robertson, 1996). Focus has shifted from that of accountability of competent professionals to compliance and control through the use of corporate management models, test-based accountability, imposed professional codes of conduct, and policies aimed at reduction in union power (Carter, Stevenson, & Passy, 2010; Compton & Weiner, 2008; Kuehn, 2006b; Martell, 2006; Poole, 2007; Robertson & Smaller, 1996; Stevenson, 2007). Persisting into the current landscape, Hargreaves (2000) characterizes this era of teacher professionalism as the post-professional, where teachers struggle to counter centralized curricula, testing regimes, external surveillance, and the economic imperatives of marketization.

These reforms have manifested themselves in various jurisdictions. In the United States, the marketization of education arguably began in 1983 with the release of the well-known document A Nation at Risk (Hewitt, 2008; Ravitch, 2010). Claiming that the education system was no longer preparing citizens for the real world, the report called for a sweeping overhaul of educational standards and stated, “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre education performance that exists today, we might well have called it an act of war” (p. 3). The report shocked much of the American public, reframing the discourse regarding educational policy and setting into motion a chain reaction of educational reforms purportedly aimed at re-establishing America’s place as a global leader.
Apple (2001) referred to the changes that followed the release of *A Nation at Risk* as “conservative modernization” (p. 5) and argued that that the right turn in education in the U.S. was a complex agenda where “cultural struggles and struggles over race, gender, and sexuality coincide with class alliances and class power” (p. 36). In later work, Apple (2006) went on to discuss the “controversial agenda” of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Brought into legislation in 2002 by President George Bush, NCLB requires states to adhere to stringent accountability standards and resulted in the creation of state imposed policies that include performance pay, new teacher evaluation procedures, rigid testing and reporting, adequate yearly progress targets, penalties for failing schools, and government mandated professional development (Apple, 2006; Jaiani & Whitford, 2011; Murphy, 2008). According to Apple (2006), NCLB continued “an established tradition of the conservative production of discourse that incorporates progressive language, while simultaneously advancing key elements of the neoliberal and neoconservative agendas” (p. 90).

Ravitch (2010) and Lipman (2004; 2011; 2013) have also written about the impact of the neoliberalization of education in America. Like Apple, Lipman (2004) argued that neoliberal policies are deeply entrenched in cultural politics and promote inequalities based on race and class. More specifically, using Chicago as an example, she contended that neoliberal educational reform in America specifically marginalizes and excludes African American and Latino youth through the dismantling and subsequent closure of failing schools, which are most often located in urban and inner city neighborhoods. Describing Chicago as an “incubator, test case, and model for the neoliberal urban education agenda” (p. 19), in later work Lipman (2011) described how similar scenarios had crept across the country under the leadership of Arne Duncan, who had left his position as CEO of Chicago Public Schools to become Obama’s Secretary of Education.
She commented that although neoliberal policies are marketed as improving schools by increasing innovation, choice, and access to higher quality schools, in reality, the reforms challenge the core work of teachers (Lipman, 2011), “exacerbate already shameful inequalities” (Lipman & Hursh, 2010, p. 161), and “play a central role in coercive urban governance” (Lipman, 2013, p. 2).

A former assistant secretary of education in the Bush administration and strong supporter of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as NCLB in 2002, Ravitch gained notoriety in 2010 when she became a stanch critic of charters, school choice, merit pay, and accountability reforms in the US. In her book The Death and Life of the Great American School System (2010), Ravitch talked about how she had fallen “for the latest panaceas and miracle cures” (p. 3) that promised to improve the quality of American schools but began to grow uneasy about such reforms once she saw how they were working out in reality. Reflecting on NCLB, she commented “I saw my hopes for better education turn into a measurement strategy that had no underlying educational vision at all” (2010, p. 16). She claimed that, rather than improve student learning, NCLB and its counterparts hijacked American education and prompted the watering down of curriculum, the lowering of state standards to reach proficiency targets, and a direct assault on teachers and their unions.

Robertson (1996) has written about similar circumstances in Australia, recalling the history of the restructuring of teachers’ work in that country from the 1970s to the 1990s. According to Robertson, having been socialized into the ideology of the welfare state, teachers posed potential problems to the transitioning of education to an economic commodity. As such, regulatory mechanisms were employed by government to control teachers by limiting “the space available for reflection, critique and contestation” (p. 39). Robertson went on to state:
Government has typically refused to engage in any level of prior consolation with teachers, their unions, or teacher educations...the consolidation that has taken place has been tightly managed and after the fact. The fact is; the goals, objectives and policy direction for schools are not for teachers to determine. (p. 44)

Codd (2005) described teachers in neighboring New Zealand as becoming “increasingly ‘managed’ so that their productivity could be measured in terms of the test results and examination performances of their students” (p. 194). He argued that a culture of distrust had been created where teachers are viewed as little more than skilled technicians and are certainly not privy to engagement in the policy agenda.

Similar conditions have also been experienced in England, “where teachers’ work in that country has been, and is, the subject of more intensive and sustained central government intervention than any other” (Day & Smethem, 2009, p. 141). External school inspections, merit pay, published league tables, and standardized tests as a means to judge teachers’ performance have all been imposed as part of a reform agenda that, like reforms in the United States, purports to focus on improving student achievement (Carter, Stevenson, & Passy; 2010; Day, 2002). Moreover, Day (2002) discussed what he refers to as “naming and shaming” (p. 680) where schools who do not reach achievement targets are categorized as being in need of “special measures”, sometimes resulting in the removal of teachers and headmasters or the complete closure of schools. Day argued that these reforms have established a system that “rewards those who successfully comply with government directives and reach government targets and punishes those who do not” (p. 678). Hargreaves (1994), who explored the impact of these policies on teacher collaboration, argued that they had “created constraints and imposed excessive bureaucratic requirements which often diminished both the confidence and capacity of teachers to perform to the best of their ability” (p. 6).
While Canadian educational reform policies have not employed the “blame and shame” methods described in England and the United States, the literature shows that other aspects of the neoliberal agenda have been adopted in much of the country. Beginning in the 1990s, most provincial governments began downsizing many areas of the public sector. In education, this was primarily achieved through reductions in the number of school boards and the centralization of decision-making (Fleming, 1997; Galway 2012; Osmond, 2008). In line with this, provincial governments in various provinces unilaterally mandated significant policy reforms regarding curriculum, accountability and testing, teacher working conditions, and teacher professional development (Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson, 2007).

Teachers in British Columbia, for instance, have been subjected to accountability contracts, the use of standardized test scores to judge teacher performance, and contract stripping, indicative of what Poole (2007) referred to as “increased centralization of power in the hands of the Ministry of Education and increased top-down surveillance” (p. 2). On the other side of the country, teachers in Newfoundland have experienced a multitude of controversial imposed educational reforms including school board reorganizations and consolidations (Dibbon, Sheppard, & Brown, 2012) that have been associated with increased teacher workloads (Dibbon, 2004) and high levels of teacher stress (Younghusband, 2005).

Ben Jaafar & Anderson (2007) have written about the emergence of similar policy environments in these and other Canadian provinces where policies around standardized testing, mandatory school improvement plans, increased centralization and the creation of standards for the teaching profession have become the new norm. Although there are some exceptions to this trend (Saskatchewan for example where there is a long history of local policy development), the authors state that, for much of the Canadian educational
context, the responsibility of school agents “is primarily to carry out external policies and to achieve externally aligned goals and standards of performance” (p. 217).

2.2.2. Deprofessionalization or reprofessionalization?

There are two schools of thought regarding the impact of neoliberal educational reforms on teacher professionalism, described in the literature as the diametrically opposed notions of the “deprofessionalisation” and “reprofessionalization” (Hargreaves, 2000; Seddon, 1997). Hargreaves (2000), for instance, described the age of the post-professional as:

marked by a struggle between forces and groups intent on de-professionalizing the work of teaching, and other forces and groups who are seeking to re-define teacher professionalism and professional learning in more positive and principled post-modern ways that are flexible, wide-ranging and inclusive in nature. (p. 153)

Yet, like most of the terminology around professionalism, even these terms have been contested, framed in diverse ways by a multitude of authors. This section of the literature review will explore the use of both these terms and analyze their relevance to this study.

Those in the “reprofessionalization” camp tend to frame neoliberal policies as potentially enhancing teacher professionalism through the adoption of new practices. In Australia, for instance, Ashenden (as cited in Robertson, 1996) referred to the restructuring of teachers work in that country as offering teachers a chance to become “real” professionals. David Hargreaves (1994) also argued that, in England and Wales, imposed reforms promoted “a new culture amongst teachers” which he referred to as the “new professionalism.” Contrasted with “old” versions of professionalism that were rooted in the authority and autonomy of teachers, Hargreaves positioned new professionalism as offering enhanced professional pride and self-confidence, a stronger focus on student achievement and greater collaboration amongst teachers, parents, and students.
Governments have also promoted the idea that neoliberal reforms are poised to reprofessionalize teaching, appealing to the professionalism of teachers as a marketing tool for new reforms (Evetts, 2003). In Scotland, for instance, Kennedy (2007) pointed out that the terms “professional” and “professionalism” were routinely embedded in official documentation surrounding the implementation of neoliberal policies in a deliberate attempt to define a new discourse of professionalism which would co-opt teachers to adopt new practices and conform to imposed standards of work. Likewise, Beck (2008) argued that, through the use of specific neo-liberal discourses in a variety of public documents and white papers, governments in England have attempted to marginalize competing models of professionalism in order to protect the conception of professionalism that they promote; a process which he referred to as “a project of governmental professionalism” (p. 133).

Like Beck and Kennedy, other authors were also weary about the so-called “promise of professionalism” (Robertson, 1996) touted in the “re-professionalization” framing of neoliberal reforms. In particular, these authors argue that such agendas promote a particular discourse of teacher professionalism to distract teachers “away from the broader concerns of determining curricula, formulating educational goals and promoting social reconstruction and toward the realm of efficient school management with an educational marketplace” (Harris, 1994, p. 4). For instance, Robertson (1996) noted, that while some Australian policies allowed teachers to participate in decision-making, their purview was limited to “technical issues, not the big ticket items” (p. 43) such as debates about the purposes of education and what constitutes knowledge. Likewise, Hargreaves & Goodson (1996) claimed that, despite the rhetoric of policies that were marketed as promoting the development of professional learning communities and other forms of collaborative work, the outcome could be more accurately interpreted as “contrived
collegiality in the shape of compulsory peer coaching or labyrinthine procedures of school development planning that are the very anti-thesis of self-directed professionalism” (p. 10).

A similar notion was discussed by Rottman (2007) in her account of the “hegemony, settlement, and resistance” of conceptions of teacher leadership, where she argued that many “so-called teacher leadership programs” were better characterized as “competitive, system-driven opportunities for individually selected teachers” (p. 2). She went on to state, “With responsibilities defined by centralized decision makers”, teacher “leaders” are often “hired to improve schools, not to challenge district level decision making” (p. 3). This was also evident in Little and Bartlett’s (2002) study of teachers who were involved in comprehensive school reform where teachers reported that their initial enthusiasm about being involved in the policy process was followed by long-term disappointment once it became apparent that their autonomy was an illusion.

According to these authors and a host of others, rather than a “re-professionalizing” effect, teacher professionalism within neoliberal policy environments has actually contributed to the “deprofessionlization” of the teaching profession as part of a deliberate attack on teacher autonomy and union strength (Beck, 2008; Carter, Stevenson & Passy, 2010; Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; 1998; Lipman, 2013; MacBeath, 2012; Ozga, 1995; Thompson, 2006). In Australia, for instance, Robertson (1996) described changes to the work of teachers as “an ideological attack on teacher competence” (p. 42) and, more recently, Thomas (2005) traced the sidelining of Australian teachers in official policy documents. According to Thomas, the documents constructed “discourses that worked to marginalize teachers from policy-making processes, to ‘take teachers out of the equation’, at both national and state levels of educational decision-making” (p. 48). Likewise, Connell (2009) commented that the neoliberal governance of teaching in Australia had
reduced “good teaching” to ticks on a checklist. Analyzing a number of state created lists of teacher competencies, Connell noted that the frameworks were heavily specified in corporate managerial language where “what teachers do is decomposed into specific, auditable competencies and performances” (p. 220). He described such policies as embedding a neoliberal, distrust of teachers and reconstructing teachers as knowledge workers rather than intellectuals.

In the UK, Carter, Stevenson and Passy (2010) interpreted changes brought about as a result of workplace remodeling as “a sustained attack on the limited autonomy and professionalism of teachers” (p. 21) and Beck (2008) referred to the State’s attempt to “modernize” the teaching profession as “deprofessionalisation in the guise of re-professionalisation” (p. 119). According to Beck, this “modernization” project occurred over two phases: the discrediting of teachers by the Conservative party (1979-1997), which portrayed teachers as unprofessional and in need of external accountability; and the construction of a new model of teacher professionalism by the New Labour (from 1998 onwards), which focused on coercive accountability and the creation of an audit culture. Ozga (1995) also provided an historical account of teacher–state relations in the English context. She argued that the restructuring of education in England was “particularly hostile” and that teachers were “scapegoated” in the wake of the failure of the Keynesian Welfare State. She theorized that this particular culture had enhanced the professionalism of those who are appointed to “management” positions while deskilling women, who still comprise the vast majority of classroom teachers. In reference to these conditions, Day (2002) commented, “The persisting effect is to erode teachers’ autonomy and challenge teachers’ individual and collective professional and personal identities” (p. 678).
2.2.2.1. Managerial Discourses of Teacher Professionalism

Brennan (as cited in Sachs, 2003) referred to the deficit discourses created by neoliberal reforms and the deprofessionalization of teachers as “managerial professionalism.” Here the professional teacher is one who meets organizational goals, works efficiently to meet “one size fits all” benchmarks of student achievement, and documents this process for the accountability of the system. This is also referred to as “organizational professionalism” by Evetts (2003), which values effectiveness, efficiency, and compliance. Similarly, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) described “the human widget image of the profession.”

Fuelled by a view of teaching rooted in business capital, “keeping good teachers becomes about seeking out and deploying (but not really developing or investing in) existing human capital - hunting for talented individuals, working them hard, and moving them on when they get restless or become spent” (p. 2). On a similar note, Ball (1990) described these proletarianizing notions as “discourses of derision,” (p. 18) arguing that the conditions created by such discourses are more likely to diminish teachers’ capacity to raise standards than increase effectiveness as teachers become “ontologically insecure,” unsure whether they are “doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others” (Ball, 2003, p. 220).

According to Sachs (2003), it is this view of professionalism that forms the dominant discourse in much of the industrialized world. Discourses of teacher professionalism serve to “shape the way teachers think, talk, and act in relation to themselves as teachers individually and collectively” (Sachs, 2003, p.122) and, by virtue of acceptance into larger discourses of teacher identity, discourses of professionalism eventually lay out the blueprint of what it means to be a professional teacher. Considering the dominance of this discourse, it is not surprising that some teachers have been lured by the “new professionalism” and have begun to view their work through a neoliberal lens (Robertson, 1996). This was evident in Tichenor and Tichenor’s studies of teacher professionalism in
the UK (2004/2005; 2009). In their studies participants rarely discussed extra-classroom work as being a part of teacher professionalism and low priority was given to teacher leadership activities such as presenting at workshops, conducting teacher action research, and involvement in professional organizations. Similarly, in Bangs and Frost’s (2012) international study of teacher efficacy, the vast majority of participants stated that teachers could lead change within their prescribed role but far fewer felt that it was acceptable for teachers to lead change beyond these roles.

Some academics suggest that newer generations of teachers may be especially susceptible to deficit discourses of teacher professionalism. In British Columbia, Grimmett and D’Amico (2008) found that experienced teachers expressed much more frustration than their less-experienced colleagues with respect to infrequent opportunities to participate in meaningful professional learning. The authors suggested that “a narrower conception of professionalism constrained by accountability and fiscal efficiency has begun to impact the practices of teachers in the workforce” (p. 29). A similar phenomenon was reported by Day, Stobart, Kingson, Sammons, and Last (2003) in their four-year exploration of the variations in teachers’ work and lives in England. In that study, younger teachers also seemed to be more content to tailor their work to fit within what their experienced peers deemed as a narrowing of their discretionary decision-making.

### 2.2.2.2. Broader discourses of teacher professionalism

In light of numerous calls to re-culture (Fullan, 2001) and re-invent (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996) teacher professionalism and what it means to be a professional teacher, a number of academics have proposed frameworks that position the work of teachers as extending beyond the classroom and situate teachers’ role in education within the broader context of schooling. Sockett (1993), for instance, identified five major aspects of teacher
professionalism, which included teachers’ commitment to change and developing working relationships beyond the classroom, in addition to the traditional notions of subject matter knowledge, pedagogy, and character. He stated:

Professionalism requires that we go beyond the classroom performance or classroom activity as descriptors of teaching acts to the complete and complex role a teacher fulfills. Public education needs teachers who able to not only shine in the categories mentioned within the classroom but are also able to undertake the demands of partnership with other professionals, of collaborative leadership, and of a wider role within the school. (p. 8)

Hoyle (1974) referred to this as “extended professionalism” where high value is placed on teachers’ engagement in professional activities and extra-classroom work.

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) proposed the idea of “post-modern professionalism.” They believed that teacher professionalism should encompass engagement in collaborative cultures to solve problems of practice rather than implementing the mandates of others and self-directed professional learning rather than compliance with the “endless change demanded by others” (p. 21). They advocated for increased professional discretion and opportunities for teachers to engage in curriculum and assessment matters. In a similar vein, Nixon, Martin, McKeown, & Ranson (1997) described “emergent professionalism”, where continuous reflection, professional learning, and working collaboratively take center stage.

Exclusively focusing on teacher agency as part of an “activist teaching profession,” Sachs (2003) also re-defined teacher professionalism with her notion of “transformative professionalism.” Further explored by Mockler (2005), transformative professionalism “refuses to yield to narrow typologies of teachers’ work, instead posing links between teachers work and their broader social and civic responsibilities” (p. 737). Professional teachers in this framework are seen as broadly contributing to the quality of education; they advocate for equitable policies that challenge the status quo, their purview is
extended to include debates over the purposes of schooling, and their success is judged on more than students’ performance on standardized tests.

These frameworks and others like them promote what Sachs (2003) refers to as “democratic” discourses of professionalism. Unlike managerial discourses of professionalism, which reinforce traditional hierarchies, democratic discourses of professionalism are rooted in teacher empowerment. Here, the lines between those at the top and those at the bottom are blurred, positioning teachers as engaging in higher levels of reflection and taking an inquiry stance in examining educational practices and policies. Teachers are encouraged to “contribute actively to the promotion of educational reform and wider societal change” (Webb et al., 2004, p. 87), though the creation of innovative leadership opportunities and self-directed professional learning experiences such as teacher networks (Lieberman & Friedrich, 2007), action research projects (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), and involvement in teacher unions (Bascia, 1997; 2000).

While democratic discourses are not as prevalent in the literature, a small body of literature has explored alternatives to the narrow ideas of teacher professionalism espoused by neoliberal policies. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), for instance, pointed out that managerial discourses of teacher professionalism are not employed in most of the world’s top performing countries. They noted, “In Finland, South Korea, and Singapore, teachers are nation builders…and indispensable national assets” (p. 2). In these countries the focus tends to be more on capacity building to develop the professional capital of teachers to “make effective judgments using all their capabilities and experience” (p. 3). Likewise, Sahlberg (2011) remarked that in Finland there are no top-down accountability systems; “teachers are the best judges of how their own students are progressing in school” (p. 23). Teaching is considered to be a high status profession where teachers are
trusted professionals with “some of the most important aspects of their work conducted outside of classrooms” (p. 24).

Democratic discourses of teacher professionalism are also found in countries where managerial discourses are dominant, generally framed in the literature as emerging from within the teaching profession itself rather than from without. In particular, teachers who are involved in various teacher leadership programs and union projects are often discussed as exhibiting broader discourses of teacher professionalism. In the United States for example, Lieberman and Friedrich (2007) wrote about the National Writing Project (NWP) where teachers engage in self-directed peer-to-peer writing activities. A project that acknowledges teacher knowledge, expertise, and leadership; participants noted that it was their professional responsibility to contribute to the betterment of education - some using their involvement in the project to springboard changes in their schools and encourage others to become teacher leaders. According to the authors, teachers in the project “overcame the entrenched bureaucratic norms of school and the institutionalized notions of leadership” (p. 28) and grew in their ability to support their colleagues and strengthen their capacity to work with their peers. On the international front, Frost (2011) reported on the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) program, which supports teacher-led professional learning program innovations in 15 countries across Europe. A strong proponent of teacher leadership and extended roles for teachers, Frost defines teacher professionalism as being about “the scope of the teachers’ role” and commented:

Teachers who lead development work are embracing extended professionalism in which they share responsibility for the goals of the learning community to which they belong, engage in knowledge creation and transfer and act ethically in the pursuit of the interests of their students. (p. 42)
Thus, as the literature in this section demonstrates, it is possible for teachers to enact and espouse expanded notions of what it means to be a professional teacher. In doing so, these teachers are laying the foundation for the continued promotion of alternative conceptions of teacher professionalism that act as counter narratives to the managerial discourses that dominate much of the global educational landscape. That being said, enacting democratic discourses against the backdrop of narrow ideas of teachers’ work is a challenging and risky endeavor. To that end, many teachers do so through active participation in teacher unions. To gain further insight into this phenomenon, the next section explores the ways in which some teacher unions have gone about facilitating the creation of environments to support the development of alternative discourses of teacher professionalism amongst their members.

2.3. Teacher Unions and Educational Reform

Initially created in response to the poor working conditions and unjust treatment of teachers (Murphy, 1990; Smaller, 1991; Urban, 1982), teacher unions and their venture into educational reform have not always fit easily into the educational landscape (Bascia, 2005; Bascia & Osmond, 2012). Historically equated with “industrial unionism” and “labour”, throughout their over 100-year existence, teacher unions have been viewed “at best benign or irrelevant but frequently obstructive, rarely visionary, and tending to promote mediocrity” (Bascia, 2003, p. 3). Within this context, establishing themselves as valued and valid educational reformers has been an uphill battle for teacher unions as governments have increasing limited their purview to a narrow set of collective bargaining issues (Bascia & Osmond, 2012). The role of teacher unions in the context of educational reform and their relationship to democratic discourse of teacher professionalism are further examined the sections that follow.
2.3.1. Teacher Unions as Marginalized Agents of Reform

The marginalization of teacher unions in educational reform is traced in the literature from their advent through to current times. Murphy (1990), for instance, described the early trials and tribulations of teacher unions in the U.S. as they struggled to establish a legitimate political role for themselves in the face of workplace issues that included discrimination against women, unequal pay scales, and the violation of civil liberties during the “Red Scare.” Eventually securing collective bargaining rights in many states, by the 1980s, teacher unions in the U.S. had gained considerable ground and significant improvements in teacher working conditions had been achieved. However, with the release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission, 1983) and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act via the *No Child Left Behind* legislation in 2002, teacher unions in many places in the United States have been embroiled in what Lipman (2011) refers to as a deliberate attempt to weaken public sector unions.

One of the most notable and publically fought battles recently occurred in Wisconsin where teachers in that state have endured an onslaught of anti-union legislation. Of particular contention, however, are the development of district-created employee handbooks, which completely replaced negotiated contracts as the blueprint for working conditions and the work of teachers (Swalwell & Schweber, 2013). Michelle Rhee’s bid to rid Washington D.C. schools of ‘incompetent’ teachers is another instance of America’s anti-union stance. Accusing unions of protecting bad teachers, Rhee offered the teacher’s union a radical increase in pay for teachers who were willing to give up seniority and tenure protection (Ravitch, 2010). According to Ravitch (2010) such anti-union reforms serve to vilify teacher unions and hold them directly accountable for the failures of the larger system:

One would think, by reading the critics, that the nation’s schools are overrun by incompetent teachers who hold their jobs only because of union protection, that
the unions are directly responsible for poor student performance, and that academic achievement would soar if the unions were to disappear. (p. 175)

Anti-union legislation is not unique to the United States however; like GERM it is more akin to a global phenomenon. For instance, in Canada, Poole (2007) chronicled the plight of the British Columbia Teacher’s Federation (BCTF) as it attempted to publicly counteract attacks on unionization, including contract stripping, imposed contracts, and the removal of teachers’ right to strike. At the time of this study the BCTF had once again become entangled in a battle with government over class size, classroom resources, and student access to specialist teachers including librarians, counselors, and special needs (BCTF, February 25, 2014). On a similar front, Flower and Booi (1999) and Bascia (2008a) both described the intense government pressure applied to the Alberta Teacher’s Association during the Klein years, while MacLellan (2009) described Mike Harris’ neoliberal attack on Ontario teacher unions. In the U.K., Carter, Stevenson, and Passy (2010) detailed the ongoing rapprochement and resistance of teacher unions in response to neoliberal reforms around merit pay, league tables, and school inspections. Taking a critical stance on the adoption of neoliberal policies in education, Compton and Weiner (2008) also offer stories of union resistance and resilience in response to anti-union reforms from contexts as varied as Australia, Denmark, and China, just to name a few.

Operating in a policy context characterized by mandates, fiscal constraint, accountability measures, and an increased role of the state in educational decision-making, the “triage” approach to educational reform (Basica, 2003) has often forced teacher unions to resort to traditional tactics of adversarial collective bargaining and labour action. As a consequence of such tactics, teacher unions have often been portrayed as militant, unprofessional, and selfishly concerned with ‘bread and butter’ issues of salary and benefits (Bascia, 2009). For instance, Goldstein’s (2011) study examining the portrayal of
teacher unions by major news sources found that teacher unions were much more likely to be viewed critically than positively. This is perhaps best evidenced in the popular documentary *Waiting for Superman*. Young (2011) also pointed out that media reports have portrayed Michelle Rhee and other opponents of teacher unions as saving education from greedy teacher unions by supporting legislation that bypasses unions and removes collective bargaining rights.

Teacher unions have also been highly criticized within the body of academic literature that explores their work. Johnson (2004) referred to this as the paralysis perspective - “driven by self-interest, imposing lock-step conformity on schools, and deliberately blocking reform” (p. 34). Cowen (2009), for instance, attacked collective bargaining and argued that fringe benefits and salary scales are to blame for increases in the cost of education while Antonucci (2010) negatively portrayed teacher unions as using money to win political favors. Likewise, Mangu-Ward (2011) described union leaders as cartoon super villains and immovable roadblocks to improving education and Brimelow (2003) referred to them as “the worm in the apple.” Lieberman (1997) and Moe (2007; 2011) are also prominent critics of teacher unions; with Lieberman accusing the NEA and the AFT of being the single greatest obstacle to educational reform in America and Moe (2007) stating, “Teachers don’t join unions to promote the best interests of children. They join unions to promote their own interests” (p. 80). Indeed, the mantra of a significant portion of the existing teacher union literature is that “teachers and their unions must be told what to do because, left to their own devices, they will cut a swath of destruction through students, because they are lazy, incompetent, and abusive” (Goldstein, 2011, p. 557).

Kerchner & Koppich (2004), however, noted that educational bureaucracy existed long before teachers unions emerged:
The unions did not create this system; rather, industrial unionism was labor’s answer to an education system that was intended to operate on the principles of scientific management and that put the design of the content and the pacing of the work in the hands of school administrators and not teachers. (p. 188)

Bascia (2009) also argued that, while much of the work of teacher unions may be hidden behind anti-union rhetoric, unions fulfill necessary roles in education by functioning as a balance to shortsighted government initiatives, providing critical feedback on the implementation of educational policies and acting as test-beds for new curriculum and professional development programs. Johnson (2004) referred to this as the “possibilities” perspective, which sees the work of teacher unions as progressive rather than restrictive and aiming to improve schools rather than destroy them. This perspective is further examined in the section that follows.

2.3.1. Teacher Unions as Reform Agents

In contrast to the portrayal of unions as advocating for teacher benefits at the expense of student learning, there is a smaller but growing body of literature that paints an evolving picture of teacher unions as organizations committed to strengthening the teaching profession and improving the quality of education (Bangs & Frost, 2012; Bangs & MacBeath, 2013; Bascia & Osmond, 2012; 2013; Clarke, 2001; Kerchner & Koppich, 1993; Murray, 2004; Pringle, 2010; Rottman, 2007; Urban, 2004). It is this group of union researchers who have influenced my understanding of the “possibilities” of teacher unionism (Johnson, 2004) and who have shaped the manner in which teacher unions are conceptualized in this study. In this vein, the teacher organizations featured in this section have expanded their sphere of influence to include policymaking, professional learning, and teacher leadership. Their work challenges narrow views of teacher unions and instead embodies the ideals of “new unionism” (Urban, 2004) or “professional unionism” (Kerchner & Koppich, 1993), questioning the relevance of adversarial
relationships and reconceiving teacher unions as having a legitimate and important role in educational reform.

Among the first academics to explore unions in this light were Kerchner and Koppich (1993). Chronicling several teacher unions across the United States that were pioneering new labour-management relationships during the 1990s, sites included Cincinnati, Ohio, where a joint committee was formed to allocate teacher positions and resources to inner-city schools and Glenview, Illinois, where a new constitution reallocated personnel, finance, and instruction decisions to joint labour-management committees. However, Kerchner and Koppich (1993) noted that, at the time, the kinds of labour-management relationships they described existed in no more than a few hundred of over 16,000 school districts in America.

Twenty years later the story of professional unionism remains unfinished. According to Johnson, Donaldson, Munger, Papay, and Gazilbash (2007), “Moving beyond industrial unionism is not easy both because it requires changes in culture and rules and because it demands ongoing leadership by both labour and management at all levels” (p. 390). Thus, in spite of the notion that the ‘new union’ agenda would “empower and enable teachers as full partners in school reform” (Eberts, Hollenbeck & Stone, 2004, p. 72), forward-thinking unions who have adopted this paradigm have often found themselves challenged to counter the negative relationships that have resulted from years of tension. This was also evident in Bascia’s (1994) early work on teacher unions as well as Bascia and Osmond’s (2012) review of the literature on teacher unions and educational reform. In both studies it was found that developing and maintaining positive relationships with management while balancing the needs of their members has indeed been a difficult struggle for many teacher unions.
The dangers and pitfalls of this re-conceptualized role for teacher unions is only one side of the story, however. Pringle (2010), for instance, outlined the reform and partnership efforts of a variety of locals of the National Education Association, whom she describes as being “at the forefront of educational reform and advocating for a great public schools for every student” (p. 1). Further to this, in Bascia’s (2003) case study of teacher union reform efforts, attempts to establish positive labor relations appeared to be the norm as teacher unions increasingly worked with others in the educational system to strategically initiate and sustain reform. Likewise, in Johnson et al.’s (2007) study of 30 teacher union leaders, less than one-fourth characterized their union’s negotiation approach as the traditional adversarial model. Union presidents who were interviewed spoke openly about the importance of developing positive working relations with superintendents, stating, “If that relationship fails, little else will work” (p. 390). In more recent work, Bascia and Osmond (2013) presented four cases studies of teacher unions who have, at various times, developed positive working arrangements with their governments. While it was noted that these relationships are fragile and subject to change, the authors concluded, “Collaborative working relationships between teacher unions and governments occur in a number of jurisdictions around the world” (p. 40).

