UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

OPENING THE QUESTION -- WHAT IS PROFESSIONALISM?: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

BY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1993

ISBN 0-315-88196-8

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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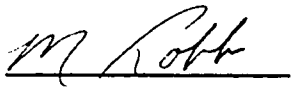
TITLE OF THESIS: Opening the Question -- What is Professionalism?: A Qualitative Exploration

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1993



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled OPENING THE QUESTION -- WHAT IS PROFESSIONALISM?: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION submitted by MARNIE E. ROBB in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY.

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DATE: August 30, 1993

ABSTRACT

The intent of this inquiry was to "re-open" the question "What is professionalism?" within the context of career development by using hermeneutic phenomenology, an inductive inquiry process. The research question subsumed the exploration of the meaning of professionalism, the experience of professionalism, and the development of professionalism. Data sources included: personal experience; etymological sources; idiomatic phrases; phenomenological literature; and experiential descriptions of others attained through written protocols, in depth interviews with four organizational/career development practitioners and one validator, and participant observation. The resulting data suggests an ecological view of professionalism that is systemic and holistic, and portrays such themes as hope, care, and respect for the spirit of the practitioner as well as the others he or she works with. The implications of the alternative paradigm of professionalism are applied within the context of career development.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Genesis of the Question

What is professionalism? This question guided my research for a year and a half. It did not come easily to me. Initially, my intention was to create a model of professional development for practitioners in the area of career development that is my field of interest. I grew increasingly uneasy with this intention and spent many months reflecting, reading, and dialoguing with others before I recognized that it was important for me to first question what the professional is striving to develop.

Even once I had this insight, the research question took time to develop. It seemingly had a life of its own -- it emerged and was refined, distorted, forgotten -- then eventually resurrected. It was only after I put aside my expectations that my research should be linear, concise, and follow what could be called a traditional research format (although what constitutes traditional research is evolving) that the question truly found its life. In other words, the question emerged only when I allowed interest and meaningfulness, rather than a notion of what I "should" study, to be my selection guide.

Background to the Concept of Professionalism and The Need for the Research Question

Concurrent with and following the emergence of the research question I overviewed existing literature on professionalism. I soon recognized that professionalism is an abstract concept. Trying to gain an understanding of it is, at best, a difficult task. In the last century, the consideration of professionalism and its related concepts has been reflected in the academic literature in both psychological and sociological writings. As is true of most complex phenomena, however, there is a lack of clarity in the literature surrounding these concepts. This is compounded by its close relation to other concepts, such as the professions and professionalization.

The terms profession, professionalization, and professionalism are often used interchangeably in the literature. Vollmer (1966) was one of the first writers to distinguish between the terms. The professions are seen to be an "ideal" conceptualization of occupational institutions based on the occupations of law, medicine, and the ministry. Professionalization is a more dynamic concept, indicating the degree of movement of an occupation toward the ideal of the professions. Professionalism refers to the ideology and corresponding activities of practitioners from a variety of occupational groups (that may or may not be considered professions) whose members desire professional status. R. H. Hall (1968) added an affective dimension to the concept of professionalism by including "the calling" as one of its defining characteristics.

That professionalism is a topic worthy of thoughtful consideration is suggested in the number and diversity of writings in educational psychology and sociology that this concept underlies. Article topics range from definitional issues (R. H. Hall, 1968; Vollmer, 1966), to disputes over whether counselling is yet a profession (Feit & Lloyd, 1990; Ritchie, 1900), to discussions of professional competence (McGaghie, 1991; Meara et al., 1988), to deliberation

of the importance of professional development for individuals (Centra, 1978; Gooch, 1986). The pursual of the clarity of the concept of professionalism therefore, is not just an "ivory tower" concern. Ultimately, the success of any occupation depends on its members and their actions. People's view of professionalism, even thought they may not be held consciously, influence their actions with the others they work with and determine the types of governing organizations they create.

In re-opening the question "What is professionalism?" I aimed to increase the clarity and further the understanding of this concept. Most writings on professionalism are embedded within the historical context of the "traditional professions" of law, medicine, and the ministry. There is little research on professionalism that explores professionalism outside of this boundary of tradition, reflects on its meaning, or that is grounded in people's life experiences. The question "What is professionalism?" aims to meet this gap and invites a deeper understanding of this concept. During my continuing reflection on the research question, three additional questions that reveal the complexity involved in exploring the nature of professionalism arose: What is the *meaning* of professionalism? What is the *experience* of professionalism? What life events contribute to an individual's *development* of professionalism? Initially, these questions seemed quite separate, but over time I began to see the relationship between them and incorporated these questions into the research design.

Overview of the Research Method and its Purpose

In the present study, I used a qualitative research method to conduct an in-depth exploration of professionalism. The resulting written description is organized around significant themes. To approach the question in a way that allowed for a continual opening of the question -- a questioning of the question, so to speak -- I used an inductive research approach based on the hermeneutic phenomenological approach described by van Manen (1990).

Increased understanding of a phenomenon is not necessarily achieved by narrowing and focusing one's thoughts. One can increase familiarity with the customs of a culture by immersing oneself with an exploratory attitude. Similarly, an individual can increase his or her understanding of professionalism by exploring those things taken-for-granted in this notion. This exploration may serve to take one beyond consensual beliefs (in this case, the conceptual attachment of professionalism to the ideal of the traditional professions) and portray the concept in a new way. "The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities" (Gadamer, 1985, p. 266). To fail to do so may result in a premature closing of the question.

In pragmatic terms, I grounded the research in people's experiences: I began my research by asking people to tell me their experiences of professionalism. The research participants' descriptions provided the springboard from which I engaged in a process of thoughtful reflection on the question and organized the date according to thematic structures. The presentation of professionalism through the exploration of thematic structures provides the reader a change to "open" and explore the question for him- or herself. The purpose of opening the question is not to provide a linear cause-effect theory by which to control the world (van Manen, 1990). Rather, its purpose is to allow the reader insight into professionalism, an opportunity to reflect on the underlying assumptions of this concept, and

chance to reflect on how these assumptions guide and influence his or her work and impacts those s/he works with. Potential changes within a reader include: (a) a shift in identity perception, attitude, or personality (Moustakas, 1900); (b) increased motivation for enhanced professional conduct; as well as (c) different ways of interacting with clients and colleagues.

The Underlying Assumptions that Support the Study

Any research is bound by its method; that is, each research method begins with a set of assumptions that influence the research direction and results. The influence of the philosophical assumptions of both quantitative and qualitative research methods is greatly debated and fills volumes of literature. I cannot attempt to describe the nuances of these issues in such a short space. I have chosen, therefore to discuss in a general way the methodological issues that have influenced my research. This brief discussion is organized according to Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) characteristics of qualitative research:

1. "Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 29).

   Qualitative researchers recognize that the setting an individual is in influences his or her behavior. They recognize that context is important to an individual's experiences in two ways: (a) by asking research participants to talk about professionalism in the context of their life experiences, and (b) through participant observation of the research participants and other individuals in their work/life settings. This type of inquiry allowed me to study professionalism in its complexity, or to "know the scene" as Eisner (1991) has said.

   As the researcher, however, I could not suspend my world views: I continually prejudiced the direction of the work. I did this, for example, through the construction of the research questions, by the way I responded to participants, and by what I selected as salient to pursue further in our conversations or to record in my observations. Although I utilized measure to increase the "trustworthiness" of my research (see Chapter 3), I cannot say that my research presents an "objective" view of professionalism. Rather, the perspective of professionalism that I present in this study is a portrayal of the insights into professionalism that I accumulated by conversing with participants, reading the literature, and engaging in an ongoing process of reflection.

2. "Qualitative research is descriptive" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 30).

   Language is important to the qualitative approach as the research results are presented in written form (rather than numerical statements) and often include anecdotal stories. Part of the success of qualitative description lies in its richness, in its ability to depict the subtleties of the topic of inquiry. It is limited in a sense by the researcher's writing ability and stylistic presentation. In the current study I tried to avoid formal and theoretical language and write in a compelling but simple manner in order to increase others' insight into and understanding of professionalism.

   A distinct yet related point is that qualitative research is also interpretive. Qualitative

research methods vary in the degree by which they range from descriptive to interpretive. The research in this study can be considered to be quite interpretive. By continually reflecting on the underlying meaning of the descriptive stories told by participants, I attempted to draw the reader into questioning assumptions that we often take for granted. Thus, there is a continual interplay between the concrete and the abstract, which means that my thoughtfulness and integrity as a researcher is essential to the integrity and interpretation of the research results.

3. "Qualitative research is concerned with process rather than simply with the outcomes or products" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 31).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) have suggested that qualitative research supports the entertainment of questions that may be more difficult to address through quantitative research, for example, how change or development occurs. As such, the intent of the current research was not to arrive at a concretized definition of professionalism, but to gain insight into the meaning and development of individuals' professionalism. I acquired an understanding of processes that are difficult to quantify, such as hope, care, and the development of integrity.

My research data involved, among other sources, conversations with and observations of four main research participants and a validator, as well as other career development practitioners, and written descriptions from students enroled in a career development diploma program. The research method was an unfolding process in itself; it was fluid and emerged as the research progressed. This allowed me to be responsive to my emerging understanding of professionalism.

4. "Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 31).

In qualitative research, there is not an assumption that the researcher know what the experiences of others are. That is, the data is not gathered to prove a preconceived hypothesis. Abstract concepts emerge from the groupings of the concrete particulars. Examples of abstract concepts that emerged in the current study were the call to learning, embodiment, and improvisation.

5. "'Meaning' is of essential concern to the qualitative approach" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 32).

Qualitative research is concerned with identifying people's experiences and interpreting these experiences. In this search for meaning, qualitative researchers attempt to enter into the world of their research participants in order to gain an increased understanding of their perspectives. It is important to realize, however, the difficulty of this task, as researchers are bound to view the research participants' experiences through their own perceptual filters. When undertaking the current research study, I found I continually needed to question the assumptions that I held, and be willing to reflect on these and dialogue with others in order to expand my preconceived notions of professionalism.

In qualitative research, the issues of validity and generalizability are related to the

creation of meaning. Whether these criteria should be used to judge the worthiness of qualitative research is a topic for discussion (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). However, validity of qualitative research is less concerned whether the research results correspond to what is real than whether there is a resonance to the research data; that is, if it has the ability to convincingly portray a possible constructed experience (van Manen, 1990). Generalizability in qualitative research is much debated and is construed in different ways. Wehlage suggests that "The consumer of the research, not the author, does the generalizing....It is up to the consumer to decide what aspects of the case apply in new contexts" (cited in Peshkin, 1993, p. 26).

