The New Professionalism? Charter Teachers' Experiences and Qualities of the Teaching Profession

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Abstract: While teacher professionalism remains a contested topic, scholars increasingly acknowledge the field has entered a "new professionalism" wherein its parameters are dictated by management and the organization rather than those within the occupation. Many argue that this shift has served to decrease teachers' sense of professionalism, efficacy and persistence. Simultaneously, no-excuses charter schools, considered to embrace this new professionalism, continue to proliferate. Yet little is known about how teachers within these schools view teaching and the qualities of teacher professionalism. To address this gap, we interviewed twenty new and novice teachers teaching in high profile charter organizations in the northeast such as Uncommon Schools, KIPP, MATCH, and Boston Collegiate. Our findings suggest that these teachers largely perceived their schools and the degree of professionalism positively. For example, teachers reported

that their schools fostered teacher autonomy, professional accountability, and collaboration. However, their schools' high-accountability climates encouraged feelings of competition and caused teachers to question their efficacy, ultimately reinforcing views of teaching as a short-term endeavor. Finally, professional status and rewards were described as low with many teachers saying they felt underappreciated or undervalued. Our findings demonstrate how the climate of "new professionalism" can produce outcomes both consistent and in tension with efforts to professionalize teaching.
Keywords: Charter schools; urban education; teacher professionalization; professionalism

¿El nuevo profesionalismo? Las experiencias y cualidades de los profesores autónomos de la profesión docente

Resumen: Mientras profesionalismo docente sigue siendo un tema controversial, los académicos reconocen cada vez más que el campo ha entrado en un "nuevo profesionalismo" y sus parámetros son dictados por la administración y la organización en lugar de los que están dentro de la ocupación. Muchos argumentan que este cambio ha servido para disminuir el sentido del profesionalismo, eficacia y persistencia de los docentes. Simultáneamente, las escuelas autónomas "sin excusas", consideradas para abarcar este nuevo profesionalismo, continúan a proliferar. Sin embargo, se sabe poco acerca de cómo los maestros dentro de estas escuelas ven la enseñanza y las cualidades del profesionalismo docente. Para enfrentar esta brecha, entrevistamos a veinte maestros nuevos y novatos que enseñaban en organizaciones charter de alto perfil en el noreste como Uncommon Schools, KIPP, MATCH y Boston Collegiate. Nuestros hallazgos sugieren que estos maestros percibieron en gran medida sus escuelas y el grado de profesionalismo de manera positiva. Por ejemplo, los docentes informaron que sus escuelas fomentaban la autonomía de los docentes, la responsabilidad profesional y la colaboración. Sin embargo, los climas de alta responsabilidad de sus escuelas crearon sentimientos de competencia y causaban que los maestros cuestionaran su eficacia, reforzando en última instancia las visiones de la enseñanza como un esfuerzo a corto plazo. Finalmente, el estado profesional y las recompensas se describieron como bajos, y muchos docentes dijeron que se sentían menospreciados o despreciados. Nuestros hallazgos demuestran cómo el clima de "nuevo profesionalismo" puede producir resultados consistentes y en tensión con los esfuerzos para profesionalizar la enseñanza.
Palabras clave: Escuelas charter; educación urbana; profesionalización docente; profesionalismo

O novo profissionalismo? As experiências e qualidades dos professores autônomos da profissão docente

Resumo: Embora o profissionalismo docente continue a ser uma questão controversa, os acadêmicos reconhecem cada vez mais que o campo entrou em um "novo profissionalismo" e seus parâmetros são ditados pela administração e organização em vez dos que estão dentro do ocupação. Muitos argumentam que essa mudança ajudou a diminuir o senso de profissionalismo, eficácia e persistência dos professores. Simultaneamente, as escolas autônomas "sem desculpas", consideradas como adotando esse novo profissionalismo, continuam a proliferar. No entanto, pouco se sabe sobre como os professores dessas escolas vêm o ensino e as qualidades do profissionalismo dos professores. Para abordar esta lacuna, entrevistámos vinte professores novos e novatos que ensinaram organizações charter de alto perfil no Nordeste, como Uncommon Schools,

KIPP, MATCH e Boston Colegiate. Nossos achados sugerem que esses professores percebem suas escolas e o grau de profissionalismo de forma positiva. Por exemplo, os professores relataram que suas escolas fomentavam a autonomia, responsabilidade profissional e colaboração dos professores. No entanto, os climas de alta responsabilidade de suas escolas promoveram sentimentos de competência e fizeram com que os professores questionassem sua eficácia, reforçando os pontos de vista do ensino como um empreendimento de curto prazo. Finalmente, o status profissional e as recompensas foram descritas como baixas, e muitos professores disseram que se sentiram subestimados ou desprezados. Nossas descobertas demonstram como o clima de "novo profissionalismo" pode produzir resultados consistentes e tensos com esforços para profissionalizar o ensino.

Palavras-chave: Escolas charter; educação urbana; profissionalização de professores; profissionalismo

Introduction

In her 2016 piece on the state of teacher professionalism, Sachs argues that, despite years of debate among practitioners and researchers alike, professionalism in education remains a contested concept. One reason for this, she says, is its fluid nature and responsiveness to internal and environmental pressures. For example, many argue that educators' work has been altered due to efforts of the "new managerialism" (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Evans, 2011; Mungal, 2015), New Public Management (Hood, 1995), and shifts towards performativity (Day & Gu, 2007) or neo-Taylorism (Trujillo, 2014). As Anderson and Cohen (2015) explain, "As educational systems globally are absorbed into a market, profit, and efficiency logic, the professional identities of teachers and leaders are redefined" (p. 2). More pointedly, Sachs (2016) argues these trends created "conditions for a more conservative and risk-averse teaching profession" (p. 423), in which teachers are positioned as technicians and often feel diminished.

In keeping with this diagnosis, Evetts (2011) and others (e.g., Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Anderson & Herr, 2015; Hall & McGinty, 2015; Stone-Johnson, 2014) suggest that teaching has entered into a stage of "new professionalism." As Evetts (2011) explains, there was a shift from "occupational" professionalism defined through professional judgement, expertise and discretion to "organizational" professionalism in which the parameters of professionalism are organizationally defined from the top down. Given the larger shifts in the public sector towards managerialism, it is no surprise that organizational professionalism is coupled with efforts to "rationalize, reorganize and contain and control the work and the practitioners" (Evetts, 2011, p. 410). The result being a decrease of collegiality and trust and a re-prioritization of work activities towards achievement (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Evetts, 2011).

In the U.S. educational sector one can see the emergence of the new professionalism as a result of federal and state policies emphasizing high stakes accountability (Anderson & Cohen, 2015), inspection via new educator evaluation models (Wilkins, 2011), market-based solutions to educational underperformance (Hall & McGinty, 2015) and the proliferation of alternative route programs aimed at lowering barriers to entry (Mungal, 2015). As already highlighted by Sachs (2016), recent research suggests that these shifts can have negative impacts on teachers' professionalism (Day et al., 2006; Wilkins, 2011), their views of the profession (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Stone-Johnson, 2014) and desire to persist over time (Zeichner, 2010).