Murray (2004), has also written about a number of “innovative” teacher union initiatives in the United States including Rochester’s Career in Teaching Program and the Toledo Career Development Plan where teachers apply to work on district projects relating to curriculum, leadership, or other self-identified areas of interest (Murray, 2004). Other literature exploring union-sponsored collaborations include Hamill’s (2011) report on the teacher-written curriculum initiative in Pittsburgh and Urbanski’s (1998) account of the work of the Teacher Union Reform Network (TURN), a group of reform oriented teacher unions focused on finding new and innovative ways to carve out larger roles for teachers.
Naylor (2005) also chronicled several professional development partnership projects sponsored by the British Columbia Teacher’s Federation including a federally funded multiliteracies project and a tri-district partnership that oversees a mentoring and support group program for new Special Education and ESL teachers.

Bascia (1994; 1996; 1997; 1998; 2000; 2003; 2005; 2008a; 2008b; 2009) has written extensively on the contributions of teacher unions to a number of areas of educational reform. In particular, much of Bascia’s work has focused on the ways in which teacher unions have gone about establishing themselves as sites of meaningful professional development for current and incoming members - stepping in to provide professional development for their members when funding for government sponsored PD has been reduced or cuts, collaborating with colleges of teacher education to develop initial teacher preparation programs, and sponsoring conferences and symposia and other networking opportunities where teachers and academics share educational ideas and strategies. For instance, in one of her works Bascia (2003) highlighted the “Teacher Center”, an initiative undertaken by the United-Federation of Teachers (UFT) in New York City to train teachers in the development of comprehensive curriculum and place them in low-performing schools to support teaching improvement projects. She has also written about the array of professional development provided by the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) during the Klein years (Basica, 2008a) as well as the National Education Association’s Learning Lab initiative, which engaged members across many locals through the 1990s (Bascia, Stiegelbauer, Jacka, Watson, & Fullan, 1997). More recent work has explored unions as policy actors (Bascia, 2009) and agents of educational reform (Bascia & Osmond, 2012).

Looking internationally, Bangs and Frost’s (2012) describe the four unions in their multi-national study on teacher efficacy as “committed to encouraging and providing sites for
their members within which they are able to become involved in influencing education policies” (p. 31). They reference Bascia’s (2008b) work on what teachers want from their unions – professional development, advocating for enhanced teacher voice in policy making, and promoting a positive professional identity – and concluded that the unions in their study exhibited these qualities. They note that while “not all unions currently adopt this role, clearly the evidence is that they have the capacity to do so” (p. 39). Similarly, in Rodrigue’s (2003) study of the professionalism discourses of Canadian teacher organizations, all 17 organizations referred to themselves as a “professional union”. She reported, that while teacher unionists in her study acknowledged the operational challenges of the dual mandate, “for the most part, the interviewees challenged the argument that professionalism and unionism were incompatible” (p. 258).

Even the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has acknowledged the importance of collaboration between government and teacher unions. In their report on the first International Summit on the Teaching Profession, they noted that while the tensions between teacher unions and governments are real, “the better a country’s education system performs, the more likely that country is working constructively with its unions and treating its unions as trusted professional partners” (Schleicher, 2001, p. 60). Held in New York in March of 2011 and funded in part by the OECD, the Summit was a meeting place for teacher unions, education ministers and teacher leaders from around the globe to “review how best to improve teacher quality and the quality of teaching and learning” (p. 11). The Summit continues annually, with the fifth conference to be held in Banff, Alberta, in 2015.

In the Canadian context, Rottmann (2008; 2011) and Kuehn (2006; 2007) also identify teacher unions as sites for social justice activism, working on issues of gender, ethnicity, bullying and poverty. Gathering website information from 20 Canadian teachers’
organizations, Rottmann (2008) characterized unions as “building internal organizational capacity for social justice and advocacy for public education, educators, and students” (p. 983) through coalition building, the establishment of equity-oriented committees, and the provision of justice-minded professional development. In other works, both Rottman (2011) and Kuehn (2006a; 2007) have discussed the various social justice initiatives undertaken by the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) around poverty, homophobia and heterosexism, women, and racism.

Thus, while some literature illustrates that many unions have struggled with dichotomy of the “conflicting missions” of professionalism unionism (Loveless, 2000), there is research that suggests that some unions have thrived; partnering with school districts and government departments on a variety of mentoring programs and collaborative models of peer review and teacher evaluation as well as undertaking a host of reform initiatives on their own (Bascia & Osmond, 2012). Taken collectively, this literature challenges the antiquated notion of teacher unions as the harbingers of all that is wrong with the world’s education system. Rather, a significantly different picture of teacher unions is presented, one that portrays unions as having the capacity to engage teachers in a host of professional experiences and advocacy work that facilitates the enactment of broader discourses of teacher professionalism. This is further explored in the section that follows.

2.4. Situating the Study in the Literature: Teacher Unions and Discourses of Professionalism

Drawing from the sources in the previous sections, I contend that teacher unions are a conduit for the promotion and enactment of alternative discourses of teacher professionalism. In these instances, the concept of professionalism has been strategically redefined to foster enhanced professional learning and teacher leadership and is employed
by unions and their members in a deliberate attempt to influence government policy around teacher autonomy and the role of teacher leaders.

A growing body of literature supports this argument. Mockler (2005), for instance, suggested that bodies that regulate the teaching profession could significantly impact the teaching profession through “pathways for professional growth and development and the adoption of a supporting stance for the emergence of a transformative teaching profession” (p. 739). Likewise, Bangs and Frost (2012), suggested that teacher unions can “provide the confidence and conditions for promoting teachers’ professional autonomy and leadership” as well as ensuring that “teachers’ voices are heard in the process of educational reform” (p. 44). Building on this notion, Bangs and MacBeath (2013) exclusively focused on teacher unions’ capacity to foster collective leadership amongst teachers. They frame teacher unions as

Playing a dual role – exercising leadership in their own right while seeking to empower their individual members to take on initiatives that may not always be in accord with current policy but which rest on an agreed set of professional principles and values. (p. 332)

They cite several teacher unions who are encouraging their members to become more actively involved in educational policymaking through enhanced professional learning programs including the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teacher in the U.S., the National Union of Teachers in the U.K. and the Australian Education Union in Australia.

Other literature has explored the ways in which unions contribute to the professionalism of their members by focusing on the leadership and activism of union leaders and union active teachers. Bascia (1997), for instance, commented that involvement in teacher unions, although often “invisible” to some teachers, “offers teachers opportunities to participate in curricular and organizational development activities as well as access to
decision-making, information, and resources” (p. 70); opportunities that she contended also provide the foundation for other teacher leadership and activist work. She went on to detail the teacher leadership of thirty-five union-active teachers from two different studies that spanned both U.S. and Canadian contexts. According to Bascia (1997), “Most teachers said they were motivated by beliefs that organizational involvement would support their advocacy work on behalf of educational programs, colleagues, and students” (p. 73).

Along a similar line, Rousmaniere (2005) chronicled the leadership and activist work of Margaret Haley, a well-known unionist who founded the first American teacher union in Chicago. Haley vehemently fought for the professional right of teachers to shape the face of teaching and learning through their actions both inside and outside of the classroom and mobilized droves of others to join the battle. Overcoming issues of racism, sexism, and classism to rise through the ranks, she eventually became the President of the Chicago Teacher’s Federation, which later became the AFT (Murphy, 1990). Rousmaniere concludes that, were Haley alive today, she would “mobilize classroom teachers to fight for their own professional standards and for the right to participate in school governance and curriculum decisions” (p. 215). The leadership and activism of Albert Shanker, another former AFT President, has been explored in great depth (Kahlenberg, 2007). Credited with beginning the AFT’s movement towards a more progressive style of unionism, a number of scholars have noted that Shanker was a strong supporter of “professional unionism” long before the idea had taken hold (Henderson, Urban, & Wolfman, 2004; Kerchner & Caufman, 1995).

Providing an insider’s perspective, Kuehn (2006a) explored the social justice and advocacy role of various unionists and union members involved in the BCTF’s International Solidarity Program. In particular Kuehn discusses a teacher-to-teacher
English in-service program in Cuba where teachers from British Columbia spent two to three weeks offering pedagogical programs to Cuban teachers. McRae and Enriquez also explored the experiences of teachers in what has become known as the “Cuba Brigade.” They noted, “Many of the teachers had developed a new respect for their union and the leadership role that it can play in teacher professionalism” (as cited in Kuehn, 2006, p. 154).

On a similar note, Naylor, O’Brien, Alexandrou, and Garsed (2008) presented an account of an international, union-led, web-based networking project that offered teachers “a way to connect with other teacher-leaders and to compare approaches and skills in very different contexts” (p. 3). Engaging three union active teacher leaders from British Columbia, Scotland, and Australia, the authors suggested that the development of leadership within these teachers was facilitated by the union’s wider frame of reference, which allowed the teachers to gain “experience in the bigger pond which built confidence and individual capacity” (p. 12). Continuing the project, Naylor and his colleagues (2010) compiled two cases studies of other union active teacher leaders in British Columbia and Scotland and identified a range of leadership qualities that teacher unions contribute to by supporting teachers’ professional development.

What all of these papers have in common is their focus on the agency of teacher unionists and the strategic ways they go about working within the various structures and cultures that circumscribe their work to instill organizational and educational change on a broader level. Reading them together, it becomes apparent that, even though discursive practices were not explicitly examined, the unionists in these examples have countered notions of professionalism that portray teachers as passive recipients of someone else’s innovations. This is perhaps best illustrated, however, through the work of Hilferty (2004, 2008), who specifically studied the discourses of teacher professionalism executive members in two
teacher subject associations in Australia. Organizations that provide subject specific professional development, teacher subject associations in some instances are extensions of teacher unions, as is the case in most Canadian provinces. Moreover, like unions, these associations often engage in the politics of policy making, specifically in the area of curriculum. Hilferty (2008), however, identified them as having another significance, “affirming the central role that these associations play as active participants in the social construction of teacher professionalism” (p. 240).

Other literature has explored the ways in which unions have gone about challenging neoliberal discourses of teacher professionalism in a more direct manner. For instance, Rottmann (2008) found all 20 of the Canadian teacher organizations in her study to be actively involved in reframing government rhetoric around professionalism “in ways that support public education, teachers’ working conditions, and students’ learning conditions” (p. 985). Examples included the Nova Scotia Teacher’s Union (NSTU) who produced and distributed an information sheet about the negative effects of pubic private partnership schools, and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) who sent links of their publications to members of provincial parliament. Along similar lines, the ATA established a Public Education Action Centre in rebuttal to negative reports on the”” sorry quality of teaching” released by Alberta Education and encouraged ATA members in schools and locals to promote public education in their own settings. In a more recent study, Bascia and Osmond (2013) note that, over the years, the ATA has reshaped the provincial discourse around education in Alberta and have been largely successful in persuading the government that they are strong partners in education reform.

Thus, despite the rhetoric of union critics, a number of teacher unions have responded to the tensions hard-wired within the traditional top-down hierarchy of educational
policymaking. Carving a path that operates in contrast to the stereotypical view of teacher unions as roadblocks to reform on educational quality, innovative teacher unions like those described above are contributing to the development of a “tapestry” where “educational improvement is understood as requiring multiple efforts in many aspects of educational practice by many reform players” (Bascia, 2003, p. 4). Within this tapestry, union-active teachers are constructing and promoting their own discourses of teacher professionalism, counter narratives that, unlike prevailing neoliberal discourses, position teachers as valued constructors of educational policy and leaders of educational change.

While some authors have explored discourses of professionalism of held or espoused by teacher unions (Bascia, 2008; Bascia & Osmond, 2012; Rodrigue, 2003; Rottman, 2008), notwithstanding the compelling instances in this literature review, literature that directly explores the professionalism discourses of union active teachers is scant. As such, this study aims to provide insights into not only the nature of the discourses espoused, but also the ways in which such discourses evolve within the larger policy context. In doing so the study attempts to begin to fill this gap in the literature, with a particular focus on teacher unionism in diverse Canadian contexts. The next chapter outlines the theoretical framework that will guide this endeavor.
Chapter Three: Theoretical & Conceptual Frameworks

This study was designed to investigate the discourses of professionalism espoused by union active teachers. It is important, however, to not only uncover alternative discourses of teacher professionalism but also to theorize the manner in which the power struggles inherent in their creation unfold in particular contexts. In this chapter I develop a conceptual framework that attempts to explain how the distinct discourses of professionalism of the union-active teachers in this study have evolved. This necessitates first, however, a discussion of Foucault’s notion of power and discourse and Hilferty’s (2004) conception of professionalism as an enacted discourse of power, which together serve as the study’s theoretical framework.

3.1. What is discourse?

Rooted in a poststructuralist view where language and social reality are intrinsically bound together in both mutually reinforcing and offsetting ways, discursive perspectives emphasize the social nature of meaning-making and highlight the importance of power in shaping not only what people say, but also what people do. According to Hall (2001, as cited in MacDonald, 2006), Foucault (particularly in his later works) understood discourse as socially constructed representations and ways of thinking about particular concepts and moments. Moreover, for Foucault, discourse does not occur within a vacuum; rather it takes shape within a highly politicized arena of socialization where discursive practices play a significant role in the maintenance of particular power structures and the cultures that support them (Hilferty, 2004). Subsequently, discourses are embedded in both discursive and non-discursive practices, a reflection of the social world. As Hilferty (2004) contends, then, discourses “are not therefore limited to spoken language, but also arise from institutional practices and inherent power relations” (p.62).
Thus, discourse is more than a description or even an explanation of meaning; discourse contributes to the creation of a particular reality (Thomas, 2005) by legitimizing the rules of engagement as to who can speak, when they can speak, and with what authority (Ball, 1990). In this way, discourse can construct, regulate, and govern human identity through the production of what Foucault (1982) refers to as ‘subjects’ (who characterize the representations within the discourse) and the creation of discursive positions for ‘subjects’ to occupy. In other words, discourse regulates conduct and social conventions such that subjects enact particular practices and espouse a particular lexicon in response to the social and organizational norms and expectations sustained through the ‘rules’ of a particular discourse. That being said, however, in later works, Foucault also noted the importance of local resistance to the power of discourse, which he positioned as having an opportunity to stimulate institutional change on both micro and macro scales (MacDonald, 2006). Consequently, as Sachs (2003) argues, space does exist for the production of counter-discourses by those who wish to challenge dominant ideologies and create new discursive positions, a function of the power struggles inherent in social relations (Sachs, 2003). By examining such co-determining, researchers can discern the power relations between different social actors being played out in discursive arenas.

### 3.2. Professionalism as an enacted discourse of power

Within the existing literature, very few authors capture the dynamic socio-political interactions that circumscribe the construction of discourses of teacher professionalism. Rather, predominant conceptualizations of teacher professionalism are typically bounded by ideas of classroom work and the teacher as an object of reform, often represented as simplistic lists of standardized competencies that include references to such patronizing notions as proper dress and decorum. Even Sockett (1993), Hoyle (1974), and Sachs (2003), who all speak of teachers’ wider role in educational decision making, orient
professionalism as a state rather than an process of meaning-making, outlining lists of
insular categories - boxes that could be ticked off in the same manner as the traditional
standardized lists of competencies that so narrowly describe the roles of teachers.
Sachs, for instance, presents a framework for rethinking teacher professionalism with a
focus on teacher agency and the development of an activist teaching profession. The
framework includes five inter-related elements - learning, participation, collaboration,
cooperation, and activism – that, taken together, open spaces for the creation of
alternative discourses of teacher professionalism. While her work initially provided me
with a basis for understanding the kinds of professional activities that provide a backdrop
for the creation of alternative discourses of teacher professionalism, it did not foreground
the inherent tensions between teacher agency and advocacy, the organizational and
political contexts within which they occur, or the dynamic manner in which these
elements shape and are shaped by discourses of professionalism.

On the other hand, drawing on the work of Foucault, Hilferty’s (2004; 2008) work on
discourses of teacher professionalism presents power as being embedded in all social
processes and, as such, positions discourses of teacher professionalism as being
“constantly defined and redefined through educational theory, practice, and policy”
(Hilferty, 2008, p.161). According to Hilferty (2004), for Foucault, “power is a
ubiquitous feature of human interaction” (p.61) such that power is involved in all social
actions and processes. Unlike Marxist theory, which positions power as being hierarchal
and primarily repressive, Foucault did not view power as flowing simply from top to
bottom. Rather, for Foucault and other poststructuralists, power is viewed as emanating
from all points, “a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much
more than as a negative instance whose function is repression” (Foucault, 1994, p.120; as
cited in Hilferty, 2004). Moreover, where there is power, there is inevitably resistance as
power struggles emerge between different social actors who are attempting to exert their own forms of power.

According to Foucault (1980), however, power relations “cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse” (p.93), which represent and shape both social practices and the meaning derived from such relations. As such, in her exploration of the professionalism discourses of teacher subject associations in Australia, Hilferty (2004) conceptualizes professionalism as an enacted discourse of power that “embraces more than just rhetoric, it also emerges from everyday practice – through the routines in which individuals and groups seek to control the work of teachers” (p.62). Moreover, by constructing professionalism as a discourse of power used by both educational authorities as well as teachers and their teacher organizations, Hilferty acknowledges Foucault’s notion that power is revealed through discourse and specifically relates discourses of professionalism to three central power issues in education: the rights of teachers to participate in educational decision making, the recognition of teacher expertise as valuable knowledge, and the pursuit of an enhanced professional status for teachers. In this way, Hilferty’s portrayal of enacted professionalism specifically draws a distinction between traditional notions of professionalism that are primarily concerned with the “quality and character of teacher’s work” and teacher professionalism as “a process that relates the ways in which teachers attempt to influence the quality and character of this work” (Hilferty, 2008, p. 163).

That being said, while Hilferty theorizes enacted professionalism as a product of the interplay between agency and the historical and organizational cultures and structures that either limit or support such discourses, she does not distinguish between teacher organizations themselves and the larger educational policy context in terms of their
unique influences on the formation of such discourses. The framework I present in this chapter draws from the work of Hilferty and Foucault but rooted in the data from this study, positions union engagement as a distinct sphere of influence on the discourses of professionalism espoused by its members. A detailed account of the tenets of this framework is presented below.

3.1. Theorizing the discourses of professionalism amongst union active teachers

In this study I contend that the professionalism discourses of union active teachers are shaped by the push and pull of three primary dimensions: teacher agency, engagement in teacher organizations, and the broader policy context that characterizes the educational landscape within which that engagement and agency occurs. Each dimension is described separately below before examining the relationships amongst them.

3.1.1. Agency and Sense of Agency

There is some debate amongst theorists as to whether or not Foucault’s conception of the relationship between power and discourse excludes the ‘subject’ from the possibility of agency (Bleiker, 2003). For the purposes of this study, however, I adopt Bleiker’s (2003) notion that, “despite their power to frame the world, discourses are not invincible” (p.29), and, in doing so, side with those theorists who argue that Foucault’s conception of discourse does provide a space for human agency. According to Hall (1997, as cited in Ryan, 1999), not all who are ‘subjected’ to a particular discourse will automatically occupy the space created by the discourse. Rather, subjects must identify with the space and “become” its subject. However, as Bleiker (2003), points out, “discourses are often thin, unstable, and fragmented. There are fissures, there are cracks, there are weak spots:
windows of opportunity that lead to transformative pathways” (p. 29). Drawing on this notion and taking into consideration Foucault’s (1982) later acknowledgment that where there is power, there is resistance, I contend that, while discourse may indeed produce subjects, subjects may also navigate discursive cracks, fissures, and weak spots to create counter-discourse that transcend dominate ideologies that serve to control their conduct in repressive ways. This argument is also backed by Lemke (2002), who contends that, “Foucault endeavors to show how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other’s emergence” (p.50-1).

According to Zeichner & Liston (1996):

Teachers cannot restrict their attention to the classroom alone, leaving the larger setting and purposes of schooling to be determined by others…they need to determine their own agency through a critical and continual evaluation of the purposes, the consequences, and the social context of their calling. (p.11)

Likewise, in the U.S., a study by Archbald and Porter (1994) argued that teacher professionalism was not eclipsed by state control over curriculum. Rather, they concluded that official policy paled in comparison to teachers’ belief that they were in control over the most important aspects of the curriculum. Similarly, Helgøy and Homme (2007) point out that different teachers may interpret demands for transparency and accountability differently, with some viewing the imposition as a threat to their professionalism and others using it as “an opportunity to demonstrate the value and quality of their work” (p. 234). Thus, the notion of agency is key in terms of conceptualizing the power struggle over specific typologies of teacher professionalism and the manner in which different discursive positions are created. Conceptualizing agency as a “chordal triad” of temporal orientations towards the past, present, and future, for the purpose of this study, I adopt Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) general definition of agency as “the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to
problematic situations” (p. 971). Applied to the teaching profession, agency in this study is seen as the desire of teachers to “actively and purposefully direct their own working lives” (p. 68) through engagement in autonomous, intrinsically motivated work. Moreover, like Hilferty (2004), I also conceive of the enactment of alternative discourses of professionalism as a form of agency since it requires teachers to take an active role in creating both the discursive and non-discursive reality they are aiming to achieve in their professional working lives.

3.1.2. Union Engagement

Drawing on Meads notion of “sociality”, Emirbayer and Mische (1998), also note the importance of the social element of agency, concluding that agency is “a dialogical process by and through which actors immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organized contexts of action” (p.974). Thus, while the agency of individual teachers inevitably shapes the discourse of professionalism espoused and enacted by a particular teacher, so too does the collective interaction between groups of teachers as social actors. As such, I contend that discourses of teacher professionalism (as well as teachers’ sense of personal agency) are also shaped through the process of engagement in teacher unions.

As Sachs (2003) notes, democratic discourses of teacher professionalism rely on the creation of spaces and the development of opportunities for teachers to collaboratively engage with their peers in meaningful professional development. Moreover, democratic discourses of teacher professionalism and the activist teaching identities they support are “concerned with changing people’s beliefs, perspectives, and options regarding the importance of teaching, the socialization of teachers and the role of competency and intelligent teachers in various educational institutions” (Sachs, 2003, p. 146). Considering
the onslaught of neoliberal reforms aimed at controlling and monitoring the teaching profession, however, engaging in an activist teaching profession involves a willingness to be political and, as such, is most easily done as a collective venture. In this vein, teachers may become active participants in teacher organizations, who represent “teachers’ aspirations for a powerful and participatory form of professionalism that asserts practitioner rights in educational policy-making” (Hilferty, 2004, p. 214). This involvement may be at the local level or on a larger scale and includes partaking in a wide variety of activities ranging from committee work and participating in protests to seeking election and taking on executive roles within the organization. Engagement in such social activities, however, constitute a whole new sphere of influence on the discourses of teacher professionalism as teachers are exposed to organizational discourses around the roles of teachers as espoused through both the manner in which the union engages in the educational labour process and the kinds of professional learning and advocacy opportunities they make available to their members.

3.1.3. Broader Policy Context

Like teacher unions, the broader policy environment also promotes its own historical and cultural discourses around the teacher as professional. Defined by Hilferty (2004) as “the social glue that binds an organization and related community together” (p. 70), culture can also be likened to a learned knowledge that “people use to generate and interpret social behavior” (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972, p. 8). Looking back to the work of Foucault, then, counter-discourses can either be supported or inhibited by the dominant discursive rules that define the culturally accepted and expected roles of professional teachers within a given context and time period.
In other words, discourses espoused through the development and implementation of educational policies have a direct impact on both the content and practice of teaching and learning as well as the conditions under which these actions take place. Serving as the backdrop to teachers’ daily work life, the broader policy environment determines the context of teachers’ involvement in the policy process, access to self-directed forms of professional learning and teacher leadership, and the scope of legal collective action within their union, inevitably influencing the nature of the discourses of professionalism enacted and espoused by members of the teaching profession in myriad ways. Such contextual factors underscore the power relationships between stakeholders at that various levels with the hierarchy, setting the tone for future policy cycles and contract negotiations, which are also circumscribed by struggles over discursive positions. More specifically, as demonstrated in the literature review, neo-liberal agendas around the globe currently frame the work of teachers within a culture of accountability where the dominant discourse conceptualizes teachers as implementers rather than policy actors. To varying degrees, this discourse has permeated both of the provincial contexts examined in this study.

3.4. Summary

While it is necessary to individually present these three spheres of influence for clarity purposes, such a portrayal is not an accurate representation of how these elements work together to shape the discourses of professionalism amongst union active teachers, nor does it capture the ways in which they mutually influence each other. As illustrated in Figure 1, each of the three dimensions plays off of, and is impacted by, the others. They do no exist in isolation and are not traits on a list of characteristics that define professionalism. Rather, it is the dynamic interplay and inherent tensions between these
dimensions that is seen as influencing and shaping the conceptions of teacher professionalism espoused and enacted by participants in this study.

Figure 1: Discourses of Teacher Professionalism Amongst Union Active Teachers

As indicated by the double arrows, each individual dimension impacts and is impacted by the other dimensions and one cannot be separated from the others. For instance, union engagement is an active choice, part and parcel of one’s personal agency. Likewise, union engagement can reinforce personal agency by providing access to a host of professional learning and growth experiences that individuals may not have otherwise had the ability to choose to participate in. Similarly, the work of individual teachers and that of their unions takes place within the broader policy context, with union members individually and collectively inserting their voices into the conversation and advocating for particular policy changes. Inevitably, these discourses find their way into the larger policy environment, which, in turn, through the promotion of its own discourses, impacts
the personal agency of individuals and the collective power of union action in a similar manner. In this way the framework acknowledges the dynamic forces that influence discourses of professionalism without positioning them as diametrically opposed to each other. Rather, the complex relationship that exists between these forces is highlighted in order to gain a robust understanding of the discursive arena framing this phenomenon.

According to Fairclough (2001), however,

Social life is reflexive. That is, people not only act and interact within networks of social practices, they also interpret and represent to themselves and each other what they do, and these interpretations and representations shape and reshape what they do” (p. 4).

Thus, it is important to note that the dimensions shaping discourses of teacher professionalism (as well as the discourses themselves) are not static. Rather, within a particular setting (in this case, at the provincial level) the discourses are temporal, constantly changing and evolving in relation to each other as priorities shifts and as teacher organizations, individuals, and government change and respond to each other in new ways. Furthermore, on the micro level, the extent to which each dimension influences individual discourses of teacher professionalism varies both between and within individual teachers, depending of a number of factors such as family and other life commitments and the value associated with their teacher organization.
Chapter Four: Research Design

In this chapter I outline and justify the design of this study. More specifically, I explore the tenets of critical qualitative research and its alignment with the purposes of the study. The choice of case study methods, the research context, and the methods of data collection are described in detail and I outline the use of the constant comparative methods as a means of constructing each cases. The use of cross-case analysis in conceptualizing the enactment of such discourses amongst union active teachers across both contexts is explored and I conclude the chapter with an explanation of the ethical considerations of the study.

4.1. Qualitative Research

As described earlier, the purpose of this study is to uncover discourses of professionalism as defined and enacted by union active teachers and to examine the ways in which these discourses are shaped through the interplay between teachers’ own agency and the organizational structures and cultural contexts within which the enactment of such discourses occurs. This purpose, however, is framed by a web of my own ontological and epistemological orientations, which were outlined in Chapter 1 - an understanding of the social creation of knowledge, the questioning of prevailing assumptions, and an acknowledgment of the role of power in the creation of discourses. Thus, In order to make sense of this web and arrive a multilayered and complex interpretation of the data, I adopted a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

Several scholars and academics have written about and described qualitative research. Denzin & Lincoln (2005), for instance, state, “qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers
study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Likewise, Patton (2002) discussed qualitative research as being concerned with the subjective construction of negotiated meanings within particular milieu. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research aims to understand the how and why of a particular human or social phenomenon. It is not concerned with numerical representations or absolute truths and does not aim or claim to be generalizable (Merriam, 2009). Rather, qualitative research constructs a representation of phenomena through a detailed and contextualized analysis of the data, which allows the reader to make their own inferences as to the applicability of the data to their own circumstance.

This study is concerned with generating a rich understanding of the particular discursive reality that union active teachers both create and experience in response to the world around them and, therefore, lends itself well to the qualitative paradigm. More specifically, the study can be situated within the four broad characteristics of qualitative research as outline by Merriam (2009): there is a focus on meaning and understanding from the participants’ perspectives, there is acknowledgment of the researchers position within the design of the study, analysis follows an inductive process of theory building from the gathered data, and the description of the findings is thick, rich, rooted in context, and supported by authentic participant data.

The term qualitative research, however, is more of an umbrella phrase than it is a precise definition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and, as such, the paradigm encompasses many orientations. Thus, it behooves me to situate this study within the realm of critical qualitative research, which, in addition to facilitating an understanding of a phenomenon has the goal of uncovering power dynamics and challenging the status quo (Merriam, 2009). With epistemological and ontological roots in critical theory (see Freire, 1970 &
Giroux, 1983), critical researchers purposefully engage under-represented groups within the larger society in order to produce counter-narratives to dominant discourses and ways of thinking. More specifically, as Hilferty (2004) notes, traditional texts describing critical research positions it as having an emancipatory function where participants are empowered to bring about social changes though the research process. In this sense, critical research aims to be transformative and to raise consciousness by making apparent both injustices and more equitable possibilities (Merriam, 2009).

Like all research, critical research is not without its critics. Of particular contestation is the extent to which critical research actually achieves its somewhat lofty goal of emancipation and social change. Acknowledging that some critical researchers may indeed overstate the “freeing” effect of their work on the participants involved, Hilferty (2004) argues that this tendency is a function of individual researchers’ deficit views of their participants as “passive, unthinking recipients of imposed change” (p.83). Like Hilferty’s research, my study does not aim to liberate the union active teachers who participated in this study or the teacher organizations that form the cases. Rather, this study acknowledges the keen awareness of both the teachers and the organizations involved with respect to the power dynamics of the broader context of education in their respective provinces as well as the ways in which they go about attempting to insert their own voice within that context.