I cannot say that the current research results are "generalizable" or "valid" in the natural scientific meaning of the word. There is a benefit to this, however, in that I do not want to suggest that there is *a* definitive system of professionalism that every one must follow. To do so would ignore the personal in the professional; that is, the personal search that my research participants told me was so important to their development and unique expression of professionalism. Similarly, this description of professionalism is not meant to be definitive. Just as the world is dynamic, so are my thoughts -- each day I come to new understandings of professionalism. This study can be no more than a landmark of my current understandings of professionalism, which will continue to transform as I gain new life experiences.

Delimitations: The Parameters of the Study

The study is largely delimited by the research question itself, for it was the question that guided the direction of the study, including the research method. My orientation to the research would have been quite different, for example, if my principal question had been" What are four persons' life histories of professionalism?

The second factor that delimited the study was the background from which I approached the question. I came to the research with a prior interest, that of being an aspiring professional in the helping occupations, with an emphasis in the area of career development. I could have interviewed people from a variety of occupational clusters, including medical occupations, environmental occupations, and technical occupations. Instead, I chose to embed the discussion of professionalism within the context of career development.

Interestingly enough, I soon discovered that the context I had selected for my question was not entirely an appropriate one: It was difficult for the research participants to limit their conversations of professionalism to career development. A more appropriate context for a discussion of professionalism seemed to be the backdrop of the participants' lives, that is, the development of professionalism had its roots in such places as the participants' childhoods and their first jobs. Their practice of professionalism spanned the various occupations that they held; our discussions would have been artificially limited had I held the participants to relating their experiences exclusively within the area of career development. I felt that it was important, therefore, to present the thematic descriptions of professionalism within the fuller context of the participants' lives. I did, however, delimit the research once again in the discussion section, where I placed professionalism more exclusively in the context of career development and related organizational practices.

The Limitations of the Study

Any attempt to pose an organizational structure on one's stream of consciousness imposes a selection process. In reviewing my data, I was at times overwhelmed by the amount of information that was contained within it. I soon realized that there was enough material to write a substantial book. The resulting description of professionalism, therefore, is not meant to be all-encompassing. It is instead a portrayal of some of the essential themes of professionalism that I gleaned from the data. The description *is* meant to contribute to the body of literature by re-opening the question of professionalism by: (a) exploring professionalism outside of the traditional theoretical ideal of the occupations such as law and medicine, and (b) grounding the research in people's experiences.

The second major limitation of the current research study is time. A professor I once had suggested that an idea is inseparable from its articulation. In this case, what would make this research stronger would be having more time to re-write and re-write and re-write...the phenomenological interpretation. Specifically, I would like to re-work the entrance to the research so that the question is not simply stated, but written in a descriptive manner the brings the question to life for the reader. Additionally, I would like to incorporate the literature review into the research interpretation, rather than have it as a distinct chapter. Both of these revisions would make the research a "stronger piece."

Overview of the Study

The organization of the research study is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. An introduction to the question and its significance provides the focus of this chapter. Additionally, I presented the delimitations and limitations of the research study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature. The concept of professionalism is rooted in the concepts of the professions and professionalization. In order to provide a context for the discussion of professionalism, I reviewed the literature on these concepts and discussed their influence.

Chapter 3: Method and Procedures. The method used in this study was an evolving one. It did, however, have its roots in the hermeneutic phenomenological approach described by van Manen (1990). This chapter describes this research approach as a blend of description and interpretation. To alert the reader to the potential influences of my life experiences on the research process, I provide an autobiographical reflection. The procedures used to conduct the research, including the interviews, the creation of meaning through data analysis and interpretation, and the writing process are discussed. Finally, I present criteria of trustworthiness by which the current study can be critiqued.

Chapter 4: An Ecological Paradigm of Professionalism.
Chapter 5: Focus: The Practitioner.
Chapter 6: Focus: Intentionality. These three chapters form the hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation of my research. They include a synthesis of researcher's descriptions, quotes from related literature, and my interpretation of the meaning of these in

relation to professionalism.

Chapter 7: Research Discussion. This chapter addresses the contribution of the research, as well as implications of the research results for professionals in career development. Implications are organized according to career development assumptions and practices, the development of professionalism, the organizational structure, and the function of professional associations. In closing I suggest future research directions for consideration.

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CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), a review of technical literature holds different purposes for quantitative and qualitative researchers. Quantitative researchers tend to complete a comprehensive literature search with the intent of identifying previous research in an area, delineating important variables, and suggesting relationships among them. Although this practice is functional for quantitative researchers, it can actually inhibit qualitative researchers. For the latter, whose purpose is discovery, an exhaustive literature search can potentially saturate a researcher with preconceived categories, making it difficult to see the data in a way that allows him or her to creatively give form to research themes.

Thus, my literature review held a different purpose than if the study had been quantitative in nature. It was, as suggested by Yin (1989), used as "a means to an end and not as an end in itself"; that is, it was a process that allowed me to develop a theoretical sensitivity toward professionalism. Theoretical sensitivity is a term used by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to describe a researcher's familiarity with and insight into the phenomenon being studied. It is what allows the researcher to ask more meaningful questions, to recognize nuances, to separate what is relevant from that which is not. It is an unfolding process. It develops from the researcher's personal experience with the phenomenon, reading of both traditional and non-traditional literature, and ongoing engagement with and analysis of the data.

Not surprisingly, the concept of professionalism is embedded within the conceptualization of the professions. Because the historical delineation of the professions has so strongly influenced our occupational practices even in recent times, I devote much of this review to the explanation of this perspective. The overall wording and tone of some of the earlier writings on the professions and related concepts (for example, Greenwood, 1957) set the backdrop (influenced my theoretical sensitivity) from which I then entered into the interviews with the research participants and conducted my interpretation. To begin this presentation, I define the terms profession, professionalization, and professionalism. I then discuss each of these terms more thoroughly, according each concept a section. In the latter section I present a body of literature that looks at professionalism in a somewhat different light than the literature that builds on the historical perspective of the professions.

Definitions

Vollmer (1966) was one of the first authors to bring increased precision to the definitions of the professions and their associated constructs. These definitions have subsequently been adopted by numerous researchers. According to Vollmer, a profession is:

> An "ideal type" of occupational organization which does not exist in reality, but which provides the model of the form of occupational organization that would result if any occupational group became completely professionalized. (p. vii)

This use of "profession" is a static one, where an occupation either is or is not a profession.

To overcome the difficulties associated with such an ideal type definition, Vollmer (1966) used the term professionalization to indicate the movement of an occupation toward the

ideal. Professionalization is:

> The dynamic *process* whereby many occupations can be observed to change certain crucial characteristics in the direction of a 'profession,' even though some of these may not move very far in this direction. (pp. vii-viii)

Professionalism is defined as a distinct construct, that is:

> An *ideology* and associated activities that can be found in many and diverse occupational groups where members aspire to professional status....(p. viii)

According to this view, a group may display professionalism, yet have made little progress toward professionalization.

Professional groups and professionals are defined as:

> Associations of colleagues in an occupational context where we observe that a relatively high degree of professionalization has taken place. "Professionals," then, are those who are considered by their colleagues to be members of professional groups. (p. viii)

These definitions can be used to guide the reader's understanding of the literature reviewed in the following sections.

The Professions

The meaning of the words profession and professional vary, depending on the context in which they are used. People speak of professional versus amateur athletes or refer to prostitution as "the oldest profession." There is, however, a large body of theoretical literature, predominately in the sociological domain, directed at determining what a profession is. From this perspective, a profession is viewed as an occupational category, typically seen to be at the upper end of the social stratification system (R. H. Hall, 1975).

Definitions of the professions abound to such an extent that they have been said to litter the field (Johnson, 1972). "The terms 'profession' and 'professionalization' are virtual nonconcepts, since there is little consensus about their meaning" (Forsyth & Danisiewicz, 1985, p. 59). Freidson (1970a) suggested that the only common link between the occupations called professions is the desire for prestige.

There are, however, a few prominent *approaches* to the theoretical discussions of the professions and related concepts. Ritzer (1977) characterized these as the trait approach (the listing of essential elements of the professions), the process approach (the developmental sequence of an occupation striving to become a profession), and the power approach (the power sources and dynamics in a profession). Johnson (1972) proposed two approaches: The ideal approach and the power approach. The theoretical orientation as to what constitutes the ideal profession can be divided into the trait approach and the functionalist approach, although there is overlap between the two. The trait approach attempts to present an exhaustive list of attributes that define the constitution of a profession. The functional approach attempts to

focus on those characteristics that distinguish professions from non-professions.

For the purpose of this literature review, I focus on the ideal approach (Johnson, 1972) and the process approach (Ritzer, 1977) as these orientations form the basis of much of the theoretical discussion surrounding professionalism. These approaches, however, are not without shortcomings.

Due to the large volume of literature in the area, I selected to focus, for the most part, on key theorists who have influenced the field. In their attempts to identify the ideal characteristics of a profession, researchers usually begin their analysis with the occupations of law, medicine, and the ministry, which have long considered to be the traditional professions in Western society (Burrage & Torstendahl, 1990; Vollmer, 1966). Professor A.M. Carr-Saunders in England was perhaps the first social scientist to systematically analyze the professions and, in 1933, along with Wilson, published a compendium of the histories of "twenty-two professions and would-be professions" (Burrage & Torstendahl, 1990). According to Carr-Saunders (1928), two main criteria that are required for an occupation to be considered a profession are the specialized, intellectual training that is necessary for a practitioner to be able to provide a skilled service to another that cannot be performed by the laity, and the remuneration of services through fee or salary. This emphasis on intellectual techniques is the common thread between most definitions of the professions (R. H. Hall, 1975).

Greenwood (1957), an influential theorist who has roots in social work, defined five major attributes of professions:

1. A basis of systematic theory. Greenwood (1957) noted that a factor commonly used to distinguish a professional occupation from a non-professional occupation is the superior skill required to conduct the former, which presumably necessitates a lengthy training period. However, some occupations considered to be non-professional, such as cabinet making, may also require a great deal of skill. The distinguishing factor then, according to Greenwood, is not the element of skill as such, but the existence of a knowledge base that supports the skills; that is, a body of theory. Thus, professional preparation must involve both an intellectual component (theoretical knowledge) as well as a skill component.