Given these realities, we might imagine that charter schools, envisioned as a means to break school bureaucracy and bring market principles into and across schools (Chubb & Moe, 1988;

Kahlenberg, 2007; Lake, 2008; Renzulli, Barr, & Paino, 2014), are a strong example in which to consider the impact of the new professionalism on teachers' views of their work and the profession writ large. For example, charter schools disproportionately rely on alternate routes to teaching to staff schools, especially Teach for America (TFA), with somewhat limited pre-service training for new teachers (Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014). Additionally, and particularly in "no excuses" charter schools, teachers are expected to implement proven "systems" to help them attain high student test scores. For example, teachers in no-excuses schools must often implement disciplinary systems that involve "clear expectations for students (i.e., prescribing exactly what a student is expected to do and holding them accountable to it with consequences and rewards" (Torres, 2014, p. 11). Thus, these schools rely on prescriptive systems to help teachers manage student behavior and instruction (Merseth et al., 2009; Torres, 2014), higher levels of inspection (Lake et al., 2010) and competition among teachers (Weiner & Torres, 2016). As a result, one might assume charter school teachers would describe their work as lacking features of occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2011) or what Gorman and Sandefur (2011) identified as more traditional attributes of professionalism (i.e., expert knowledge, technical autonomy, a normative orientation toward socialization and preparation into the profession, and high status, income, and other rewards).

And yet, a number of recent studies find that teachers choose charters because of a sense of status, the ability to work with like-minded colleagues, and because they offer teachers the possibility of creating innovative approaches to teaching and learning (Vasudeva & Grutzik, 2002; Weiner & Torres, 2016). These positive feelings are sometimes so strong that novice charter school teachers see their work as distinctly different from, and more positive than, teaching in traditional public schools (Weiner & Torres, 2016). Recent work by Stone-Johnson (2014) also suggests that different generations of teachers may respond to new professionalism differently, engaging in a "parallel professionalism" with younger teachers generally feeling more positively about these shifts than their older colleagues. Taken together, these findings suggest that charter teachers' perceptions regarding working in charters and the degree of professionalism within them may be somewhat more complex than current understandings. This study takes up these issues directly by focusing on the experiences and beliefs of 20 early career charter school teachers in high profile, "no excuses" charter schools in the northeastern United States. Our research questions are:

- How do these charter school teachers describe their work and views of teaching as a profession?
- How do these descriptions compare to elements of a profession?
- What do these descriptions tell us about the process of professionalization in charter schools?

Our findings suggest that while much of their work appeared to reflect elements of the new professionalism (e.g., expertise defined by the organization, competition, high levels of inspection, etc.), in general, these charter school teachers largely perceived their schools and the degree of professionalism positively. For example, teachers reported that their schools fostered teacher autonomy, professional accountability, and collaboration. However, the high-accountability climate of their schools encouraged feelings of competition and caused teachers to question their efficacy, ultimately reinforcing views of teaching as a short-term endeavor. Finally, excluding psychic rewards, professional status and rewards were described as relatively low with many teachers reporting that they felt underappreciated or undervalued. Our findings highlight a need to reconsider professionalism in charter schools and the impact on teachers' perceptions of their work.

Occupational Professionalism and The New Professionalism

There is considerable variability in the use of the term professionalism in the field of education (Evetts, 2011; Sachs, 2016). We distinguish our focus from that of scholars who study teacher professionalism as a set of personal characteristics to describe what it means to be a professional (Day, 2002; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2009) and instead focus on the concept of professionalism as how work is organized and controlled (Evetts, 2011). Specifically, we consider "new professionalism" defined as the shift from those within an occupation exerting authority and control over their work to a top-down form of professionalism in which management and the organization hold this power (Hall & McGinty, 2015).

Evetts (2011) distinguishes organizational professionalism, or new professionalism, from concepts of occupational professionalism. Occupational professionalism represents the ways scholars studying professions and the process of professionalization have traditionally defined what it means to be in a profession. In this view, a "true" profession has a high level of legitimacy in part because of an expert knowledge base (i.e., an agreed upon body of knowledge across a profession that serves as the basis for preparation and practice of professionals) that individuals learn via extensive, pre-service university-based formal education (Friedson, 2001). This expert knowledge is informed by professional bodies and key actors within them (e.g., practitioners/users, universities), who determine what counts as 'knowledge' and how it is developed and assessed (Gorman & Sandefur, 2011). If an occupation is perceived as legitimate, professionals benefit from increased control over their work due to respect for individual discretion stemming from expert knowledge. Prospective professionals often invest in their own preparation with the expectation that this work will serve as a lifelong endeavor.

Societal trust in this system of knowledge and development bolsters the public's perceptions of status and respect for the profession, which in turn brings both monetary and psychic rewards to professionals (Mehta, 2013). Finally, professionals tend to share common norms (e.g., an ideal of service to others) and have a *normative orientation,* sharing experiences of training, socialization, and conditions of work that shape their professional identities and understanding of how to conduct professional work (Gorman & Sandefur, 2011). Gorman and Sandefur (2011) describe the four characteristics of a "true" (i.e., occupational) profession as: 1) expert knowledge, 2) the use of professional discretion/autonomy, 3) normative orientation and community, and 4) status, income, and rewards. We use these characteristics to analyze and organize our data and literature review, and note that both occupational and organizational forms of professionalism may inform practitioners' views of each of these qualities.

Unlike occupational professionalism, in which control around the process of professionalization and discourse of professionalism resides within the occupational group, in organizational professionalism, control of work priorities and processes come "from above" (Evetts, 2011, p. 408). Organizational objectives, guided by larger policies and narratives of competition and achievement, act to narrow the bounds of professional discretion. There are several important implications stemming from this shift. First, "the shift towards external forms of accountability has both narrowed professional discretion while also expanding and intensifying role-expectations" (Anderson & Cohen, 2015, p. 5). Intensification occurs in part because of external high-stakes accountability policies that force educators to compete "internally with each other and externally with other organizations" (Anderson & Cohen, 2015, p. 5). Measuring professionalism in teaching only increases demands for auditing performance and fuels competition, in turn threatening social cohesion among teachers (Evetts, 2011).

These shifts also have important normative implications for the process of professionalization (or, some might argue, de-professionalization). For example, the process of creating and assessing expert knowledge may shift from professional bodies and practitioners to the individual organization and management. But how do practitioners understand what constitutes expert knowledge, and the process by which it is constructed? What role do they have in creating and assessing this knowledge? Are there benefits as well as challenges? Evetts (2011) argues that organizational and occupational professionalism could be mutually supportive—for instance, market pressures could lead to cooperative work consistent with occupational forms of professionalism. To understand the opportunities and challenges in the movement towards new professionalism, Evetts (2011) asks: "Are there some advantages in the combination of professional and organizational logics… for controlling work and workers?" (p. 416)

In this sense, both forms of professionalism can contribute to the larger process of professionalization, defined as the social process by which an occupation tries to attain professionalized qualities like those previously discussed (e.g., the process of creating and assessing expert knowledge), and our understanding of what is occurring regarding professionalization in teaching more broadly. Despite dramatic shifts shaping the processes and discourses of professionalism, we know little about how teachers experience and understand indicators of occupational professionalism and the teaching profession in the context of the new professionalism. This study focuses on the process and understanding of professionalism in "no-excuses" charter schools as a window into the phenomenon of new professionalism.

Literature Review

Given this focus, we begin the literature review summarizing the argument surrounding teaching as a profession and how charter organizations contribute to the debate around professionalization and the new professionalism. We then review what is known about charter schools with respect to various indicators of a professional model, specifically: preparation and induction of charter school teachers, autonomy, normative orientation, compensation, and status.

Charters and the Teaching Profession

Teaching is traditionally described as a "semi-profession" (Etzioni, 1969). Relative to established professions like medicine, teaching is characterized by brief training periods, limited autonomy, low status, and reliance on intuition over evidence-based methods (Etzioni, 1969; Lortie, 1975). Current trends may be reinforcing this status. States are experiencing teacher shortages -- nationally, there has been a 31% decrease in traditional teacher preparation program enrollment since 2008 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), and a growing proportion of teachers choose alternative routes to teaching compared to previous generations (Feistritzer, 2011). Together, these findings reinforce the idea among many that teaching is a lower status profession, worthy neither of prolonged investment nor of preparation.