Drawing from Hilferty’s (2004) reconceptualization of the tenets of critical research, however, I contend that, despite its lack of focus on emancipatory power, this study maintains a critical orientation in that it attempts to confront the marginalization of teachers and teacher unions as both policy actors and active educational reformers while giving voice to a particular group of teachers, most of whom, as demonstrated in the cases, recognize the presence of oppressive forces that attempt to limit their
professionalism. In this sense, the study aims to effect positive change by helping teacher organizations better understand they ways in which they can go about providing a platform of support for the creation of democratic discourses of professionalism, making this a critical study, but within a “21st Century educative research context” (Hilferty, 2004, p. 86). More specifically, qualitative case study methodology was utilized to achieve this end, the details and application of which are described below.

4.2. Case Study Methods

“Case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 253). In other words, case study methods are embedded in the notion that the phenomenon being explored is both multifaceted in nature and circumscribed by particular contexts, which, in turn, adds to that complexity. Thus, case study methods not only allow for a rich representation of the realities of a particular phenomenon, it also allows that representation to be constructed in relation to the social and structural processes that frame the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). According to Yin (2003), “You would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions—believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (p. 13). To this end, case study methods were specifically chosen for this study since the construction of discourse is a socio-political process best understood in its real-life context. Moreover, as discussed in the first two chapters, the construction of discourses of professionalism has been identified in the literature as being heavily influenced by neo-liberal reforms and the marketization of education in general.

According to Stake (1998), case studies can take on three different forms: intrinsic (studies which seek to understand the particular case being explored); instrumental
(studies where a case is explored in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon); and collective (studies which make use of more than one instrumental case). From these categories, this study lends itself to the collective paradigm, also referred to by Yin (2006) as comparative case study methodology. As such, I employed this approach with the hopes of yielding a richer understanding of the ways in which discourses of professionalism evolve and play out in the professional lives of teachers in unique milieus. Examining such discourses within and across multiple contexts provides a more compelling interpretation of the results and increases the relatability of the study when compared with a single holistic case study (Merriam, 2009), which are sometimes perceived as “unique and idiosyncratic and therefore have limited value beyond the circumstances of the single case” (Yin, 2006, p. 115). In this instance, I construct two cases of discourses of professionalism with provincial teacher organizations as the unit of analysis: the Alberta Teacher’s Association (ATA) and the Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario (ETFO). This number allowed for the construction of varied descriptions of the ways in which union-active teachers in particular contexts were impacting the balance of professionalism discourses while remaining manageable and containable within the scope and time frame of the study.

4.2.1. Site Selection
Selection of specific cases is one of the most important aspects of case study research (Yin, 2006). As such, when considering possible locations, several factors come into play. First, the researcher must contemplate which sites would provide the best insights into the particular phenomenon being explored. Secondly, the willingness of key informants to participate as well as ease of access to those informants needs to be considered. Further to these criteria, when conducting a study of more than one case, the
researcher must decide if the cases are to be complementary, contrasting, or theoretically diverse (Yin, 2006). As detailed below, the cases in this study are a mix of all three.

I purposefully chose teacher organizations from the provinces of Ontario and Alberta for a variety of reasons. Firstly, unique cultural, demographic, and political factors in each province contribute to the creation of distinct politics of education and particular kinds of relationships between government and the teacher organizations in each province. In these ways, the provinces serve as instances of contrasting cases that illuminate discourses of professionalism from diverse entry points. For instance, Alberta has had a relatively stable political climate with the Conservatives in power since the 1970s while, to the contrary, Ontario has experienced a number of political shifts, with the New Democrats, the Conservatives, and the Liberals all having held power at some time over the past 20 years. Additionally, teaching in Alberta is a unified profession with both teachers and administrators belonging to the Alberta Teachers’ Association, which serves as the only teacher organization in the province. In Ontario, however, administrators were removed from the membership of teacher organizations in 1994 and teachers belong to one of four teacher organizations; L’Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA), and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF), the largest of which being OSSTF and ETFO.

However, despite many contextual differences, teacher organizations in both Ontario and Alberta have experienced periods of relative harmony with respect to their relationship with government as well as periods of intense strife. At various points in their history, managerial discourses of teacher professionalism have been employed in both provinces, intentionally or unintentionally, under the guise of fiscal uncertainty and efficiency measures. Perhaps as a result of these ebbs and flows in their relationship with
government, the teacher organizations in both contexts have long histories of advocacy work, political engagement, and a strong focus on supporting the professional growth of teachers, conditions which are associated with providing a platform for the construction of democratic discourses of professionalism (Sachs, 2003; Hilferty 2004). In these ways the cases are complementary to each other.

Of the four teacher unions in Ontario, I specifically selected ETFO for the study because of their high level of political engagement during the year leading up to the study, which was rife with unrest as a result of Bill 115 that proposed to strip teachers of two years of negotiated pay increases, reduce sick benefits, and remove teacher’s right to strike. Since there is only one teacher union in Alberta, participants from that province were all members of the ATA, which, like ETFO, is known for its history of political engagement and strong commitment to teacher professional development. Contacts with both the ATA and ETFO were also in place prior to the study as a result of previous collaboration, facilitating access to possible participants. The provincial contexts and the histories of these organizations are described in more detailed in their respective cases.

4.2.2. Participant Selection

Participants in this study were purposefully selected in order to yield the most compelling data from those who are closely linked to the phenomenon. Specifically, I sought participants who were active members of their respective associations, as evidenced through participation in a host of association work including elected positions on local executive and specialist councils as well as volunteer participation in various research initiatives, professional development programs, and committees. To facilitate access to members who met this inclusion criterion I utilized existing contacts within each organization and they agreed to act as a liaison between potential participants and myself.
Through several conversations with these contacts, it was agreed that the study would be introduced at provincial leadership events held by each of the associations. ETFO introduced the study at the annual Leadership Training workshop held in Toronto on September 26th, 2013 and the ATA launch took place as part of the Annual Summer Conference held in Banff from August 12-14, 2013. Both of these events offer leadership development workshops and seminars to some of the most active and involved members in each association and, as such, contacts from both associations were certain that members attending these events would best suit the characteristics of my desired sample.

During each launch, association contacts introduced the study, described its purpose and the associations’ interest in the study, and distributed an information letter to interested members (see Appendix A). In Alberta, while interest at the launch seemed high, initial recruitment of participants was slow and after two weeks I had received a response from only one person. I attribute this to the timing of launch, which occurred towards the end of the summer when teachers are just beginning to prepare for a new school year. After consultation, it was decided that my contact would send follow up emails to approximately 20 persons who had initially expressed interested in the study. These emails contained the same information letter that was distributed at the launch and recipients were asked to contact me directly if they were still interested in participating. This approached yielded 12 additional members for a total of 13 participants from the ATA. In Ontario the launch occurred roughly six weeks later, when teachers had already settled into the hustle and bustle of the new school year, and I began receiving responses from interested members within just a few days, which, in total, yielded 11 participants from ETFO.

Of the 13 members from the ATA, six were male and seven were female. This is not representative of the gender ratio within the Association, which is currently comprised of
about 80% females. It is noted, however, that the ATA has a long history of lower levels of female participation, a topic I further discuss in the findings chapters. Participants’ teaching careers ranged from nine to thirty-five years: four members had taught for more than thirty years, three had taught between twenty and twenty-nine years, five had taught between ten and nineteen years, and one had taught for less than 10 years. Eight were classroom teachers, four were school administrators, and one was a board office consultant. Of the administrators, two still taught half time. The length of time members had been active in the Association also varied: six having been involved for over twenty years, four involved between ten and twenty years, and three active for less than ten years. Seven had been active for their whole teaching career, while the remaining six became more involved a little later, their association work spanning about half of their teaching career.

Six members were currently serving on local executive council: four as president, one as secretary, and one as past-president. Of these, one member had previously served on provincial executive council in a senior position. Another member was the current president of a provincial specialist council. The remaining six members were currently volunteering on various local and provincial committees. All members had myriad experiences with the Association in addition to their current work, previously serving on a number of other committees in a variety of capacities, attending and presenting at various conferences and professional development seminars, and being involved in various political and professional association initiatives at both the local and provincial level.

In Ontario, ten participants were female and one was male. This is representative of the relative percentages of males and females within the greater ETFO population, which, like the ATA, stands at around 80% female and 20% male. As will be discussed later,
having formed from the amalgamation of two gendered federations in 1998, ETFO has many targeted programs for females and female participation in the federation has always been on the higher end. Within this context, it is logical that the vast majority of volunteers to participate in this study were female. Years of teaching experience in the ETFO sample were similar to that of the ATA members in the study. Ranging from seven to thirty-one years, two had taught for thirty-plus years, four had taught between twenty and twenty-nine years, four had taught between ten and nineteen years, and one had taught less than ten years. Ten members were classroom teachers and one was a consultant with a school board. Since administrators were removed from the teacher federations in 1994, there were no principals in the Ontario case. ETFO involvement again ranged, with half of participants active for their entire careers, three of which totaled over twenty years. The remaining six had been involved for half or less than half of their careers, one of which had been teaching for seven years and had only recently taken a more active role.

With the exception of one participant, who had only recently become involved, the majority of ETFO members in this study had participated in numerous facets of the federation. Four were currently serving on local executive councils: two as vice-president, one as secretary, and one as chief negotiator. The remaining seven participants were currently serving on a variety of local and provincial committees, or were school stewards. As was the case for ATA member, all ETFO members had attended a variety of ETFO sponsored professional development programs and conferences, and a number had been involved in political action and protests.
4.4. Data Selection

The literature detailing case study methodology agrees that quality case studies utilize various data sources to triangulate findings and improve the rigor and robustness of their findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Yin, 2006). Aligning with this view, I made use of two primary sources of evidence in this study so as to provide as rich an interpretation of the research questions as possible: interviews and document analysis. It should be noted however that I did not use these data sources to “triangulate” in the traditional sense, which seeks convergence or validation of ideas in multiple data sources; rather, as Mathison suggested, triangulation was used in this study to improve the construction of “meaningful propositions about the social world” (as cited in Hilferty, 2004, p.95) by drawing upon evidence from more than one source.

Data collection for the study occurred over a period of twelve months, from September 2013 to August 2014. I conducted interviews with union-active teachers in both provinces throughout the fall of 2013. At the same time I began gathering various reports, member magazines, news articles, and press releases for the document analysis, a process that continued through to the summer of 2014. Specific details of each data collection method are provided below.

4.4.1. Interviews

Interviewing is one of the preferred tools for gathering qualitative evidence as it lends itself well to probing the ways in which individuals understand and perceive the social realities they are simultaneously experiencing and creating (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam, 2009). It was with this idea in mind that I decided that interviewing was the most appropriate data collection tool to aid me in developing an understanding of how union action teachers both defined and enacted teacher professionalism in their daily
work lives. I specifically chose to use individual interviews in order to delve deeply into participants’ thoughts and feelings in a private setting where participants would not be intimidated by the public nature of group settings. Moreover, I employed semi-structured interviews so as to promote an atmosphere of comfortable conversation with the hopes of eliciting authentic data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) that reflected participants’ genuine understandings of teacher professionalism and the work of teachers. This approach also provided me with the flexibility to entertain other questions that emerged as the conversations unfolded, which was often very productive in generating data that may not have been unearthed otherwise.

Interviews ranged from approximately 30 minutes to one hour in duration. Loosely guided by a set of pre-determined questions (see Appendix C), I designed the interview protocol to probe member understanding of teacher professionalism, the roles and boundaries of the work of teachers and the elements that influence and shape the enactment of such understandings. Through the interviews I collected data on the following:

- Members’ involvement in their respective association as well as other professional growth and leadership opportunities they had participated in outside of their association.
- Members’ personal views of teacher professionalism and the work of professional teachers.
- The influence of the association on the member’s views of professionalism.
- Supports and limitations experienced in terms of enacting their personal view of professionalism in their daily work life.

Because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews, I sometimes modified the sequence of questions, with some questions being asked of some and not to others,
depending on the flow of the conversation and the issues being discussed. I sent participants the interview protocol ahead of time to allow them an opportunity to reflect on the topics being explored prior to the actual interview. The interviewing techniques I used also align with the tenets of critical research in that interviewees had some control over the data collection process by shaping the course of the interview (Hilferty, 2004).

Interviews were audiotaped with participants’ permission and later transcribed verbatim. After I had completed the transcription process, I emailed personal transcripts to each participant and asked them to ensure the accuracy of the transcribed data. I also informed participants of their right to add data where they felt clarification was necessary and to change or remove passages that were inaccurate or which they were uncomfortable keeping in the dataset. In some cases I asked participants to identify the names of programs or committees that were difficult to discern over the recording. In other instances I asked participants to provide additional details or clarify certain points that, upon later reflection, were not entirely transparent in terms of their meaning or intent. This process was two-fold in its intentions; firstly it aided in ensuring the validity of the data collected (Merriam, 2009) and secondly; participant voice became a part of the research process, further adding to the critical and empowering nature of participation in the study (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, as cited in Hilferty, 2004).

I gave participants a two-week window of opportunity to complete any changes or clarifications to their transcript in order to expedite the analysis process. In Alberta, 7 of 13 interviewees returned the transcript within that timeframe, five of which had made small changes that included a combination of re-phrasings, clarifications, and deletions. There were no major modifications to any of the transcripts and no glaring misrepresentations. One participant requested additional time, which I granted. The remaining participants did not respond to the request for participant check and their
transcripts were analyzed in their original format. In Ontario, I received edited transcripts from 5 of the 11 participants within the two-week time frame. As in Alberta, there were no major modifications, just a few minor clarifications and some grammatical changes. One additional participant contacted me to say that they would return their transcript as soon as possible, but never did. I did not hear from the remaining five participants and their transcripts were analyzed as is.

4.4.2. Documents

Although interviews generate in-depth understandings of the perspectives of those who are closest to a phenomenon, utilizing interviews as the only data source is not preferable due to the potential for bias in self-report (Merriam, 2009). This is particularly applicable to case study methods, which aim to generate as accurate and in-depth and understanding of a phenomenon as possible. Unlike data gathered through the interview process, documents have a “stability” in terms of it’s objectiveness because they stand outside of the research in that they were not specifically created in response to the study (Merriam, 2009). As such, I felt it necessary to ground the real-life accounts presented in the interview data within the history and recent activities of each organization as presented in publically available documents. This allowed me to not only detail the discourses of participants, rather, I was able to construct dynamic cases that authentically positioned the evolution of such discourses to the supports and constraints uniquely shaping the discursive arena in each milieu. Specific documents analyzed for each association are listed in the table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Overview of document analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>ETFO</th>
<th>ATA</th>
</tr>
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elementary teachers and their federations (authored by a retired ETFO staffer and published as a four part series in ETFO Voice Magazine in 2006-2007) | chronically the last 10 years of the ATA’s involvement in educational politics and reform in Alberta

| Recent Political engagement | Online newspaper articles from various sources including the National Post, CBC, The Huffington Post, The Globe & Mail, & the Toronto Start | Online newspaper articles from various sources including the National Post, the CBC, The Huffington Post, The Globe & Mail, & the Edmonton Sun

| ETFO press releases and EFTO Voice editorials from 2010-2014 | ATA press releases and ATA Magazine editorials from 2010-2014

All documents were accessed online from either the associations’ webpages or independent newspaper sites. When possible, I saved the documents as PDF files. In the case of the newspaper articles, I saved them as web archives that could be easily retrieved when needed.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (CIHR, NSERC, & SSHRC, 2010), “With academic freedom comes responsibility, including the responsibility to ensure that research involving human meets high scientific and ethical standards that respect and protect the participants” (p. 7). Thus, in order to ensure that ethical issues had been thoroughly considered, the study was reviewed by the University of Toronto’s ethics review board prior to data collection. On June 24th, 2013, the Board approved the study for a period of one year (See Appendix B). The approval was renewed the following
May and expires on June 23rd, 2015 (See Appendix B). Since the defense occurs prior to this date, a second renewal is not necessary.

As with all ethical research, participation in the study was voluntary and participants were told that they could withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. I obtained informed consent for participation in the study from all participants prior to the start of their interview (see Appendix A). In the letter I assured participants that their identities would remain anonymous in all publications and I verbally reassured them again prior to the beginning of the interviews. To ensure confidentiality, I encrypted all electronic data including consent forms, interview transcripts, and audio-recordings in one file on my own personal computer, which is also password protected. The only persons to have access to any raw data were my thesis supervisor, Dr. Nina Bascia and myself. I will destroy all data after five years.

To further protect participant identities, I assigned each participant a code number comprised a letter (“A” for Alberta participants and “O” for Ontario participants) and a random number (1-13 in Alberta and 1-11 in Ontario). I used these codes to replace names in all data sources (including the title of all electronic sources) and to identify participants throughout the body of this thesis. I do not use specific locations such as schools, districts, cities, or towns in order to further ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The only identifying information I use anywhere in this thesis is the province where the participant teaches in addition to the teacher organization to which they belong. I have locked the document that matches participant names with their corresponding identifying code is stored in a file cabinet in my home office and the electronic version has been destroyed.
Given the nature of the topics to be discussed, I anticipated that participants would not experience stress or discomfort as a result of participating in the study and there were no incidents during data collection to suggest otherwise. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, I provided participants with copies of their interview transcripts to check for accuracy and remove any sensitive or contentious comments. There were no major corrections or deletions in the transcript, however, further suggesting that participants were not distressed by their participation.

4.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study was inductive in its approach and utilized the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Recognizing that all researchers have particular experiences and background knowledge that will inevitably shape design, data collection, and analysis decisions in a given study, it is arguable that pure inductive reasoning does not exist in reality. However, rooted in my critical constructivist epistemological tendencies, it is my preference as a qualitative researcher to theorize findings from the data collected rather than use the data to confirm or oppose a pre-existing theory. In this sense, my approach is more inductive than deductive. Aligning with this, the constant comparative method is an iterative process of coding and recoding where incidents in the data are compared to other incidents in order to identify instances of congruence as well as those of dissonance (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). More specifically, I drew from Boeije’s (2002) approach that used a step-by-step process to analyze interviews with groups of couples. Applying this approach to my study, I utilized a 3-step process to first construct each individual case study (steps 1 and 2) and later, (step 3) to conduct a cross-case analysis (Borman, Clarke, Cotner, and Lee, 2006).

1. Comparison within a single interview.

2. Comparison between interviews within the same group.
3. Comparison between interviews from different groups.

This allowed me to look for commonalities and differences within each case in order to build a complex interpretation of the data across cases.

Open coding was used in steps 1 and 2 to thematically tease out the various representations of the roles and work of teachers contained in the transcripts. Beginning with single interviews, I originally started the coding process for step 1 using Nvivo 10. I inductively created nodes around participants’ definition and enactment of professionalism as I analyzed each interview, carefully comparing the responses to each question to look for incidents of cohesion and dissonance within each individual interview. After doing this for three interviews, however, I found that individual participants were getting lost in the aggregate data so I decided to create a summary document for each participant instead. I refer to these documents as “Bird’s Eye View” charts, as they serve as a one-page, overall visual of the discursive strands espoused by each participant.

To create each “Bird’s Eye View” chart I first recorded participant’s demographic information and moved on to outlining the various ways they had been involved both within and outside of their teacher organization. I then summarized responses to each question using open codes and included supporting quotations from the transcripts directly. In particular I paid attention to the discourses of professionalism enacted by each participant, as evidenced by the nature of their involvement in various union and non-union professional growth and leadership activities and compared that to the ways in which they spoke about the roles and boundaries of the work of teachers in order to look for evidence of cohesion and tension at the level of the individual. From there I was able to identify the core messages in each interview with respect to my research questions.
This process also generated a list of provisional codes that were then used as the basis for comparison and axial coding in step 2.

In Step 2, I compared interviews within the same group in order to identify similarities and differences in fragments that share the same code. Wanting a more nuanced representation of the data than presented in the “Bird’s Eye View” charts, for this step I went back to the original transcripts in Nvivo. I started with ATA interviews and began by first grouping data into large themes such as “work of teachers”, “views of professionalism”, “influences on views”, “supports” and “limitations”. After this was completed for all ATA interviews, I recoded each large theme into smaller subthemes, comparing and contrasting the various ways in which participants framed their views within each particular theme and subtheme. This process further facilitated my understanding of the themes that were emerging from the data as I refined the code tree and patterns and instances of dissonance became more apparent. Once this process was completed for ATA interview data, I used the coding tree to structure the outline of the ATA case. Drawing on the data within the codes, I wrote the case, which was supplemented by contextual and historical gathered from the documents outlined previously. Once this process was fully completed for the ATA case, I began and carried out the same process for the ETFO case.

In this particular study, however, I was not only interested in uncovering the discourses of professionalism amongst union active teachers; I was also aiming to understand the dynamic of the sociological construction of those discourses. Thus, in step 3, I conducted a cross-case comparison between the two groups in order to discern the similarities and differences of between the professionalism discourses within each case, with particular attention to the manner in which social, cultural, and organizational factors in each context shaped and influenced participant discourses around teacher professionalism and
the work of teachers. To do this I simultaneously worked with both of the Nvivo files that I had created in step 2 (one for ETFO and one for the ATA). In particular I compared the prevalence of particular discourses and the varied ways in which discourses were represented, influenced, supported, and limited in each context. This allowed me to construct a cross-case analysis that captures the nuances of the discursive arena around teacher professionalism revealed in each case and provides plausible inferences around the ways in which historical and organizational contexts have operated to create similar, yet distinct discourses around teacher professionalism in both milieus. These cases and the cross-case analysis are presented in the chapters that follow.
Chapter Five: The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario

5.1. Introduction

One of four teacher federations in Ontario, The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) was created in 1998 by the amalgamation of two of Ontario’s first teacher organizations - the Federation of Women Teachers’ Association of Ontario (FWTAO) and the Ontario Public School Teachers’ Federation (OPSTF). A banding together of several local women’s teachers’ associations, FWTAO was founded in 1918 in response to male dominance in educational administration and sub-standard conditions for female elementary teachers. Male elementary teachers followed suit in 1920, forming the Ontario Public School Men’s Teachers’ Federation (OPSMTF) (Richter, 2006a).

Over the next three decades, both federations worked separately to establish salary gains and job security for their members. It wasn’t until 1944, however, with the passing of the Teaching Profession Act, that membership in teacher federations became mandatory in the province (Richter, 2006b), establishing the legal right of federations to advocate for member’s rights, improved working conditions, and higher standards for teacher education and entry into the teaching profession.

Faced with a province-wide teacher shortage after World War II, the provincial government lowered requirements for teachers in the 1950s, first allowing entrance to those with incomplete qualifications and later extending temporary teaching certificates to high school graduates who had only completed six-weeks of teacher training over the summer. The increase in poorly trained members prompted both federations to significantly improve their professional development services; organizing conferences,
workshops, and summer courses in an attempt to fill the gap and better prepare members for classroom teaching (Richter, 2006b). This was the start of what would become a strong focus on teacher professional learning in both organizations - a feature that would continue to grow within the amalgamated ETFO and remain a priority even today.

In the meantime, female teachers were still earning significantly less than their male counterparts and were severely outnumbered in administrative positions. After extensive lobbying by FWTAO, in 1951 the Ontario government legislated pay parity for male and female teachers. Convinced, however, that the work of men was more significant that that of women, many school boards offered bonuses and special allowances to male teachers in order to circumvent the law (Richter, 2007a). In addition to this, first hired on temporary contracts as part of the post-war efforts to alleviate the teacher shortage, the number of married women and mothers in the teaching profession dramatically increased during the 1950s and 60s. This promoted FWTAO to lobby government for policies around maternity leave and job security for married women. Having successfully negotiated maternity leave into most collective agreements, government passed the Women’s Equal Opportunity Act in 1970, guaranteeing women in any profession 17 weeks of maternity leave and making it illegal to consider gender or marital status in hiring, firing, or promotion practices. This move was met with strong resistance from school boards, who argued that the law should not apply to teachers and lobbied government to exclude them from the requirements (Richter, 2007a).

Given these and other circumstances that unfolded during its tenure, it is not surprising that FWTAO fought long and hard to maintain their distinct status as a women’s federation. With a significantly smaller membership and less collective power, however, OPSMTF voted to allow females to voluntarily join their organization in 1972. Unwavering in their attempt to establish a joint elementary teacher’s federation, the
Federation dropped the word “Men’s” from their name in 1982 to become the Ontario Public School Teachers’ Federation (OPSTF) and embarked on a campaign to amalgamation with FWTAO, who refused. In response, OPSTF launched a discrimination charge and, in 1994, the assignment of men and women to teacher federations on the basis of gender was ruled a violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This prompted FWTAO to finally enter into negotiations with OPSTF to create the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario in 1998 (Richter, 2007b).

Since that time ETFO has become both a political juggernaut and staunch advocate for teacher rights. Moreover, as illustrated in the case that follows, ETFO’s commitment to diverse professional development and teacher leadership opportunities, in combination with member engagement in more traditional union tactics during hostile times, has instilled a vision of the teaching profession that portrays teachers as valued pedagogical experts. While this vision is evident in the professionalism discourses of many of the ETFO members in this study, the data also indicate that recent media coverage and government backlash against work to rule campaigns, political protests, and strike action has significantly impacted member discourses as well. ETFO’s work in the areas of political engagement and professional development, the recent educational policy context in Ontario, and the impact of both these sphere of influence on the discourses of teacher professionalism of ETFO members in this study are the focus of the sections that follow.

5.2. Ontario’s Policy Context (1995-2013)

During the 1990s, teachers in Ontario endured what has become known as one of the most controversial periods in the province’s educational history (MacLellan, 2009). Like much of the industrialized world, beginning in the late 1980s, the province of Ontario experienced high levels of unemployment and growing debt during the midst of a global
economic downturn. As a result, education in Ontario underwent significant changes. The bulk of these changes came under the leadership of Conservative Premier Mike Harris and his political agenda, the “Common Sense Revolution” (Gidney, 1999).

Beginning in 1995, Harris made sweeping changes to education that emphasized the neoliberal principals of fiscal restraint and accountability in combination with centralized control of curriculum, student assessment, teacher evaluation and certification, and educational finance (MacLellan, 2009). Enacted with little or no consultation, Harris’ reforms shifted the locus of control in education from teachers and their federations and placed it firmly in the hands of policy makers and government officials (Sattler, 2012). As illustrated throughout the case, the power struggles that began as a result of such changes have had a lasting impact on the climate of education in the province and continue to wear on the minds of teachers even today.

One of the first of Harris’ reforms was the creation of the Ontario College of Teachers, an independent teacher certification agency who would be responsible for setting the standards for entry into the teaching profession and developing the accreditation standards for teacher education programs (MacLellan, 2009). The OCT also took charge of disciplinary matters and developing professional standards of practice, which had been previously within the scope of the work of the teacher federations. Thus, all teachers must be members of the OCT in order to maintain their teaching certificate, in addition to being members of a teacher federation.

Following the creation of the OCT, Harris introduced Bill 160 in September of 1997, the Education Quality Improvement Act. Tabled to take effect on January 1st, 1998, the Bill stripped school boards of their right to control funding through taxation and required them to publish annual Financial Report Cards to account for their spending. The Bill
also reduced the number of teacher professional development days and removed the rights of federations to bargain issues of class size, preparation time, release time, and the length of the school year. Moreover, the Bill changed the legislation around the work of school administrators to emphasize their managerial roles and removed principals and vice-principals from the bargaining unit of teacher federations (MacLellan, 2009).

Not surprisingly, Bill 160 was met with much resistance from the teacher federations, who organized a ten-day walkout involving nearly all the provinces teachers in the fall of 1996 (Anderson & Ben Jaffar, 2003). However, in spite of the protests of the provinces teachers, Bill 160 passed and became law only four months after being introduced. The centralization of funding and increased managerial rights regarding working conditions left very little room for negotiations during the 1998 contract year. Moreover, a subsequent move to amalgamate school boards meant that on top of bargaining over new concerns, teacher federations also had to work with the newly formed boards to merge existing collective agreements into a single document. As such, the 1998/99 school year was rife with work to rule action, strikes and lockouts (Anderson & Ben Jaffar, 2003).

1998 was also ETFO’s inaugural year and, having come into being during one of the most tumultuous periods of education in the province’s history, the organization spent much of its first year of existence immersed in tough collective bargaining tactics and a host of labour actions. At the same time, the newly formed organization was also undergoing internal restructuring to re-organize former programs and services for their combined membership. Moreover, in light of lack of government resources on the implementation of new curriculum, ETFO took it upon itself to launch a host of curriculum related programs including Presenters on the Road, where members visit school sites to deliver curriculum related workshops to other members (Richter, 2006a).
Optimistic about the opportunity to elect a new government, in 1999 ETFO and the other Ontario teacher federations embarked on a high-profile media campaign with the aim of defeating Harris and putting an end to anti-union Conservative policies. ETFO’s participation was multi-faced, sponsoring television and radio ads, lobbying government, releasing position papers, and encouraging members to participate in NDP and Liberal election campaigns (McCaffery, 2008). Harris, however, continued to maintain public support and was re-elected, although with a much smaller mandate after 17 incumbents including the Education Minister lost their seats.

Over the next four years, teacher federations in Ontario continued to be bombarded by proposed reforms. ETFO was steadfast in its efforts to sway the public discourse with through several strong media campaigns. When the government attempted to mandate extra-curricular participation for teachers, ETFO responded with No More Bullying, arguing that mandating such activities challenged the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and advising its members to withdraw all extra-curricular participation for the 2000-2001 school year. The government responded by repealing that section of the Bill. Likewise, when the government announced a plan for teacher re-certification in 2002 that would require teachers to complete fourteen prescribed professional development courses every five years in order to maintain their teaching certificate, ETFO advised members to boycott the program and began offering its own three-day Summer Conference for teachers across the province (DeQuetteville, 2008).