The generation of solid theory requires systematic research through the continual use of the scientific method, which in turn augments the element of rationality within the professions. "The spirit of rationality in a profession encourages a critical, as opposed to a reverential, attitude toward the theoretical system." Through this continual evaluation, theory or innovations that cannot be shown to be valid are replaced with concepts shown to have greater validity.

2. Professional authority. The professional holds a specialized body of knowledge and set of skills that the laity does not. This systematic theory that is gained through extensive education provides the professional with knowledge that "highlights the layman's comparative ignorance." The implication is that, although a nonprofessional occupation has customers, a professional occupation has clients.

According to Greenwood (1957), customers are able to determine their needs

and select a service that will meet these needs. People requiring the assistance of a professional, however, cannot determine their needs, select the appropriate service to meet these needs, or evaluate the services because they lack the skill and expertise that the professional holds. Consequently, in a professional relationship, clients must accede to the authority of the professional, who "dictates what is good or evil for the client." It is because of the inability of clients to discern what services are appropriate for them that the professions have a history of not being allowed to advertise.

3. Sanction of the community. A profession is given community approval to have both formal and informal control over certain spheres. These powers and privileges reflect control over the accreditation process and admittance to the profession. In other words, because only its members have the knowledge and skill base to determine what these standards should be, the profession itself *sets* the standards that must be adhered to and *monitors* professional members' adherence to these standards. Members of a profession who do not complete the required licensing procedures are subject to legal punishment. The community also sanctions privileged communication through the endorsement of confidentiality although, as Greenwood (1957) noted, not all occupations considered to be professions are accorded this privilege. These powers and privileges grant the professions a monopoly over their services, which is one of the prime aims of occupations striving to acquire professional status.

4. Regulative code of ethics. So that the monopoly held by the profession is not abused, its members must develop a code of ethics. According to Greenwood (1957), a profession's code of ethics may be more public service oriented and possess more altruistic overtones than the ethical guidelines of other occupations. A professional must assume an emotional neutrality toward clients, that is, an attitude of universalism that requires the professional to "provide service to whoever requests it, irrespective of the requesting client's age, income, kinship, politics, race, religion, sex and social status." Ethics are enforced both informally, for example through colleague's actions, or through formal disciplinary measures administered by the professional association.

5. The professional culture. Both the formal and informal groups through which professions operate form the professional culture. Formal groups or organizations include professional associations, settings in which the professional practices (such as a hospital), and educational and research centres (that supply the field with practitioners and upgrade its theoretical knowledge base). Informal groups include colleagues who cluster together for a diversity of reasons.

The culture of a profession is created through its values, symbols, and norms. A central value to a profession is the belief by the community in the worthiness and importance of the service being offered. The symbols of a profession include those items that are meaningful to it, such as its history, its important members, and its insignias. The cultural norms guide the behavior of a professional group in social situations. Although the professional group encourages innovation, it does not encourage unorthodox behavior or deviation from its values and norms. Because only its members understand it, the professional culture serves to distinguish professions from one another.

The final consideration of a professional culture is the concept of career that, according to Greenwood (1957), is usually used to refer to professional occupations, rather than other types of occupations, such as the trades. The reason for this, Greenwood continued, is that a career is a calling, requiring devotion to and complete absorption in one's work, where the distinction between work and leisure diminishes and the professional's work "becomes his [or her] life."

> We do not talk about the career of a bricklayer or of a mechanic; but we do talk about the career of an architect or of a clergyman. At the heart of the career concept is a certain attitude toward work which is peculiarly professional. A career is essentially a *calling*, a life devoted to "good works"....To the professional person his work becomes his life. Hence the act of embarking upon a professional career is similar in some respect to entering a religious order. The same cannot be said of a nonprofessional occupation. (cited in Vollmer, 1966, p. 17)

Edward Gross (1958) contributed to the characterization of the professions by proposing structural components. These include: Working with an unstandardized product, which requires the ability to solve unique problems that fit within the profession's body of knowledge; and the provision of a significant societal service that cannot be performed by the laity. These characteristics contribute to the monopolistic control over the service by the profession.

Additionally, Gross (1958) placed greater emphasis on the *attitudinal* attributes that characterize the professions. Gross suggested that personality involvement is important, with the professional demonstrating a high degree of involvement and holding a "sense of obligation" to the professional art. Professionals will want to work to the best of their abilities, and will hold the intrinsic rewards of the occupation in higher esteem than the monetary rewards. Clients perceive this attitude and believe that the professional will act in their best interest.

Similar characteristics to those outlined by Greenwood (1957) and Gross (1958) are reflected in many authors' attempts to delineate the *characteristics* of the professions. An occupational taxonomy designed by Cullen (1983), based on a synthesis of dimensions of the professions cited by 15 authors, provides an orientation to the types of traits that are often portrayed as essential to the professions. The traits listed in this taxonomy include: Complex occupation, self-employed, complex relationships with people, altruistic service, long training, organized code of ethics, competence tested, licensed, high income, and high prestige.

The Influence of Definitional Exercises

It is important to recognize the influence that these definitional exercises have on occupations that wish to be considered a profession. An example from the recent literature on the occupation of counselling in the United States demonstrates this influence. Feit and Lloyd (1990) proposed that the conditions to be met for an occupation to be considered a profession "have remained constant for more than 30 years" (p. 217). According to these authors, the most commonly cited essential features of a profession include: "(a) specialized training, (b) ethical standards, and (c) a strong identity with the field as a profession or vocation" (p. 217).

They further suggested that if these criteria were originally a valid means for ascribing professional status to an occupation, the occupation of counselling now meets these criteria and can therefore be considered a profession.

In a point/counterpoint response to this article Ritchie (1990) disagreed and drew on more extensive criterion from the literature to delineate the characteristics of a profession:

1. A profession is primarily service oriented and the service it provides is of great social value.

2. Performance of the specified social service rests primarily upon intellectual techniques.

3. Members of a profession possess a strong commitment or calling to the profession, view it as a life-long career, and are engaged in the profession full-time.

4. A profession is based upon a common body of knowledge, theory, and skills that is not generally known to the public, is based on scientific research, and is unique to the profession.

5. The service provided to society is unique and society has delegated to qualified members of the profession exclusive authority to provide the specified social service.

6. Entry into the profession requires an extensive period of specialized training in institutions of higher education. There are explicit and uniform standards for training. Admission into training is highly selective. The training standards are controlled by the profession.

7. Members must exhibit minimum competency by examination and supervised apprenticeship or internship prior to entry into the professions.

8. The profession is legally recognized by virtue of certification, licensure laws, or both.

9. Members of the profession are bound by an ethical code that defines both ethical and unethical conduct and services, and provides for strict enforcement of its rules and regulations.

10. Individual members of the profession possess broad authority over the practice of their services, and the profession as a whole possesses broad autonomy over internal operations.

According to Ritchie (1990), the occupation of counselling falls short of meeting three of the ten criteria; that is, research, training, and legal recognition. More specifically, Ritchie suggested first, that counselling services are offered by a variety of people, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and clergy and therefore cannot be considered

exclusive or unique. Second, the theory, knowledge, and skill base of counselling is psychological in nature and thus is shared with psychologists. Additionally, the counselling field is often criticized because of its lack of research-driven theoretical knowledge base. Third, counselling is not recognized by insurance companies with regards to third-party billing. This means that counsellors may need to work under the supervision of psychologists in order for their clients to collect insurance, a practice that may limit the autonomy of counsellors.

Critique of the Ideal Approach to the Professions

Before continuing the discussion of professionalism, it is important to reflect on assumptions that underlie the ideal approach to the professions. The notion of an "ideal" assumes that one knows both what a profession is and what essential characteristics constitute a profession (Burrage & Torstendahl, 1990; Cullen, 1983; Johnson, 1972). Further, the trait approach assumes "that professional occupations have essentially similar characteristics" (Cullen, 1983, p. 257). Yet, Cullen found that although lawyers and predominantly medical personnel scored highest on almost all aspects of professionalization, other persons that we may typically consider to be professional, such as registered nurses and physical therapists, scored in the same occupational clusters as carpenters and taxi drivers. Thus, one must be cautious in making assumptions of occupational taxonomies of professions.

Additionally, there is often a lack of theoretical articulation between the relationships of the purported essential elements (Johnson, 1972). A further difficulty to the ideal approach is that decisions to include or exclude essential elements in a model may be made randomly (in part dependent on which occupations one wishes to ascribe as professional (Johnson, 1972)), or for the sake of conceptual simplicity (Crouch, 1975). For example, if one wishes to endow a greater number of occupations with the term profession, one can use fewer essential categories, allowing a greater number of professions to comply with the criteria. We saw Feit and Lloyd (1990) and Ritchie (1990) face a similar dilemma in their address to the question: Is counselling a profession?

The essential characteristics and functions used to define the ideal profession are generally abstracted from a small number of occupations, such as law and medicine, which are considered to be the traditional professions. Burrage and Torstendahl (1990) suggested that one might get quite a different set of essential characteristics by abstracting essential characteristics from other occupations considered to be professions, such as nursing, engineering, or teaching: An essentialist abstraction grounded in these professions might place lawyers and doctors on the periphery of the ideal professional model.

In addition to listing and analyzing the general assumptions of the ideal approach, it is also important to critique Greenwood's (1957) more functional orientation to the ideal profession, as these assumptions still influence current theory and practice surrounding the professions. Specifically, I would like to address three of his concepts presented earlier: A systematic basis of theory, professional authority, and the professional culture.

A Basis of Systematic Theory. In their social evolution, professions have tended toward increasing specialization. Professionals have been increasingly expected to be able to answer specific questions about their occupational knowledge base. As Conway (1991) suggested, there may be a danger, however, with this drive toward certainty in knowledge that

professionals will lose their questioning capacity for "nontrivial" questions.

> As modern professionals we are driven towards specialized knowledge, not general scholarship, certain knowledge rather than a searching curiosity, techniques and methods not ideas, facts not theories, or a single theory rather than a plurality of competing theories. (p. 455)

The emphasis on a theoretical knowledge base as being necessary to achieve the status and prestige of the professions is also reflected in occupational practices. Conway (1991) suggested that psychology adopted the methods of the "prestigious natural sciences" in order to attain prestige and status in academic settings.