At the same time, some argue that charters and other market reforms may serve to *further* de-professionalize teaching (Milner, 2013) by focusing narrow attention on replication of school models rather than how the work of the sector is organized as a whole (Mehta, 2013). Charter schools and portfolio management models (PMMs) are supplementing or replacing traditional schools and districts in various states and major cities such as New Orleans, Philadelphia, Newark, Los Angeles, Denver, and New York City (Bulkley & Henig, 2010). PMMs, in their attempts to close failing schools and supervise the process of opening new schools (Lake & Hill, 2009), personify the shift towards principles of new professionalism in their prioritization of audit and competition. Critics point out that alternate routes to teaching, favored by many charters and portfolio managers as a

way to expand the supply of potential teachers available to their schools (Lake & Hill, 2009), require almost no pre-service training and lead to a reliance on "teacher-proof," scripted curricular materials (Milner, 2013). Increasing the supply of charters and PMMs may directly or indirectly increase the demand for such approaches.

Mehta (2013) argues that the U.S. approach to improving schools relies on bureaucratic systems of auditing teacher and school performance that largely ignore the systematic development of expertise and skill needed to improve teaching at scale. For example, rather than focus on building infrastructure to produce expert knowledge across the profession, we rely on a compliance and accountability structures that force organizations and individual teachers to learn and develop on their own. In effect, current school reform efforts that rely on market logics to produce desirable outcomes may be in tension with efforts to professionalize teaching (Mehta, 2013).

Expert Knowledge

The literature suggests that charter schools may face real challenges accessing teachers who are well prepared prior to entering the field or that have substantial experience teaching. First, charter school teachers are younger and less experienced than their traditional public school counterparts: 31% of charter teachers are under 30 in comparison to 15% of traditional public school teachers, and about a quarter of charter teachers have less than three years of experience compared to 10% of traditional teachers (Goldring, Gray & Bitterman, 2013). They also tend to leave teaching at higher rates than traditional public school teachers (Stuit & Smith, 2012), a pattern mirrored in high-performing, no-excuses charter management organizations (CMOs) (Torres, 2016). These trends—a novice-oriented school culture (Kardos et al., 2001), with little pre-service training, and general instability of the faculty—illustrate that charter school teachers are potentially ill-positioned to contribute to an expert knowledge base for teaching.

Pre-Service Preparation. As already mentioned, extensive, prolonged pre-service preparation is traditionally important to fostering expert knowledge in a profession. Scholarship illustrates shifts away from partnerships with traditional providers and towards the creation and assessment of expert knowledge by the employing charter organization (Mungal, 2015). For many charter teachers working in the Northeastern part of the United States, alternative providers like Relay Graduate School of Education, associated with the Achievement First, KIPP and Uncommon charter networks, often rely on teachers who are prepared by TFA or while on the job as charter teachers of record (Mungal, 2016; Torres & Chu, 2016). These alternative preparation options have developed year-long charter school teacher residency programs that include intensive coaching and a gradual release of responsibility (Arnett, 2015; Horn, 2015). These residencies tend to be grounded in methods developed by charter schools (Green, 2014), such as a specialized style of data-driven instruction (Bambrick, 2010) and Lemov's (2010) "taxonomy" of effective teaching practices. Survey data indicate that charter teachers tend to be highly satisfied with these alternative models and their focus on "just in time" strategies and knowledge for new teachers (Torres & Chu, 2016). The rise of these models, considered alongside diminishing enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs, illustrate larger moves away from the idea teachers should have extensive pre-service training *before* officially entering the field.

Induction and Teacher Development. While the relationship between preservice training and professional expertise in charter schools is oft debated, the connection between professionalization and charter schools' teacher induction and development remains underexplored. Induction is defined as support, guidance and orientation programs that are typically aimed at supporting new teachers or those relatively new to an organization (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Programs for new teacher induction have expanded in various states and districts in recent years, yet

they are generally underdeveloped and do not emphasize a "comprehensive" approach involving multiple approaches to support (Ingersoll, 2012).

Instead, charter schools typically deal with teacher support, guidance and orientation at the organizational level. For example, charter organizations like KIPP, Uncommon and MATCH developed comprehensive and similar systems to induct new teachers and build expertise (Horn, 2015; KIPP.org, 2017; Lake et al., 2012). Looking at the practices of 22 CMOs across the country, Lake and colleagues (2012) found that frequent, intensive teacher coaching and student behavior management processes, particularly those implemented by Uncommon Schools and KIPP, were strongly associated with student achievement. Additionally, the highest-performing CMOs frequently employed strategies that involved instructional coaches or school leaders meeting with teachers on a weekly or even daily basis to observe lessons and receive feedback (see Lake et al., 2012 for further descriptions of these models). Similarly, they found that training and supporting teachers to be consistent implementing student behavior management strategies was seen as integral to success. They argued: "comprehensive and codified sets of policies help students develop necessary behavioral habits and reinforce the school's achievement goals" (Lake et al., 2012, pg. 18), a finding reinforced by prior KIPP studies (e.g., see Woodworth et al., 2008). These approaches, including collaborative analysis of student interim assessment data (Bambrick, 2010), are seen as core strategies for developing charter teachers. However, these strategies often focus on general pedagogy (e.g., Green, 2014; Lemov, 2010) and may ignore knowledge development in specialized areas like special education. While this approach may be influenced by the difficulty these organizations have retaining more experienced teachers and the need to direct resources towards developing new and novice teachers (Torres, 2016), teacher development primarily occurs on site and likely impacts teachers' understandings of the substance and skills associated with expertise in this context.

Autonomy

In general, educators generally feel they have less autonomy in their schools and classrooms compared to previous years. Nationally representative data show that 26% of teachers reported having less classroom autonomy in 2011-2012 compared to 18% saying the same in 2003 (Sparks & Malkus, 2015). Analyzing these same data from 2003-2012, researchers found that charter school teachers reported having greater autonomy than teachers in traditional schools, with the exception that teachers working in CMOs report having significantly less autonomy than those in standalone charters (Ni, 2012; Oberfield, 2016; Roch & Sai, 2015). Qualitative research explaining this difference looks at how teachers and central office leaders experience a tension between the desire for consistency in scaling best practices across a network's schools with teachers' ideas about what is best for their students (Bulkley, 2005; Torres, 2014). However, teachers' expectations for autonomy tend to vary by years of experience – mid-career teachers tend to expect greater degrees of professional autonomy and view it as a mark of competence and status (Quartz et al., 2010). Thus, preferences for autonomy may be very different in charter schools, especially those that are novice-oriented and staffed largely by younger, newer teachers. Thus it is important to investigate not just how much autonomy these teachers report having, but the value and meaning they assign to it.

Norms and Orientation: School Culture

Given the prominence of abbreviated alternative preparation, many charter school teachers may experience the strongest effects of socialization into teaching through the organizations in which they are employed. Many charter schools' cultures, especially those managed by large CMOs (Lake et al., 2012), tends to be "novice-oriented" (Kardos et al., 2001). Teachers can rarely count on expertise of experienced teachers in the building; most rely on teacher development systems like

those we described. Related to this, a second aspect of school culture often emphasized is the "esprit de corps" teachers feel when working with young, "like-minded" colleagues on a common mission (Malloy & Wohlstetter, 2003; Vasudeva & Grutzik, 2002). Third, some of the high-performing, "no-excuses" charters and CMOs (Whitman, 2008) embrace a culture of test-based accountability and one that calls on teachers to work up to 60-80 hours per week doing "whatever it takes" to meet performance goals (Lake et al., 2010; Merseth et al., 2009). Although this mentality is perceived as necessary to attain high levels of student achievement, charter teachers often cite burnout as a key reason for leaving (Torres, 2016). Thus, while teachers may gain a sense of status and belonging, charters' normative orientation may run counter to prolonged affiliation that is a historical indicator of professionalization.