By 2003, parents and school boards were tired of labour action on the part of the teacher federations and underfunding in education had become a major priority. Sensing that the public was finally ready for a change in government, ETFO launched yet another public campaign, this time with the specific plea of “help us help your kids” (Richter, 2006a, p. 6). ETFO also encouraged its members to actively campaign for Liberal and NDP
candidates after receiving written commitments from both parties that they would abolish the recertification program and include more federation representation on the OCT if elected. A new Liberal government was elected that fall. Almost immediately, new Premier Dalton McGuinty went about reversing some of the mandates of the Harris government and announced a three-year plan to invest $1.6 million increase in educational funding. In addition, the Liberal government began the burdensome task of rebuilding the much-damaged working relationship with the teachers of Ontario. This began with the establishment of the Education Partnership Table in 2004 to enhance the consultation process in the arena of educational policy (ETFO, 2006). Moreover, in 2006 McGunity provided ETFO with $7.8 million to expand existing professional development offerings such as Summer Academy and developed new programs around teacher research.

According to a December 2006 article in ETFO’s member magazine, ETFO Voice,

> After three years of Liberal government, the picture has changed dramatically. ETFO leaders and staff once more have a voice as the government plans new initiatives or reforms existing programs. The Ministry recognizes the importance of federation involvement and is promoting it. (p. 25)

Thus, 2007 marked the first election year in over a decade where ETFO did not campaign against the current government (McCaffery, 2008). Rather, for much of the next three years, ETFO focused on continuing to work with the Liberals on new reforms around literacy and numeracy and full-day kindergarten while creating a host of professional resources for members around the implementation of these programs and other curricular areas. During this time the organization also worked to develop and promote an education agenda for the 2011 election, Building Better Schools. The plan celebrated Ontario’s progress in student achievement and outlined five building blocks for continued success and improvement: more meaningful student assessment, greater access to
specialist teachers, smaller class sizes, more resources for special needs students, and a greater focus on equity (ETFO, 2010). ETFO also launched a controversial ad campaign that featured satirical parodies where a vote for the Conservatives was portrayed as a “vote against kids.” The campaign was met with a mix of support and resistance but was a means to a desired end as the Liberal government was re-elected with a minority government.

Heading into the next round of collective bargaining in 2012, however, teacher federations in Ontario unexpectedly found themselves facing mandated changes to teacher contracts. Facing strong pressure from the opposition to reduce the province’s $15 billion deficit, the Liberals passed Bill 115, the Putting Students First Act, which proposed to strip teachers of their negotiated pay increases for the next two years, reduce teacher sick time benefits, and remove teachers’ right to strike (Howlett, 2012). While the members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA) decided to sign a tentative deal with the government, ETFO and OSSTF engaged their members in a province wide withdrawal of extracurricular services in opposition to the Bill, which was to be enacted in January of 2013 (Ferguson & Benzie, 2012). With government not budging on the issue, in December ETFO members also began one-day rotating strikes across numerous school boards (Skorbach, 2012).

Media outlets were replete with coverage of the walkouts and the work to rule action, often portraying teachers and their federations as “punishing Ontario students” (Caplan, 2012) and using them as scapegoats in their beef with the provincial government. McGunty’s anti-union rhetoric was quoted almost daily, reminding teacher unions that, by comparison to other Ontario governments, the Liberals has been generous to teachers (Benzie, 2012) and pointing a finger at ETFO for disrupting nine years of labour peace (Brennan, 2012).
After failing to reach a deal by the December 31st deadline, on January 3rd, 2013, Education Minister Laurel Broten announced that the government would enact Bill 115 to impose contracts with the province’s elementary and secondary teachers (Mahoney & Howlett, 2013). This move put an end to the rotating strikes, which the Bill rendered illegal. OSSTEF and ETFO, however, continued to advise their members to refrain from extra curricular activities and, once the new imposed contracts were in place, government repealed Bill 115 just twenty days after it had been enacted, stating that a new process for future negotiations was required (Rushowy & Ferguson, 2013). In a press release, ETFO president Sam Hammond stated,

The premier and education minister are deluding themselves if they think the repeal of Bill 115 will promote goodwill and stability in the education sector and restore their popularity…it’s a sleight of hand that ETFO members and most Ontarians will see through. (ETFO, 2013a)

Amidst the labour strife, Premier Dalton McGuinty announced in October of 2012 that he would be retiring as Premier and leader of the Provincial Liberal Party. On February 11th, 2013, he was succeeded by Kathleen Wynne, who had been voted in as the new leader of the Liberal party in late January with an agenda that included working with teacher unions and school boards to formalize a new process for collective bargaining in the province (Hammer & Howlett, 2013). Wynne was also quick to replace Laurel Broten as education minister; appointing former school board trustee Liz Sandals to the post shortly after the discussions with the unions began (Alphonso & Hammer, 2013). In her first speech from the throne, Wynne stated,

As your government moves forward, Ontario’s labour force will be treated fairly and with respect. It will sit down with its partners across all sectors to build a sustainable model for wage negotiation, respectful of both collective bargaining and a fair and transparent interest arbitration process, so that the brightness of our shared future is not clouded by the indisputable economic realities of our time. (Government of Ontario, 2013)
She immediately tabled a series of meetings with school boards and the unions in the hopes of easing labour tensions. In a news report, Wynne spoke optimistically of the meetings and was quoted as saying “The conversations are very positive and I’m looking forward to a good outcome in the near future” (Alphonso & Morrow, 2013).

Also feeling hopeful about the talks, OSSTF voted to lift its extra curricular ban in late February, leaving individual members to make their own decision as to whether they would return to their volunteer activities (Rushowy, Brennan, & Brown, 2013). It was ETFO; however, who held out the longest, announcing three days after OSSTF lifted its ban that “ETFO’s advice regarding voluntary/extra-curricular activities remains unchanged” (ETFO, 2013b). President Sam Hammond explained in media release:

Beyond initial commitments made by the government team to listen, engage in positive dialogue and explore a more inclusive process for future bargaining rounds, it is going to take real actions to regain the confidence of members in light of the very flawed processed during 2012 that resulted in the loss of members’ fundamental democratic rights. (ETFO, 2013b)

It wasn’t until almost a month later, on March 26th, 2013, that ETFO announced that it was joining OSSTF and lifting the extra-curricular ban in light of the continued progress of their talks with government (Radwanski & Alphonso, 2013). In an official press release, Hammond stated that, as a result of the “meaningful” discussions that had been taking place, ETFO was “confident that the government has demonstrated a commitment to dealing concrete items of importance to our members” (ETFO, 2013c).

In the months that followed the reinstatement of extra-curricular activities, both unions reached new tentative deals with the government - OSSTF on March 31st and ETFO on June 13th (ETFO, 2013d). Later ratified by the general memberships, the deals, which run out in August 2014, included amendments to the contracts imposed by the McGunity government around issues including salary grids and sick days. Heading into the 2013-
2014 school year, all sides seemed to be optimistic about the continued talks designed to facilitate a new process for future collective bargaining in the education sector. On October 22nd, 2013, Education Minister Liz Sandals introduced Bill 122, new legislation that, if passed, would see a formalized, two-tiered bargaining system implemented where all major financial issues would be centrally bargained between the school boards, the provincial governments, and the teacher unions, with local bargaining on other matters to be decided between individual boards and the unions that hold bargaining rights in that particular jurisdiction (ETFO, 2013e).

At the time of this study, Bill 122 was still being debated in the legislature and all teacher unions in the province had a ratified contract. While it was not yet known whether the new negotiating strategy would result in a smoother process for the next round of contract talks, labour peace in Ontario education had been restored for the time being. That being said, this study was conducted on the heels of the biggest upheaval in educational politics in Ontario since the days of Mike Harris. The impact that this environment would have on union active teachers and their view of teacher professionalism was uncertain to say the least.

Consequently, the evolution of ETFO has taken place amidst pendulum swings of periods of relative harmony and periods of tough conflict with the Ontario government. In good times, the organization has worked with government on a variety of professional issues including new directions around teacher induction and appraisal, and policies around curriculum development and implementation and student success (Brand, 2006, VOICE magazine). In times of strife, however, the organization has responded with strong media campaigns, coupled with more traditional labour tactics of walkouts, rotating strikes and withdraw extra-curricular.
Within this context, however, ETFO has maintained a strong focus on professional issues; providing its members with access to a litany of professional development seminars, conferences, workshops and programs that engage members in shared learning, teacher leadership, and teacher action research. Members are also encouraged to become active in a host of local and provincial committees that deal with such diverse topics as Collective Bargaining, Professional Development, Anti-Racist Education, and International Assistance. Moreover, in keeping with the primary cause of its female predecessor, ETFO maintains a strong focus on equity and women’s issues, with specialized professional development programs, conferences, and committees solely dedicated to female teachers, who comprise over 80% of their membership.

As discussed in the sections that follow, it appears that ETFO’s approach of engaging its members in diverse teacher-driven professional development has significantly impacted the discourses of teacher professionalism espoused and enacted by the members in this study. That being said, the “on-again, off-again” tension that has existed between the teacher federations and the Ontario government may have put somewhat of a damper on the activism and autonomy of some ETFO members. Moreover, this climate has left its own mark on the discourses around teacher professionalism, both within the realm of general public as well as the ETFO membership interviewed for this case.

5.3. Discourses of Teacher Professionalism and the Work of Teachers

The majority of ETFO members in this study espoused discourses of teacher professionalism that were more or less rooted in democratic notions of the role of teachers within the broader context of schooling. That being said, mirroring the “back and forth” context within which such discourses have evolved, for some members these
discourses were somewhat uncertain and extra-classroom work was viewed as an optional add-on rather than the professional preview of all teachers. Moreover, it was apparent that managerial discourses espoused through the litany of top-down educational reforms over the past two decades had impacted the professionalism discourses of some participants more than others. Consequently, for a few participants, professionalism was very much rooted in traditional notions around standards of practice, moral responsibility, and pedagogy. In such cases, participants were probed to garner insights around their view of teachers’ roles outside the classroom, revealing discourses that were more mixed in nature.

5.3.1. Democratic discourses.
A little more than half of the ETFO members in this study subscribed to democratic notions of teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2003) that saw the work of teachers as broadly encompassing a variety of extra-classroom, advocacy, and professional development opportunities. For such members, engaging in collaborative work, self-directed professional learning, and federation activities added a richness that enabled them to better respond to the diverse needs of their students, while giving back to the profession and supporting the professional growth of their peers. In this sense, being a professional teacher meant being an autonomous learner, exercising professional judgment, collaborating with others, and taking a stand on educational reforms and policies from a position of authority and knowledge.

More specifically, the discourse of the teacher as learner was prominent, with a number of participants describing teacher professionalism as engaging in self-directed learning and seeking out diverse opportunities for professional growth. Emphasis was placed on being aware of current best practices and critically reflecting on and adapting classroom
practice in light of new knowledge. For instance, one ETFO member commented, “Obviously there has to be a knowledge base and a learning base and that can't be static so you need to be continually perfecting your craft” (ON11). Another member framed teachers as “life long learner”, commenting:

In order for me to be able to deliver that and to help my students as well as guide my learning, I need to be out there to see what other people are doing and hear new ways and strategies to deal with the demands of students on a regular basis. (ON8)

For some participants, the notion of teacher as learner also encompassed the work of teachers as mentors. Supporting the learning and fostering the growth of beginning teachers was an important aspect of teacher professionalism, essential to the continued development of teaching as a profession. One participant in particular also noted the importance of socializing new teachers into a discourse around the teaching profession that is not solely based in narrow ideals around accountability:

I think mentoring teachers is really important. I want teachers to hear a different perspective than what they hear from the ministry and the board because that is very often data driven. When I mentor teachers, I spend a lot of time talking about the relationship that they have with their colleagues and the learning that they can get from other people and the relationship that they have with their students and their students parents and how that all fits into what we're trying to teach the kids. (ON11)

Related to discourses around professional learning and peer mentoring, collaboration was also valued as an essential component of teacher professionalism for some ETFO members. In such instances, the work of teachers was expanded to include team teaching, grade-level planning, and the sharing of ideas and strategies amongst peers. Challenging each other to consider new ways of thinking was highly valued and the mutual learning that such reflection fostered and the impact of that learning on classroom practice was
considered paramount. For instance, when asked to reflect on the work of professional teachers, one participant responded:

I think that we have a responsibility to make sure that we are open to as many different ideas and strategies so that we can make sure that we get back to that basic idea of helping that student progress as far along as they can within the time that we work with them and realizing that they are going to be meeting up with a number of different teachers and a series of educators and that we have to kind of get within that all well, taking the information that we get from our peers that have worked with the students prior and then handing them off to the next educator and trusting that they will also do their job. (ON1)

A second participant went on to discuss collaboration in an even broader sense, expanding the role to teacher’s work with administrators and parents:

When I am being a professional, I'm working the hardest I can to bring out the best I can in my students and my colleagues, the parents of the kids that I teach so they can support their kids in their learning. I'm working within a relationship that's positive with my administrators so that everyone in the building and outside of the building who is associated with that is working in the same direction so that the kids get the best education that they can. To me that's the crux of professionalism. (ON11)

Another element of democratic teacher professionalism, teachers as educational experts and autonomous decision makers was particularly evident in the dialogue of some participants. In particular these discourses revolved around the insider knowledge that teachers gain throughout the course of their careers. Drawing on that knowledge, professional teachers were viewed as possessing the skills and experience to make self-directed decisions as opposed having others make decisions for them. For some participants, the teacher as decision-maker was about being autonomous in the classroom and making pedagogical decisions that were in the best interest of the students in their own classrooms:

[Professionalism is] this set of skills that say ‘I'm the expert’. So when I'm educating the students that are in my class, I'm the person that works with them day to day, I have the skills necessary and the experience and the knowledge to know what's best to do for this student in this class at this time. We always seem
to want to go to someone who's written something but have never actually been the frontline teacher in the classroom. So for me it's this set of skills that says I'm the expert in this area. (ON3)

In other instances, participants viewed autonomy and decision-making as encompassing big picture items around self-directed learning and being reflective practitioners:

Well, when I think teacher professionalism, what comes to mind is autonomy… being researchers and creators of knowledge, being able to read critically and do research rather than just passively accepting what we are told is the latest and greatest thing. (ON7)

Related to ideas around the teacher as expert, for some participants, teacher professionalism also included taking an activist role and inserting teacher voice into the educational policy arena. As evidenced in the passage below, while discourses around such action ranged from simply being a part of the conversation to specific talk about protests and work-to-rule action, the importance of presenting a counter-narrative to deficit discourses that de-professionalize teachers by portraying them as incompetent and unethical was also evident:

I became certainly quite involved politically, in terms of taking part in protest and then becoming part of a political party and making connections with other union organizations, just to try to make sure that the voice of education and teachers is heard and heard within the proper context, not within the stereotype that's on the news. (ON1)

For another participant, activism was about demonstrating that teachers are indeed professionals and, as such, can be trusted to make good decisions:

[Professionalism] is about advocating for public education, for teaching, for learning…. advocating and helping people see what we do and making that visible to people and representing that profession well, ensuring that the public has faith and confidence in my judgment; that's part of being a professional as well. (ON5)

Engaging activism and advocacy activities, however, was viewed by some participants as being somewhat precarious, particularly in light of the recent upheaval around Bill 115
and the resulting imposed contract. In this vein, activism was most often viewed in the collective, which included participation in teacher federations. As one participant stated, “Being involved in the union and teacher organizations is critical for creating that momentum and creating the more positive perception of teaching in the popular media” (ON7). Also acknowledging the importance of collective engagement, a second participant noted that advocacy work could take place through other professional networks, in addition to the federations. More specifically, she framed teacher advocacy as:

Being active, being engaged, being part of your federation, being part of these conversations, reading, being aware of what's happening within the field, politically and at the policy level, participating in conferences, being engaged with other people within education whether it's other teachers or your federation, the OCT, OISE, or other faculties, just being engaged at that level. (ON5)

Woven with these discourses around activism and the broader roles of teachers was the notion that the purpose of engaging in such extra-classroom work tied back to classroom practice and serving the needs to students. As one participant stated, “You have to fit that whole framework into the relationship that you build with the child. Because it’s all for naught if you don’t get the children to engage” (ON11). This connection between teachers’ work in the classroom and their extended work is perhaps best depicted in the statement below:

Part of understanding how to meet the needs of the student in the classroom is to understand the environment that they are now part of and that we all have to work in. All of the leadership opportunities, the work on committees, both with the federation and through the board and of my own personal interest, are for me to better understand what it is that I'm trying to prepare the child for. When I see that there are areas that need to be improved or could be improved, voicing those issues and being prepared to take on an activist role as well in order to further that vision of what I see education could be and to make sure that we remove any unnecessary barriers for our students. (ON1)

In other words, for these ETFO members, extra-classroom work and extending oneself into the broader context of schooling was viewed as essential to teacher professionalism,
which they saw as directly relating back to their work with students and making them
better classroom teachers. Moreover, engaging in professional learning, advocacy work,
and actively being a part of a teacher federation was highly valued as energizing,
refreshing, and “an excellent opportunity to see the fullness of the profession” (ON1).

That being said, some of the same ETFO members who touted extra-classroom work as
an important part of the work of teachers also noted that engagement in such activities
was voluntary and something they had chosen to take on as part of their own professional
growth. Even though they espoused democratic discourses of teacher professionalism,
these particular participants were hesitant to frame such work as the purview of all
professional teachers and careful not to make claims that would in any way suggest that
teachers who did not engage in such work were any less professional than those that did.
For instance, one participant commented, “I still think a teacher could just read
professional magazines, articles, and talk with their colleagues and they would be fine in
the classroom. I don’t think it’s [extra-classroom work] necessary; I think it’s a choice”
(ON3). Another commented,

I would definitely say I see the work of teachers as being quite broad. Though, I
would say that it’s dependent upon the individual, the roles they want to take. For
some teachers there work remains in the classroom and that’s not to disparage that
at all. (ON6)

Thus, for these particular participants there appeared to be a divide between work within
the classroom and work outside of the classroom, with the latter being viewed as more of
an optional activity, rather than an essential component of teacher professionalism. It was
apparent that such participants struggled to reconcile the incongruent duality of the work
of teachers portrayed during times of unrest: the importance of teacher voice, teacher
expertise, and teacher advocacy on the one hand and the officially defined roles and
responsibilities of teachers on the other, which traditionally do not include such activities. Tensions between these two worlds were even more evident in the discourses of some ETFO members, further described in the next section.

5.3.2. Mixed discourses.

When asked to define teacher professionalism, the discourses of a few ETFO members were mixed in nature, containing elements traditional, managerial discourses of teacher professionalism in addition to notions of professionalism that were more akin to broader, democratic discourse of the work of teachers. In most of these instances, when asked to describe teacher professionalism and the work of teachers, the responses of these particular participants were initially very traditional. For instance, one participant framed teacher professionalism in the following manner:

Professionalism encompasses everything that we do, especially our work in the classroom with the children. Our preparation of lessons at night, and then the delivery of them in the day time and then we're looking at them and morphing them and changing them and seeing how to best serve our students. (ON4)

Consequently the work of professional teachers was limited to only that which directly related to classroom teaching - preparation of lessons, delivering content, and assessment of students. There was no mention of teacher’s broader roles as advocates and policy actors, nor recognition of the teacher as self-directed learner or autonomous decision-maker.

In some instances, participants espoused discourses of teacher professionalism that centered on demonstrating an ethical orientation and upholding good moral character. This more traditional conception of professionalism was particularly at the fore for one participant whose involvement with the federation spanned twenty-five years. According to this participant, as a teacher,
You are always portraying that which are the best qualities you want to see in people; morals, values, socially how you behave, and well as the ethics of you want the best for children in any situation whether it be at your school or your neighbors children or any child out there. (ON10)

The participant then went on to talk about morally “wearing the teacher hat” all the time, equating such action with wanting “the best for children” - comments steeped in antiquated notions of teachers as being held to a higher moral standard, living your life under a microscope, and being a teacher wherever you go.

In a similar instance, a participant who was actively involved in the collective bargaining aspect of the federation commented that professionalism was rooted in being accountable and demonstrating a minimum level of expertise:

We do have a standard that we expect everybody to at least, minimally, adhere to…. because you're not talking about an office job, not that there aren't professionals in office jobs, but we are constantly told we are held to a higher standard. The expectation is that you have a done a number of educational pieces to get to this point and you are working in the public and there is this expectation that you need to be, on a minimum, demonstrating your knowledge and your professionalism towards children and other educators. (ON2)

Here the line of conversation implies that, rather than granting autonomy, the fact that teachers possess expertise means that their conduct is restricted to that which falls within a particular standard of behavior and expectations, ideals that are entrenched in managerial discourses where teacher professionalism is a standard list of competencies that one ticks off as they are demonstrated or achieved.

Amongst these conventional ideas, however, small glimpses of democratic notions could be detected. For instance, when asked about the work of teachers, ON2, commented on the importance of building professional knowledge by engaging in teacher talk and working collaboratively with peers:

The collaboration and the sharing piece, is really, really important so you're not isolated in the teaching profession. And being able to just communicate those
ideas and getting ideas from others - Have you ever thought of trying this in your approach? Would that work? How do you think that would work in my class? . (ON2)

Here we see that, although the participant defined professionalism within the traditional discourses of standards and competencies, there was also recognition of the teacher as learner, as collaborator, and as reflective practitioner.

However, it was only when specifically asked whether they considered extra-classroom work part of the roles of teachers that two other participants began to espouse discourses that portrayed teacher professionalism and the work of teachers in more unconventional and democratic ways. This is demonstrated in the excerpts below:

I: I'm just thinking about all the things that you've done. You've done lots of things that aren't directly standing in front of a classroom and teaching children. ON10: Right.
I: Do you think that those are roles and responsibilities of professional teachers, to engage in the sorts of things that you've done?
ON10: I do. Whether it's mentoring a student teacher or someone whose in your building, it is by giving of yourself that we're going to keep the profession going and pass on past practices and best practices. That's part of being a teacher; it's not just the ending at 3:30. I'm a very, very strong believer of collaboration in your building but also networking outside of that. What I've been trying to do is network across the province and finding out what other people are doing whether it be a specific problem, does someone out there have the answer, is it an approach I should try, or is there something that hasn't come to our county that maybe I could bring and I could share, as an approach to share with my colleagues….just getting that knowledge is really important. Things are changing so quickly and I don't want to be left in the dust. I want to be in the forefront to find out what's going on. (ON10)

I: And what about the other things, things like you've done. So being involved as a mentor, becoming involved in professional organizations, taking professional learning into your own hands, collaborating with colleagues, taking on leadership positions as a teacher, all these sorts of things. Do you think they are the roles and responsibilities of professional teachers?
ON 4: Oh absolutely. I can't imagine doing this job if I didn't have all those other pieces. It just enhances what you do every day and makes sure a world of difference.
Thus, with deeper probing it was apparent that these participants did acknowledge the role of teachers in seeking out professional development and building professional networks even though, upon first blush, their discourses were rooted in time-honoured traditions of standard competencies and moral character. That being said, it was somewhat difficult to elicit such responses and, even when probed, very little emerged in the way of discourses that framed the teacher as policy actor, expert, or advocate on beyond their own school setting.

5.4. Supporting Discourses of Teacher Professionalism

Interestingly enough, all ETFO members in this study enacted a discourse of professionalism that embodied democratic ideals of the work of teachers, regardless of the nature of the discourses they espoused. Moreover, participants clearly identified the teacher federation and their ETFO work as supporting the enactment of such discourses in their daily professional lives. All of the ETFO participants in this study were involved in a host of extra-classroom work that saw them take on roles as learners, mentors, and activists. Through such activities, their capacity for teacher leadership and professional growth reached far beyond the four walls of their own classrooms and even their own schools.

Two ETFO members had completed Masters degrees in education and three others noted that they had completed Additional Qualification (AQ) programs to develop greater knowledge and expertise in particular areas. Another participant had presented at an international conference on gifted education and others had attended provincial education conferences. One member, who had established a professional Twitter network, was also part of an independent group of interested citizens who met to discuss the various frames
around education in broader society. Almost half were mentors, either as part of the official New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) run by the Ministry of Education or as associate teachers to pre-service teachers who were completing internships in their classrooms.

Many were also active within their school districts, with one member commenting that she had participated in district run leadership initiatives and others noting that they regularly engaged in district workshops and seminars. One member had participated in a Teach Abroad program sponsored by their district that saw them travel to Korea to in-service teachers on English as a foreign language (EFL) and additional district work included volunteering for various committees and writing curriculum resources.

Further to these roles, all of the ETFO members in this study were actively engaged in various facets of their teacher federation. For some, ETFO involvement was a relatively new development, a reaction to the upheaval around Bill 115. For others, federation work spanned the entirety of a twenty- or thirty-plus year teaching career, an extension of their personal agency and social justice orientation. Regardless of the length of service, participants’ ETFO work was vast and varied and included serving in elected and volunteer positions at the local and provincial level, participating as committee members, partaking in protests and strikes, and engaging in and facilitating various professional learning opportunities. For instance, one participant was currently serving on the provincial special education committee and had previously presented equity workshops to teachers in addition to serving as both school representative and communications officer within the local branch. Another was the Family and Schools advisor at their branch and, having previously completed the program, was currently a facilitator with ETFO’s teacher action research group. Others were on the Collective Bargaining or Political Action committee and had lead strike action or rallied the troops during marches to the
legislature. Many had also taken professional development courses through ETFO including Summer Academy, courses on women in unions, and additional qualification courses. Some had presented or facilitated workshops at such events as well.

In this sense, although tensions around the extra-classroom work of teachers were evident in the discourses espoused by some ETFO members, democratic discourses of teacher professionalism were very much alive and well in their own professional work lives. They were leaders, mentors, activists, and policy actors, taking a dynamic role in their own professional growth, supporting that of their colleagues, and publically advocating for quality learning environments and improved teaching conditions. Moreover, the vast majority commented that participation in their teachers’ association had influenced and reinforced their democratic views of professionalism. For instance, one participant talked about how ETFO’s social justice orientation supported teacher activism and the implementation of critical pedagogy:

One of the things that I've always been very interested in is social justice and human rights and I was just so thrilled with ETFO involvement with that. Teachers as advocates for social change is perhaps a broader vision than how most people might envision a classroom teacher, but ETFO and other teacher organizations and other unions do a lot of work-for anti-poverty and social justice and these sorts of programs and it’s all about the pedagogy of liberation, right. This sort of wider, trying to make the world a better place is something that I find very inspiring. (ON7)

Similarly, another member talked about ways in which ETFO had created awareness of the breadth of issues that affect teaching, acting as a vehicle for exerting a collective voice, which they described as being “very empowering to your professional development as well as your professional growth” (ON 1). Other members shared similar sentiments regarding the impact of the collective on their ability to take a stand on an issue on an individual level. In some instances this was framed in conventional union discourses around standing up for teacher rights:
For sure my union has influenced me. I know what my rights are as a professional and I know what my obligations are as a professional. I didn't find myself in the position that a lot of young teachers find themselves in now, which is where the principal is saying you must do and you know in your heart that it isn't what's best for you or necessarily what's best for your children and you're not even sure it's your job, but your principal is telling you that you must. At my age, and with my experience, I can say to my principal, I really appreciate that that's your opinion, but this is what I will be doing. Because this is my job and this is how I run my classroom. I can do that. (ON11)

In other instances, ETFO’s activist identity was viewed through a broader lens which foregrounded the opportunity to participate in the policy arena in a more democratic manner:

The idea that teachers are impacting policy at the ministry level and doing research and that research in the classroom is going to the ministry and making a change on the macro scale, to me is very significant and interesting. Through one program, for example, I got to speak with the director from the Ministry about why we should be investing in tablets and iPads in the classrooms. To have the ear of someone at the ministry was pretty mind blowing for me, because I'm "just" a classroom teacher, right? But all of those experts and policymakers and directors and superintendents and ministers, hopefully, they were all "just" classroom teachers too. (ON7)

Many ETFO members were appreciative of the various opportunities ETFO provided, citing these experiences as stimulating their professional growth and providing an outlet for developing and demonstrating leadership beyond the walls of their own classrooms:

Having been involved in collective bargaining and in a union has really changed things because I really didn't think outside of the classroom or the school….Having been a steward for a number of years, that opened up a lot of doors. I didn't realize these different things and going back to my school and telling people - wow, are you aware of these different types of opportunities? (ON2)

For such participants, being actively engaged in their teacher federation provided a new and exciting perspective on the kinds of work they could be engaged in and reminded them of the possibilities of their profession. Furthermore, some participants specifically identified the federation as a leader in providing such opportunities. As one participant
commented, “That's where I go to look for what's available and what's next. It’s not me asking my principal, it's not me asking my superintendent” (ON10).

It was also apparent that ETFO’s commitment to supporting the professional development of its members had significantly impacted member discourses around teacher learning and the teacher as expert. For instance, one participant described ETFO as being a vital component of teacher learning and professional growth, specifically noting that the federation is about more than traditional “union” issues of collective bargaining:

ETFO has been instrumental in providing information and facilitating my growth as a professional… I see it as a vital part of keeping education current and relevant because it's not just about fighting for contracts and all this, it really is about promoting the profession and making sure that our members are at the top of their game, as much as possible. (ON1)

More specifically, several participants identified Reflections on Practice (ROP), as being especially fundamental in shaping their views around teacher professionalism. A teacher action research program exclusively available to female ETFO members, ROP provides teachers with the opportunity to design and conduct self-directed classroom-based research projects over the course of a full year. Once they have completed the program, participants can subsequently apply to facilitate the next group of action researchers. The program is very popular, with seven of the participants in this study having participated. For those members, ROP was a transformational professional growth experience. For one participant, it challenged previously held notions about the tension between professionalism and unionism and allowed her to establish a deeper connection with her identity as a member of a teacher organization. She stated:

Even though politically I really do support unions, I also have found aspects of the culture of unions a bit problematic - quite male in certain ways and often pretty combative. I've also found it challenging that the face sometimes of the federation has been about protecting teachers who may not be really strong teachers. But in ROP I feel like it was more about raising the level of professionalism and being
empowered, articulating and striving for excellence as a teacher - that kind of leadership. (ON5)

She noted that engaging in teacher research “raised the profile of what it means to be a teacher,” providing a stronger platform from which to engage in advocacy work around conditions of teaching and learning. Moreover, as illustrated in the passage below, she contended that the program demonstrated the value that ETFO places on teacher expertise and autonomy:

There's a message that's communicated to us through this program that you're valuable and you're worthy of investment and what you do everyday is important....At ROP it feels like you're given back to and as a professional you feel invested in… it's that feeling that what you're doing, that question that you're thinking about, it really matters and somebody is acknowledging that. (ON5)

Other ROP participants told a similar story: ROP was a different kind of professional development; it put the teacher in the driver seat and anchored teacher intuition in research rather than subjective observation. For instance, one participant commented:

I think maybe up until ROP I had always felt like a new teacher, not quite sure of what I was doing or just doing what people told me to do. And, through ROP I finally owned the professional ground upon which I stood. (ON7)

Another referred to it as “life-altering” and the “the most significant course” she had ever taken with ETFO (ON9). In particular, participants credited the program with creating an awareness of the importance of critical reflection and inserting teacher voice into the larger policy arena. In this vein, a few participants commented that participating in the program had impacted their views around teacher professionalism in ways that the OCT or the government never had.