> For the psychological scientist, publications are the coin of the realm; prestige and status come with research productivity in the form of tenure, promotion, grants. One publishes in one's narrow speciality area, and if that speciality happens to be part of the *Zeitgeist* of the day then so much the better for one's citation count. (p. 455)

The concern is that the emphasis on contribution to a theoretical knowledge base can come to assume more importance and gain more recognition than "professing," which is also an important facet of the academic setting.

Most people would, however, agree that a systematic knowledge base and clearly articulated competencies for educating practitioners are an asset to any given occupation. It is important to question, however, the potential shortcomings in limiting this knowledge quest to a rational, natural scientific approach. This is not to say that the scientific approach should not be used, but that it is important to consider perspectives that offer us other 'truths' (Conway, 1991). Phrased another way, it is important to question what professionals profess and examine the tenets of the theories on which their profession is based (Rychlak, 1984).

In reference to psychologists, Rychlak (1984) proposed that it may be their professional and ethical responsibility to "conceptualize life from the point of view of those whom they are serving in an applied context." This orientation suggests the importance for practitioners to increase their understanding of those they work with. Conway (1991) suggested that a humanistic world view, or clinicalism, is a growing perspective in psychological theory and practice. Clinicalism promotes narrative versus natural scientific methods of understanding and includes, among others, constructionism and hermeneutic methods.

Professional authority. This characteristic of the professions as proposed by Greenwood (1957) is perhaps best summed up by Sutherland who stated, "The practitioner defines, of course, what the cliente [sic] "needs"; it may not always be what the cliente [sic] wants" (cited in Vollmer, 1966, p. 35). In this approach the professional is clearly seen as the authority and the client as the subordinate. This view reflects a hierarchical power structure, with the professional having *power over* the client. This view suggests that clients must passively place themselves in the hands of the practitioner who will decide their fate.

A different way of acting with clients is to work toward client empowerment; that is, recognizing another's capacity for growth and decision making (See Chapters Four through Six). The "rightness" of professional authority is currently being questioned in the practices of many occupations, including medicine, long considered to be one of the "true" professions. For example, issues such as the right of patients to regulate their pain medication, and the right to refuse and/or to withdraw from treatment and/or life-support systems are gaining increasing attention.

The professional culture. As occupations move toward more preventive orientations and practices, the information held by the professional culture is increasingly shared with the public. For example, terms such as plaque, dental caries, and gingivitis have been introduced to the public in educational efforts of the dental profession. The medical profession aims to educate people about a variety of health concerns, for example, sexual issues such as pregnancy, birth control, and AIDS.

The calling as portrayed by Greenwood (1957) also reflected a hierarchical attitude that only "professionals" can be devoted to their work. R. H. Hall's (1968) research findings challenged this assumption, however, showing that the established professions are relatively weak on the belief in service to the public and a sense of calling to the field. Additionally, the hierarchical perspective portrayed by Greenwood assumes that only select people can have a career, a notion that is not reflected in current career development theory. The definition of career perhaps most often cited (Super, 1976) implied that *everyone* has a career, and that a career spans one's lifetime:

> [A career is] the course of events which constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one's commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development; the series of remunerated and nonremunerated positions occupied by a person from adolescence through retirement, of which occupation is only one; includes work-related roles such as those of student, employee, and pensioner together with complementary avocation, familial, and civic roles. (cited in Herr and Cramer, 1988, p. 17)

Professionalization

> Professionalization seeks to clothe a given area with standards of excellence, to establish rules of conduct, to develop a sense of responsibility, to set criteria for recruitment and training, to ensure a measure of protection for members, to establish collective control over the area, and to elevate it to a position of dignity and social standing in the society. (Vollmer, 1966)

So far I have been talking of the characteristics of the professions as if they exist in an "all or none" manner, a common way to attempt to define the professions. However, even the traditional professions may fall short of fulfilling these characteristics. Vollmer (1966), Greenwood (1957), and others recognize that this approach is too fixed as occupations can vary by the degree to which they approach the ideal profession. Professionalization represents a dynamic approach that eliminates the "either/or" debate, and instead places discrete elements of the ideal of the professions on a continuum: The end of the continuum indicates a higher degree of professionalization. In this model, occupations can either be moving closer to the

ideal (professionalizing) or further away from the ideal (deprofessionalizing) (Emener & Cottone, 1989).

The Stages of Professionalization

Both Caplow (1954) and Wilensky (1964) identified a predictable sequence that occupations move through in the process of becoming a profession. The stages described by the two authors are similar. Caplow's sequential steps include: (a) the establishment of a professional association; (b) the adoption of a new title that can be monopolized, and serves to distinguish the professionalized occupation from the former occupation; (c) the development of a code of ethics; (d) political agitation to attain public power, so that the profession provides licensure for its members and eventually holds a monopoly over its services; and (e) the development of specialized training facilities, which occurs concurrently with the latter stage.

The process proposed by Wilensky (1964) includes: (a) creation of a full time occupation, (b) the establishment of a training school, (c) formation of professional associations, and (d) the formation of a code of ethics. This sequence is seen to be predictive of the development of a profession. R. H. Hall (1968) proposed that Wilensky's variables are more descriptively accurate of the professionalization process than Caplow's (1954) variables. Wilensky's model forms the bases for R. H. Hall's measurement of professionalism, which is discussed in the following section, *Professionalism.*

> We may ask to what degree the journeyman or plumber or the bulldozer operator is professional, even if an evaluation shows the degree to be low. (Sutherland, cited in Vollmer, 1966, p. 35)

As with the trait and functional approaches, the concept of professionalization requires a conceptualization of the ideal that the professions are to move toward. Therefore, although this model suggests that there is a dynamic process involved where an occupation can move toward holding increasing characteristics of a profession, it also has the potential to limit some occupations from ever becoming a profession, depending upon the characteristics used to define the ideal. For example, in a discussion on the potential of librarianship as attaining the status of an occupation, Goode (1961) wrote:

> Intellectually, the librarian must work within the client's limitations, instead of imposing his professional categories, conceptions, and authority on the client. In other professions, too, the practitioner must understand the client's notions, but only enough to elicit adequate information and co-operation from him. (cited in Vollmer, 1966, p. 42)

Goode proposed that librarianship may always be limited in its ability to move forward on the professionalization continuum because the type of relation that exists between the librarian and client does not meet the service orientation he suggested to be necessary for an occupation to be considered a profession.

One can see, therefore, that although the concept of professionalization overcomes the either-or debate as to whether an occupation is or is not a profession, the same problematic issue surrounding the ideal model of the professions remains. That is, professionalization still

assumes a known professional ideal.

Professionalism

Compared to the volumes of written works surrounding the professions and professionalization, the literature surrounding professionalism is scarce. The term professionalism is often used in a variety of ways, for example as job involvement, intrinsic motivation, and higher order needs satisfaction (Wallace & Brinkeroff, 1991) or as synonymous with professionalization (Emener & Cottone, 1989).

Vollmer (1966) and R. H. Hall (1968) are usually attributed as being among the first writers to make key contributions to the clarity of the construct of professionalism. As presented earlier in this chapter in the definition section, Vollmer introduced the idea of professionalism as an ideology; that is, a way of viewing one's work (Crouch, 1975). R. H. Hall contributed to what he termed the professional model by building on Vollmer's notion of professionalism. Considered to be the classic presentation of the concept, R. H. Hall's treatment of professionalism involved the construction of a 50 item Likert-type scale questionnaire used to measure these attitudinal characteristics.

R. H. Hall (1975) described the professional model (whose purpose is to distinguish occupations from professions) as having two basic attributes: Structural and attitudinal. The structural attributes include "such things as formal educational and entrance requirements" (p. 92), and are based on the stages of professionalization described by Wilensky (1964) that occupations pass through in their transformation to a profession. The attitudinal attributes build on Vollmer's (1966) definition of professionalism as ideology, and are used to describe the way practitioners view their work. These attributes include:

> 1. The use of the professional organization as a major reference, including both the formal organization, as well as informal colleague relations;
>
> 2. A belief in service to the public, including the idea that the occupation benefits both the public and the practitioners;
>
> 3. Belief in self-regulation, as the professional members are in the best position to judge the work of fellow professionals;
>
> 4. A sense of calling to the field, which reflects the dedication of the professional to his or her work rather than to other extrinsic rewards; and
>
> 5. Autonomy, which reflects the belief that the professional should be free to make decisions without external pressure from others who are not members of the profession, including clients and the employing organization (R. H. Hall, 1975, pp. 81-82).

R. H. Hall's (1968, 1975) work, along with that of Kerr, Von Glinow, and Schriesheim (1977) who proposed similar, although not identical, elements of professionalism (professional identification, ethics, collegial maintenance of standards, professional commitment, autonomy, and expertise), has sparked more recent explorations into professionalism as commitment

(Blau, 1988). These recent explorations can perhaps best be summarized as trying to answer the implicit question: Commitment to what?

Researchers modified R. H. Hall's (1968) original measurement scale in attempts to improve discriminant validity among a variety of related concepts, such as professional commitment (e.g., Tuma & Grimes, 1981), organizational and occupational commitment (e.g., Aranya & Jacobson, 1975), career commitment (e.g., Blau, 1985), work commitment (e.g., Morrow & Goetz, 1988), job involvement (e.g., Blau, 1985), career salience (e.g., Greenhaus & Simon, 1977), and career orientation (e.g., Cochran, 1983). Much effort has gone into determining if these concepts are operationally distinct from each other. Part of the difficulty in attempting to operationalize these concepts is the inconsistent and/or interchangeable use of terms. For example, in past psychological research, the construct job involvement was used ambiguously. Lodahl and Kejner's (1965) widely used measure of job involvement has items that exemplify both "a person's psychological identification with the job" and "a person's intrinsic motivation at work for fulfilling self-esteem needs" (Kanungo, 1982, p. 341). Kanungo proposed the need to conceptually distinguish between job involvement (one's relationship with one's current job) and the more general construct of work involvement. He developed new scales to measure these constructs.

Following R. H. Hall's (1968) lead, most of the researchers attempting to operationalize these related constructs have tended to use Likert-type scales, where a higher score indicates a greater degree of professionalism. Examples of questions used by Kanungo (1982) to measure job involvement are: "The most important things that happen to me involve my present job"; "To me, my job is only a small part of who I am"; "I live, eat and breathe my job"; "Most of my interests are centred around my job"; "I like to be absorbed in my job most of the time" (p. 342).