Compensation and Status

Traditionally, teachers are attracted to teaching for psychic rather than monetary rewards (Lortie, 1975), though the relative pay for teaching matters when considering whether to enter teaching versus other professionalized fields (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011). Evidence suggests that charters do little to change the pay dynamic as they are paid at generally similar or lower levels compared to their traditional counterparts (Gross & DeArmond, 2010; Malloy & Wohlstetter, 2003; Miron & Applegate, 2007). CMOs like KIPP strategically locate where they can provide competitive salaries, offering higher than average pay in exchange for working longer hours (Woodworth et al., 2008). In states like Michigan, lower starting salaries for charter teachers are frequently offset by merit-based bonuses (Dynarski, Jacob, & Mahadevan, 2016). Regardless of relative equivalency, studies show that compensation is "significantly more important to charter school teachers' decisions to leave the profession voluntarily and move schools than it [is] to TPS teachers" (Stuit & Smith, 2012, p. 276). Other studies that incorporate data from various states find that charter teachers are less satisfied with their salaries, citing it as a top reason for leaving compared to traditional teachers (Gross & DeArmond, 2010; Miron & Applegate, 2007). Thus, compensation appears to be an important determinant of charter teacher longevity. Finally, teachers' sense of status tends to be derived from their affiliation with a school, network, or preparation program (i.e. TFA) rather than to the teaching profession overall (Weiner & Torres, 2016).

In sum, the literature suggests that charter organizations use their autonomy from state and district policies to create or reinforce highly contextualized or individualized modes of teacher development, recruitment, and knowledge generation. As others have noted elsewhere (e.g. Stone-Johnson, 2014), we argue that it is necessary to investigate how these situations are experienced in unique ways by different kinds of teachers, as well as how this informs our broader understanding of professionalism and the teaching profession.

Methods

We took a qualitative approach to this study, interviewing our participants about their experiences and understandings and analyzing the data using deductive and inductive coding processes. We discuss these elements in more detail below.

Participants

Data for the study was collected in 2014. The sample consists of 20 teachers with between one and seven years of teaching experience. At the time of the study, each participant was teaching in a charter school, with 17 different schools represented in the sample. All of the schools were located in a northeastern region of the United States.

We focused on early career teachers in this particular area of the country for several reasons. First, we selected early career teachers due to their more recent experiences with pre-service opportunities and presumably, their ability to more readily reflect on them. Many of the teachers were also still participating in induction and other professional socialization processes in their particular school. This made questions regarding their experiences with these elements of the professionalization process particularly salient. Third, as over a third of charter school teachers are under 30 years old (Stuit & Smith, 2012) and a large proportion of teachers employed by CMOs in the Northeast are similarly young, we thought this group of early career teachers to be representative of charter teachers overall.

We chose to draw participants from this region of the US as many of the charter schools in urban centers could be counted as high profile, "no excuses" charter schools such as KIPP and Uncommon Schools. All but two[1] of the participants characterized their school as a "no-excuses" school. For this study, we are particularly interested in no-excuses charter schools as they often embrace neoliberal philosophies reflective of new professionalism (Sondel, 2016). For example, no excuses charters are known to promote instruction aligned with externally determined standards, emphasize frequent testing and data use, and hire teachers through alternative or non-traditional preparation programs (Golann, 2015; Whitman, 2008). These schools also implement school and network-wide "tight" discipline systems proscribing teacher practice and emphasizing student compliance, order, and control (Wilson, 2009). These features are consistent with aspects of new professionalism such as work standardization, audit and measurement, and management "from above" (Evetts, 2011).

Using snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961), we recruited participants by distributing flyers via social media (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn) and emails to personal contacts. Sixty-five percent of the participants were female and 65% self-identified as white. Eighty-five percent had between two and five years teaching experience and all but one were 30 years old or younger. Most participants chose alternative certification routes such as TFA (*n*=9) or charter residency programs to become teachers, and most taught in charter schools affiliated with CMOs (see Table 1 in Appendix) or standalone charters with similar practices and cultures such as Boston Collegiate and MATCH (see Merseth et al., 2009, for further descriptions of these schools).

Data Collection

We conducted one, in-person interview for each participant. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were semi-structured and the protocol was designed to collect facets of professionalization (e.g., supports received, rewards associated with their position, status relative to other professions, etc.). Participants were also asked to reflect on their school's professional culture and norms and how these norms shaped their daily practice and interactions. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Analysis

We analyzed the data thematically using deductive and inductive coding (Boyatzis, 1998). We developed our codebook based on what Gorman and Sandefur (2011) identified as traditional elements of a profession (i.e., expert knowledge, technical autonomy, a normative orientation toward the service others, and high status, income, and other rewards). These elements, and participants' understanding of them, can be viewed in light of occupational and/or organizational professionalism, noting again that these forms are not mutually exclusive (Evetts, 2011).

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[1] These two stated they were uncertain if their school would qualify as being no-excuses.

In the first round of coding, we focused on identifying instances where participants were discussing either their experiences and work or other's experiences or views relative to the profession. We began with broad descriptive codes such as "perceptions of teaching profession," "commitment to teaching," "importance of working conditions," "perceptions of preparation," and "comparisons to 'traditional' public schools." We then used our initial codes on four randomly selected interviews that we both coded. During this process, we added additional codes to describe different experiences of participants within these broader categories. For example, within "perceptions of teaching profession" we added sub-codes such as "viewing teaching as service," "influence of charter environment," or "importance of 'good' colleagues." We met together regularly to discuss our codes and build reliability. This process included each researcher explaining the reasoning and justification for the selected or modified code. When there were differences in coding we engaged in a deliberative process until agreement was reached. This sometimes included clarifying or modifying the code book to enhance its precision and our consistency in use. In this way, our process mirrored suggestions of Hruschka et al. (2004) in building interrater reliability: "the segmentation of text, codebook creation, coding, assessment of reliability, codebook modification, and final coding." After coding the first four interviews we continued our coding by randomly assigning an even number of the remaining interviews to each researcher and meeting regularly to discuss results and re-calibrate as needed.

Once the initial coding was completed, we conducted a second round of coding. This coding was inductive and facilitated the identification of more nuanced themes within each larger coding category as well as a larger schema for considering the professionalization process. For example, we were able to identify themes regarding the specific norms (e.g., collaboration, commitment, and competition) participants highlighted as part of the larger professional culture in their schools and how they came to be acculturated to these norms. We followed the same process of developing interrater reliability, working closely to deliberate and evaluate the codes and coded pieces of text for consistency and clarity. We also wrote analytical memos, returning to the data to clarify, refine, and identify themes during this iterative process (Boyatzis, 1998).

Limitations

The relatively small number of participants, their novice status, varied work sites, and the fact that charter schools whether no excuses or not, vary in type and quality make it difficult to generalize our findings to all charter school teachers. We were not able to gain a deep perspective on any one of the schools or CMOs and thus may have overlooked specific elements of how professionalism plays out in these different contexts. We also tended to talk to individuals who moved from traditional public schools to charters, often via TFA, and were relatively novice in their careers. Contrasting these experiences with more veteran teachers and those who exited the profession or left to work traditional public schools would help to address any selection bias.

Findings

Expert Knowledge

Only two of the participants pursued educational degrees as undergraduates. Among the remaining participants, about half participated in TFA. These individuals often started their careers in traditional public schools and after their two-year TFA commitment, transitioned to a charter school (see Table 1 in Appendix). A smaller group of TFA teachers began their careers in charter schools. The remaining participants attended what could be considered alternative routes to teaching. Of these, a small number attended city or state-sponsored teacher residency programs. The rest experienced their first teacher training in a charter school. With this general lack of substantial

pre-service training in mind, it is perhaps not a surprise that, on average, participants felt inadequately prepared to teach upon their arrival at their charter schools.