In addition to providing a platform for the promotion of an activist teaching profession rooted in democratic principles of teacher professionalism, participants were also mindful of the considerable support ETFO provided towards the actual enactment of such
discourses. Rather than just talking the talk, ETFO walked the walk; providing funding to members for accommodations, travel costs, and release time in an effort to remove some of the constraints that might limit member engagement in such activities. Many participants viewed this support as directly enabling them to participate in learning experiences they would not have been privy to otherwise:

ETFO provides release time for these things so you don't have to worry about losing a day’s pay or travel if you can't afford it, because usually the union helps fund your release time to go and do these workshops and mileage if you need it or a meal if you need it, those sorts of things. Also, my research was published through reflections on practice… They covered my release days when I had to travel to Toronto and paid for the supplies that were needed in my classroom. Without my union, I wouldn't have had that. I wouldn't have had a lot of the opportunities I've had through ETFO. (ON3)

For one participant, this support was equated with a level of respect for teachers on the part of ETFO that was severely lacking in the day-to-day life of teachers, commenting “You go to a board meeting and they can't even provide you with food at this point and I know that's sounds like a little thing but the medium is the message” (ON5). In other words, it was abundantly clear that for these participants, the teacher-centered spirit and empowering nature of the professional growth and learning opportunities provided by ETFO were sharply contrasted those provided by the boards and the Ministry, which were perceived as limited in scope and de-professionalizing.

A few members also identified ETFO as providing moral support and encouragement during times of conflict and dissonance, reminding teachers of the collective power and resiliency of the teaching profession. One participant in particular deeply valued such reinforcement when navigating top-down policies that conflicted with her own professional judgment and made her question her choice of career. She commented:

The union strengthens you at times, especially at times when you're feeling like crap and you're feeling like “oh my god should I stay in this profession” or “what the heck is going on” and you're critically examining things and you're trying to honour what's being suggested [within policies] but on the other hand you kind of
look and you go this is extreme, this is crazy. And at those moments where you feel vulnerable, the union really, really helps shore you up and go “Come on, pick up your boot straps” or “take a look, here's a strategy, here's some support, here's some resources, giddy up, let’s go”. It keeps you going. (ON9)

For this participant, then, the federation provided the encouragement and strength needed to get through challenging professional times. Further to this, through the provision of and support for teacher leadership and activism, the participant commented that her federation work complemented and fueled her internal drive for broader engagement and advocacy work, particularly in times of strife:

I would say most teachers come to the table with the extra bit of spark and energy, maybe I’d say chutzpa, and I think that the union is an organization that just helps keep you strong at those hard time…. It's influenced me at different points to speak up and voice opinions; you know, when we were protesting. In some ways it inspired and cemented more of sense of “I am teacher”, confirming that I will roar and I believe in what I'm doing. (ON9)

Looking across the data in this case, then, it is clearly evident that, by and large, ETFO has greatly influenced both the ways in which the members in this study conceptualized teacher professionalism and the manner in which those discourses are realized in action. Moreover, through the work that it does to facilitate and support diverse opportunities for teacher professional learning, ETFO itself promotes a discourse that frames teachers as learners and experts who possess a wealth of valuable knowledge and insights regarding best practices for teaching and learning. Furthermore, with its strong political engagement and advocacy work, ETFO is steadfast in advocating for the teaching profession, projecting a vision of teaching amongst many of its most active members that exemplifies the principles of activism and engagement in the broader context of schooling. That being said, as evidenced by the mixed discourses and tensions within the views of a number of the participants in this study, it is apparent that ETFO is not the only influence on the discourses espoused by members in this study. To that end, perceived limitations
on the professionalism discourses of ETFO members are described in the section that follows.

5.5. Limiting Discourses of Teacher Professionalism

ETFO members in this study identified a number of discursive factors that they perceived as limiting their teacher professionalism in some manner. The majority of these factors, however, were primarily tied to the overall climate of the larger education policy context within the province. More specifically, as demonstrated in the following section, the recent labour dispute over Bill 115 was particularly grueling for some members who were deeply affected by the media coverage and public response to ETFO’s decision to withdraw extra-curricular activities for much of the 2012-13 school year. Moreover, it was also evident that some participants were still conflicted by reforms imposed during the Harris years that changed the composition of the federations and introduced a new professional organization for the teaching profession. Consequently, the presence of deficit discourses espoused by the media, the general public, and the reform policies of the last 20 significantly impacted the professionalism discourses of some ETFO members who struggled to bridge the gap, so to speak, between managerial and democratic notions of the work of teachers. In particular, participants noted that the unrest that had periodically occurred since the 1990s had resulted in a management style that was “less open” and “more directive” which, in turn, limited “how you express yourself and the agendas you can carry forward” (ON1).

One theme to emerge within the data was concern about the lack of teacher autonomy and the manner in which teachers are micromanaged though initiatives that are implemented with little or no input from teachers. One participant particularly noted how funding is used by the government as a discursive tool to devalue teacher autonomy and conveys a particular view of what’s really important in schooling:
The government sends us messages about lack of respect for teaching all the time. When they have top down directives that say this is what will be the focus of schools, to me and to lots of other teachers, that says we can't look at our own school and decide we're good with literacy and numeracy but we're really not good with empathy and treating each other well so that's what we're going to focus on and get professional learning around. There's no money for that….the money was all directed towards data and accountability. (ON11)

Furthermore, it was evident that some of this participant’s skepticism was rooted in residual tensions left over from the Harris years. In particular, the participant questioned the intentions of the subsequent Liberal government and was critical of mechanisms they used to give what the participant perceived as the appearance of autonomy, when it was overtly clear that they were really espousing a contradictory discourse:

Even when the liberal government under Dalton McGuinty was giving a fair amount of money to education, even when they were making comments in the press that were quite positive, I still did not feel that the government backed teachers. I still felt that this was still some of the political games that had been played since the time of Mike Harris. I didn't trust that they meant what they said. If they had felt that teachers were professionals and deserved that respect then their would have been a lot more autonomy. (ON11)

The absence of teacher voice in the greater policy arena was also the mantra of another participant who spoke at length about the stifling of teacher creativity. Considering that teachers are responsible for the implementation and accountable to the outcomes, the participant was irritated that the perspective of the teacher was often missing from the policy discussion. The participant commented that, coupled with a paucity of implementation resources, a lack of dedicated time to process and incorporate imposed reforms rendered her a “walking to-do list” (ON5) rather than an agent or an advocate.

We're not enough of an agent in the whole process and I feel like people are actually scared of teacher autonomy and it's really bizarre to me. Yes we have to be accountable, I'm not saying autonomy without any kind of accountability, but teacher autonomy would actually unleash a lot of the things I think people want to see in education, but that's not where we are. (ON5)
Thus, for this participant, juxtaposed discourses around accountability and autonomy that inaccurately portray such ideals as non-complementary was seen as creating a repressive climate that did not support the enactment of democratic discourses around the teacher as advocate and policy actor.

When describing the impact of the policy context on discourses of teachers’ professionalism, the most recent battle over Bill 115 also took center stage for a few participants. Of particular significance was the manner in which the media’s coverage of the work to rule action had shaped public discourses and framed teachers as out for their own best interests at the expense of students. For instance, one participant recalled how frustrated and disappointed she was with the public’s view of teachers during that time:

> I would read all the comments in the media about teachers saying, “fire them all and hire a bunch of other people who will do the job”, and it's just so short sighted and tells us how little people value what's happening in the classroom. I mean the fact that Ontario is performing at the top of the class on all these OECD assessments and all these different tests and state of the art and world-class education system, it doesn't matter, people don't see that. They just see whiny teachers who are overpaid and get their summers off so fire them all and just get in anyone; they'll be able to look after the kids. And to me I see it as so short sighted. (ON7)

Such discourses were seen as disheartening and hurtful, adding salt to the wounds of teachers who were already feeling battered and bruised by the Liberals. As another member commented, “When you're fighting with your government, no matter the reasons for it, there are going to be a lot of people who take up against you and that's not a good situation when you're teaching their children” (ON11).

For two ETFO members in the study, the deficit discourses that dominated the year leading up to the study had taken an even greater toll. In addition to expressing the demoralizing and deflating effects described by their peers, these participants felt
scapegoated and scrutinized as they were subject to constant criticism and questioning.

As one participant stated:

Nothing you did was good enough and it definitely fuelled the public with misinformation. And even friends or people you knew, suddenly they would come to you with these statements and you would be like, “No, that's not what's happening.” (ON2)

Moreover, even though the work to rule had ended and a new school year had begun, at the time of the study these participants were still cautious about the public perception, commenting, “You always have to watch what you're doing; you always have to have that professional hat on…. So I feel that it does limit me” (ON8). The lingering effects of such negative discourse was so powerful in the lives of these teachers that they reported being apprehensive to even tell people that they were teachers:

…Honestly, I just came to a point where I didn't tell people that I met anymore that I was a teacher. I just said I worked with government; I was a public service employee. (ON2)

I mean at times, when I'm out in public, I don't want people to know that I'm a teacher because the minute they find out I'm a teacher they automatically want to unload and vent all of their issues and problems. (ON8)

It was also evident that policy changes made during the Harris years had left their mark on the discursive landscape and, in the eyes of some participants, were continuing to shape the policy context and views around teachers and teacher organizations almost 20 years later. In particular, the removal of administrators from the teacher federations was identified by a number of ETFO members as setting up a dichotomy between teachers and administrators that sometimes constrained the ability of teachers to participate in extra-classroom work:

What’s limited me is my principal….I'm old enough that they used to be part of our bargaining unit. So I was around when that change happened actually and I worked with a principal who was a very strong member of ETFO and then when the changes came in, all of a sudden it was now “us and them” mentality. (ON7)
Consequently, administrators were viewed by some ETFO participants as being “mouthpieces” for the board and the Ministry, which was viewed as limiting teacher autonomy and the professional judgment of teachers.

In addition to their new role as “managers”, the lack of administrator backbone, so to speak, was thought by another participant to be a by-product of the reduced networks for support and limited opportunities for professional growth administrators experienced upon being removed from the federations:

The unions really were a great place for principals to learn and have a network of people, not just in their board but also across the province…And that was taken away so principals are much more isolated now and they're also much more vulnerable because they are on personal service contracts with the board, so either they don't know what to do or they do what the board says to do, which is isn't necessarily always the best way (ON11).

Moreover, she commented that the loss of networking opportunities had eroded administrators’ ability to see the bigger picture and make informed decisions in the best interests of the students and teachers within their school community:

The board isn't in the schools everyday. You know, they make policy but they don't implement it, that's what principals do and they need the feedback from teachers and principals to say, you know what, this is bad policy and this is the reason why. (ON11)

Stemming from the perceived division between teachers and administrators, some participants also talked about the difficult situation facing those who chose to be active in the federation. It was noted that engaging in federation work sometimes put up a red flag with principals and created an adverse work atmosphere that wasn’t conducive to collaboration, teacher leadership, professional learning, or any other aspect of democratic professionalism. Further to this, the role of the school steward was thought to be especially challenging, with one participant noting that one school in her board has had four stewards in four years, “all due to feeling that they weren’t being treated fairly by
their administrator” (ON3). Another participant, who was currently in the role of steward, shared similar sentiments:

I've seen it a number of times this year, actually, where administration has kind of tried to come in and bully their way into making people do a certain thing and I'm trying to be an advocate for those people, as the steward in the building. But it's been very tricky and it's made me sit back and say, do I really want to take on this role right now. And I feel like anyone else in this position, as steward, wouldn't take it as hard as I am, but if I see something that I don't feel is professional and I don't feel that the teacher's voice is being heard, or that somebody isn't getting the same amount of opportunity as someone else, I'll be the first one to say something but this particular administrator doesn't want to hear it and is so anti-union, and has told me in very many ways that if I am doing ETFO work to help me build my career, I'm wasting my time. (ON8)

The creation of the Ontario College of Teachers also appeared to influence the discourses of ETFO members. In particular, the discourses espoused by the OCT around professional standards, competency, and conduct, had found its way into the professionalism discourses of many of the ETFO members in this study. Furthermore, being members of both ETFO and OCT also contributed to the creation of mixed discourses that, in some instances, bordered on more traditional notions of teacher professionalism. One participant particularly struggled to reconcile the competing interests of these organizations, whom they referred to as “the watchdog” (the OCT) and “the guard dog” (ETFO):

There’s this funny split in teaching because we're unionized and then we've been professionalized through the Ontario College of Teachers… and I have mixed feelings about it; I think there's something positive but I also think there's something problematic about it. On the one hand it's this idea that's there's a professional body for teachers; but what does that mean…. Quite frankly, I get the OCT's Professionally Speaking magazine and it totally shies away from critical literacy, it doesn't engage with that aspect of what it means to be an educator; it really wants to walk this mushy middle road of not offending and not really tackling issues of power in any way. And some parts even feel like it's too much, like my relationship with it is too much of watchdog. So on the one hand here I am as a teacher and I've got the federation, which is supposed to be a guard dog, and then you've got the OCT, which is the watchdog…. I'm trying to be an agent in education, not just saddled between these two dogs. (ON5)
It was clear that the participant wrestled with trying to understand what teacher professionalism meant within the context of these two organizations, neither of which she felt accurately represented the face of the teaching profession on their own.

On a related note, another participant specifically spoke about the ways in which Harris shifted the discourse around teacher federations from one of “professional association” to one of “union.” As evidenced in the comments below, it was felt that the term union was specifically employed to de-professionalize teachers and portray teachers as typical labourers that could easily be replaced:

We used to be a professional association. We used to be the Federation of Women's Teacher's Association of Ontario and Mike Harris changed us all to unions. And I think that was because a union is more of a hardcore sort of thing; union people are punching a clock, they are hourly employees and they are widgets whereas a lot of professions, like medicine and law, they're more independent and autonomous. So if we don't have professional knowledge, if we're widgets, I see it going the way of America where we are handed the resources and told it's idiot proof and salaries no longer need to be as high and you can get anyone to do it. (ON7)

Changing the terminology also changed the ways in which the general public and even teachers themselves viewed their federations, especially in light of the creation of the OCT, which is touted as the ‘professional’ association for the provinces’ teachers.

Yet, in spite of the existence of what was viewed as a sometimes antagonistic and contentious policy environment, a few participants were hopeful that the worst was over and expressed confidence that, in solidarity, ETFO members could face whatever obstacles were thrown their way:

I would like to be optimistic that it's going to settle down a little bit… I mean as long as the union can stick together, we'll be ok. But that would be the key. And that's what the governments’ next goal is, is to divide and conquer – the mentality is that if they can scare that fear into us, we'll break. And I think one ETFO's big jobs is to keep the fear mongering at a minimum. (ON2)
On similar note, one participant commented, “we are our union and I believe that we are strong together and that makes all the difference in the world” (ON 4), while another noted the significant role ETFO had played in helping her see past the potential limitations and stand firm on her own professional laurels:

I've never felt anything less than professional and I've never felt like I couldn't be professional ever during my 21 years of being a teacher. Have things happened that I feel are irritating? Have I found things that I've been asked to do that I don't necessarily agree with? Do I feel that some of the strategies are useless or a waste of my professional time? Yeah. But the other side of it that I also feel that our union has done great things; they were able to fight back with the latest negotiations to the point where it was put on the table that if we were going to be doing various assessments they would be done according to our professional judgment, not according to imposed time lines by our boards. (ON9).

Driven by and supported in their work with the federation, these participants commented that nothing limited their professionalism; rather it was all in how you perceived it.

5.6. Summary

A leader in the professional development of Ontario teachers, ETFO has worked hard to provide its members with the kind of self-directed learning opportunities that instill a vision of the teaching profession where teachers are valued for their expertise and respected for their ability to use their professional judgment in the best interest of students and the profession as a whole. Moreover, engaging their members in the facilitation of professional development for other teachers through the development of programs like ROP has also promoted the ideals of mentoring, collaboration, and mutual learning – all of which are elements of democratic teacher professionalism and an activist teaching profession.

Faced with an ever-changing political context with respect to educational reform in the province, ETFO has also emerged over the past twenty years as a staunch advocate for
the teaching profession that is committed to the professional growth of its members and the creation of fair and equitable conditions for teaching and learning. Employing a combination of professional and union tactics, ETFO has attempted on a number of occasions to engage their members in combatting deficit ideas around teacher professionalism that often find their way into the public discourse. In this way the federation has also served as a platform for its members to become advocates and activist who collectively insert their voice into the larger policy arena in an attempt to counter-balance what might otherwise be a very one-sided approach to educational reform. In this vein, many of the ETFO members in this study espoused discourses that portrayed teachers as being autonomous experts and decision makers whose purview extended beyond any one classroom and included weighing in on the substantive issues of schooling, collaborating across the system, and engaging in a host of self-directed professional learning and advocacy activities both as a function of teacher federations and beyond.

Despite its best efforts, however, for many of the members in this study, the challenging political context and the reforms and deficit discourses within have been a tangible constraining factor that has limited the enactment of democratic discourses of teacher professionalism and influenced member views around the roles and responsibilities of teachers. In particular, the removal of administrators from the federations appears to represent a significant change in the relationship between teachers and principals. This, in turn, has impacted the kinds of extra-classroom work some members felt they should or could engage in. The creation of the OCT appears to also have reinforced traditional discourses around teacher professionalism, which sometimes conflicted with the vision of the teaching profession held by some of the participants in this study.
Moreover, the work-to-rule and strike action of 2012/13 and the media coverage of those events were perceived as having a significant impact the public discourse around education in Ontario, which was decidedly negative when compared to the view of teachers just a few years prior. Even though ETFO has been steadfast in its support for members during these difficult times, for some participants in this study, the public bashing of teachers had taken a toll. Participants were sometimes conflicted about teacher professionalism, espousing discourses where democratic and traditional notions of the work of teachers were seen as being in tension with one another. Such tensions were also perceived as limiting the enactment of democratic teacher professionalism as members grappled with the juxtaposition of negative comments in the public and in the media and their own democratic views around what constitutes being a professional teacher. That being said, other members were proud of the progress that ETFO had achieved and were confident in moving forward in solidarity with their federation.

While the context of education and the work of the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) is similar to that which is presented in this case of the ETFO, the public discourse around education in Alberta is and has been much less abrasive than has been in Ontario over the past 20 years. As such, the discourses of the ATA members in this study, while still presenting some conflicting tensions, tended to be impacted by the policy environment along different lines. These discourses and the factors that support and limit their enactment are the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter Six: The Alberta Teachers’ Association

6.1. Introduction

Founded in 1917 and originally known as the Alberta Teacher’s Alliance, the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA), like most other teacher organizations, initially evolved in response to substandard working conditions imposed by local school boards. Tenure did not exist, there was no recourse against dismissal, salaries were deplorable, and most teachers were employed on term contracts with no job security. As a result, the teaching profession was in crisis; droves of teachers had left the profession to enlist in the war effort or other jobs where conditions were more favorable and thousands of untrained “teachers” were being employed in order to fill the gap (ATA, 2005).

Largely under the leadership of John Barnett, who would later become the first executive secretary, a small group of teachers broke away from the Alberta Education Association, which was primarily overseen by the Department of Education, and established Alberta’s first teacher organization, holding their first meeting on April 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1918 (ATA, 2005). It wasn’t until 1935, however, that the Alberta government passed the Teaching Profession Act, establishing the newly named Alberta Teachers’ Association as the province’s professional teacher organization with both union and professional responsibilities. In an amendment to that act in 1936, ATA membership was made automatic for all teaching professionals in Alberta, solidifying the collective strength of the Association as a prominent voice in education and granting the ATA the fiscal and human capital to go about advocating for higher standards of teaching and learning (Thomas, 2013).

Now representing all of the province’s over 40,000 teachers and school administrators, the ATA’s dedication to achieving high standards of working conditions for its members
has not waivered. However, in the almost 100 years since its inauguration, the ATA has evolved as a teacher organization to encompass a professional agenda that largely focuses on partnerships, research, and member engagement (Bascia & Osmond, 2012). Moreover, the ATA has emerged as a well-respected advocate for improved public education on a broad scale, despite (and perhaps even as a result of) a system of government in the 1990s that placed control of education firmly in the hands of the formal legislature (Bascia, 2008).

As will be demonstrated in this case, the ATA’s bid to shape the public discourse around quality education and forge its own path around teacher professional development has profoundly impacted the discourses of teacher professionalism held by some of its most active members. Providing a platform for engagement in a host of professional growth, teacher leadership, and professional learning opportunities, the ATA has steadfastly served as an outlet for members’ activist identities and advocacy work in a policy context that has fluctuated between times of harmony and times of discord. Through these strategic actions, the ATA has instilled a vision of the teaching profession that recognizes, celebrates, and promotes the teacher as learner, the teacher as leader, and the teacher as policy actor – all tenets of an activist teaching profession. The ATA’s vision for public education, the policy context of provincial educational education reform, and their relationship to the discourses of teacher professionalism espoused and enacted by the members in this study will be the focus of the following sections.


The political history of Alberta is unlike that of any other Canadian province, having elected only five different governing parties since joining confederation in 1905. More specifically, at the time of this study, the Progressive Conservative (PC) party of Alberta
had been in office for over 40 years, first elected in 1971 and continuing to hold a majority government until being voted out in favour of an NDP government in 2015.

While known for being one of the wealthiest provinces in the country, Alberta has been particularly vulnerable to the pressures of global market trends over the past thirty or so years because of the province’s heavy reliance on the export of oil and gas resources (Basica, 2008). Thus, when many provinces were significantly increasing investments in education during the 1990s, like their Ontario counterparts, Alberta educators were “experiencing a combination of rising expectations and shrinking resources” (Basica, 2008, p. 173) in the wake of a drastic drop in the international price of oil.

This was particularly the mantra of Premier Ralph Klein who led the PC Party from 1992 through to 2006. Preoccupied with debt from the previous decade, Klein’s agenda was heavily influenced by the ideology of fiscal conservatism and market liberalism endorsed by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan in the late 1980s. Severe cutbacks in government spending and the downsizing of the public enterprise quickly became the norm as the government went about reinventing itself along entrepreneurial lines based on business values, economic productivity, and the promotion of the private sector (Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson, 2007a). By 1993, this “hard right turn” (Jeffrey, 1999) was particularly gruelling for education with the release of Meeting the Challenge, a three year business plan for education which slashed the education budget by over a quarter of a billion dollars and stripped boards of their ability to control funding (Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson, 2007a; Taylor, 2001).

Throughout the remainder of the 1990s, other imposed reforms included a reduction in the number of school boards by half, a 5% salary roll back for teachers, the launch of the province’s first charter schools, and the introduction of standardized curriculum and provincial student testing (Barnetson, 2010). The Klein government also attempted to
change the structure of the ATA in 1993 with the introduction of Bill 212, which proposed to make membership in the union arm of the ATA optional for the province’s teachers (Mackay & Flower, 1999). The Bill was eventually withdrawn and reintroduced as Bill 210 in 1994, but was defeated on its second reading (Raston, 2003). According to Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson (2007a), “restructuring in education had begun to take place within a government discourse that predominantly emphasized accountability and choice” (p. 34). Teachers were viewed as a special interest group, government refused to take their concerns seriously, and the relationship between teachers and government became increasingly hostile (Mackay & Flower, 1999).

However, rather than respond to the so-called crisis in education with traditional union tactics, the ATA viewed the charged political climate of the 1990s as an opportunity to assert its voice in the educational landscape and become strong advocates for public education on a different scale (Raston, 2003). Thus, when Alberta Education (the province’s ministry of education) held public consultations on education reform, the ATA sponsored its own roundtable discussion panels throughout the province and released its own report, Challenging the View, which portrayed education as an investment rather than an expense. They followed this in 1994 with the launch of a half million dollar public awareness campaign to challenge “negative reports on the sorry quality of education released by Alberta Education” (Bascia, 2008a, p. 179) and re-establish teachers as leaders in learning. The year 1995 saw the opening of the ATA’s Public Education Action Center and the unveiling of the “Public Education Works” slogan, which was featured on buttons, billboards, and television advertisements in an effort to inform the public of the successes of public education and reframe the discourse from “spending cuts to re-investment” (Raston, 2003, p. 141).
During the same time frame, the ATA also attempted to fill many of the substantive gaps in educational practice resulting from the decimated educational infrastructure, particularly in the area of professional development (Bascia, 2008a; Flower & Booi, 1999). For instance, when the government mandated individual growth plans for teachers, the ATA won the contract to develop workbooks and train administrators on their use. The ATA also developed the official resource manual on school councils when they were legislated in 1995 and provided training on their implementation. In both instances the ATA inserted their own stamp on what was an otherwise imposed reform, essentially managing to determining how they played out in schools (Flower & Booi, 1999).

While some might be critical of the ATA’s willingness to work with the government during this time, viewing their lack of militancy and collective action as weak and unorganized, Raston (2003) contends that, “organizationally, this was a savvy decision that helped the ATA emerge from the Klein Revolution with minimal damage” (p. 150). Moreover, both Raston (2003) and Bascia (2008a) suggest that the ATA’s unwillingness to deliberately antagonize the government was strategic; the ATA assessed the political climate and, knowing the conditions were unfavourable, “choose to survive the Klein Revolution by avoiding full confrontation with the government” (Raston, 2003, p. 150) and wait until the timing was right and the public was ripe for change.

Three years after the launch of the ATA’s public awareness campaign, Angus Reid Education Polls showed that the percentage of Albertans who believed that the government was spending too little on education had risen from 31% in 1994 to 65% in 1997 (Taylor, 2001). Sensing that the time had come for more direct political action, on October 4th, 1997 nearly half of the province’s teachers marched to the Legislature in Edmonton. The timing of the protest also coincided with a statement from the government’s Growth Summit initiative that called upon the government to make
education its “highest priority” (Raston, 2003). Slowly, over the next few years, the government made small incremental increases in the education budget but funding was still much less than pre-1992 levels, before Klein had taken the reins (Thomas, 2007).

By 2002, two sticking points remained for the ATA and its membership: underfunding in education and class size. Having been promised by Klein during his re-election campaign that they would be ‘fairly compensated and given as good a work environment as possible’ teachers were shocked when Klein announced in May of 2001 that funding would be increasing by only 6% over two years (Booi, 2007). On February 4th, 2002, after the provincial government repeatedly refused to reconsider its financial stance, the ATA finally resorted to trade union tactics, coordinating a series of strikes across one third of the province’s school districts and involving nearly 15,000 teachers (Booi, 2007; Raston, 2003). Over the next three weeks, the strike spread to more districts and, at its peak, over 350,000 students were out of the classroom (Reshef, 2007). According to an ATA representative the strike was “the biggest crisis for the administration [of Premier Ralph Klein] in over more than a decade” (Bascia & Osmond, 2013, p. 23), ending three weeks later on February 21st when the government declared a public emergency and ordered teachers back to work.

Over the next few years, the ATA and government remained at logger heads over several issues; deteriorating classroom conditions, changes to the arbitration process, restrictions on the content of collective bargaining, the unfunded liability of the Teachers’ Pension Plan, and the proposed removal of administrators from the ATA (Thomas, 2007). According to Thomas (2007), Minister Oberg’s objective was to reduce the Association to a union of classroom teachers and limit bargaining to salaries and little else. Yet, in spite of their differences, progress was made in some areas, including an agreement that the ATA would take over a portion of teacher certification and monitor teacher
competence. In 1999, the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) was created as a partnership project between the ATA, government, and other educational stakeholders with the goal of improving education through localized, teacher-led research projects. It should be noted, however, that the government’s original plans including a merit pay program called the School Performance Incentive Program (SPIP). SPIP was met with fervent opposition from both the ATA and the Alberta School Boards Association, prompting Minister Lyle Oberg to cancel the program in May of 1999. He later invited the school boards and the ATA to collaboratively develop a program, the result of which was AISI (Thomas, 2007).

The break in the tension, however, didn’t really occur until 2007, after Ed Stelmach had taken over as Premier following Klein’s resignation in late 2006. In that year, the ATA and the Premier reached a deal to resolve the issue of the unfunded liability pension plan in exchange for a five-year formally negotiated contract (Bruseker, 2007). A memorandum of understanding was signed in November and three months later, by the January 31st deadline, all 62 school boards had ratified agreements and 97% of teachers had voted in favour (Brusker, 2007). According to former ATA President, Frank Bruseker (2007),

"Following the 2002 teachers’ strike, the relationship between the ATA and the government was at an all-time low, which was to be expected following labour strife. It was not a situation that could continue indefinitely, however, for that would be to the detriment of education in Alberta. I saw a need to rebuild a better working relationship with the government, so the profession could have more input into decisions affecting teachers’ daily work lives." (¶ 2)

Hence, in the years that followed, the ATA continued to work with the government on several fronts, including collaborating on new directions for inclusive education and sitting on the steering committee for new Minister Dave Hancock’s Inspiring Education project, which was struck in 2009 and tasked with carving out a framework for the future of educational change in Alberta. The relationship between the government and the ATA
appeared to continue to improve with the election of Alison Redford as leader of the PC party and new Premier in 2011. Just days after taking over the post, Redford restored over $100 million in education funding that had been cut by Stelmach in his last tenure, making good on a key promise in her leadership campaign (CBC, 2011). When interviewed in 2012, the view of the ATA’s President, Carol Henderson, was that education in Alberta had “come a long way over the past decade” (Basica & Osmond, 2013, unpublished data).

In the two years leading up to this study, however, education in Alberta had once again been in a state of flux after the Redford government implemented an imposed contract in May of 2013 (CBC, 2013). With the five-year deal signed under Stelmach set to expire in August 2012, a tripartite discussion panel was struck in 2011 which saw the ATA, the government, and the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) participate in regular meetings to work towards a framework for future collective agreements. The meetings carried on into 2012 and on November 30th, with a provincial framework yet to be worked out, the ATA stepped away from the tripartite table and presented the government with a four-year deal that would see teachers take a two year wage freeze, followed by a 1% and 3% raise in the last two years. The proposal also called for a reduction in teacher workload with respect to non-instructional tasks, with smaller items to be bargained at the local level. In return, the ATA would not engage in any strikes for the duration of the agreement (Henderson, 2012).