Although there seems to be some redundancy between some of the concepts used to measure commitment (Morrow, 1983; Morrow & Goetz, 1988), there is also reported discriminant validity between some of these concepts (Blau, 1988; Kanungo, 1982; Morrow & Goetz, 1988). For example, Blau (1988) determined career commitment to be operationally distinct from both job involvement and organizational commitment. Career commitment is "the extent to which work activities figure into life plans and the desire to work in hypothetical situations where there is no financial need" (p. 187) or more succinctly, "one's attitude toward one's profession or vocation" (p. 290). Job involvement is "the degree to which the individual identifies with a job, that is, the importance of the job to one's self-image" (p. 290). Organizational commitment is "the individual's identification with a particular organization and its goals" (p. 290). Morrow (1983) suggested that an overriding work commitment index be developed that incorporates such distinct but related work referent facets.

In contrast to Vollmer's (1966) definition, Morrow and Goetz (1988) suggested that the concept of professionalism may not apply to all workers, as many workers are employed in occupations other than the professions. These researchers did suggest, however, that a more generic career focus with more general applications to other occupations such as retail sales, might be possible by substituting the word field for career in Blau's (1985b) definition of career commitment. Since professions are a special type of occupation, Blau (1988) refined his definition to: "One's attitude towards one's vocation, including a profession," (p. 295).

Blau further suggested that future research could address the minimal levels of professional characteristics required for a measure of career commitment to be useful. "For example, could career commitment be operationalized reliably and validly using samples of factory workers, custodians, or mechanics?" (p. 295).

It is important to reflect on the messages of professionalism portrayed in this body of research. The underlying assumption of these Likert-type measures of commitment is that "more-is-better." For example, the more one lives and breathes one's job, the more job commitment one shows and, by implication, the more professionalism one holds. This concept is challenged by Wilson Schaeff and Fassel (1990) who proposed that this type of behavior may be a display of addictive tendencies, such as those displayed by workaholics, rather than tendencies one would hope others would emulate. This more-is-better orientation to professionalism leaves little room for other priorities in people's lives, such as family, friends, and recreational time. Perhaps we need to ask: Is it not possible that a curvi-linear, rather than linear conception of job involvement might be more appropriate? Or a dynamic one that shifts depending on our life circumstances? For example, is an individual's degree of professionalism necessarily lower because s/he takes maternity or paternity leave to take care of a new born child? a sick child? or because s/he decides to commit time to relationships with important others? Similar questions can be asked of the more-is-better measurement of organizational commitment. Is loyalty to an organization desirable, for example, if organizational values conflict with one's personal values?

A Different Orientation to Professionalism

A smaller, but no less important body of literature, suggests other dimensions of professionalism that should not be overlooked. Most of the research on professionalism focuses on the self-report of attitudes as a measure of professionalism. Jorde-Bloom (1989) advocated that there is a need to consider the attitudes as well as the behaviors associated with professionalism. She further suggested that a more comprehensive orientation to professionalism is needed that considers the individual within his or her work context. She referred to this expanded view of professionalism as professional orientation. In contrast to R. H. Hall's (1968) work that suggested attitudes to be quite strongly associated with behavior, results of Jorde-Bloom's research conducted with child care workers indicated a large discrepancy between workers' professional attitudes (which were generally high) and workers' professional behaviors, such as involvement in professional activities like subscribing to journals and attending conferences (which were generally much lower). Further differences were found between degree of professional orientation and workers' positions in the occupational hierarchy, with those workers at the upper end of the hierarchy displaying greater professional orientation. Finally, Jorde-Bloom reported that child care centres varied in their degree of professional orientation, depending on the centre size, legal structure, and program type. This research suggests that professionalism is a construct with multiple dimensions, and that a fuller understanding of it may require a research method that allows for a comprehensive view.

In reference to rehabilitation workers, Emener and Cottone (1989) recognized the importance of using a model of professionalism that can address its complex nature. They proposed the necessity of holding a systemic view rather than a "building-block" attitude which would go beyond positivism, and adopting a phenomenological view that would

acknowledge larger social and economic realities. "Are rehabilitation counsellors stimulus-bound technicians? Or are they active professional decision makers and social agents mindful of social and economic forces that might affect clinical judgment?" (p. 577).

Approaching professionalism from a slightly different angle, Bowman (1989) argued that, for sound professional practices in early childhood education, personal knowledge needs to be blended with scientific knowledge . "Teachers filter formal theories and ideas regarding practices through their own values, beliefs, feelings, and habits, sometimes expanding and changing their personal knowledge to accommodate new ideas and new experiences, sometimes restructuring it to fit their current needs" (p. 444). Reflection is a tool that people can use to integrate scientific and personal knowledge systems, and has the potential to enhance their understanding of their professional practices and interactions with others. Reflection and self-awareness is also essential in the determination of appropriate boundaries between ourselves and those we work with, particularly in the case of potentially sensitive worker-client interactions, such as male youth workers who have female adolescent clients (Germain & Kessell, 1989).

Gudgeon (1989) called for modification to the professional model as it pertains to child care workers, reminding practitioners that this model can be dangerous if they forget to reconnect it to its function, which is to enhance the core relationship between worker and child. He suggested that the language practitioners use in their working models influences this relational process. The technical language of the medical model uses word like "treatment," "therapy," and "mental illness"; the behavioral-learning model uses words like "reinforcing positive behavior," "rewards," or "goals"; and the professional model uses neutralizing language such as "clients," "practitioners," "personnel," and "service." The language used in these models may encourage practitioners to maintain distance from those they work with. Gudgeon called for the use of more expressive language that "grounds the abstract notion of 'care' in everyday experience" (p. 20). Care implies an intimacy that the medical model, behavioral model, and the traditional professional model do not allow. Yet care must be accepted in child care as part of worker-child relationships. Further, placing the metaphor of care within a developmental perspective may enhance opportunities for children to reach their potential.

Although the articles reviewed in this section addressed a diversity of concepts in a diversity of contexts, a similar message runs through them. Professionalism is a multi-faceted concept that involves relations between practitioners and others. It needs to be framed within a world-view that can address these dimensions and complexities.

Summary and Transition

The question that guided my research is: "What is professionalism?" There is a cohesive body of literature in the sociological and psychological domains that has aimed to clarify this concept. This body of literature has made important contributions to the conceptualization of professionalism. It has raised many questions and has increased awareness of different constructs such as profession and professionalism, and job and work. It has provided a conceptual framework from which other researchers have begun their inquiries into the professions and professionalism. This literature is, however, unavoidably situated within a historical socio-cultural context. The essential qualities of the professions (and, as the

somewhat circular argument goes, therefore professionalism) are based on the historically defined ideal characteristics of the "traditional" occupations (law, medicine, and the ministry). In turn, these historically ideal characteristics are based within a natural scientific framework; they promote a rational, hierarchical view of professionalism that assumes power over clients.

A smaller body of literature on professionalism suggests the possibility for viewing the phenomenon of professionalism from another perspective that is not conceptually tied to the underlying world view of the natural scientific paradigm and the traditional criteria of the professions. This literature suggests that there is a need to study professionalism using a method that allows the complexity of professionalism to be portrayed. My research aims to enhance the literature on professionalism by exploring this phenomenon in a way that allows its multi-dimensional nature to be explored. In the following chapter, I acquaint the reader with the methods and procedures I used to undertake this exploration.

CHAPTER 3
METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Orienting to the Phenomenon and Formulating the Question

> *In order to make a beginning, the phenomenologist must ask: What human experience do I feel called upon to make topical for my investigation? (van Manen, 1990, p. 41)*

My orientation to the phenomenon of professionalism could best be described as a lengthy engagement. In preparation for my Ph.D. candidacy examination, I developed a framework for a professional development model that was based on Magnusson, Day, and Redekopp's (1988) hierarchy of self-directed adaptation. As my candidacy exam came and went I became increasingly uncomfortable about conceptualizing a model without grounding it in people's lived experiences.

I decided that engagement in qualitative research, perhaps through the use of grounded theory, would assist my new intention of a model of professional development. I soon began to feel, however, that before I could conceptualize a model of professional development, I must increase my understanding of what a professional is, what a professional experiences.

> *An appropriate topic for phenomenological inquiry is determined by the questioning of the essential nature of a lived experience: a certain way of being in the world. (van Manen, 1990, p. 39)*

The clarification of my question from this first inclination was a long and less than linear process that involved reading, writing, thinking, and discussing. A sampling of some of my initial questions were: What strategies promote professional development for career development practitioners? What factors encourage professional growth? What is the meaning of becoming a professional? What is the experience of passion, compassion, and the pursuit of excellence in the area of career development? What is the meaning of passionately engaging in work in the area of career development?

Finally, after months of searching, reading, and reflecting, the question: What is professionalism? emerged. I liked the question because of its openness; it left more room for exploration than some of my previous questions. I now had a genuine question that I was deeply interested in and that was a possible human experience.

> *If you hold and serve the question...and you really believe in your question, it will be answered; the breakpoint will arrive when you will suddenly be 'ready'. Then you must put your hand to the plough and not look back, walk out onto the water unmindful of the waves" (Pearce, cited in Moustakas, 1990, p. 108).*

Choosing a Context for the Question

One of my first research decisions was to determine which context to embed my discussion of professionalism in. I could have undertaken my discussion of professionalism by interviewing people from a diverse number of occupations. Because of my interest in career development, however, I chose to ground the research interpretation and discussion within this context.

Does this mean that the resulting interpretation of professionalism holds little meaning for people working outside the area of career development? Let me use an analogy as a way of answering this question. The story of Romeo and Juliette is situated within a specific sociocultural context. Yet, the enduring popularity of this story suggests that there *is* something essential about it that holds meaning for many of us, despite our different life situations. Returning to the discussion of professionalism, the sociocultural context may differ among occupational groups, and even within specific jobs within occupations. I suspect, however, that there are also many essential aspects of the interpretation of professionalism that hold meaning for practitioners from a variety of occupational backgrounds. This latter conjecture is congruent to my experiences: In the course of my research I distributed copies of the interpretation of professionalism to a variety of people to receive their feedback, including an educational administrator, engineer, hair dresser, lawyer, and physician -- all of whom found that the document held resonance for them. Ultimately, however, each reader must decide if the interpretation of professionalism holds meaning in the context of his or her life situation.