These feelings of unpreparedness were expressed by participants no matter what type of pre-service experience they had (e.g., TFA, residency, traditional undergraduate, or none). For example, Stephanie went through TFA training and then began working at her current charter school. When asked how prepared she felt upon coming to the school, she said,

> My summer training I felt prepared me more, but when I got to the school and started working on the curriculum piece, I felt completely clueless, which made me nervous about having to stand up and deliver it. I felt like I didn't even know how to begin thinking about approaching it. So not super-prepared.

In this case, Stephanie faces the dual challenge of being a new teacher and having limited pedagogical expertise or training from which to draw on in her new environment.

It was not just participants without prior experience who expressed feeling under or unprepared. With few exceptions, participants who were from TFA and fulfilled their 2-year commitment prior to coming to their current charter school reported feeling unprepared upon arrival. In keeping with TFA goals, all but one of these teachers (*n*=8) said that they taught in schools with limited resources and high need populations. Speaking about these experiences, many cited a lack of formal induction, mentorship or other forms of support. As Vicki recalled speaking about her experience working after going through TFA,

> I was totally unprepared for what I was put into. That's the nature of the game. If I had known what I was getting into, I wouldn't have done it. [laughs] I learned a lot from the situation and also knew that I wasn't really ready for that, and I knew that I needed more intensive professional development. I don't mean just like what TFA could provide for me, which was someone coming into my classroom maybe once every other week and giving the feedback that they could and professional development on Saturdays.

While TFA alumni were fairly consistent in their views of their preparation experiences, the ten participants who attended undergraduate teaching programs and/or teacher residency programs, had more varied views. Some, like Tiffany, felt well-prepared and recalled immediately recognizing the strength of her undergraduate preparation upon starting at her charter school. She said, "We were well above what everyone else was doing." Others, like Britney, who also received an undergraduate teaching degree, felt unprepared despite this experience. She said,

> I think that some of the big surprises were the behavior. I was not prepped for that...you're dealing with students who have some pretty traumatic backgrounds, it was a big wake-up call. And also just the extreme gaps, I have these students who are above grade level, and who can pretty much do anything, and then I have these students who speak only Spanish, and I am trying to like figure out a way to kind of help them all, and that was a huge gap that I got to adjust to my first year.

Whatever their training, participants voiced that they had minimal expertise upon arrival at their particular charter schools. In this sense, preparation programs (whether traditional or alternative) were not seen as important contributors to participants' development of expert knowledge, particularly when considering the "high need" environments they were placed in. However, participants did report that they were able to quickly gain expertise through school-based induction and support.

Induction and Teacher Development

Virtually all participants said that their charter school provided them strong induction supports. For some, this meant participating in a formal training program run by their charter school.[2] In these programs, participants often had differentiated titles such as "tutor" or "associate teacher" and received intensive coaching and coursework. They were expected to support classroom teachers and to work with students independently. These programs were perceived by participants as highly competitive and as a direct and, in some cases, the sole, pipeline to work at that school or within an associated network. Yvonne, who participated in such a training program, described the experience this way,

> The way they set up their program is, we do classes in the fall and we do preparation and there's a lot of focus on behavior management, and in the spring we start student teaching, and we also have the job application process—it's not really an application so much as an interview process with a lot of different charter schools and the emphasis of our training is behavioral management in ...no-excuses charter schools that have merits, demerits, send-outs... The schools that they want us to work in host the teacher residency at schools that are similar to [name of school].

This sense that one needed to have situated training experiences to be a successful charter school candidate, and to work in "no excuses" schools in particular, was often repeated by participants and reinforced by these training programs. In one case, even teachers with prior experience were required to spend a year in the training program to, as one participant explained, get "them ready to teach in the River schools...managing the high demands with content and standards and everything, but also dealing with what could be a difficult student population." In this way, teachers' prior knowledge was presented as largely non-transferable and thus sent the message that expertise was contextual and solely practice based. In this way, and consistent with qualities of new professionalism, expert knowledge is created and assessed from above, at the organizational level rather than by the teachers themselves who may not bring with them the expertise or training to contribute to this knowledge base in their early careers.

Participants' comments suggested that induction programs often included a summer orientation and ongoing classroom-based support from administrators and veteran teachers. As Shannon explained,

> As a new teacher, you have an extra week, eight days, week and a half of training before the rest of the staff comes back for all-staff training in August. Actually, I ended up doing that twice, because I did that when I was working part-time and then when I actually got hired to be a teacher there. They said, "You should probably do this again for real." ...and then throughout the year, I think about every month to six weeks, you meet with the other first-year teachers.

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[2] We treat these programs as induction as opposed to pre-service preparation, for two reasons. First, those trained in programs situated at a charter school tended to work at that school once they completed the program. In essence, the training program was the process of induction to ready these individuals for taking on a full-time position *in that charter school or one within a tight network with similar values, practices and norms*. Unlike a traditional residency program, the training was framed by participants as specific to *this* school or set of schools rather than to *any* school.

As we discuss later, these extensive supports for new teachers were often coupled with other supports provided to all teachers (e.g., coaching, co-teaching, grade level teams, etc.). Additionally, participants often described themselves as successful because they participated in these induction and training programs, and discussed positive student achievement data as an indicator of this success. They also generally presented themselves and their colleagues as deeply committed to the work and "on the same page" or "in total agreement" regarding how it should be done. Induction processes helped some feel a sense of common identity with their colleagues.

And yet, despite their positive views of their colleagues generally and the supports they received, more than a quarter of the participants argued that some of the instructional supports they received including coaching was often ineffective due to the organization's dependence on contextual expertise. In particular, these participants suggested that their coaches or other professional development providers (e.g., administrators, colleagues, etc.) frequently lacked the necessary content knowledge to provide teachers with new, innovative and research-based instructional interventions. Teachers (n=3) who went outside their schools to earn specialized certification or a master's degree found the lack of strong content expertise among coaches particularly troubling. For example, in describing the general expertise in his school, Frank said,

> The majority of the teachers actually don't [go outside the school to gain expertise]. This is where things are a little scary for me sometimes. I'm the most highly qualified teacher in the building. I have all my licensure in all the areas, content, Special Ed., [etc.], but I'm the only one in the building with it.

Sasha, who also obtained a special education certification from a local university, expressed similar misgivings about her coaches' capacity to provide supports to enhance her expertise.

> I am certified special education. A lot of Special Ed. teachers in charter schools are not certified. So while my coach may have been certified, other teachers in my department were not. So there was a difference between what my development looked like and what their development looked like, because it got to the point where I knew as much as my coach because I had been recently trained…I used my outside resources in terms of instructional development in special education.

This highlights a more problematic aspect of a heavy dependence on situated or contextual expertise –it has the potential to create a closed system in which information is recycled rather than expanded. Of course, such a result is not necessarily inevitable. If individuals within these systems actively pursue new information aimed at expansively building their expertise and bringing it back to others, new information would enter the system.

Additionally, these schools tended to move teachers into administrative positions quickly, bringing up questions regarding the coaches' degree of expertise. For example, Britney believed her principal to be underqualified to support her instruction,

> We have a head of school…he is 25-years-old. He taught for two years…then he studied at Harvard [for one year], and he is now my head of school, who I go and see…He has less hours of the teaching than I do, given that I did my internships, and stuff for two years in college, plus now, I'm in my second year of teaching, and that just is really reflected, as well in just his ability to guide a whole team of teachers. He has 10 teachers that he is supposed to be seeing [instruction], but the things that he really focuses on are staff culture... And I think he was hired a lot for like that shiny degree, more as opposed to his experience, and even experience with being a manager, or anything like that.