On February 20th, Minister Jeff Johnson countered the proposal with a lengthy letter to ATA President Carol Henderson and ASBA Chair Jacquie Hansen. Stating that “there are far more areas where we agree than were we disagree” (Johnson, 2013, p.1), the Minister outlined a deal which included a three year wage freeze followed by a 2% raise in the last year, a commitment to reducing instructional time with the exception of small
schools, and the establishment of a joint committee to conduct a study of teacher workload. While bargaining at the local level continued, six days later President Henderson announced that the ATA’s Provincial Executive unanimously voted to reject the minister’s offer, stating, “we’ve said no to the minister’s offer, but yes to collective bargaining, and yes to fair solutions with locally elected school boards” (ATA, 2013a).

Not long after rejecting the February offer, however, President Henderson met with Premier Redford and changes were made to the deal in March. More specifically, the changes ensured that the government would not alter the local bargaining process or sections of the School’s Act for the duration of the deal without consultation with the ATA. The new deal also included a 1% lump sum payment to teachers in lieu of the three-year wage freeze and included more details on the government’s commitment to studying teacher workload and reducing instructional time (ATA, 2013b). Both the ATA and the ASBA supported the deal and recommended that members vote to accept it before the May 13th deadline. While the majority of boards and local unions voted to accept the offer, a small number voted to reject the offer, prompting the government to enact legislation to impose the contract on all boards and bargaining units (CBC, 2013). In a statement, President Henderson noted her disappointment that the government decided to take that particular route, commenting, “Imposing a legislated settlement is inconsistent with collective bargaining and is exactly what some teachers were hoping to avoid by supporting the offer” (ATA, 2013c).

At the time that this study was conducted, the legislated contracted had just come into effect. Moreover, a joint committee examining teacher workload had just been struck and was beginning to conduct its work. In September of 2013, Minister Johnson also created the Task Force for Teaching Excellence whose mandate is to work out possible policies and implementation plans for the recommendations laid out in the document resulting
from the Inspiring Education initiative. While the ATA is part of the teacher workload committee, the ATA was not invited to take part in the task force. That being said, regardless of the political climate or the nature of their relationship with the government, over the years the ATA has continued to establish itself as a strategic teacher organization that sets its own agenda with respect to the future of teaching and learning in Alberta. For instance, a brief scan of the ATA’s website shows a variety of documents designed to initiate public dialogue and engage members in conversations around improving education over the long-term. The ATA’s efforts to continue to shape the face of education in Alberta have also been aided by its in-house research division, which was established in 2006 to provide evidence to substantiate the ATA’s platform on particular policy issues. For instance, a case study of the work life of Calgary Public teachers (ATA, 2012) and a similar project on the conditions of professional practice in Rocky View Schools (ATA, 2011) has bolstered the ATA’s efforts to examine and address issues around teacher workload. Other strategic advocacy work has included the ATA’s involvement in Public Interest Alberta (PIA), a non-profit, non-partisan public interest group focused on advocacy around education and other matters of public interest. Other members include United Nurses of Alberta, the Health Sciences Association and the Alberta Federation of Labour (Virag, 2012).

The ATA has also continued to heavily invest in professional learning opportunities for its members. With a strong focus on member engagement, the ATA holds an annual teacher convention for all the province’s teachers, organizes a host of specialist conferences, runs mentoring programs for beginning teachers and administrators, and hosts online webinars and school-based workshops. In one of its most recent ventures, the ATA has developed an international partnership with Finland where teachers and students participant in short-term exchanges where they collaborate on mutual learning focused around teaching and learning at the classroom level. Over the past few years the ATA has
also worked with several well-known academics in the area of educational leadership and educational change. These academics often provide insight around the ATA’s strategic plan and program areas, give keynotes at conferences, and collaborate on research and other special projects.

ATA members also have many opportunities to engage in teacher leadership though participation in a variety of provincial and local committees and programs. Some of these committees, such as the Economic Policy Committee (EPC), focus on bargaining and teaching conditions while others, such as the Convention Committee and the Instructors Corps, afford members the opportunity to organize and deliver professional development workshops for other teachers. Additional committees focus on misconduct, strategic planning, political engagement, administrator issues and concerns, teacher welfare, and child and youth well being, just to name a few.

In sum, having navigated some tough waters both in the past and in current times; the ATA has emerged in the public sphere as an advocate for progressive educational reform in Alberta. Moreover, through strategic political engagement and the provision of a variety of professional activities for its members, the ATA has directly challenged traditional views around teacher professionalism and the role of teachers in the context of educational change. It is this context of challenging political times and strong professional unionism that framed discussions with members of the ATA and set the stage for the discourses of professionalism espoused in this case.

6.3. Discourses of Teacher Professionalism and the Work of Teachers

When asked to define teacher professionalism and the work of teachers, the majority of participants espoused discourses that were more democratic (Sachs, 2003) in nature. That being said, such discourses did not entirely preclude elements of traditional discourses
such as accountability for student achievement and moral and ethical responsibilities. Rather, the discourses of some participants contained elements of both, most often positioning the extra-classroom work of teachers as an integral component of the professional growth of teachers as pedagogical experts and facilitators of student learning. Particular elements of the discourses of ATA members in this study are detailed in the sections that follow.

6.3.1. Democratic discourses.

Almost half of ATA participants espoused discourses of teacher professionalism that were predominantly democratic in nature. Such participants viewed teachers as dynamic contributors to education on a grand scale whose work reached beyond the walls of any one classroom and encompassed a host of extra-classroom work. Engagement in such activities served to revitalize, invigorate, and stimulate their own professional growth as well as that of their colleagues. Rather than position teachers as implementers and technicians, these participants talked about teachers as being autonomous professionals and educational leaders with the authority and expertise to exercise their own professional judgment:

Teacher professionalism means that I'm thinking about pedagogy, I'm thinking about my students and their needs and I am the person who has many years of university and I can think for myself and put all those things together to help my students in the best way possible, from a position of authority and a position of learning (AB5).

One participant framed teachers as having their own professional practice, a lens that she developed through her work as part of a university/district partnership around professional growth. She comments:

Our district has been working with the university on a research study on professional growth for administrators in education….Each month their senior admin team comes with the researcher and they have conversations with us that really help us dig deeper into our professional growth. It's through those
conversations that I started to think of myself as having my own professional practice verses just being a teacher, then talking in those terms…. I thought oh I'm a teacher, I work as a teacher, that's my profession and I work for this school district but I had never thought of myself as having my own professional practice. (AB9)

She went on to articulate that she viewed her professional practice as encompassing responsibility for the learning of her students, accountability for her own professional growth as well as “active involvement in growing and supporting the professional practice of colleagues.”

Some participants extended the notion of the teacher as expert to include an element of voice, articulating that being a teacher meant more than implementing a pre-determined curriculum; it meant digging in and speaking up when it comes to decisions of pedagogy and student learning. One participant, for instance, commented,

I think [professionalism is] having voice for our students, from a position of knowledge and authority because we do have that background, we do work with kids and we do have the education to speak up on behalf of our kids when things are coming at us….We are professionals and we have a solid base in terms of thinking about and working with students and [understanding] what we can do to help our kids do the best they can. (AB5)

On a similar note, another participant noted the role of teachers in critically examining policy and reform, rather than taking them at face value:

Teachers are given the authority and support to do our jobs and then we're trusted to act on that authority. I'm not somebody's puppet - here is the policy, just go out and follow it…. We have to think for ourselves because the government might be wrong, the policy might be wrong. And that doesn't mean we are running around rogue and ignoring everyone but we need to be critical thinkers. (AB6)

Such participants viewed teachers as having rich decisional capital as a result of years of dedication to fostering student success and articulated that teachers had a firm foundation of expertise and experience upon which to base their classroom autonomy.
It was also apparent that being involved in decision making encompassed big picture policy decisions pertaining to the contexts of quality teaching and learning environments. This was most often expressed in the form of the collective through discourses around being a member of a teacher organization. Such discourses emphasized the important role members have in shaping public views around the value of teachers and their associations to betterment of public education. For instance, one participant commented:

We have to demonstrate to the public that we are professionals; we don't just work from 8:30 to 3:30 and have two months off in the summer. Teaching is a profession…. We do a really good job of educating ourselves, but I'm not sure teachers do a very good job of indicating to the public what our work really is about…And I really believe that's a big part of our work. And I feel sometimes that teachers think that it's the ATA's job to go and do that my belief that teachers ARE the ATA so it's our job to go and do that, as part of the ATA. (AB4)

Another participant who was a long-standing member of a local executive recalled the advocacy of members during the 1994 strike:

When we were on strike it called upon leaders to stand firm on what we believed was essential conditions for change for teachers. That was some of the hardest things that we have had to do in terms of labour; being on strike and standing face to face with the media and the entire community whose eyes are on us, of a million people saying “well what are you doing, you're not servicing our children.” Well we say this isn't about service to children, this is about providing the best conditions for practice for our teachers so that we can provide those best conditions for service to children. It's not a one-way street. (AB12)

For such participants, becoming involved in their teacher association was simply viewed as part and parcel of the professional purview of teachers and a function of their role as advocates for the teaching profession.

The discourses of ATA participants also tended to frame teachers as learners. One participant, for instance, stated that the teacher is the “first learner in the classroom” (AB6). Another positioned teachers as “life-long learners”, which he admitted was clichéd but felt to be true nonetheless. Moreover, participants espoused that teacher professionalism meant keeping abreast of the most recent educational research and
professional literature and actively pursing opportunities for self-directed professional
development:

Teacher professionalism is looking at research, reading, keeping abreast of the
best practices. It's not just going to university, getting your degree, and poof
you've a professional. It's like you are life long learning, you are keeping abreast
of all the current research and best practices. (AB11)

Teacher professionalism is keeping up with new ideas that are coming to better
meet the needs of our students. It's really that idea of keeping engaged in learning
and keeping engaged in the changing times and, again, part of that is being
involved in curriculum development, leadership opportunities, and all of those
things. (AB4)

Some also noted the importance of teachers learning from other teachers, stating that
teachers should have more of an opportunity to organize, plan, and deliver workshops and
presentations to other teachers. One participant in particular commented that PD led by
other teachers was some of the best PD she had ever had. Others framed this as part of a
larger discourse around the collaborative aspect of teacher professionalism where
teachers actively share and learn from each other’s experience and expertise:

I'm meeting with my colleagues today to share, collaborate, have a cup of tea, and
plan the best possible environment for ourselves as educators to refresh and renew
and bring back different ways of providing instruction and also just to have a
better understanding of who our kids are and we are. (AB12)

On a similar note, a teaching vice-principal commented that teacher professionalism was
about “trying to break down the walls of classrooms and collaborating with each other,
not only in this building [the school], but the opportunity to work beyond this building as
well” (AB4).

In all these instances, ATA members viewed teacher professionalism through a
democratic lens where teachers are a vital ingredient in the creation and sustainability of
quality environments conducive to the processes of teaching and learning. Within such
discourses teachers are highly valued for their expertise and decisional capital and are
seen as providing important counterbalances in the policy-making arena through their advocacy work and active participation in teacher associations. Self-directed teacher learning is front and center along with collaboration, mutual learning, and authentic teacher leadership. It is noteworthy however, that alongside such democratic discourses, some participants also espoused elements of more traditional discourses of teacher professionalism and the work of teachers. These mixed discourses are detailed in the section that follows.

**6.3.2. Mixed discourses.**

To say that ATA members espoused purely democratic discourses around teacher professionalism would be inaccurate. Rather, many participants espoused discourses that were a combination of both democratic and traditional notions of teacher professionalism. Such discourses took on diverse forms and expressed varied tensions and levels of consistency. For instance one participant who espoused democratic notions around autonomy and decision-making when defining teacher professionalism did not see these roles extending beyond individual classrooms when asked to talk about the work of professional teachers:

I: Lets move on to professionalism. So what exactly teacher professionalism mean to you?
AB3: Teacher professionalism means teacher efficacy; being able to feel good about what you do and having decisional capital to make discretionary judgments within your classroom. Using your structured and unstructured experience in practice and reflection.
I: So, when you think of the work of a professional teacher, what are the roles and responsibilities you think of?
AB3: They are responsible for student learning, that's their main, number one responsibility. And being able to make those choices in the classroom as to what resources to use, what pedagogical methods to use, what sorts of assessment to use depending on differentiated learning. That's what the role of a teacher is.

When further probed about possible roles beyond the classroom it became apparent that, the participant – who was the division’s lead teacher on the workload committee –
viewed extra-classroom work as problematic because it was not officially recognized as part of teachers’ paid workday. The participant proceeded to explain that her own school currently runs 19 mandated initiatives that are in addition to teacher’s regular classroom work. Thus, for this participant it was hard to separate extra-classroom work that was mandated from similar kinds of work that teachers initiated on their own accord. Through subsequent dialogue, it was clear that the participant struggled with reconciling the work that they felt professional teachers should be doing (collaborating, mentoring, association work) and the work that is supported by official roles and responsibilities as defined by the higher-ups.

In another instance, when asked what professionalism meant to them, a participant who was an administrator, commented:

From the day we take our oath till the day we die, we are under a different scrutiny…we are called to a higher standard where we are models to kids and I say to young teachers, your life as you know it is over, your actions on social media or when your outside of this building can come back to bite you and so you have to be always thinking that teaching is a 24/7 thing. (AB10)

The same participant went on to espouse a mixed discourse about the work of teacher. On the one hand, extra-classroom work was again viewed as being problematic:

The broad role [of teachers] is to attempt to help every child be as successful as they can be…preparing methods with every kid in mind…team planning around our new directions and transformative education, and trying to do some new pedagogical things with kids in terms of the way they assess and the kinds of lessons the implement. The teacher's work day is extremely complicated and then, on top of that, we ask them to engage professionally, to attend workshops and to try to be involved in their association as much as they can as a school rep or serve on a committee or get involved in our local. (AB10)

On the other hand, however, the participant also noted, “teachers have an obligation to be aware of current events, new trends and directions and to know the political things that are happening” (AB10), framing teachers as self-directed learners. Again, it was clear that traditional and democratic discourses around teacher professionalism were viewed as
being in tension with each other and the participant drew a distinct line between classroom work and the work teachers engage in outside of the classroom.

Other participants, however, saw democratic and traditional elements of teacher professionalism as co-existing in a more organic manner; engaging in the broader contexts of schooling was an outlet for professional growth that renewed passion for teaching and aided teachers in their work within the classroom. In such instances the discourse leaned more to the democratic side but with explicit acknowledgement of traditional elements of the work of teachers. This was the case for the participant described earlier who viewed herself as having her own professional practice. She commented:

Ultimately I think of the teacher as being responsible for the learning of his or her students, through teaching, planning, prepping, assessing, providing feedback to the students, collaborating with other teachers and educational staff. I think that's kind of the foundation or the base but I do believe that in order for that to be done well and to stay at a high standard, a teacher needs to continually focus on his or her growth and that is done through professional development, through collaboration, continuing education, university courses, graduate studies, and here in Alberta, becoming involved with their professional organization. (AB9)

Likewise, another participant who viewed professionalism in this dual-pronged way commented:

There's two parts [to teacher professionalism]. I like the idea that teachers are responsible for curriculum and classroom instruction and all that but I also think that there's another part of it - being aware of curriculum and research and a lot of those kinds of things… I wish more of my colleagues to have the inclination or the time to do those sorts of things….Very few of them do the sorts of things that I do and that's partly time, people are busy, but I just kind of enjoy it. (AB7)

For this participant, who was particularly involved in the political work of the ATA, although engaging in extra-classroom work was an important part of his own professionalism, he recognized that this was not the reality for all teachers. Acknowledging that such activities are not built into the traditional framework that define teachers’ workday, this participant, however, was able to reconcile this tension in his own
work life and actually viewed his extra-classroom participation as being an integral part of his professionalism.

Another participant, who was a school administrator and long time instructor with the ATA, commented that it was pedagogy that separated teachers from other professionals:

> Teachers have pedagogy; you have to be compassionate to be a doctor, you have to be organized to be an engineer, you have to be educated, all those things that we hold with other professions. But what’s different for teachers is pedagogy…. So, for me, teacher professionalism is that deep understanding about child development and how kids learn. (AB8)

She went on to note, however, “As teachers, we are the only ones to have that. We are the ones that know how to help children learn,” and talked about the importance of self-directed teacher learning, collaboration, and the teacher as decision maker. She explained that in her school, teachers and administrators collectively decide how extra funding gets allocated or what sort of professional development they need:

> We work together to decide what resources we need. I just finished hiring my 6th full time EA; that was conversation we had as professionals – what do we need for our work and what’s best for the kids? (AB8)

Thus, for a few ATA members, mixed discourses of teacher professionalism were accompanied by an internal struggle around the perceived dichotomy and tension between democratic roles of teachers as advocates and activists and traditional views of the teacher as moral role model, with role boundaries strictly within the classroom. For other participants, with more democratically inclined mixed views, these two worlds were more skillfully intertwined in a discourse of teacher professionalism that touted extra-classroom work as a vital component of enhanced classroom practice. In both instances participants tended to personally view the work of teachers as being both within and beyond the classroom. That being said, it was often recognized that not all teachers were inclined or had the opportunity to engaged in such work, a fact that was lamented by some participants.
6.4. Supporting Discourses of Teacher Professionalism

While the discourses of teacher professionalism espoused were somewhat variable amongst participants, all thirteen ATA members in this study personally embodied Sachs’ (2003) definition of democratic discourses of teacher professionalism. As a whole, participants were involved in a dynamic range of professional activities. Five had completed their Master’s degree and one was pursuing their Doctorate. A few had been involved in curriculum and report card development and others had attended or presented at provincial educational conferences.

For the majority of participants, however, the teacher association served as the platform from which they chose to enact their professionalism, engaging in the broader context of schooling through a variety of association work including elected positions at the local and provincial level, volunteering on a host of different committees, and participating in various professional development activities. For many, association work spanned most, if not their entire careers, with four participants having been actively involved in their associations in one way or another for over twenty-five years. For some, being active within the ATA had invigorated and renewed their passion for teaching and served as a motivating factor in their desire to advocate for students and teaching profession alike. This was particularly the case for one participant who had a history of local executive work and involvement in specialist councils. She commented, “People ask me why don't I retire, because I have the years to do so, and I say I have found a new passion in being president and getting involved in what's happening within the province” (AB11). On a similar note, another participant with extensive committee work was very passionate about the value of the association and the unique growth opportunities it provided:

The association has a different relationship to education, it analyzes in different ways, and it looks through different lenses. It has opportunities for research, for
mobilization, for engagement with teachers, for recognition of service in a different way, to rise above the ordinary, the hum drum of day to day routine and put your skills to work in a different way, to be seen in a different way and to see your own capacity and skills grow in a way that may not evolve within the school context….You get to be part of an organization that celebrates our identities as professionals in different ways and we've don't very often get opportunities to celebrate that as educators. (AB12)

In many ways, being a part of the ATA provided an outlet for participants to find their professional voice and critically challenge policies and initiatives that, however well-meaning, were not well-suited to the realities of their classroom or their school. For instance, one participant noted how being involved in the association had validated her expertise and reminded her that professional judgment had a place in the broader policy picture, reinforcing her activist identity:

Being part of the ATA constantly reminds me that I am a professional and that I have the knowledge and wisdom to think for myself and help my students. And when the government and the superintendents and people above me, start to say “do this” and “do that”, I can stop and question it because I am a professional, I can think for myself. I work with my students, I know them well, and my voice is just a valid as anybody else's voice and sometimes more so because I work one on one with the kids, I know them much better than a lot of other things that seem to come down the pipes at us (AB5)

Others commented that amidst the day-to-day hustle and bustle of the classroom, it is easy for teachers to forget that they have a voice. For these teachers the association played an integral role in promoting the discourses of the teacher as expert and advocate and providing a foundation to stand upon in their own activist endeavors. In this vein, ATA members in this study largely enacted their professionalism as a “discourse of power” (Hilferty, 2004), their actions and activities clearly portraying professional teachers as experts, decision makers, and advocates. Their extra-classroom work challenged traditional ideals around what it means to be a professional teacher; they exercised their voice from a position of power and authority, venturing into the policy arena confident and strong.
Moreover, for the vast majority of participants, these discourses were heavily influenced by their collaborative work with the ATA and professional community that they then belonged to:

Because I'm involved with that community and the ATA and my colleagues there, we meet, we talk, we share ideas, I start to see a vision of professionalism from them and I start to practice it by being aware, by being involved, and by doing my professional reading. So I think that my ATA colleagues, over the years, have very much shaped me as a teacher and shaped my thinking about professionalism. (AB7)

For some members, the ATA’s influence was so profound that it was difficult for them to separate their views from those of the Association. According to one participant, who was an administrator, “99.9% of my views around teacher professionalism have come from the ATA” (AB10). Other participants voiced similar comments, as evidenced in the passage below:

I've always been active with the organization. So it's hard for me to separate and clearly define this is what I thought before and this is how I think about my professional practice since my involvement. But I would say it's definitely played a huge role in shaping my ideas about teacher professionalism. (AB9)

ATA members also identified the Association as a critical element in their ability to enact democratic discourses of teacher professionalism in their daily professional lives. Participants particularly valued the ATA’s strong commitment to the provision of diverse professional learning opportunities for their members. Participants talked about the Finland Project, Convention, Summer Institute, and a host of other workshops and seminars, viewing such opportunities as heavily supporting their professional growth. One particular participant actually credited her career growth and leadership experiences to her involvement in ATA sponsored PD:

I wouldn't be where I am in my career today if I hadn't become involved with the ATA and the specialist councils to the level that I have. I don't know that I would have done my masters or if I did pursue a master's degree, I don't think I would have done it in leadership. A lot of my leadership experiences I've gotten through
being actively involved in the ATA. A lot of my professional growth has come from them, both from attending PD workshops, conferences, curriculum circles, that sort of thing, as well as being involved in the development of curriculum resource, facilitating workshops, putting on presentations myself. Probably 85% of that has come from my involvement through the ATA. I don't think I would be an administrator in my district right now, or a consultant if it weren’t for that. (AB8)

Some remarked that many experiences were opportunities they felt they would not have had otherwise, noting the generous proportion of the ATA’s budget that is earmarked for release time, accommodations, and travel costs in order to support teachers in attending and participating in such events. One participant relayed; “in our building, we have 15 teachers, including myself and the principal who have now travelled to Finland, and those are opportunity we definitely wouldn't have had without the ATA spearheading and leading those opportunity for us” (AB10).

In particular, the teacher-led nature of the ATA’s PD was viewed as being a more favorable outlet for teacher learning that other forms of board sponsored PD, which one participant referred to as “top-down” and impersonal (AB11). For instance, one participant noted:

   From our districts we get directions on just doing our jobs… if you want to do things professionally in terms of your own growth, we have more resources from the ATA than we do from our school boards, or from the ministry for that matter. (AB10)

Another participant who was on the ATA’s provincial PD committee, similarly commented:

   We're supposed to have 3 days out of our school year that we do PD. It's supposed to be teacher led PD but often times people feel that it's done to them and it seems to be mostly about district initiatives and superintendent's initiatives as opposed to things that we really need to move our own learning forward. (AB5)

The participant went on to contrast this restrictive climate to the empowering atmosphere of the ATA’s annual teacher convention, which they described as allowing teachers much
more control over their learning in addition to opportunities to lead the learning of their colleagues:

The teacher's convention that the ATA runs allows me to network with people and ask them to present at convention and mention keynotes that might be actually helpful for us…. And so, on the PD committee this year we're talking about what do our teachers need. I'm actually picking something that I want to explore further…. I feel that there's a lot more voice in what I do at the ATA. (AB5)

Perhaps more than anything, however, the discourses of the participants in this study have been significantly influenced through the various networking opportunities afforded to them by their involvement with the ATA. In particular, members articulated that being an active member of the ATA expanded their professional networks and increased their sphere of influence through dialogue with leading academics, government officials, and teachers from around the province and, in some cases, the globe. For instance, one participant recalled how becoming PD chair opened him up to a whole new professional community:

When I became PD chair for my local that really allowed me an opportunity to spend more time and effort on ATA events where they brought in world-class speakers like Pasi Sahlberg, Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley, and the names go on. I started reading their books and listening to them and blogging about them and, although I started the ball on my own, it's really in large part because of the ATA. (AB6)

For some participants, participating in these new networks had the domino effect of serving as an additional platform from which to engage in advocacy work and insert their voice in the policy arena. As evidenced in the passages below, this held true not only for those in formal executive positions, but also for those who were involved in various committees:

As Branch President I attend the board meetings each month and I hear the discussions and I get to have lunch with them and influence them. I can take them aside and say hey this is a good decision or no, this is a terrible decision. (AB2)

The minister does a reception at the ARA (Annual Representative Assembly) and I've had a chance to talk with him about some of the things that are not ok. So, it
also provides opportunities to talk with people at different places and you can kind of get messages across. (AB5)

Hearing and reflecting on the perspectives of their peers and colleagues through committee work and professional learning opportunities also broadened participants’ frame of reference in terms of the diversity of teaching and learning conditions across the province, allowing them to view educational issues through a variety of lenses. In this manner, a number of members commented that they were able to “see society through different eyes” (AB12) and gain better insights into how educational policies play out in the bigger picture:

Doing all these things helps me understand what's going on in the province, it helps me understand what life is like for other teachers...helps me to see the world of a teacher in, I think, a much larger way than I would otherwise if I just staying in my little corner of the world…. It's great for providing information and knowledge and seeing the world from a different viewpoint, which is really helpful as a teacher, you know, as opposed to just being in the classroom. (AB5)

I get a better idea of the direction that the government is taking on policy. I get a clear sense of ATA policy and probably I know a lot more about issues related to teaching and education in the province because I'm involved in those...simply being aware of things that I wouldn't normally been aware of if I were just a day to day teacher, I show up teach and go home. I really wouldn't be as informed about issues related to education. (AB7)

Consequently, networking through the ATA often created a more acute awareness of the depth and breadth of the circumstances of their peers, which, in turn, fueled their advocacy work around conditions of teaching and learning.

In summary, as the comments of the ATA members in this study illustrate, the ATA has directly gone about influencing the discourses of teacher professionalism espoused and enacted by its most active members in myriad ways. Working with and participating in various facets of the ATA provided the members in this case with a platform for advocacy work and an opportunity for leadership growth, which consequently supported the promotion of democratic discourses of teacher professionalism amongst the majority
of the members in this study. Moreover, the ATA’s support for professional learning and networking opportunities acted as a backbone of collective strength, which allowed members to put such discourses into action. At the same time however, the presence of other forces have served to limit and constrain engagement in their association. This is further explored in the next section.

6.5. Limiting Discourses of Teacher Professionalism

As discussed earlier, the political climate around education in Alberta had been somewhat strained leading into this study. The imposition of a non-negotiated contract, the elimination of AISI funding, and the absence of ATA representation on the Task Force for Teaching Excellence had been particularly difficult for the association and its members, especially in light of the progressive relationship between the ATA and Alberta Learning when Ed Hancock had been Minister. These tensions were duly noted by a number of ATA members in this study, who spoke about the “push and pull” of government as impacting various facets of teacher professionalism and teacher’s ability to engage in extra-classroom work. That being said, dialogue around the negative impact of the current policy environment, however, took a variety of forms and a number of themes emerged within this subset of the data.

One participant, for instance, was particularly aware of the managerial discourses shaping the face of education, not just in Alberta but also around the globe:

> When we look at world politics right now and we look at Bush and NCLB and Chicago, there’s a public perception that education is broken and that the way to fix it is through privatization and big business. And so you have people who are not educators making decisions that are supposed to be in the best interests of teachers and parents and families. (AB1)

Moreover, it was clear that this participant broadly perceived this particular discourse as limiting his ability to carry through on his own agency. Espousing very democratic ideals
around teacher professionalism and a strong propensity toward activism and advocacy, the participant was frustrated by what he referred to as the “bioaccumulation of poison that travels up the food chain” (AB1), resulting in the creation of an organization of like-minded individuals that “train people to act and think a certain way.” The participant went on to talk about how government control of certification stymied the ability of teachers to be autonomous professionals:

Our professional lives still lie in the hands of our education minister. It doesn't lie in the hands of our teachers. So if you're a doctor, your doctors’ association certifies you, if you're a lawyer, the bar certifies you. Here we're certified by the government so there's not really an accountability directly back to our teachers. That's changed a little bit because we have the ability to discipline members now but we don't necessary have that control of our profession….We're being treated not as professionals but as ground level employees who, if they weren't there to shepherd us, would be out looking at the stars. (AB1)

For this participant, then, the context of education in the province was very much a part of the reality that shaped their daily work life and, in turn, broadly limited democratic discourses of professionalism on individual and collective scales.