Choosing a Method

A certain tension exists between the research method and the research question. How the question is phrased reflects an orientation to a particular set of philosophical assumptions. The phrasing of the question: What is professionalism? reflected my desire to keep the question open, to allow for in depth exploration of people's experiences that would facilitate a fuller understanding of the phenomenon.

As I read books on different methods, I began to see my question in various lights and to visualize the myriad forms of expression it could take. I found some methods more appealing than others. I was most strongly attracted to hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), which promotes increased understanding of the experience in question and encourages the immersion of the researcher in the living of the question.

I recognized that if I wished to remain true to the phenomenon of professionalism, I must adopt the notion of an individualized, emerging research design. These practices are generally acknowledged in the human science paradigm (Colaizzi, 1978; Gadamer, 1985; Giorgi, 1970; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). "Each particular psychological pehnomenon [sic], in conjunction with the particular aims and objectives of a particular researcher, evokes a particular descriptive method" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 53). Fluidity of research design is often seen as one of the major advantages of the human science paradigm. Thus, while the overriding research perspective that guided my search was hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), I allowed the details of my research design to gradually emerge at each stage.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

In a general way, phenomenology is concerned with description of experience; hermeneutics is concerned with interpretation (Silverman, 1984). Yet, there is no such thing as "the" phenomenological or hermeneutic method. Rather, hermeneutics and phenomenology are embedded in an evolving history of tradition, "a body of knowledge and insights, a history of the lives of thinkers and authors which, taken as an example, constitutes both a source and

methodological ground for present human science research practices" (van Manen, 1990, p. 30).

It is important to note that the interpretive dimension of hermeneutic phenomenology distinguishes it from other traditions of phenomenology, such as that proposed by Giorgi (1985). Giorgi's work more closely aligns with Husserl's transcendental method, which maintains "that the object of phenomenological description is fully achieved 'solely' through a direct grasping (intuiting) of the essential structure of phenomena as they appear in consciousness" (van Manen, 1990, p. 26).

Many works produced by graduate students in North America are in close alignment with phenomenological methods that favour relatively *transcendental* rather than interpretive research orientations (although most phenomenological researchers agree that a purely transcendental or pre-suppositional perspective is not possible.) Researchers using this general orientation to phenomenology may portray the data in tabular form. They may also conduct a "within" and "between" analysis of the data; that is, researchers may discern which themes or essences of an object of phenomenological description are particular to each research participant, and which themes are common to all research participants.

Graduate students aligned with a *descriptive* orientation to phenomenology often aim to let the *voice of the research participants* be the focus of the written research results, with the voice of the researcher playing a more "supportive" role. It is common in research documents of this nature to see lengthy quotes from participants that are followed by a short interpretation by the researcher that highlights significant aspects of the quote. The assumption of this mode of presentation is that what is essential to the phenomenon in question will show itself in the data.

My hermeneutic phenomenological orientation to the illumination of professionalism is more interpretive in nature than many research studies in psychology, combining both description and interpretation. In hermeneutic phenomenology the *voice of the interpreter* is strong; that is, the thoughtfulness of the researcher, the meaning he or she makes of the phenomenon assumes a central part in the resulting written interpretation of the research data. This does not mean, however, that the resulting philosophical work is simply speculative. Hermeneutic phenomenology embraces the use of *retrospective phenomenological descriptions*; that is, research participants describe incidents or anecdotes where they have experienced the phenomenon being explored. These descriptions give access to the pre-reflective experiences of the lifeworld. They allow one to bring to life that which is essential to professionalism, without which it could not be.

The *hermeneutic element* in my research arises from the recognition of the interpretive nature of understanding. Hermeneutic interpretation brings understanding to and highlights that which is being interpreted. Both the phenomenological perspective *and* the hermeneutic perspective are concerned with questions of understanding and meaning. The resulting philosophical interpretation must be grounded in lived experience descriptions, for it is this connectedness to people's every day realities that prevents hermeneutic phenomenology from being an "armchair philosophy."

To <u>do</u> hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to

construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal. (van Manen, 1990, p. 18)

The Question

To question is to wonder about what we are questioning (van Manen, 1990). A genuine question requires that we have not determined the answer; as such, it requires an openness to possibilities (Gadamer, 1985). To do this requires an individual to take a deeply questioning stance in his or her orientation (van Manen, 1990).

Although Husserl proposed that individuals suspend biases through a process of bracketing and reduction, Heidegger suggested that it is not possible for people to remove themselves from their biases, that any understanding held is subject to prejudice (Packer, 1985). Any question an individual asks, therefore, arises out of his or her previous experiences. S/he will raise the question within the context of fore-understandings and prejudices (Heidegger, 1962): An individual cannot separate him- or herself from the question. One's biases, therefore, are important in that they provide an entrance to the question. One does not, however, aim to blindly and arbitrarily impose them on the phenomenon being questioned (Gadamer, 1985).

Hermeneutic inquiry involves a dialectical tension of both knowing and not knowing. Maintaining relevance of the question requires that the researcher "lives" the question, becomes the question (van Manen, 1990). The researcher immerses him- or herself as s/he orients to the phenomenon being studied. The interpreter, thus, influences the question. The question influences the interpreter. To avoid prematurely closing the question, to clarify what is known, the researcher needs to bring fore-understandings into consciousness. S/he needs to assume an attitude of not knowing in order to expand previous understandings.

The hermeneutic question is open, but not boundless, in the sense that hermeneutics is attentive to meaning. The question is limited by "sensibleness"; that is whether the direction of the answer seems plausible (Gadamer, 1985; Packer, 1985; van Manen, 1990). This determination of the correctness and suitability of the interpretation is not made in a single decision, but through a constant revisiting to the phenomenon being questioned, in a "constant task of understanding." "The circular movement is necessary, because 'nothing that needs interpretation can be understood at once'" (Gadamer, 1985, p. 169).

My Entrance to the Question

I am the questioner, the interpreter in this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry of professionalism. To provide the reader an understanding of the horizon that I brought to the question, I have included a brief autobiographical reflection of lived experiences that I wrote as I began to ponder the notion of professionalism.

My First Teaching Assignment: A Small Country School. It's my first day of school. I go to the staff room at lunch and sit down: I am told that everyone has their assigned place -- the one I am sitting in is not mine. I work with grade one, two, or three teachers to create exciting, individualized programs for some of their students. Two of the

other teachers think that only lazy kids go to the resource room. They won't send their students to me. Michael's father wrote me a note that said, "A bouquet of roses for what you've done with Michael. I used to have to hog-tie him to get him to read, now I can't get him to stop reading." I live in fear of the principal and hide a lot in my room. I love working with my students. I mention in a meeting that I have few teaching materials. I ask if anyone has suggestions for where to gather alternate materials, or ideas for exciting activities that I could use with my students. The next day I am reprimanded for this by the associate superintendent. When people ask me what kind of work I do, I shrug and mumble, "I'm a teacher."

Teaching in the City: Population 15,000. I can sit wherever I want in the staff room. I like to tell stories of the great things my students do. Many other teachers like to tell stories of the awful things their students do. I don't spend much time in the staff room. I love working with my students. I love spending lunch hours, recesses, and after school hours with my students. Another teacher routinely looks me in the eye while she tells my students they have to go outside at these times. I plan many events such as field trips, films and daily lessons with another grade three teacher. We keep each other motivated and come up with better ideas than we would have on our own. Sometimes I am frustrated because I can't make the changes I want within the school system. When people ask me what kind of work I do, I smile and say, "I am a teacher." I have a group of boys in my grade three class whose reading level ranges from pre-primer to grade two. I have them on individualized reading programs. I am required to assign them a report card mark according to grade three standards. I voice my concerns. I can't resolve the dilemma I feel in putting a failing mark on their report card when I worked so hard the rest of the year to help them feel a sense of worth in themselves. I feel burned out. I leave teaching to go back to university.

University, Round 2: Graduate Studies in Counselling Psychology. I feel fortunate that my department offers a range of courses that include a diversity of perspectives. I find I have an interest in qualitative research and transpersonal psychology. I find that these interests are considered to be "fringe" interests within the department. I find that it is necessary to do well in statistics and research design in order to earn respect as a student. I find that I am not getting the support or the skills I feel I need in my counselling courses. I form a support/study group with some class mates and learn that I can create meaningful learning opportunities for myself. One of my counselling instructors is charged with sexual harassment for his conduct in a workshop that I attended. I learn the heartache that this whole experience brought to all of us involved in this class. I find allies in a variety of professors who support my learning endeavours. I work part-time in various roles that include acting as a graduate teaching assistant in a research design course and as a psychometrician for a local hospital where I administered intellectual assessments. I enjoy the autonomy and diversity these experiences provide. I realize this work is not in alignment with my "fringe" interests.

The next three phases in my life overlapped, each influencing the other.

University, Round 3 -- Ph.D. -- and More Part-Time Work. Changes are under way in the educational psychology department. I am asked for input into some of the changes. Students are becoming more visible. Qualitative methods are not so much on the fringe. I still have a difficult time mentioning words like intuition and spirituality to others in the department. I start working part-time as a facilitator in a residential addiction program. I am

struck by the quality of the program. I receive formal training. I am encouraged to attend first hand the places I will refer participants to. I am regularly asked for suggestions regarding improvements for the program. Regular staff meetings are structured throughout the weekend. We discuss how our workshops are going. We share what strategies work well. We discuss our difficult clients. We offer each other support and suggestions. The staff show respect for participants. They care about the participants. The staff show respect for each other. They care about each other. We keep in contact long after we quit working in this program, consulting with each other about issues that arise in our new work situations.

The Home Front. I have a child. I think, "Life used to be so easy." My time is no longer my own. I study for my university courses when my baby is sleeping. She rarely naps. She doesn't fall asleep at night until one a.m.. I study at very strange times. I can no longer devote endless hours to my university work. My university work is not what it used to be. My child is sick. I miss work. When we have bad sock days I'm late for work (bad sock days are when my child can't decide which socks to wear, but still insists on wearing some). Some weeks we have several bad sock days. My father becomes critically ill, requiring intensive caretaking. I make emergency trips to Calgary almost weekly for a year. Each time I think, "This might be the last time I see him." When I make emergency trips I have to get someone to cover for me at work. My work is suffering. Somehow I manage to complete my Ph.D. candidacy exam. I have mental debates with myself about whether I should quit work and quit university because I can't do it as well as I want to right now.