Overall, these comments highlighted a dependency on young, relatively inexperienced instructional leaders and a narrowly focused induction process. While one may argue that these charter schools appear to be providing their teachers with stronger induction and support processes than typically found in traditional public schools, their experiences also point to important potential limitations regarding the information and expertise within those systems.

Autonomy

Eighteen of the 20 participants said they had a great deal of professional autonomy in their charter schools. As Maura explained,

> In all the charter schools I've worked in, there's usually a high alignment to standards and to really clear benchmarks for kids to perform on standardized tests or meet certain assessments, but the route you take to get there is more varied in charter schools, especially here at [School name]. I have full control over our curriculum, and I have a lot of support through leadership staff and through co-teachers, but it's really my choice to do what I think is best to help kids learn. And there's a lot of staffing resources, financial resources, just to help me get the materials I need, the support I need to in turn give back to the students.

Maura's comments highlight a comprehensive system of teacher accountability, support and autonomy in which teachers are free to make decisions regarding their practice and are supported by the administration to ensure this practice produces effective results.

At the same time, autonomy often existed within a well-defined framework of agreed upon practice and desired outcomes. Nowhere was this stated consistency stronger than in regards to behavioral management and may be attributable to many participants working in schools using a "no excuses" approach. This was true Ron who, in considering some of the strengths of his school, said,

> I feel like [my school] is very consistent, and I feel like they always have your back in terms whatever consequences you gave [via the behavior system]. It was also very standardized as well. You had guides and taught about it…we talked about it and normed everything which was great everyone was on the same page. That is great, and a strength of charter schools.

Like Ron, other participants also characterized their schools as valuing "consistency" and "alignment" stating that these features were part of why they were drawn to teach and remain in charter schools. Interestingly then, early career teachers like Ron valued sacrificing some control in favor of standardization. At the same time, teachers often remarked that even within a more tightly controlled behavior management system they had freedom not necessarily in terms of *what* to teach but *how* to teach it (e.g., to design specific learning activities to accomplish an objective). As such, teacher autonomy relative to instructional practice was presented as flourishing within the larger guiding frameworks of standards and assessments.

When asked about teacher autonomy and the professional supports in their schools, participants highlighted collaborative feedback structures as the primary means they received such supports. These structures were varied and overlapping and included everything from daily grade level team meetings to regular instructional coaching to frequent classroom observations coupled with debriefing and coaching. Most understood these as part of a process of continuous improvement in which their autonomy was respected but their practice challenged. As Mike said,

> I meet twice a week to talk about planning and instructional delivery with my coach. The assumption is that I know how to teach a lesson and I know how to tell students are learning, but we meet with really specific goals in mind, like my sequencing of questions. I'll bring my lesson and we'll review, "Is this the right order to ask the questions in? Is there a way I could push more knowledge onto the students instead of me leading the discussion? If I try this new seating arrangement, what will that do for behavior management?"

Similarly, when speaking about such supports in his school Bill said,

> We have what's called a 10-minute observation...either the principal or the director of instruction will come in and observe you for 10 minutes with the form… I think I got observed between 12 and 15 times my first year, which is great. And then I met once a week with the director, I meet with her every other week this year for matters of curriculum mostly, but it could be for any other issues I was having.

These examples further illustrate how teachers experienced autonomy within a system of support for effective practice. Autonomy was not defined or viewed in terms of isolated individuals making what they consider to be professional decisions (Lortie, 1975). Instead, autonomy appeared to be understood as within the boundaries of a highly defined framework of support and collaborative practice. These frameworks (e.g. standards, assessments, disciplinary structures) were designed "from above" (Evetts, 2011) rather than by the teachers themselves, yet many still enjoyed flexibility within these structures.

Normative Orientation and Community

Participants described a strongly shared culture across these schools with at least three interconnected but distinct norms: collaboration, commitment and competition. These norms served to provide a sense of shared identity and purpose; however, these same teachers, even as they said their school cultures were positive, described competitive environments in which they felt uncertain about the efficacy of their work.

Collaboration. Throughout the interviews, with the exception of a few teachers, these participants described their charter schools as highly collaborative and listed a number of structures (e.g., professional learning communities, data teams, co-teaching, etc.) that allowed them to come together to plan, analyze student performance and support one another's practice. They also often pointed to the additional time, and sometimes interpersonal negotiations required to make these collaborations effective.

For some, such negotiations were well worth the outcome. For others, these demands could become burdensome particularly when balanced with other responsibilities. However, most described a sense of shared identity, purpose and professionalism with colleagues, as Maura did as she discussed what kept her committed to the work:

> The high level of professionalism and intelligence, especially here at [school name]. Some of the best minds are here working for these kids. If they can't do it, who can? It seems really—our work environment is very intelligent, very focused, very positive, and very solutions-oriented. Those are all things that when the challenges arise, we have the tools to overcome them.

In addition to these more formal means of collaboration, participants also described collaborating informally in hallways, over lunch and in settings after and out of school. Participants also often

spoke about the sense of community among teachers and that they were all working together towards a common good. As Bill put it,

> We don't just care about our kids doing well. We want to know all the other kids in all the classes. We want to care about all the students. We want to—if somebody's co-teacher's absent, you want to pop into that class. "Do you need me to help copy? Do you want to take a bathroom break? Get coffee? Could I watch them during this independent practice?"

Many of the teachers described their colleagues as exhibiting similar helping behaviors and a broadly shared sentiment that teachers were "in this thing together."

      Commitment. Participants highlighted commitment – to the work and to the students – as a prevailing professional norm across their schools. On the one hand such commitment was framed very positively, these teachers said colleagues exhibited what might be described as a "can-do" attitude despite the many challenges they faced, and what was almost an *internalized* demand of the need to work hard to achieve their goals and those of their school. As Ron described it, "everyone is working really hard and no one's slacking off. And people—at my [traditional] school...we would have professional development and if it went a minute over, people would get up and leave. That sort of thing does not happen at our school." Similarly, Jessica explained, at her school, "It's generally at attitude of, 'Try as hard as you can.' Somebody thinks this is something that will work, so people are usually willing to try it."

      In contrast to this framing of commitment as a function of teachers' willingness to work hard, participants also often spoke about how this sense of commitment was prompted by administrative demands or expectations. Describing this phenomenon as "expected selflessness", Vicki listed her many responsibilities at the school,

> Our administration puts a lot on us, piles more and more and more. It's literally too much to do well... I'm expected to work all day on Sunday on lesson plan. I'm expected to be on my email all weekend. I'm available on my phone to kids for homework help until 9 p.m. every day, on the weekends, too, and they use it. I do work on Saturdays, too…The expectation or the assumption is always that I can do it. In addition to my teaching, I'm on a lot of different quote-unquote "teams" in school. I teach an art enrichment after school,...I do Saturday academy principal. I'm on the teacher leadership team and the RTI team, I'm my cluster lead...I've gotten in trouble for not responding to emails on Sunday night.

While this teacher's experiences may be perceived as extreme, many described working similarly long hours and having responsibilities perceived to be far broader than teachers in traditional public schools. Participants themselves often made such contrasts, arguing, like Stephanie, that "Those of us at charter schools have a lot longer working hours, longer school years, [and] more duties than some of my friends who are at regular district schools." Additionally, and as she suggests, it was not just the administration making these demands on teachers, these schools also seemed to foster competition among teachers and within themselves.