Other participants were more specific, talking about particular aspects of the policy environment. Several participants, for instance, spoke about the manner in which the professional and union functions of the ATA had been portrayed by the media. For one participant, this portrayal was seen as restricting teacher professionalism and narrowing the public’s understanding of the function and purpose of the ATA:

A lot of what's shown in the media shows our association as acting as a labour union versus a professional association and that negatively impacts on us being seen as professionals. I think that our ATA certainly does have a bit of a labour union part to it, however, I would say, predominately; our ATA acts as a professional organization that helps to improve the practice of teaching in our province…. I don't know if individuals out there always view the ATA in that way and there are limited understanding of what the ATA is. (AB9)
Other members noted the negative connotation associated with ‘union’ discourses, which colors the public perception of teachers as unionized professionals:

    It’s quite interesting with the terminology, how it has different connotations. With the political climate in Alberta, we really try to say association and our government is really bent on painting us as a union, which, again, has interesting connotations in the public eye. (AB1)

In this vein, many members were particularly adamant about using the term “association” rather than “union” when describing the ATA. For instance, one participant commented, “We are not just a union; we are a professional association. Often people refer to it as the union and it's not. The ATA is the professional association for us” (AB5). Others expressed concern that portrayals of the ATA as a union brought about fears within the membership that ATA work could have negative consequences on their career growth, stating, “Some people see your ATA work as union work and it can be used punitively if you're trying to move into leadership” (AB4). This was especially a concern for one participant who was heavily involved in the C2 committee:

    Because of the school act, the superintendent has the right to transfer me and they don't even have to give a reason…. I'm afraid that these extra roles that I've taken on with the association may be perceived as a negative as far as working at the site that I have been working at for the last 11 years…. I'm a little bit worried that I may be transferred, unduly, without reason, which will greatly affect my current life realities as a single parent. (AB3)

For the majority of ATA members in this study, however, the most significant factor limiting their ability to enact democratic discourses of teacher professionalism was workload. Many participants commented that their direct work around teaching and learning was cumbersome in and of itself; preparing lessons, assessing students, and finding resources was time consuming and often went well beyond the preparation time they were allotted. Add to that the numerous district and school-led initiatives that had
been piled on and teacher workload became even more onerous, leaving little time or energy for engaging in any other professional work:

When the workload and the pressures and the stresses increases in the classroom and day to day teaching, teachers have less energy, time, and willingness to go out and do other things. A lot of what we can do to increase our professionalism is done outside of the regular school day so it does make it more challenging and sometimes we hear teachers saying “I'm just going to focus on my classroom this year, just focus on my students, because it's too hard to do some of the other stuff”. (AB9)

One participant framed the workload issue as “thriving, not striving”, stating that the work environment of a teacher should be an atmosphere where teachers flourish and grow as professionals rather than struggle to keep their heads above water:

Teacher should be able to thrive, but what we're hearing increasingly is that they are striving and that's no way to go to work…. How can people bloom if they feel that they don't have the time or the energy to do that? Even in the association we notice that it's hard to draw people into service because they don't have the time. That's really the question going forward, how much is too much, so that a teacher can be more than just a service provider; they are a person with a wealth of expertise and an opportunity to grow in different ways. Otherwise growth becomes something you do for others as opposed to something you do for yourself and if I don't grow, I have a lot less to contribute. (AB12)

The participant went on to note the role of the association and its members in addressing workload and changing the public discourse around the work of teachers:

We have 21st century learning, well I don't know, what about 21st century teaching? What kinds of conditions and practices are we creating for teachers so they can move out of these silos and into a new architectural design for teaching that allow people freedoms and liberations from this sort of straightjacketed environment. A lot of policy wonks get in there and chat it up about how they’re going to transform education but we're not talking about how we're going to improve the lives of teachers so that those things can actually be realized…I think one of the more prominent roles of the teacher association is to help people understand that we need to change that language around teaching and start talking about how we're going to improve the working conditions for teachers so we can move on to other areas. (AB12)
In all of these instances, it was clear that deficit discourses around teacher unionism and the work of professional teachers had reinforced a vision of the teaching profession that was often in stark contrast to the discourses espoused and enacted by most of the ATA members in this study. Some participants noted that this discord sometimes created a contentious atmosphere that adversely impacted relationships between the ATA, the government, and the school boards as well as that of teachers and administrators and teachers and the general public. Furthermore, many perceived such tensions as constraining the extent to which teachers were able to voice their opinions, engage in advocacy work, and genuinely be involved in decision making – all tenets of democratic teacher professionalism.

Interestingly, a few participants actually noted that working within such constraining discourses did not limit their ability to enact their views of teacher professionalism; rather it reinforced the importance of engaging in such work and highlighted the value of their teacher association. For instance, one participant commented that since the imposed contract she had become more active and outspoken, sitting down to talk with members of the legislative assembly and the minister himself to bring forward the voice of teachers (AB11). Another member specifically noted the work of ATA in supporting their ability to persevere and enact democratic discourses in spite of the presence of other limiting discourses:

I do feel that we're not valued (by government) and that sense of not being valued is more and more [evident]…. On the other hand, being part of the association reminds me that we are professionals, that we have gone to school, that we do know what we are talking about, that we have years of experience working with kids and looking at pedagogy and knowing that our voice matters and that we really need to speak up as much as we can and that spurs me on in terms of trying to education and inform that we do come from a base of knowledge. (AB5)

Other participants commented that they themselves had made a conscious effort to not allow anything to limit the enactment of their professionalism. These participants
perceived the current discursive context as part of the “ebb and flow” of the politics of education and chose not to let deficit discourses around professionalism and teacher workload impact their view of themselves as professionals or their engagement in extra-classroom work. For instance, one participant commented:

I can honestly say that nothing has limited my professionalism. I get into hot debates sometimes but the conversations are very respectful and at the end of the day we may agree to disagree but it's ever limited what I've been really passionate about and what I've wanted to do…. And it's been busy [with workload] but you just have to learn to prioritize what's important and what really needs the time and what does not. (AB4)

Moreover, she was optimistic that the ATA’s work on the teacher workload committee would begin to address some of the underlying issues which served as limitations on engagement in extra-classroom work for so many of her colleagues.

6.6. Summary

The ATA has served as a platform for engagement in an activist teaching profession in a number of ways, but primarily through the provision of meaningful, teacher-led professional development and various teacher leadership and networking opportunities. Through these avenues the ATA has endorsed a vision of teacher professionalism that embraces and celebrates the teacher as innovator, policy actor, and expert, fostering and promoting similar discourses amongst those who choose to be actively involved in such opportunities. Consequently, ATA members in this study embodied the ideals of an activist teaching profession: collaborating with educators, academics, and other stakeholders, exercising their voice around key issues, and advocating for the rights of teachers and the representative strength of their association.

Moreover, with their proactive approach to political engagement and strong research capacity, the ATA has become well known and respected within the province as a strong
supporter of thoughtful educational restructuring that supports the creation of improved conditions for teaching and learning. Working with the government and engaging in productive debates and discussions even in times of discord, the ATA has also largely been successful in shaping the public discourse around teacher professionalism and the work of teachers, establishing teachers as the foremost experts on matters of education in the province. That being said, from time to time, the relationship between the ATA and the government has become quite strained, particularly in regards to the issue of teacher workload. Such tensions were acknowledged by a number of participants in this study, a few of which feared that ATA work might hinder their career growth and others who were concerned over the ways in which particular government discourses around teacher professionalism and the unionism impacted teacher autonomy and teacher voice.

While this particular policy environment was identified as limiting the enactment of democratic discourses of teacher professionalism by some members, regardless of the constraints presented, the ATA members interviewed in this study espoused and enacted discourses of teacher professionalism that predominantly challenged traditional notions around the roles and responsibilities of professional teachers. For some participants, engaging in the association was an extension of an innate desire to contribute to the teaching profession in ways that their work in the classroom did not afford, an outlet from which to exercise their personal sense of agency. For others their work with the association was more happenstance, their association work fueling their growth and development of their activist identity. Consistently supported by their association, however, they were committed to influencing the educational landscape, not only within their own classrooms and schools but also on a provincial level as well; promoting a vision of the teaching profession where teachers are valued for much more than standard competencies and compliance.
Chapter Seven: Cross-Case Analysis

7.1. Introduction

In order to understand the influences, supports and constraints around member discourses of teacher professionalism and the work of teachers, this study presents detailed cases of two teacher associations in distinct Canadian contexts: The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario and the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Drawing on the data presented in the cases and the literature presented in chapter two, this chapter presents the cross-case analysis of the significant findings, which are organized around three primary claims:

- Engagement in teacher unions can serve as a platform for the promotion of democratic discourses of teacher professionalism that aid in development of an activist teaching profession that is dedicated to improving education on a grander scale. This occurs in variable ways, however, depending on the organizational priorities and the discourses of professionalism espoused by the union themselves.

- Distinct relationships between union engagement, teacher agency, and the larger policy context result in discourses of professionalism that are unique to particular contexts and particular individuals.

- The discourses of teacher professionalism held by teachers and their unions and those held by governments and the public are not as mutually exclusive as they are often presented in literature. They are more like two sides of the same coin.

While these claims are explored in separate sections for the purpose of clarity of presentation, this is an artificial delineation. Rather, it is the reciprocity of influence between and amongst union engagement, teacher agency, and the broader policy environment that create a discursive arena in each context that shifts and changes over
time on both an individual and collective scale, reflective of the evolving manner in which governments, teacher unions, and their members discursively respond in relation to one another. This relationship, and the manner in which it gives rise to variable, yet related, discourses of professionalism, is detailed in the sections that follow.

7.2. Teacher Associations as a Platform for Democratic Discourses of Professionalism

As noted in the literature review, teacher unions have had a difficult time establishing themselves as valid policy actors and educational reformers (Bascia, 2003; 2005; Lipman, 2011; Murphy, 1990; Poole, 2007; Ravitch, 2010; Swalwell & Schweber, 2013). Struggling to work with the small space that has typically been afforded to them amidst the recent neoliberalizing of education, teacher unions have been criticized, demonized, and demoralized by the media and researchers alike who have referred to them as “the worm in the apple” (Brimelow, 2003) and accused them of being concerned only with bread and butter issues of salary and benefits and shamefully putting the needs of teachers ahead of the needs of students.

The two unions in this study, however, stand in stark comparison to the negative portrayal of teacher unions as foreboding and selfish organizations so commonly found in much of the literature that explores their work. Rather, like the unions in Bangs and Frost (2012) and the subject associations in Hilferty (2004), ETFO and the ATA both embody many aspects of Kerchner and Koppich’s (1993) “professional unionism” and share a focus on member engagement and professional development that was highly valued by the participants in this study. More specifically, in response to increasing demands for teacher quality amidst fewer government resources, these organizations pride themselves
on providing opportunities for member engagement in a variety of professional learning and leadership programs that provided members with myriad opportunities to become involved in influencing policy and broadly participating in debates around big picture items including curriculum, equity, and teacher development, to name a few.

Describing their associations as “instrumental in facilitating professional growth” (ON1) and “celebrating teacher identities as professionals” (AB12), it was clearly evident that participation in such activities impacted their espoused discourses, in addition to providing support for the enactment of such discourses. In this vein, by and large members in both cases viewed teacher professionalism as encompassing roles as learners, mentors, advocates, and collaborators. Self-directed learning opportunities, being respected as autonomous professionals, and engaging in the teacher association were viewed as paramount to professionalism and members from both associations largely embodied these ideals in their own professional work life, engaging in and seeking out such opportunities on a regular and ongoing basis. In this way then, the ATA and ETFO both served to promote and sustain the promotion of democratic discourses of teacher professionalism amongst their most active members and, in doing so, strengthened capacity for the ongoing development of “activist teaching professions” (Sachs, 2003) in their respective contexts. This further supports Bangs and MacBeath’s (2013) notion that teacher unions play “a dual role” in terms of “exercising leadership in their own right while seeking to empower their individual members” (p.332).

However, while democratic discourses were evident in both cases, there were slight differences between the cases that appear to reflect the distinct priorities of each organization with respect to professional learning and collaboration. For instance, through its partnership with Finland and its collaboration with leading academics, the ATA focuses heavily on the networking aspect of teacher professionalism. This not only
allows members to “see the world from a different viewpoint” (AB5) and “get a better picture of the direction that government is taking on policy” (AB7), it also provides them with opportunities to build their own professional network, which often presents new occasions to enact various aspects of democratic professionalism. While ETFO is involved in a number of collaborative projects, networking does not appear to be an overt focus within ETFO and this element was not a strong component in the discourses of its members, being only briefly mentioned by one participant.

On a similar note, both the ATA and ETFO engage their membership in the political side of teacher unionism, providing an outlet for advocacy and activism and inserting the voice of teachers into the larger context of schooling. Reminding teachers that their voice is “just as valid as anybody else’s voice” (AB5), engagement in such activities has also helped shape the discourses espoused and enacted by the union active teachers in this study, particularly with respect to discourses around the teacher as autonomous expert and the importance of collectively taking a stand as active members of teacher associations. Members from both organizations positioned teachers as “having a voice for students from a position of knowledge and authority” (AB5) and being the agents of change, influencing the policy arena and advocating for quality environments for teaching and learning. Rather than “executing the innovations of others” (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001, p.140), teachers were portrayed as “researchers and creators of knowledge” (ON7) on issues related to all areas of educational reform including student learning, curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, and the professional development of teachers.

That being said, however, democratic discourses around the teacher as advocate and social activist were more strongly espoused by ATA members than members of ETFO. For instance, while a number of ETFO members talked about “teachers as Advocates for
social change” (ON7), this was primarily within the context of taking part in protests and other forms of labour action. On the contrary, in Alberta, the notion of strikes, withdrawal of services, and political marches was all but absent. Rather, advocacy and activism amongst ATA members was more about “indicating to the public what the job of teaching is about” (AB4) through proactive political action that opens a dialogue between teachers, the ATA, government, and the public regarding what constitutes the best conditions for teaching and learning.

While no direct correlation can be firmly established, it is possible that this distinction may be related to the specific political tactics employed by each organization. Tending to focus more on establishing a research base for its position than it does on the protest plights typical of conventional unions, the ATA has developed a vision for the future of education in Alberta that acknowledges the need for thoughtful and careful educational change. Within this context the ATA has become an advocate for public education in the province of Alberta and has been very successful in swaying the public discourse in support of teachers. While it employs many tenets of professional unionism, ETFO has tended to rely more heavily on union tactics during times of discord, perhaps a function of the multi-union situation in Ontario where the decisions of one organization sometimes forces the others into a corner. Within this context, teacher organizations in Ontario appear to be viewed more as advocates for teachers than advocates for education and they have not had the same success as the ATA in swinging the public discourse or the reform agendas of governments.

Moreover, falling victim to the kinds of negative press discussed earlier, at the time that this study was conducted it was somewhat of an unfavorable time to be an active participant in a teacher federation in Ontario. While not the case for all the members in this study, some ETFO participants commented that they no longer told people they were
teachers, as they didn’t want to deal with the backlash from people who “want to unload and vent about issues and problems” (ON8). Bolstered by their strategic public advocacy work and choosing to largely refrain from labour action over the past decade, ATA members, by contrast, enacted their democratic professionalism within a public sphere that, for the most part, was highly supportive of the teaching profession. In that vein, ATA members did not appear to be as profoundly impacted by negative public discourses. While some members did speak to the unfavorable manner in which the ATA was sometimes portrayed by the government and in the media, the comments lacked the sense of urgency and despair evident in the discourses of some ETFO members who lamented a similar situation. For instance, while a few ATA members were fearful that their association work might be used “punitively if you’re trying to move into leadership” (AB4), no ATA member reported being hesitant to tell people what they did for a living.

Thus, in addition to illustrating the possibility that teacher unions represent in terms of the promotion and embodiment of democratic discourses amongst its members, data from this study also suggest that the organizational priorities of particular teacher associations can significantly impact member discourses around teacher professionalism as well as ways in which the general public views the teaching profession. In this study, the kinds of professional activities members are engaged in and the tactics used during disputes with government appear to have profoundly shaped the views of the ATA and ETFO members who participated in this study. As such, while both organizations shared a commitment to professional development, member engagement, and advocacy work, combined with the specificities of their individual approaches, ETFO and the ATA have indeed promoted and supported the development and enactment democratic discourses of teacher professionalism amongst their most active members, albeit to varying degrees and along somewhat distinct lines.
7.3. The Discursive Triad of Member Engagement, Teacher Agency, and the Larger Policy Environment

While it is clear that teacher associations influence the professionalism discourses of their members, engagement in teacher associations does not entirely account for the discourses presented by the union-active teachers in this study. Rather, the larger policy environment and the agency of teachers also played a role, forming a discursive triad with member engagement that collectively shaped participant discourses. In this section I first explore the larger policy environment in each case and propose an explanation of how distinctive discourses within these environments may have influenced the discourses found in each context. Next, I turn my attention to the manner in which a teacher’s sense of agency can serve to modify external discursive factors and facilitate the enactment of democratic discourse of professionalism even in policy contexts that promote contrasting discourses.

7.3.1. The larger policy environment

It is arguable the proliferation of neoliberalism and GERM has not been as extreme in Canada as they have been in countries like the US and England. In fact, Canadian jurisdictions have largely shied away from reforms of merit pay, charter schools, league tables, and external school inspections (see Apple, 2006; Carter, Stevenson, & Passy, 2010; and Ravitch, 2010), which Day (2002) positions as “rewarding those who successfully comply with government directives and reach government targets and punishing those who do not” (p. 678). That being said, as highlighted in Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson’s (2007a) edited book on educational policy across the country, the general principles of accountability, centralization of decision-making, and top-down policy reforms have indeed been alive and well in most Canadian provinces, including Alberta (Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson, 2007b) and Ontario (Anderson & Ben Jaafar, 2007). As
outlined earlier in both cases, such policy cultures were particularly predominant during the Harris years in Ontario and the Klein era in Alberta, but they also persist into the current landscape.

At first glance, it appears as though a similar context of educational reform has evolved in Ontario and Alberta over the past 30 years. This seems to be particularly true during the Klein era and the Harris years, where the political atmosphere and reform agenda in both provinces were very anti-union. The most recent upheavals have also both been the result of plans to legislate contracts after talks at the bargaining table did not result in collective agreements. Despite these surface similarities, however, a number of factors have contributed to the evolution of policy contexts that are distinct in each location. For instance, the Conservative party of Alberta has been in power for the last 40 years and, although specific foci have varied, the relationship between the ATA and the Alberta government has been relatively stable (Bascia & Osmond, 2012). Even in times of strife, the ATA has often opted to continue to collaborate with government and work within whatever discursive arenas they could so as to continue to constructively insert the voice of teachers into the larger policy conversation (Bascia, 2008). This collaborative approach may have also been aided by the relatively small size of the educational policy scene in Alberta, which has resulted in an “everyone knows everyone” environment where it is not unheard of for someone to have worked in Alberta Learning and move to the ATA or vice versa. Within this context, although there have been times where the ATA and the government have come to loggerheads, a prevailing discourse of mutual trust and working together had largely dominated the educational landscape for much of the last 20 years leading into this study (Basica & Osmond, 2012).

In contrast, three different political parties have governed Ontario since 1990: the NDP, the PC party, and most recently the Liberals. Coupled with the much larger size of the
Ministry, establishing solid relationships built on trust with the ruling party has been more challenging for ETFO (MacLellan, 2009). In this vein, the prevailing discursive context in Ontario over the past 20 years can be more accurately described as swinging back and forth between one of mutual understanding and collaboration and one of hostility and distrust. Further to this, while the ATA is the only teacher association in Alberta, ETFO is one of four federations in Ontario. As Stevenson and Bascia (2013) point out, “in a multi-union situation unions have to look ‘two ways’” (p. 15): not only must they be engaged in a relationship with their employer, they “must also make an assessment of their own actions relative to the actions of other unions” (p. 15). Thus, as evidenced in the cases, the single union context in Alberta has allowed the ATA to advocate as one strong voice for teachers whereas ETFO’s advocacy work has been sometimes impacted by a lack of cohesiveness within its multi-union context. For instance, in the case of Bill 115, OECTA agreed to a deal with the government at the onset, setting a precedent for the other federations to follow suit. Not happy with the deal, ETFO and OSSTF held out and withdrew extracurricular services in protest. Later, when government rescinded the bill, OSSTF lifted their ban, leaving ETFO as the lone federation standing firm. Hence, although there have been times of harmony with government, the level of mutual respect and the depth of collaboration that exists between the ATA and Alberta Learning has yet to be firmly established in the Ontario context over the long-term.

Further to this, as the individual cases in this study suggest, like the varied approaches and priorities of teacher organizations, the distinct educational contexts and the unique ways in which those contexts discursively manifest themselves in the daily work lives of teachers have also contributed to differences in participant discourses around teacher professionalism. In Ontario, for instance, particular reforms imposed around the establishment of the Ontario College of Teachers, who sets professional standards and
handles teacher discipline, appears to have given rise to a culture of distrust (Codd, 2005) that contributed to public discourses of suspicion of teacher unions and perpetuation of the misconception that they protect bad teachers, further reinforcing the contentious environment of the greater policy picture in Ontario.

For some ETFO members in this study, these “discourses of derision” (Ball, 1990) have created a situation where they were uncertain of their collective and individual teacher identities. More specifically, it was apparent that the presence of this independent “watchdog” (ON5) was confusing for some ETFO members, who struggled to understand the role of their “union” in light of this external regulatory organization. Moreover, evidence from the case also suggests that the presence of the OCT and their discourse of professionalism as “a standard we expect everyone to minimally adhere to” (ON2) had contributed to the espousal of mixed discourses in some ETFO members that focused on traditional elements of moral character and standards of practice more than the democratic elements of activism and autonomy. In contrast, in Alberta, while Alberta Learning is involved in the teacher certification process, it is the ATA who deals with matters of discipline and sets the standards for professional practice and ethical conduct of teachers. There is no external college of teachers or OCT equivalent and the ATA stands firm as the one “professional association” for the province’s teachers. In this sense, while one ATA members portrayed the professional lives of Alberta teachers as lying “in the hands of the education minister” (AB1) and others lamented the use of the “union” by government, discourses around standards of practice and minimum levels of competency were relatively minimal.

The policy structure around the work of administrators is also unique to each context. In Alberta, teaching is a unified profession and the ATA represents both teachers and school administrators. While tensions between teachers and administrators were noted by some
ATA members as impacting their ability to enact democratic discourse of teacher professionalism, this theme was much more apparent in the ETFO data, where participants talked, sometimes at great length, about the “us vs. them” (ON7) discourse that has seeped into some schools since principals and vice principals were moved into management positions. In this vein a number of ETFO participants reflected that top-down administrative styles and principals who were “mouthpieces for the board” (ON7) limited their professionalism by portraying their ETFO work as “a waste of time” (ON8), creating a clear dichotomy between those who want to become school administrators and those who want to be active in their teacher federation.

As a whole, these differences in the policy context and the discourses espoused within have impinged on the discourses of the union-active teacher in this study in unique ways. For instance, while ATA members acknowledged the presence of limiting factors within Alberta’s policy context, in the absence of overtly negative public discourses around the teaching profession, it was policies around workload and teacher time that were perceived as having the largest impact on democratic professionalism. Simply finding the time amongst the barrage of initiatives and ever-increasing demands on teachers was a challenge for most participants and seemed to trump other policy issues like the recent imposed contract. By contrast, ETFO members described the limitations of the policy environment and the discourses within with an unparalleled urgency. Participants voiced concerns over what they perceived as deliberate attempts on the part of government to scapegoat teachers and “throw every piece of crap” (ON2) at them in an attempt to exert more control over teachers and alter the scope of the work of the federation to highlight their union function and decrease their professional purview, promoting the common discourse of the teacher union as “driven by self-interest…and deliberately blocking reform” (Johnson, 2004, p. 34). In this way, ETFO members seemed to have been exposed to a policy environment that was much more typical of the traditional “paralysis
perspective” (Johnson, 2004) of unions than their ATA counterparts and, in turn, espoused a deeper mistrust of both government and the public in terms of the value placed on teachers and, by extension, their teacher associations.

7.3.2. Teacher agency

As also noted in each case, however, regardless of the presence of competing discourses which served to constrain and limit the enactment of democratic professionalism, all members of both organizations were, in various ways, purposefully inserting themselves into the broader educational context and engaging in professional learning, advocacy, and collaboration well beyond their own classrooms and even their own schools. In accordance with Hilferty’s (2004) notion that professionalism is an enacted discourse of power made visible not only through words but also in action, in this study the extent to which neoliberal discourses of reform served to deprofessionalize teachers largely depended on the extent to which teachers went about trying to shape the conditions of teaching and learning on their own accord. In other words, the politics of teacher professionalism and the struggle over discursive legitimacy was partly about government’s actions and partly about how teachers responded to those actions (McCulloch, Helsby, & Knight 2000), which I propose was a function of both their individual and collective sense of agency.

It is noteworthy, however, that some authors who write about agency question the significance of individualized action (including Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), particularly in light of the social constructivist notion of Foucault’s notion of discourse. As such, it behooves me to say that, while I do agree that, individual agency likely doesn’t determine the discourse of teacher professionalism one espouses completely on its own accord, that is not to say that an individual’s personal sense of agency isn’t a part of the dynamic
interplay of factors that do shape these notions of professionalism concomitantly. In other words, this study acknowledges that, like discourses themselves, individual agency is shaped by societal factors and does not occur in a vacuum, however, the ways in which those factors intermingle to impact views around efficacy and agentic power is unique to each individual, which I propose accounts for the variable manifestation of such discourses both within and between each case, at least to some extent.

In particular, the significance of individual agency on the enactment of discourses of professionalism was evidenced in the additional advocacy work of some participants. These participants specifically noted that they innately possessed an inner drive to contribute to education on a broader scale and one Ontario participants posited, “It’s the way I was hatched” (ON9). Putting this agency into action, these particular members engage in a host of self-driven, individual advocacy work outside of their teacher organization. Such work included writing educational blogs, creating a professional network on Twitter, publishing articles and books on critical educational issues, and participating in public advocacy groups around educational reform. They firmly believed that they had important and timely contributions to make beyond their work with their own students. In this vein, they were intent on exercising their voice and innately viewed teachers as possessing the authority and knowledge to question policy and reforms though a critical and reflective lens through both their association and on their own individual pursuits. Moreover, while some members in both organizations came to be involved in their association through happenstance or the encouragement of senior members, many participants indicated that they were intrinsically motivated to contribute and give back to the profession. In this way, individual teacher agency can drive collective member engagement.
On the other hand, some of those who did not initially display such intrinsic motivations commented that seeing the value of the work of teacher organizations and the impact they had on the future of the teaching profession quickly fueled their desire to be agents of change and advocate in the best interest of teaching and learning, illustrating that, likewise, collective engagement in teacher associations can drive individual teacher agency. Thus, as discussed previously, it is clear that the discourses of professionalism espoused and enacted by the participants in this study were also significantly shaped by their engagement in their respective teacher associations. The myriad advocacy and activist work they engaged in was no doubt critically supported by the collective agency that resulted from the collaboration, capacity building, and solidarity that characterized their associations, whom they credited shaping their “thinking about professionalism” (AB7) and strengthening their resolve when they are “feeling like crap and wondering if you should stay in this profession” (ON9).

Acknowledging Mead’s notion of “sociality” (as cited in Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) also means one cannot discount the impact of the collective discourses espoused within the broader policy environment on participants’ sense of agency. For instance, some members from both the ATA and ETFO framed current discourses within their provincial educational landscape as demonstrating the importance of being activists and advocates and, as one ATA member noted, spurs them on “in terms of trying to educate and inform” (AB5) the public and the government about the advocacy work of teachers through the embodiment of democratic counter-discourses. In other instances, participants viewed deficit discourses around the teaching profession within the larger policy context as putting up too big of a roadblock, thwarting their desire to engage in such activities for fear of repercussions and backlash in light of “how little people value what is happening in the classroom” (ON7). In these ways, then, data from this study also suggest a relationship between teacher agency and the larger policy context.
It is also noteworthy, however, that only a few members of each organization were keenly aware of their own agency, directly citing their perseverance and desire to contribute as a supporting factor in their ability to translate their vision of teacher professionalism into real action. Rather, in most instances, evidence of teacher agency was inferred from member actions rather than specific acknowledgement of its presence. Moreover, when compared to the relative percentages of males and females in each sample, ETFO women were much more vocal about their agency then ATA women, even in light of the differential representation between the samples. One possible explanation for this is the gendered history of ETFO, which has fostered a legacy of programs and services designed to specifically engage the female membership in substantive areas of federation work. With almost 80% of its membership identifying as female, the ATA has a similar gender representation amongst its members, yet there are no targeted women’s programs. It goes beyond the data in this study to establish a firm link between the agency of female members and organizational commitment to their engagement; however, this is an area for future exploration.

7.3.3. Summary of the triad of discursive influences

In this chapter thus far I have illustrated the dynamic ways in which teacher agency, engagement in teacher associations, and the larger policy environment work in tandem to shape discourses of teacher professionalism amongst union active teachers. Drawing on data from both cases, I have also demonstrated the distinct manner in which such forces serve to influence notions of teacher professionalism and the work of teachers in particular milieus and for particular individuals. Teasing this triad apart, the study illustrates the diverse ways in which teacher organizations can go about promoting democratic professionalism amongst its membership as part of an activist teaching profession. Here managerial discourses that “work to marginalize teachers from the
policy process” (Thomas, 2005, p.48), decompose their work into “auditable competencies and performances” (Connell, 2009, p.220) and portray teachers as “functionaries rather than professionals” (Codd, 2005, p.201) are challenged by democratic counter-discourses that portray teachers as agents, advocates, and activists, driven by a desire to “contribute actively to the promotion of educational reform and wider societal change” (Webb et al., 2004, p. 87) in their own classrooms and beyond.

That being said, data further indicate that policy environments and the discourses within also shape and influence the enacted professionalism of teachers, in addition to suggesting that such discursive influences are negotiated in conjunction with participants’ collective and individual sense of agency. Considering the mutually reinforcing nature of the interactions between this triad of member engagement, teacher agency, and the larger policy environment, I further propose that the study illustrates that discourses of professionalism “from within” and “from without” (McClelland, 1990) actually co-evolve as two sides of the same coin, rather than as distinct entities. This is further explored below.

7.4. “From Within” and “From Without”: Two Sides of the Same Coin

On the surface, it appears as though the cases in this study contain polarized discourses of teacher professionalism that are in line with typical representations of professionalism discourses as either emerging “from within” the profession itself or being imposed by governments seeking to control the profession “from without” (McClelland, 1990). Indeed, a cursory glance at some of the participant comments in both cases can easily be interpreted as “us vs. them” where the discourses of teachers and their unions are juxtaposed against those of government and, at times, the general public. For instance, on the matter of teacher learning, participants from both organization contrasted the “top-
down” (AB11) and impersonal nature of board sponsored PD that is “mostly about district initiatives” (AB5) with the “life-altering” (ON9) learning opportunities afforded through their union involvement where they “owned the professional ground” (ON7) upon which they stood. The government discourse of “union” versus participant discourses of “professional association” was another example as was the participant discourse of professionalism as “a set of skills that says I’m the expert” (ON3) in comparison to the notion of teachers as “somebody’s puppet” (AB6) and “passively accepting the latest and greatest thing” (ON7).

Thus, for many participants in this study, democratic discourses of teacher professionalism were viewed as emerging from within the teaching profession itself, with traditional, managerial discourses predominantly being externally manifested as part of government’s “deprofessionalization” scheme. However, the presence of mixed discourses in both cases suggests that this polarizing delineation is not as simplistic as it might initially appear. Rather, for many participants, traditional discourses of competence, moral character, and being “held to a higher standard” (ON2) were intertwined with democratic discourses of the teacher as self-directed learner and autonomous expert. Although this mixture of discourses was disharmonious and problematic for some, for other participants, the marrying of their extra-classroom work and their work in schools was harmonious, a critical juncture in the enactment of their professionalism.