A Freedom Child Finds Freedom!!!!! I begin work in the area of career development. I am encouraged to sculpt my work/life. I can choose which programs I want to work on, who I want to work with, the amount of hours I want to work, and where I want to work. I can create new programs and influence the direction of the organization. I work with talented people who believe in what they are doing. It is okay for me to make mistakes. It is okay for me to admit I don't know everything. It is okay for me to have weaknesses. I can see my weaknesses as my point of growth. I am coached. I am supported. I begin to see a global vision of career development. I learn about the "theory of abundance," that it is important to share with interested others what I have learned about career development. I see what can be accomplished when people work together on projects they believe in. I learn that it is okay for me to have dreams. I learn that I can pursue my dreams and that sometimes they come true. It is okay for me to use words like intuitive, holistic, and spiritual. I find that I am becoming so passionate about my work that I am quite willing to work extra hours and take shorter holidays. I find that I care a lot about what I do. I feel that it is important for me to "do good work" because what I do has the potential to influence others and the field.

When I began writing my autobiographical reflection I felt that I was "groping in the dark" -- I was not sure where to start or what to write. Eventually, however, I simply began writing and "felt" that somehow what I was writing was important to my developing sense of professionalism. Moustakas (1990) refers to this as a kind of "tacit knowing" where we "know more than we can tell" (p. 20). I had less success in reflecting on my life experiences with the purpose of articulating my fore-understandings of professionalism. My journal entry where I attempted to delineate these was short and vague.

> *Professionalism has something to do with passion, compassion, and commitment. It has to do with caring about my work. And somehow it is connected to spirituality, but*

I don't yet know how.

Exploring the Phenomenon

In inquiring into the phenomenon of professionalism, I used the following techniques suggested by van Manen (1990): Using personal experience as a starting point, tracing etymological sources, identifying idiomatic phrases, obtaining experiential descriptions from others, and consulting phenomenological literature. These techniques were not used in a linear manner, one following the other, but in a more rhythmic, interrelated manner, with the use of one technique influencing the other at various points in the research process.

1. **Using personal experience as a starting point**. To orient to the question, it helps to reflect on the life experiences one has had that are relevant to the phenomenon we are considering. The resulting experiential accounts that we write should focus on specific life events that point to possible experiences of the phenomenon in question. As such, these descriptions become text appropriate for hermeneutic interpretation, serving to increase our consciousness and understanding of professionalism.

I wrote various personal lived experience descriptions of professionalism as I began orienting to the notion of professionalism. I continued to write descriptions of my experiences throughout the research process. Writing helped me to continually expand my understanding of professionalism.

2. **Tracing etymological sources**. Without language, hermeneutic interpretation could not occur. Attentiveness to language, then, is important in our inquiry into the phenomenon we seek to understand. In opening the question of professionalism, I explored the meaning of words in a variety of ways, including reflection on dictionary definitions and the roots of words. Many words in use today have lost their original meaning. Searching the etymological origins of key words serves to connect us with an understanding of the experiences from which the meaning of the word evolved.

In orienting to the research process, I spent a day perusing the dictionary, recording etymological roots of words such as profession, vocation, passion, compassion, and spirit. Each word pointed me in a new direction. I started to see connections between words in ways that opened my understanding of professionalism. For example, the etymological meanings of vocation and profession have roots within the context of religion. I began to gain insight, however slight, into the relation of spirit to professionalism.

3. **Identifying idiomatic phrases**. The common expressions individuals use in conversations are often linked to every day lived experiences. As such, reflection on these expressions can provide enhanced insight in hermeneutic analysis.

Throughout the writing process, I was continually attuned to idiomatic phrases. As I wrote various sections, phrases would enter my consciousness. The process of reflecting on these phrases returned me to possible lived experiences of myself or others as I thought of situations in which these might be used. The process of identifying idiomatic phrases helped me in the process of continually returning to the ground of professionalism.

4. **Consulting phenomenological literature**. Other phenomenological writers may have, either directly or in tangential ways, addressed the question that we hold. Their considerations may provide us with additional insight into the phenomenon we are exploring. These materials provide the opportunity for us to reflect more deeply on our interpretation, to perceive and go beyond our previous limits, bringing to light subtle nuances that enhance our understanding.

Throughout the research process I read a variety of phenomenological literature. I was greatly influenced by van Manen's (1991) book The tact of teaching. The writings of other phenomenologists such as Beckman's (1983) article Human science as a dialogue with children also broadened my interpretive understanding. I did not limit my ongoing readings to phenomenological or hermeneutic descriptions. As important concepts emerged in my writing, for example, empowerment and dialogue, I searched the literature and read articles with the purpose of gleaning insight into subtleties I had not previously recognized. Each venture into the literature, however, required that I revisit the texts of lived experiences provided to me by my research participants and that I return to my original question, "What is professionalism?"

5. **Obtaining experiential descriptions from others.**

(a) ***Protocol writing***: Written protocols provide the researcher with original stories of peoples' lived experiences to analyze. These descriptions should portray a specific incidence in detail, providing the reader an understanding of how it was "lived through," rather than analyzing, explaining, or theorizing about the experience. There is no need to embellish the account, for example through the use of flowery language.

One of the research participants, who was familiar with hermeneutic phenomenology, chose to write some lived experience descriptions in answer to the guiding questions I supplied. These written descriptions tended to be briefer than the anecdotes that came from the interviews, providing a focused entrance to the question.

(b) ***Observing***: The type of observing required in hermeneutic phenomenology is one of participant observer, in contrast to the subject-object type of observation that might be required in the natural sciences. This type of observation allows the researcher to enter the horizons of the lives of those being studied, in an effort to come to more fully understand their world. The researcher as participant-observer is one of tension; that is, the researcher must enter as fully into the relation as s/he can while at the same time retaining a reflective stance in order to make meaning of the situation.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to observe most of the research participants as our paths crossed in various dimensions of our work. As Robert remarked, I was in a unique position to be able to see if the participants "lived their talk." The purpose of these observations, however, was really not to determine the "truth" of the conversations we held. Rather, the observations served as another source of date from which I could interpret the meaning of professionalism. When I did note what I thought to be discrepancies between a conversation with a participant and my observations of him or her, I would mention these in our next conversation. The ensuing dialogue always served to enhance my understanding of the subtleties of professionalism.

(c) ***Interviewing***: The use of interviews allows the researcher to gather anecdotes -- rich descriptions of lived experiences that increase our understanding of the phenomenon. As with the written protocols, the intention is to gather stories of specific life events as they were lived through, rather than abstractions about the stories. There is a time, however, when research participants can be invited into the interpretive circle. This process, which has a distinct purpose from gaining phenomenological descriptions, can occur either in rhythm with the story telling, or as a separate occurrence at a different point in time.

Because interviews provided the main source of text for interpretation, I describe the interview processes and techniques used in this research more fully below.

The Interviews

The Conversationalists

In contrast to quantitative methods that promote random or representative sampling, Lincoln and Guba (1985) encouraged purposive sampling for qualitative research. Whereas random sampling often suppresses the influence of more "deviant" cases on the data, purposive sampling allows the researcher to intentionally increase the scope of the data, allowing for the fuller exploration of multiple realities.

With the aim of elucidating the fullest possibilities of professionalism, I used *intensity sampling* (Patton, 1990), a type of sampling that is purposive in nature (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); that is, I chose participants who held rich experiences of and strongly manifested professionalism. I also selected participants on the basis of their ability and willingness to describe and reflect on their experiences. As Becker (1986) suggested, "Usually, preferred subjects are centrally involved with the phenomenon, and have many life experiences of it to talk about....These research subjects must be willing to struggle with verbally describing their everyday experiences of a particular phenomenon" (p. 105). Additionally, I used an *emerging sample* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), meaning that I selected participants as the research progressed. This allowed me to approach those persons that I thought would best add to the unfolding picture of professionalism.

I work in a career development organization where I have the opportunity to interact with a variety of career development consultants, many of whom exhibit professionalism. To support my impressions of others' professionalism, I asked colleagues to identify practitioners whom they saw to "truly" demonstrate professionalism. Consistent names arose. I narrowed my choices by seeking only those practitioners who had been in the field for a minimum of five years to "ensure" their immersion in the chosen context. As I got further into the research process, however, it seemed that this criterion had not really been necessary, as professionalism seemed to take place as much in the context of a person's life as in the context of a particular occupation. Additionally, I chose people that I could interview locally. This included one out-of-province participant who travelled to Edmonton on regularly scheduled visits.

In total, I approached four primary participants, two men and two women. Once the

interviews with the participants were complete and my analysis undertaken, I verified the emerging themes with a male career development practitioner whose professional judgement I hold in the highest esteem. The purpose of the verification process was to seek feedback on and enhance my understanding of the data and my interpretation of it, as well as to see if the validator had any additional perspectives on professionalism to offer, which he did.

The participants all brought distinct orientations to the exploration of professionalism. In order to promote the likelihood that the anonymity of participants is maintained, I have portrayed a composite description of the participants. The advantage a composite descriptions has over individual descriptions is that it increases the likelihood that the anonymity of the participants is maintained. The disadvantage of this type of description is that some of the contextual understanding of professionalism that arises from being allowed to enter the horizon of the participants' unique situations is lost.

The participants ranged in age between 31 and 52 years of age. They have worked in diverse settings, including post-secondary institutions, the public school system, and government postings at both the provincial and federal levels. Their career development experiences include counselling; teaching; workshop, program, and product development and implementation; policy development; and consulting. The participants are recognized throughout the province and/or the nation for their contributions to career development. Throughout the dissertation, I refer to the participants by their pseudonyms -- Joanne, Ariel, Richard, and Jason.

Preparing for the Conversations

Patton (1990) presented three interview approaches that portray the spectrum of choices available to the interviewee. The first of these approaches is the informal conversational interview; this approach allows a dialogical conversation and the spontaneous generation of questions. In the second, or the general interview guide approach, the interviewer outlines in advance the issues to be covered during the interview. This approach provides a semi-structured format; issues do not need to be covered in a particular order, and pre-determined wording of questions is not necessary. The most structured approach, the standardized open-ended interview, uses pre-arranged wording and sequenced questions from which the researcher does not deviate. The purpose of this format is to allow for greater consistency between interviews.