      Competition. The climate of high expectations in these schools helped to foster teachers' feelings of competition and uncertainty about one's own efficacy. Describing themselves and their colleagues as "very self-critical", participants said that these negative feelings tended to cause them to work even harder to achieve results. When such effort was then coupled with stringent yearly

evaluations and the possibility that their contracts might not be renewed, it could, as Ron argued, create a "pressure cooker." He elaborated,

> Everybody is very friendly and tries hard, but everybody's also stressed out a lot of the time…Everybody's really insecure about the job they're doing. The standards are so high. You're not guaranteed a position. People are putting on a strong face and trying to smile their way through, but teachers are insecure about how they're doing, and I wouldn't say they're necessarily happy at this point.

These feelings of insecurity and uncertainty were fostered, in part, by teachers critiquing each other's instructional practices and materials. As Britney pointed out,

> There was just a lot – well, a lot of competitiveness…It's like, so somebody makes plans, and distributes them out, and they've spent hours putting these together, and worked really hard, and somebody who thinks they know better is saying – secretly, just kind of drama-craziness, but like, "Oh, these aren't really good to other teachers, and like I want to kind of change these around to this way, whether I have this experience or not." And then, kind of remaking plans, or kind of undermining somebody's efforts, and stuff, or just gossiping, that kind of competitive gossiping…that kind of stuff.

In this way, the aforementioned collaborative norms of sharing materials seemed to be discrete from other norms of how to engage productively in disagreement or critique. The result was that sometimes collaboration seemed to further foster competition and uncertainty in an already high accountability context. This competitiveness then contributed to teachers' perspectives on the short-term nature of teaching generally, as Yvonne noted when asked if working at her charter had changed her views of teaching as a profession: "My views have changed in terms of work-life balance. I can't speak for anyone else, but it's like, when does it get easier? When does it become more balanced?"

> The normative climate fostered feelings of admiration and shared identity. At the same time, feelings of competition reinforced the view that the work of teaching is only possible for the short-term. These competitive feelings were psychically reinforced by mutual admiration.

Status, Income, and Rewards

In response to questions regarding the rewards of teaching at their charter school, participants often focused on psychic rewards, specifically, their positive relationships with students and their families and the academic gains their students and school produced. As Stephanie explained, these rewards kept her committed to the profession despite its many challenges,

> The experiences with the kids. Just those day-to-day interactions that can range from really silly and ridiculous to really profound. "You did not know that before. I specifically taught you that, and now you know that." That's really neat. So just, "Hey, we both laughed over a really silly joke that I put on your homework." Those things are what keep me most committed, being able to have a variety of experiences every day with so many different kids…

Like Stephanie, other teachers highlighted daily interactions with students and their subsequent academic achievement as deeply rewarding. Participants often framed academic achievement as synonymous with standardized achievement tests and frequently provided specific numbers as

evidence of growth in their students' average proficiency levels. In this way, participants' views of their success appeared to be deeply tied with external measures of performance.

Perhaps one reason participants focused so much attention on the psychic awards associated with the profession was the perceived lack of strong material rewards. Indeed, participants frequently complained about their salaries. About 20% of the teachers that were interviewed felt particularly aggrieved given what they perceived to be their longer hours and multiple responsibilities relative to traditional public school teachers who participants said earned more. For some of the participants, like Maura, the lack of compensation had real and negative implications for her overall view of the profession.

> The money is less than you can make elsewhere, and the hours are long. There is a pretty strong pull for people to move into administration, where the hours and duties are more predictable, or to move out to things that—at times for me personally and I think for a lot of teachers, it can feel very much like you are a blue-collar laborer, punching the time card. Society in a lot of ways doesn't show teachers that professional respect that I think teachers deserve.... The kids are a huge reward in teaching, but as far as the ability to move up to a higher salary or higher prestige within the classroom, there's just not a lot of ways to do that.

These same sentiments regarding the negative impact of low pay relative to workload required were echoed by other participants. When asked about their long term plans with regards to teaching, about half of the participants cited their low compensation as a key reason they were considering exit. Among those providing negative responses, there was a smaller group of participants (n=3) who felt they were adequately or even well compensated for their work. These individuals tended to work in charter schools with performance pay programs and, due to their students' performance, had achieved bonuses. As Sanjay described it, at his school, "the monetary rewards for committed teachers who achieve excellent results are pretty good." However, these same participants were clear that not all their colleagues were happy with these systems or reaping their benefits.

Participants, particularly the 13 working in charter schools affiliated with CMOs, often described the use of promotion to reward teachers. For example, when asked about their career plans, many spoke about moving into coaching positions. Others talked about the trajectories of friends and colleagues, who, despite being relative early in their careers (i.e., under 5 years), already moved into such positions. Besides creating a career pathway for those interested in additional responsibilities, such policies likely had implications for the quality and substance of such coaching and, as we mentioned earlier, professional expertise.

Status

Finally, more than two-thirds of the participants felt that teaching was often viewed by society as a lower status profession. Participants' comments suggested that this lack of prestige negatively impacted their professional efficacy and commitment. After years of hearing that teaching was a "thankless job" and that he "could do so much better," Frank felt he had to "justify why I'm doing what I'm doing." Daron expressed similar sentiments:

> It really bothers me how society views teaching. It also bothers me how I feel—it bothers me that I'm bothered by that, because it shouldn't matter what other people think of your profession if you love it and it's something you feel is really important.

Beyond the negative impact these perceptions had on their psyche, participants also highlighted real implications such views had on the profession and education at large. As Bill explained,

> In our society, it's not viewed as a prestigious job. And I don't need a constant 'attaboy' and a pat on the back, but…it's not seen as a career where as much innovation goes on as maybe the private sector for, let's say, information technology or things like that. So when I think about my job, if my job felt like it was given as much importance as I think it is, then I'd feel like more resources would flow into it and if that happens, you have the ability to try more things and make a greater impact.

Overall, and despite the generally positive views participants had of their schools and the impact they were making, many were disappointed about their low status as teachers.

Discussion

This study focused on how early career charter school teachers conceptualize their work and how this relates to our understanding of professionalism and the process of professionalization. Our findings suggest these teachers generally embraced many elements of the new professionalism present in their schools, and described the climate and their colleagues positively. In this way, our work reinforces the complexity associated with both capturing the nature of a profession and how different individuals or groups of individuals within it may respond to its elements (i.e., "parallel professionalism"; Stone-Johnson, 2014).

Shifting now to our specific findings, first, unlike the majority of traditional public school teachers, many of whom were socialized into the profession through traditional university pre-service programs, study participants were not. Few attended such programs and many were TFA alums who had two weeks of pre-service training before entering the field. While the efficacy of these respective models in adequately readying teachers for the role is still being debated (Darling-Hammond, 2016), we bring up this difference in pre-service experience for a different purpose. We argue that traditionally trained teachers are likely to be exposed to foundational courses on various philosophies of education and pedagogy (Grossman, Hammerness & McDonald, 2009) thus linking their expertise to others across the occupation. In contrast, charter school teachers, like our participants, tend to attend alternative and usually abbreviated programs focused explicitly on practice, may not have such exposure. This potential lack of guiding frameworks on which to compare and contrast new learning once beginning to teach may have played a role in these teachers' tendency to frame expertise as deeply embedded in their local context (i.e., organizationally defined) and exhibited by meeting management-created practice expectations. In other words, these charter teachers may have a more limited view of professionally grounded expertise in part because of their more limited knowledge of the teaching profession, its history and underlying philosophies.

Often in response to the lack of pre-service training, the bulk of participants' knowledge regarding their role and the profession came from site-specific induction processes. These induction supports, which included teacher coaching, observation, and professional learning communities, were perceived positively by participants. However, the focus of these supports were fairly narrow in scope and emphasized achievement at the expense of perceived work sustainability, illustrative of the logic and potential consequences of new professionalism. Given our findings on competition, commitment, and the perceived lack of monetary compensation despite the often overwhelming demands of the work, newer teachers may need more time to better acclimate early in their careers. For example, various studies on new teacher induction highlight other time-oriented supports such as a reduced teaching schedule, reduced preparations, and extra classroom assistance as effectively

supporting new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These strategies may be useful for induction for "no-excuses" schools to adopt.