Moreover, as illustrated earlier in this chapter, participant discourses were not only influenced by their involvement in their association, the larger policy environment and the discourses of government and the public also shaped how participants viewed teacher professionalism, the work of teachers, and the role of their association in their own professional lives. Likewise, as evidenced by the “ebb and flow” of the collaborative
relationships between the teacher associations and their respective governments, the influences on discourses espoused is a two-way street where teachers and their unions co-penetrate the discourses of government and the public to produce what Faulconbridge and Muzio (2008) refer to as new “hybrid” discourses (as cited in Evetts, 2011). This was particularly evident with respect to the ATA’s ability to sway the government discourse in the late 1990s from one of “spending cuts to re-investment” (Raston, 2003, p. 141) and the success of the Ontario federations in shifting the governments discourse around PD from imposed and top-down to one of partnership.

In this sense then, rather than being diametrically opposed discourses with distinct origins, it seems more appropriate in the context of this study to situate discourses of teacher professionalism “from within” and “from without” as two sides of the same coin that co-evolve in the same discursive arena that sometimes foreground and background different discursive elements at any given time. In other words, it is a delicate equilibrium, and not a lopsided autocracy, that determines which discourses make their way into the public sphere, where, as Evetts (2011) suggests, the discourse of professionalism both appeals to and controls the teaching profession simultaneously. In this sense then, teaching as a profession is not necessarily at “the far end of educational reform” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012, p.1) or “the ghost at the feasts” (Bangs & Frost, 2012, p.1) with respect to policy making. Rather, teachers and their unions can impact the balance of professionalism discourses in important and substantive ways. The theoretical significance of this and the other findings presented in this cross-case analysis and their implications for teacher organizations are presented in the final concluding chapter.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1. Introduction:
The purpose of this study was to explore the professionalism discourses of union-active teachers and to theorize the framing around their evolution in distinct contexts. In doing so, the study aimed to promote broader ideals around the work of teachers and their role within the policy arena, specifically as it relates to active engagement in teacher unions. In this vein, the study was guided by the following research question and sub-questions:

- How do union-active teachers define and enact teacher professionalism?
  - How do union-active teachers perceive the roles and boundaries of the work of professional teachers?
  - In what ways do teacher unions facilitate the enactment of alternative discourses of teacher professionalism?
  - What shapes the discursive arena around discourses of professionalism in Ontario and Alberta? What institutional and historical cultures and structures are at work in each context?

To investigate these queries, the study explored member discourses around teacher professionalism and the work of teachers within two Canadian teacher organizations, The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and The Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA). The resulting case studies highlight a variety of narratives that serve as a counter-balance to prevailing neoliberal discourses of teacher professionalism, which narrowly define the roles and boundaries of the work of teachers. More specifically, however, the cases demonstrate the variable nature of discourse and provides new insights into the manner in which teacher organizations, the agency of teachers, and the
broader policy picture collectively work to produce discourses of teacher professionalism that are a combination of ideals from within the profession itself and from without.

This chapter is organized into three sections. First, I present the scholarly significance of the findings of this study. This is followed by an exploration of the practical implications of the findings for teachers and teacher organizations as well as policy makers. Lastly, I conclude with an examination of the limitations of the study and potential areas for future research. Underpinning all these insights is the study’s theoretical framework, which I argue provides a new lens for conceptualizing the manner in which discourses around teacher professionalism evolve.

8.2. Scholarly Significance

This study was exploratory in nature in the sense that very little research has specifically explored the discourses of professionalism espoused and enacted by individual teachers. This is particularly true with respect to union-active teachers, as the empirical studies that do exist in this area have tended to explore the discourses of teacher associations (Rodrigue, 2003) or subject-based organizations (Hilferty, 2004) rather than teachers themselves. Other studies that have investigated teacher perceptions of professionalism, like Tichenor & Tichenor (2004/2005), have utilized quantitative surveys, often generating a simplistic list of ideals without theorizing the dynamic combination of influences that circumscribe such notions. Furthermore, a lengthy and extensive online search in a number of scholarly databases suggests that no study of this kind has ever been conducted in the Canadian context.

In light of the paucity of research in this area, this study has begun to address the gap in the current scholarship around teacher professionalism by highlighting the varied
discourses of union-active teachers in two Canadian teacher associations. The findings of this study, therefore, have an important scholarly significance by virtue of being one of the only studies to carry out such a task. Further to this however, by illuminating democratic discourses of teacher professionalism and the work of teachers, the study challenges certain facets of the existing literature around teacher leadership and teacher unions. The study also extends upon Evett’s work (2003, 2011) around the sociology of professionalism discourses and further illuminates Sach’s (2003) vision of an activist teaching profession. Lastly, the study reinforces Hilferty’s (2004) notion of professionalism as an enacted discourse of power and presents a new framework that illustrates how the ideological struggle of various groups serves to shape the discursive arena in which discourses of professionalism evolve. These tenets are explained in more detail in the sections that follow.

8.2.1. Challenging the literature.

The participants in this study, to varying degrees, presented discourses of teacher professionalism that were rooted in democratic notions of the teacher as learner, leader, activist, and policy actor. Moreover, they enacted a discourse of professionalism that saw them extending their work beyond that of any one classroom or school and participated in regional and provincial networks where they engaged in dialogues and debates around a gamut of educational policy issues that significantly impact teaching and learning environments. Such discourses of teacher professionalism are a stark contrast to dominant neoliberal portrayals of teacher professionalism that position teachers as being increasingly managed and controlled in a bid to limit the power of teachers and their unions (Ball, 2003; Beck, 2008; Lawn & Ozga, 1986; Lipman, 2011; Robertson, 2012; Sachs, 2003). In this sense, the study presents an under-represented narrative of teacher professionalism where teachers enact their professionalism as “a discourse of power”
(Hilferty, 2004) as they attempt to challenge such marginalized views of teachers as professionals and exercise their authority and agency as active participants in the educational policy arena.

The democratic discourses of teacher professionalism presented in this study, however, are largely missing from the existing scholarship around teacher leadership. Rather, authors such as York-Barr and Duke (2004) portray leadership as being bestowed upon teachers rather than as a product of their own desire to be agents of change. Others narrowly conceive of such work as occurring only within the constraints of officially sanctioned teacher leadership positions such as department head or lead teacher or as the product of Ministry derived leadership programs (Rottman, 2007). Like Rottman (2007), however, this study positions teacher leadership within discourses of teacher professionalism that recognize the grassroots nature of informal teacher leadership and acknowledge the power and agency of teachers to initiate change on their own accord.

The data in this study also challenges literature that portrays teacher unions as “immoveable” roadblocks to educational change (Mangu-Ward, 2011) whose sole purpose, according to authors like Moe (2007), Lieberman (1997) and Brimelow (2003), is to derail educational progress and maintain a status quo of mediocrity. Rather, building on the portrayals of teacher unions found in the work of Bascia (1994; 1998; 2000; 2003; 2008a; 2009), Johnson (et al; 2004), Murray (2004); and Rottman (2011), the teacher organizations in this study were dedicated to the improvement of educational quality in their respective provinces and, in times of economic downturn, both organizations stepped up to the plate, developing innovative learning opportunities and teaching resources for their members in the face of reductions to teacher professional development by government. Moreover, even though there have been times when they didn’t see eye to eye with government, both unions have partnered with their provincial
governments on various projects, illustrating that, like the union-governmental relations in Johnson et al. (2004) and Bascia and Osmond (2012), relations between these two entities are not always as adversarial as they are often portrayed. Thus, although they utilized varying tactics and had organizational priorities that gave rise to variations between the general discourses of their members, by and large, both the ATA and ETFO have embraced Kerchner and Koppich’s (1993) notion of professional unionism and are working hard to continue to bolster the professional side of their respective organizations and renegotiate what it means to be a teacher “union”.

Further to this, by providing teachers with a platform for inserting their voices into the larger policy picture, the study additionally highlights the important role that teacher associations play as counter-balances to neoliberal agendas, which authors like Codd (2005), Connell (2009), and others in the deprofessionalization camp (Beck, 2008; Carter, Stevenson & Passy, 2010; Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; 1998; Lipman, 2013; MacBeath, 2012; Ozga, 1995; Thompson, 2006) position as aiming to reduce teaching and learning to a series of “paint by number” experiences rife with teacher proof curriculum and narrow accountability measures. A far cry from the widget model (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) employed by traditional labour unions, the teacher unions in this study advocated for the autonomy of the their members to utilize their professional discretion and unique emic knowledge of students to design meaningful learning experiences that address the specific aptitudes and needs within their own classroom context. This is not, however, an attempt to protect bad teachers or nullify accountability, as sometimes argued in the literature. Rather, in doing so, these teacher unions are working to secure context-specific conditions that facilitate greater understandings amongst students in order to raise the quality of education and the status of the teaching profession.
8.2.2. Extending the Literature

Rooted in the work of functionalists who attempted to distinguish “The Professions” from the “non-professions”, the work of some early scholars like Lortie (1975) and Etzioni (1969) focused on the extent to which teaching qualified as a “real” profession. However, as the study of professions evolved over time, according to Evetts (2003), questions of which occupations are professions and which are not have been largely deemed irrelevant in more contemporary scholarship in this area. Rather, the focus has shifted to discourses of professionalism and the ways in which various stakeholders conceive of the roles and responsibilities of the members of particular professions. Often drawing on Foucault’s notions of discourse and power, within this facet of the professions literature, discourses of professionalism are recognized as sites of ideological struggle as stakeholders with power differentials compete over which discourses emerge as the dominant ideals of the profession (McClelland, 1990; Hilferty, 2004). Applied to teaching, the literature often positions competing discourses of teacher professionalism as arising either from within the teaching profession itself or being imposed upon the profession by governments and Ministries who seek to control the teaching profession from without.

While this study recognizes the existence of these diverse discourses of teacher professionalism, data indicate that the origin of such discourses is not as simplistic as “from within” and “from without”. Rather, this study frames discourses of teacher professionalism as being circumscribed by teachers’ sense of agency and the influence of both teacher organizations and the greater policy environment, which includes public discourses and those of government itself. As such, in the cases presented here, the discourses of government and the greater public and those of teachers and their teacher organizations evolved alongside and in relation to one another, amid policy reform and paradigm shifts that characterize the ebb and flow of educational change: two sides of the
same coin rather than completely separate entities. According to Evetts (2003; 2011), it is the ways in which the balance of these discourses plays out in in particular professions that is of importance in further advancing the study of professions in years to come. In this vein, this study extends the current professionalism literature by providing insights into the manner in which this discursive balance manifested itself amongst the participants in this study. Like Hilferty’s (2004) study in Australia, this study shows that teachers and their teacher organizations can exert varying degrees of influence over the discursive arena that shapes notions of teacher professionalism in particular contexts and for particular individuals.

Further to this, depending on organizational priorities and the extent to which they prioritize professional aspects over union functions, teacher associations can significantly alter the balance of discourses of teacher professionalism. While the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario has a strong professional focus, it continues to employ traditional union tactics more so than the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Engaging in more pro-active political engagement strategies, ATA members espoused democratic discourses that were stronger and encompassed broader roles for teachers as policy actors that those espoused by most ETFO members. For varying reasons, the ATA has also been more successful in their bid to swing the public discourse in support of teachers and their association, providing the Association with a strong basis upon which to collaborate with government as valued contributors to educational improvement in the province. This has allowed the ATA to also impact the discourses of professionalism in the greater policy environment in a substantial manner, retaining control over teacher discipline and continuing to see the standards for professional conduct and expectations.

The study demonstrates, then, that teachers and their unions can indeed impact the balance of professionalism discourses with respect to the profession of teaching by
serving as an importance voice in the promotion of alternative discourses which frame teachers as innovators and which make use of the unique knowledge of teachers when deciding new directions in educational policy and reform. Moreover, building on Sachs’ (2003) work, this study also highlights the important role that teacher associations play in the promotion of an activist teaching profession. Although many members of both ETFO and the ATA were internally driven to give back to the profession and positively impact teaching and learning for their own students and those around the province, it was clear that participation in their teacher association supported this determination and provided and avenue to put their passion into action. Garnering collective strength from like-minded colleagues and peers as well as staff and elected representatives, the participants in this study were drawn to participate in their association because they saw it as the one real way to impact change in the broader policy picture.

Rather than standing alone, they drew on the wisdom and support of their fellow members and Executive as they went about voicing their opinions regarding proposed changes to educational policies, working conditions, and structural changes, all the while engaging in a variety of professional learning and growth activities. Most indicated that these were experiences and opportunities that they would not have accessed otherwise, positioning teacher associations as platforms for the continued development of activist teacher identities amongst their members.

**8.2.3. Summary of scholarly contributions**

This study draws on the work of Hilferty (2004, 2008) in that it conceptualizes teacher professionalism as an enacted discourse of power. Evident in actions and activities as much as words and written documents, discourses of teacher professionalism are representation of authority and control utilized in some manner by all educational
stakeholders. Synthesizing the data from two cases of discourses of teacher professionalism amongst union-active teachers in diverse teacher organizations and provincial contexts, the study highlights the various ways in which teacher associations can go about promoting democratic discourses of teacher professionalism amongst their members and endorses a vision of the teaching profession where teacher professionalism encompasses far more than the antiquated ideals of dress and decorum so commonly found in traditional codes of conduct and standard lists of competencies. These findings are grounded in a new framework for theorizing the discursive framework around notions of teacher professionalism and the work of teachers, which constitutes the study’s most significant scholarly contribution. The practical implications of these findings are presented in the next section.

8.3. Practical Implications

The findings of this study are particularly relevant to the staff and leadership of teacher organizations and Ministries of Education who are genuinely interested in promoting sustainable educational change that acknowledges the autonomy and discretionary knowledge of teachers. As the front-line workers in education, teachers are uniquely positioned to garner first-hand insights into “what works” with respect to improving educational quality and student achievement. Pre-occupied with narrow ideas around accountability, however, governments and Ministries of Education around the globe have continued to attempt to situate teachers on the peripheral of educational reform (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). Espousing discourses of the teacher as technician (Codd, 2005) and implementer (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001), teacher voice is often missing from the policy arena (Bangs & Frost, 2012), resulting in the creation of policies and practices that do no consider the contextual factors which impact the implementation of such reforms in the classroom (Ball, 2002). This has created a cyclic pattern of
decades of educational reform that have largely fallen flat with respect to significant improvements in education (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Resigned to their relegated position as bystanders, many teachers have become disillusioned with the teaching profession and teacher attrition and lack of commitment have plagued the profession in some contexts (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

In this study, however, teacher activism was alive and well, a manifestation of democratic discourses of teacher professionalism that value the contributions of teachers and acknowledge the diverse work roles teachers take on in the broader context of schooling. Moreover, such discourses were more prevalent when there was an underlying commitment on the part of the teacher unions and government to collectively work towards developing a shared vision of what it means to be a professional teacher and improving the quality of education. In this vein, teacher associations and Ministries of Education would do well to re-consider the nature of their relationship and attempt to collaborate more rather than drawing lines in the sand. As the former Minister of Education in Alberta stated, there are usually more areas upon which these two stakeholders agree than they disagree (Johnson, 2013). Finding common ground and limiting adversarial tactics would go a long way in developing sustainable educational reform that have real impacts on teaching and learning.

The results of this study also suggest that teacher organizations may wish to critically examine the extent to which their budgets, structures, and organizational priorities reflect and support the enactment of democratic discourse of teacher professionalism amongst their membership. Member engagement is critical to the continued growth of teacher organizations as substantial players in the educational policy arena. This study posits, however, that a reciprocal relationship exists between member engagement in teacher associations and discourses of teacher professionalism. More specifically, I propose that
those who possess a strong sense of self-efficacy and innately subscribe to democratic discourses of teacher professionalism may tend to view teacher associations as platforms for engagement in a host of advocacy and activism work. It is this segment of the membership who would most likely be already actively engaged - they see the value of their association to the development of the profession and they choose to be involved. Such engagement further reinforces democratic ideals about the work of the teachers and their substantive role as change agents and policy actors. Discouraged by the barrage of top-down reforms and unconvinced of the significance of their association in their professional lives, however, some teachers have yielded to managerial discourses of teacher professionalism; they see themselves as “just teachers” (Barth, 2007; Helterbran, 2010), lacking the time, expertise, and authority to participate in conversations around the broader context of schooling. This is the segment of the membership that most likely remains disengaged.

While this juxtaposed portrayal doesn’t fully encapsulate the motivations and attitudes of all teachers, certainly teacher associations would do well to consider the ways in which discourses of teacher professionalism are manifesting themselves both within the organization and in the larger policy context. Moreover, assessing and reflecting on the impact of such discourses on the willingness and inclination of members to participate in various facets of their association provides valuable insights into how teacher organizations can go about creating conditions which better support the promotion of democratic discourses to bolster member engagement and increase the voice of the organization on substantive issues of educational reform.
8.4. Limitations and Future Research

Like all research, this study has its limitations. First and foremost, being qualitative in nature, the findings are not readily generalizable and do not establish causal relationships. Drawing upon a small number of individuals from each organization, the study is by no means an exhaustive representation of all the discourses of professionalism present in either context. It even is arguable that the teacher organizations within this study are not representative of typical teacher unions and, as such, are not representative of the wider organizational context. That being said, the use of detailed interview data and organizational documents have facilitated the creation of two comprehensive case studies that are rich in contextual data to better allow interested parties to draw their own parallels and make appropriate inferences. Moreover, rooted in the voices of the participants, the study does provide plausible arguments that provide insight into the nature of the relationships between engagement in teacher associations, teacher agency, the broader policy environment, and their collective impact on the discourses of professionalism espoused and enacted.

I must also acknowledged that, with its specific aim of uncovering democratic discourses of professionalism, the study concerned itself only with union-active teachers in order to elicit data from those who were more likely to be engaging in the kinds of extra-classroom work supported by such discourses. As such, I cannot say that the discourses within are representative of the faction of the membership that is disengaged and not active within their respective associations. While it would have been preferential to include members with varying degrees of engagement in this study, it was not practical for me to do so within the constraints of a doctoral study. In future studies that might build off of this research I may specifically explore the discourses of this particular group to provide teacher organizations with additional data around making their work more
relevant to the broader membership and bolstering the engagement and commitment of members who are currently disengaged.

Further to this, the study raises questions as to whether a link exists between the agency of women who are active in the teacher associations and the provision of targeted union-sponsored leadership programs for females. Historically under-represented in both teacher associations and educational leadership, female teacher unionists have also received little research attention. Building on earlier work by Bascia (1998) and Bascia and Young (2001), my future research might examine the motivations and inspirations behind the participation of this particular group and explore the conditions that stimulate and support the leadership growth of females within teacher organizations.

Lastly, while it is plausible that a link exists between democratic teacher professionalism and the development and implementation of successful educational reform, this was not a primary focus of the study and there is no way to firmly establish such a relationship based on the data in this study alone. Additional research around democratic discourses of teacher professionalism might pursue a stronger examination of this possible correlation. Establishing such a link would go a long way toward perpetuating the significant cultural shift within the large policy picture necessary for democratic discourses of professionalism to become mainstream.

8.5. Conclusion

In this study I aimed to give voice to a group of teachers whose insights are largely absent from educational policy arenas. To that end, I present several counter-discourses of teacher professionalism that conceptualize teachers as policy actors, advocates, activists, learners, leaders, and experts in their field. In this vein, the study demonstrates the
contested and contextualized nature of discourses around teacher professionalism. Through the presentation of two cases that explore the discourses of union-active teachers in two Canadian teacher associations, I highlight the diverse political, organizational, and agentic powers that serve to shape individual notions of teacher professionalism in particular contexts. Within this frame, teachers, their teacher associations, and government all espouse discourses of professionalism that exhibit varying degrees of congruency and tension, two sides of the same coin which also serve to influence the discourses of the other stakeholders. The discourses of all these stakeholders shift and evolve over time and in relation to each other, part and parcel of the back and forth relationships and paradigm shifts that characterize the educational policy arena.

For the union-active teachers in this study, the discursive arena was specifically characterized by the overlap that occurred between their engagement in teacher unions, the climate of the larger policy environment, and their own personal agency. In the cases presented here, participants’ inner drive to effect change, coupled with the capacity building experiences gained through involvement in their teacher association, often trumped the limitations presented by the larger policy environment, allowing many participants to enact and espouse various elements of democratic teacher professionalism in their daily work life. That being said, the balance of democratic and traditional notions of professionalism within member discourses was significantly impacted by the organizational priorities of their respective teacher associations and the extent to which the organizations had been able to sway discourses within the larger policy environment to be supportive of teachers. This highlights the important role that teacher organizations can serve in the promotion of democratic discourse amongst its membership.

Finally, the findings of this study are timely and actively contribute to the limited body of literature that broadly conceives of the work of teacher associations and roles of teacher
leaders within the policy arena. Understanding the ways in which teachers, their unions, and governments go about influencing the discursive arena around teacher professionalism is essential to the promotion of an activist teaching profession and the continued growth of member engagement in teacher unions. Moreover, democratic discourses of teacher professionalism may also be a significant factor in the development of sustainable and informed educational reform. As such, additional research around democratic teacher professionalism is necessary in order to gain further insights into its relationship to commitment in teacher unions and its impact on educational reform.
References


Appendix A: Letters of Informed Consent

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study
Alternative discourses of teacher professionalism

My name is Pamela Osmond and I am graduate student in the department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am conducting a study that will explore how active involvement in teacher organizations influences the ways teachers define both their day-to-day work and their broader roles and responsibilities as professionals. The study is being conducted in the provinces of Ontario and Alberta and involves teachers from both the Alberta Teacher’s Association and the Elementary Teachers’ Association of Ontario.

As an active member in the Alberta Teacher’s Association, I would like to invite you to participate in a one-hour interview (to be conducted online via Skype or over the phone) that focuses on your ATA involvement and how you define teacher professionalism in your daily work. I hope to interview twenty to twenty five active teachers and I am seeking your participation in this study, as I believe that your professional experiences with the ATA will shed light on the nature of teacher professionalism in Alberta.

Please remember that participation in this study is completely voluntary and you should in no way feel obligated to participate. Complete confidentiality is guaranteed and there are no known risks associated with participating in this study. With your permission, the interview will be taped to ensure accuracy. Once the audiotapes of the interview(s) have been transcribed, the original or raw data will be stored under lock and key in my private residence. Only my supervisor, Dr. Nina Bascia, and I will ever have access to this raw data. In the transcripts, names and other identifying information about you will be systematically changed. Identifying codes that could connect you or your organization with the changed names will also be kept under lock and key in the place designated above and the names of participants will not be disclosed to union authorities that provided access to your name as a potential participant.

If you agree to an interview you will be provided with a copy of the interview questions in advance. Participants are not required to answer any question that they
are not comfortable answering and participants will not be judged or evaluated at any time. As an interviewee, you also have the option of asking that the recoding be stopped at any time and you will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview to check for clarifications. Any section, which you request to have deleted from the transcript of your interview, will be deleted. In addition, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact me either by phone or by email and, if you choose, any data that has been collected from you will be destroyed. At the end of the project, the results of the study will be made available to all participants via an email link to the online publication on the University of Toronto’s public dissertation site, T-Space. In addition, the results of this study may later be published in academic journals and books or presented at educational conferences. In all cases, participants will remain anonymous and confidentiality is guaranteed.

If you are willing to participate please reply by email, indicating a few times over the next two to four weeks that are convenient for you to be interviewed. Upon receiving your acceptance to participate in the study, I will send you consent form to be completed at that time. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number or email address below if you have any questions or concerns about my project. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me the telephone number or email address below. Alternatively, my supervisor can be reached at nina.bascia@utoronto.ca or 416-978-1159. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. Thank you for taking the time to review my request. Your consideration is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Pamela Osmond, M.Ed
Ph.D. Candidate
Dept. of Leadership, Higher & Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
28 Vincent Street
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 4G2
Cell: 647/459-4251
pamela.osmond@mail.utoronto.ca

Nina Bascia, Ph.D.
Professor
Dept. of Leadership, Higher & Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1V6
office: 416/978-1159
nina.bascia@utoronto.ca

**PLEASE RETAIN A COPY OF THIS FOR YOUR FILES**
My name is Pamela Osmond and I am a graduate student in the department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am conducting a study that will explore how active involvement in teacher organizations influences the ways teachers define both their day-to-day work and their broader roles and responsibilities as professionals. The study is being conducted in the provinces of Ontario and Alberta and involves teachers from both the Alberta Teacher’s Association and the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario.

As an active member in the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, I would like to invite you to participate in a one-hour interview (to be conducted online via Skype or over the phone) that focuses on your ETFO involvement and how you define teacher professionalism in your daily work. I hope to interview twenty to twenty five active teachers and I am seeking your participation in this study, as I believe that your professional experiences with ETFO will shed light on the nature of teacher professionalism in Ontario.

Please remember that participation in this study is completely voluntary and you should in no way feel obligated to participate. Complete confidentiality is guaranteed and there are no known risks associated with participating in this study. With your permission, the interview will be taped to ensure accuracy. Once the audiotapes of the interview(s) have been transcribed, the original or raw data will be stored under lock and key in my private residence. Only my supervisor, Dr. Nina Bascia, and I will ever have access to this raw data. In the transcripts, names and other identifying information about you will be systematically changed. Identifying codes that could connect you or your organization with the changed names will also be kept under lock and key in the place designated above and the names of participants will not be disclosed to union authorities that provided access to your name as a potential participant.

If you agree to an interview you will be provided with a copy of the interview questions in advance. Participants are not required to answer any question that they are not comfortable answering and participants will not be judged or evaluated at any time. As an interviewee, you also have the option of asking that the recording be
stopped at any time and you will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview to check for clarifications. Any section, which you request to have deleted from the transcript of your interview, will be deleted. In addition, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact me either by phone or by email and, if you choose, any data that has been collected from you will be destroyed. At the end of the project, the results of the study will be made available to all participants via an email link to the online publication on the University of Toronto’s public dissertation site, T-Space. In addition, the results of this study may later be published in academic journals and books or presented at educational conferences. In all cases, participants will remain anonymous and confidentiality is guaranteed.

If you are willing to participate please reply by email, indicating a few times over the next two to four weeks that are convenient for you to be interviewed. Upon receiving your acceptance to participate in the study, I will send you consent form to be completed at that time. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the telephone number or email address below if you have any questions or concerns about my project. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me the telephone number or email address below. Alternatively, my supervisor can be reached at nina.bascia@utoronto.ca or 416-978-1159. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. Thank you for taking the time to review my request. Your consideration is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Pamela Osmond, M.Ed  
Nina Bascia, Ph.D.
Ph.D. Candidate  
Professor
Dept. of Leadership, Higher & Adult Education  
Dept. of Leadership, Higher &
Adult Education  
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pamela.osmond@mail.utoronto.ca  
nina.bascia@utoronto.ca

**PLEASE RETAIN A COPY OF THIS FOR YOUR FILES**
Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Alternative discourses of teacher professionalism

Dear Pamela,

I agree to participate in the study Alternative discourses of teacher professionalism. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty or consequence.

The following information has been provided to me:

- The purpose of the study is to explore how active involvements in teacher organizations influences the ways teachers define both their day-to-day work and their broader roles and responsibilities as professionals.

- My participation involves a one-hour interview that will be recorded, with my permission, and transcribed. I will be given a copy of my final transcript to review for clarification and any section that I do not want to be included will be omitted.

- I am not required to answer any question that I am not comfortable with and I can ask that the recording stop at any time.

- All of the data collected will be strictly confidential and only the primary investigator (Pamela Osmond) and her supervisor (Dr. Nina Bascia) will see my responses. My name or other identifying information will not be used and I will be given a code number that will be stored separate from the data. Both the data and the identifying information will be kept under lock and key.

- Results of this study will be made available to all participants through an email link to the final dissertation.

Signature:______________________________ Date:____________________________
Telephone #____________________________ email:__________________________

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audiotaped: ___
and if you would like a summary of the findings ___

**PLEASE RETAIN A COPY OF THIS FOR YOUR FILES**
Appendix B: Ethics Approval

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 29049
June 24, 2013

Dr. Nina Bascia
OISE/UT: LEADERSHIP, HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION
OISE/UT

Ms. Pamela Osmond
OISE/UT: LEADERSHIP, HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Bascia and Ms. Pamela Osmond,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Alternative discourses of teacher professionalism: A study of union-active teachers in Alberta and Ontario"

Original Approval Date: June 24, 2013
Expiry Date: June 23, 2014
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education Research Ethics B has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB’s delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 29049

May 26, 2014

Dr. Nina Bascia
OISE/UT: LEADERSHIP, HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

Ms. Pamela Osmond
OISE/UT: LEADERSHIP, HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

Dear Dr. Bascia and Ms. Pamela Osmond,


ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: June 24, 2013
Expiry Date: June 23, 2015
Continuing Review Level: 1
Renewal: 1 of 4

We are writing to advise you that you have been granted annual renewal of ethics approval to the above-referenced research protocol through the Research Ethics Board (REB) delegated process. Please note that all protocols involving ongoing data collection or interaction with human participants are subject to re-evaluation after 5 years. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your protocol. Note that annual renewals for protocols cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry as per our guidelines.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible. If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMurrich Building, 12 Queen’s Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273  Fax: +1 416 946-5763  ethics.review@utoronto.ca  http://www.research.utoronto.ca/researchers-administration/ethics/
Appendix C: Interview Protocol

1. Please indicate your current province of employment

2. How many years have you been working in the education field?

3. How long have you been an active member of your teacher organization/union?

4. Which best describes your current employment position?

5. In what ways have you been involved in your teacher organization/union? (probe for professional learning/teacher leadership opportunities)

6. What sorts of professional learning or teacher leadership have you participated in outside of your teacher organization/union?

7. What does teacher professionalism mean to you?

8. Do you think most teachers think of teacher professionalism this way? Why or why not? If no, how do you think most teachers view the professional work of teachers?

9. When you think of the work of a professional teacher, what sorts of roles and responsibilities do you think of? (Ask about teacher’s role in specific activities if not mentioned – learning, participation in decision making, activism, collaboration, cooperation with colleagues, teacher leadership, developing professional development for others, becoming involved in professional organizations, attending conferences, participating in research, mentoring, curriculum development)

10. Have you always thought of the work of teachers in this way or has something changed your ideas? What?

11. Has your union had a role in shaping your ideas about teacher professionalism? About the work of teachers? Explain.

12. Have you been able to apply your view of teacher professionalism in your daily work life? In what ways?

13. What has supported your ability to enact your view of professionalism?

14. What has limited your ability to do so?