It is also important to note that much of content used to build teacher expertise in these schools seemed to come from other teachers who were relatively quickly (e.g., within 2 or 3 years) promoted to coaching positions. Given the larger context of high turnover in these schools and somewhat limited scope of pre-service training many of these same coaches experienced, it does bring up some questions about the substance of the coaching and its quality. Like other more "novice-oriented" cultures (Kardos et al., 2001), it may be the case that these teachers and coaches were left to either modify organizational sanctioned interventions without deeper reflection on their overarching orientations, research basis, or theoretical foundations, or to newly develop interventions for well-tread educational issues. Thus, as Kardos et al. (2001) put it, teachers in these schools may be "caught in a perpetual cycle of excessive rediscovery and reinvention" (p. 282). Our findings suggest that a novice-based culture exists not just when teachers are young and lack institutional supports, but also when such supports exist but the information in the system is limited to organizational determinations and uninformed in an intentional, iterative fashion by practitioners themselves.

Whereas professional discretion is often positioned as diminished when administrators engage in high levels of classroom inspection (Taylor, 2007), participants tended to frame processes of observation and feedback as in harmony with their professional autonomy. In keeping with changing norms of professionalism in education, these teachers tended to value norms of collaborative expertise (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996), which necessarily introduces tension between individual autonomy and teacher collaboration (Little, 1990). As others have highlighted in analyses of discourses on teacher professionalism and professionalization, discretionary judgment over what is best for one's students should coexist alongside a collaborative culture of shared expertise aimed at solving ongoing problems of practice (Day, 2002; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). Additionally, participants appreciated being able to exercise autonomy (i.e., *how* to teach) within guiding frameworks such as standards/curricula that gave guidance on *what* to teach. Charter school teachers responsible for creating everything from scratch often feel overwhelmed (Vasudeva & Gratzik, 2002). Findings illustrate a balance between positive aspects of occupational and new professionalism whereby teachers appreciate structure "from above" but retain some discretion.

However, it is still worth considering the consequences of teachers simply implementing the external mandates of the organization (e.g., teaching to the test) as opposed to engaging in self-directed generation of new knowledge and change that is characteristic of occupational professionalism. We suspect the organizational focus on tightly prescribed teacher behavior is shaped by organizational orientations towards replicating what is considered best practice alongside the need to use and reuse the same kinds and level of knowledge to prepare new teachers due to frequent teacher turnover (Torres, 2014, 2016). Other work suggests that as teachers gain more experience in these kinds of charter schools (we sampled early career teachers), they experience conflict if they express differences in opinion about what is best for students (Torres, 2014). Taken together, these findings suggest that while early career teachers may be satisfied with these highly structured professional cultures, they may also "grow out" of them. In this way, no-excuses schools may create a vicious cycle of work-intensification and rapid turnover, reinforcing the need for increased standardization, which then virtually ensures that such schools will maintain a largely novice-orientation.

Finally, our findings suggest that even when holding generally positive views relative to degree of professionalism in their schools these teachers continue to struggle with the low status of teaching generally and the intense cultures of accountability in their schools. The intensity of

induction, sense of vulnerability due to norms of shared practice, coupled with expectations associated with work demands (whether internal or externally driven) can produce feelings of competition and uncertainty about one's efficacy. Despite many positive perceptions, we argue that these factors alongside a pull to move into more flexible and higher status positions make it likely that most teachers will view teaching as a short-term endeavor.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

We see several implications for research, policy and practice based on our findings. Researchers should continue studying how charters and other educational organizations address professionalization. More quantitative work can assess the broader patterns of professionalization in charter schools and compare these with different kinds of schools, including comparisons of different kinds of charter schools (i.e. CMOs/EMOs/standalone). Qualitative work can focus on comparing or describing how different types of teachers view aspects of professionalization -- for instance, are these qualities perceived similarly or differently in for-profit EMOs and standalone, independent schools? For younger versus more experienced charter school teachers? Finally, researchers can identify, inform and evaluate efforts to create a knowledge base for teaching, including those created within organizations (Mehta, 2014).

Policymakers and practitioners interested in teacher professionalization should also pay attention to the questions we raise as well as whose responsibility it is to develop teachers and how. Currently, a large degree of responsibility is placed on individual schools and school leaders to develop teachers. In the absence of a robust system of pre-service preparation, is it reasonable to expect schools to systematically develop high quality teachers? If so, are we doing enough to support schools in doing so? Practitioners can consider induction supports like those we suggested earlier to balance the creation of effective teaching with making the profession sustainable. No-excuses schools might also consider creating pathways for teachers to inform and assess the knowledge base for effective teaching.

In addition to school-based supports, our findings suggest that the accountability climate significantly reinforces the short-term nature of teaching. If policymakers wish to enhance longevity in the profession, accountability measures should emphasize other important outcomes, such as school climate and teacher satisfaction and/or processes (e.g., how teachers should engage effectively with data to make decisions regarding differentiation). Doing so could force the organization to balance achievement with sustainability and a drive for outcomes with ethical, high quality practice.

As the context in which this study took place, no-excuses charter organizations often require significant external funding above and beyond what public funds provide (Snyder & Reckhow, 2017). Instead of dictating that schools should do more with less money while pointing to no-excuses schools as exemplars of practice, policymakers should use such schools as examples of why more financial resources are required for schools to meet performance requirements, as well as consider how these schools may have larger implication for how teaching and the teaching profession are conceptualized and enacted across the system.

Finally, despite appreciating the affiliation with their charter schools, teachers continued to point to the low status of teaching as a barrier to a long term commitment. We also note that some charter teachers reported being unwilling to move to teaching positions in the traditional sector, highlighting a divide between charter schools and traditional public schools that points to potentially larger issues of teacher recruitment, supply and mobility (Weiner & Torres, 2016). If we hope to

build a sustainable and unified profession for the betterment of *all* students, we may need reforms and career paths that will unite teachers and teaching as a field.

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Appendix

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Current School Type	Grade	Race	Years Teaching	Previous Placement	TFA or Non-TFA
Jessica	CMO	MS	Half-Hispanic	3	TPS	TFA
Frank	CMO	MS	White	5	TPS	Non-TFA
Sanjay	CMO	MS	South Asian	2	None	Non-TFA
Stephanie	Standalone	MS	White	2	None	TFA
Shannon	Standalone	ES	White	4	Other Charter	Non-TFA
Tiffany	Standalone	ES	Biracial	5	Other Charter	Non-TFA
Tom	CMO	MS	White	5	TPS	Non-TFA
Lisa	CMO	ES	White	7	Other Charter	Non-TFA
Bill	CMO	ES	White	4	Teaching Abroad	TFA
Tina	CMO	ES	Biracial	4	Other Charter	Non-TFA
Mike	CMO	ES	White	6	TPS	TFA
Maura	CMO	MS	White	4	Other Charter	TFA
Sasha	CMO	ES	African American	5	TPS	TFA
Daron	Standalone	ES	White	5	TPS	TFA
Ron	CMO	HS	White	6	Private	Non-TFA
Vicki	CMO	MS	Caucasian	3	TPS	TFA
Yvonne	Standalone	MS	Asian American	2	Other Charter	Non-TFA
Tanya	CMO	ES	White	2	Other Charter	Non-TFA
Britney	Conversion Charter	ES	White	2	None	TFA
Shaun	Standalone	ES	White	4	Taught Abroad	Non-TFA

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