Hermeneutic phenomenology research practices tend toward the conversational interviewing approach. This approach requires a willingness on the part of the researcher to embrace the unfolding moment, to travel with the interviewee in yet uncharted directions. "Genuine dialogue cannot be planned" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47).

Deciding to use a conversational approach to interviewing, I piloted the interview process with a colleague. I had anticipated that the interview would go smoothly: It did not. Lack of structure impeded the process. During this trial interview I asked, without clarification, the question, "What is professionalism?" Immediately, the conversation took on an analytic tone where my colleague and I talked "about" professionalism. Once this tone was set, it became difficult to return to descriptions of professionalism, the lifeworld of

professionalism so to speak. From this experience I decided to be more directive by encouraging the interviewee to first tell his or her narrative and then to later interpret the meaning of professionalism. This practice allowed the interpretation of the meaning of professionalism to arise from the lifeworld descriptions of the participants (van Manen, 1990).

I also felt that a set of guiding questions to be used in a general interview guide approach would facilitate the interview. Consequently, I developed the following five guiding interview questions: (1) Describe some experiences that stand out for you as personal expressions of professionalism. In other words, what are your experiences of being a *professional* professional? (2) Describe a couple of day-to-day experiences of your professionalism. (3) How has your expression of professionalism changed over time? (4) Describe times when you felt you were not exhibiting professionalism. (5) What are some barriers to your expressions of professionalism?

Additionally, in holding what I saw to be a "true dialogual conversation," I found that I influenced the voice of my friend. When I reflected meaning, I sometimes changed the intention of what the participant had said. I began to wonder if reflecting meaning was appropriate or whether I should limit myself to the use of questions, as McCracken (1988) suggests. I began to understand what Berg (1989) meant when he said, "the research interview is not a natural communication exchange" (p. 27). I felt that if I was to truly understand the interviewees, I must give them more opportunities to voice their stories and that the participants should do most of the talking in the interview. Deciding how much of my voice to allow to enter the conversation, and deciding whether I should reflect meaning, or predominately use structuring skills and the soliciting skills of questioning and probing was a constant tension for me throughout the interviews.

It was clear, however, that the greatest guiding force during the interviews was my attempt to truly listen to what the participants were saying. I wanted my participants to feel valued and accepted. I wanted to provide a comfortable atmosphere in which they could speak.

The Conversations

Once participants agreed to partake in the research process, I contacted each by phone to arrange a time and place for the conversations. I met with the participants at places of their convenience. The interviews took place in a variety of settings, including restaurants, office settings, and the participants' homes. Each setting provided a comfortable backdrop in which to conduct the interviews. The restaurant atmosphere seemed to be particularly conducive to conversational ease.

I met with the participants between two and six times. During these meetings I listened to their stories, reviewed their transcripts, clarified the thematic analysis, and received their comments about the interpretive writing. Each interview lasted between one and a half and three hours. The length of the interviews was determined by "inner clock time" rather than actual clock time (Moustakas, 1990), meaning that the interviews ended when they came to a natural closure, when we seemed to have said all that was important for the time being. In the case of the participant who was separated by geographic distance, after the initial two interviews, we used telephone conversations and written exchange of information in place of

face-to-face conversation. This process was much more difficult than being able to dialogue in person, in part because our face-to-face conversational exchanges had been so rich.

At the beginning of the initial interview session with each participant, I recapitulated the research process and my interest in professionalism. I asked for permission to tape the interviews. I explained that, to ensure confidentiality, I would transcribe the tapes myself. I informed participants that they would have the opportunity to respond to their transcripts, the thematic analysis, and the final written document so that they would be able to judge for themselves whether I had accurately represented their experiences and maintained their anonymity. Before I activated the tape recorder during the interview, each participant signed a consent form, of which they retained a copy.

The actual conversations were loosely structured. I informed each participant that my overriding question was: What is professionalism? and that this included experiences of professionalism, the development of professionalism, and the meaning of professionalism. Additionally, I gave participants the list of guiding questions to consider either before or during the interview. The questions were used as a catalyst for discussion; that is, the participants and I held the questions in mind throughout the interview process and addressed them when it seemed relevant to do so within the context of our conversation. One participant chose to write descriptions in response to the questions, as well as to enter into a conversational dialogue in which he reflected on the written descriptions. As participants spoke, I encouraged them to tell their stories, to use concrete examples to bring professionalism to life.

As Gadamer (1985) suggested, "No one knows what will 'come out' in a conversation...a conversation has a spirit of its own" (p. 345). Two participants chose to describe their experiences of exhibiting professionalism as a starting point. Two participants chose to begin by describing the development of their sense of professionalism. During the interviews, I tried to let the participants tell their stories in their own ways. I saw it as my role to listen, to respect, and to clarify. I was patient, and my patience was rewarded. There were times when I was uncertain of the direction that the interviews were taking. Yet, when I waited for a fuller explanation, the bits and pieces of the conversations led to a more integrated understanding of the participants' experiences.

The participants spoke easily of their stories of professionalism. I was touched by the trust they displayed in me and the honesty with which they spoke to me of their lives. They shared both peak experiences as well as more disillusioning and painful times. Two of the participants asked me to share my experiences. This give and take in the dialogue seemed to deepen the trust level, with both myself and the participants speaking ever more freely. The resulting data were rich, being filled with details and examples, meeting the characteristics of "good interviews" as characterized by Bogdan and Biklen (1992).

Engaging in the interviews with the participants was a powerful experience for me, one that changed me forever.

> *A conversation is a process of two people understanding each other. Thus it is characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration....(Gadamer, 1985, p. 347).*

As I spoke with people, my understanding of professionalism grew. Its place in my daily actions grew clearer. One of the participants taught me the lesson of gentleness, of accepting myself, a lesson that touched me deeply. This happened both through our dialogue where we exchanged stories of our life situations and through her acceptance and support of my learning endeavours as a researcher. As Weber (1986) emphasized, "We [the researcher] cannot and should not be unaffected by what is said...." (cited in Moustakas, 1990, p. 48).

Illuminating: Creating Meaning

The hermeneutic process of interpretation involves constructing meaning from text. Creating meaning is a multi-layered rather than linear process: How the interpreter interprets is a difficult process to describe. Phenomenological hermeneutics requires living the question. This means that my increasing understanding of professionalism, the meaning I create around this notion, is ongoing. It occurs when I employ conscious strategies, such as those suggested by van Manen (1990), to highlight themes. It occurs with self-dialogue (Moustakas, 1990) as I ponder the question, my experiences, the experiences of the participants, and the emerging essential themes. It occurs with incubation (Moustakas), that is periods of time when I withdraw from conscious immersion and analysis, but creative integration of my understanding of professionalism still takes place.

Before we talk further about hermeneutic interpretation, it is important to ask, "What is being interpreted?" From a historical perspective, hermeneutic interpretation has a strong link to literature and theology, being widely used during the seventeenth century to examine classical and theological text (Packer, 1985).

> *...hermeneutics was determined by the content of what was to be understood -- and this was the obvious unity of classical and christian literature. (Gadamer, 1985, p. 157)*

The work of Dilthey and Schleiermacher extended the use of hermeneutics, with the latter proposing a universal hermeneutics that extends to the "significant conversation" (Gadamer, 1985). Following the traditions of Heidegger and Gadamer, the hermeneutic emphasis is on experience and understanding within a contextual framework. In common practise today, the text that provides the ground for hermeneutic interpretation can arise from many sources, such as anecdotes written from participant observation, lived experiences gathered in conversations/interviews, and written protocols, with the overriding criteria being that the text reflects a possible human experience that can be understood within a historical context (van Manen, 1990).

The text analyzed in this study came predominately from interviews, but also from the processes I described in the earlier section in this chapter titled *Exploring the Phenomenon*; that is, using personal experience as a starting point, tracing etymological sources, identifying idiomatic phrases, consulting phenomenological literature, and obtaining experiential descriptions from others. Because the interviews provided the greatest source of text to be analyzed, I focus the discussion of illumination of themes on the analysis of the interview text.

Transcription

I taped each interview session. Following each conversational interview with the research participants, I transcribed the tapes verbatim, both to ensure confidentiality and to gain familiarity with the conversations. Though this was a time consuming process, it was also a valuable one. There is something different about listening to a tape rather than simply reading a transcript. It is not only what is said, but how it is said that is important: Voice tone, silences, hesitations all provide opportunities for greater understanding of the text.

> *Living sound offers the richness of pitch, emphasis, nuance and attitude, silence and expression. It provides a richness of expression capable of completely transforming the written word. It also facilitates a penetration of the silences, bringing meaning to what is not-said. (Bain, 1986, p. 44)*

Once I had completed the transcribing process, I gave each participant a copy of their text so that they could review its accuracy and make any adjustments to the conversation. Participants made some adjustments to the text. For example, Ariel removed information that might identify another person she spoke of and changed a few words to bring increasing clarity to the text. The transcript also provided a text for the participants and I to collaboratively interpret in future interviews.

Highlighting Thematic Moments

My focal entry point to creating meaning from the research text was to listen -- and listen again -- to the research tapes, and to read -- and read again -- the interview transcripts. There came a point, however, when I had to face the pragmatic question, How do I reduce the endless pages of notes in order to address my question, "What is professionalism?"

The text of lived experience descriptions provides the grounds for hermeneutic interpretation, but it is not the interpretation. That is, the text provides a description of the experience from which the interpreter creates meaning. The general process in constructing meaning in hermeneutic phenomenology is to look for *essential structures*. The point of doing so, however, is not simply to arrive at a list of structures, for example, "hope," "care," or "the calling." What is more important is the reflection around these thematic moments that draws the reader into consideration of the essences of the phenomenon in question.

As Bergum (1986) reminded us, "It is important to remember not to make too much of thematic moments." Although we seek to illuminate the essence of a phenomenon, its "is-ness," the themes are simply a focal point around which understanding takes place. We aim to identify distinct themes, but any themes that we abstract from a phenomenon will be interrelated because they are part of the whole. Another researcher interpreting the data of professionalism might have used different words to describe the themes and/or a different organizational structure in the writing.

> *Phenomenological themes are not objects or generalizations; metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes....Themes are the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through. By the light of these*

themes we can navigate and explore such universes. (van Manen, 1990, p. 90)

The Structured Approach

Illumination of the phenomenon through thematic interpretation is an integrative interplay between the data, the emerging analytic construction, the participants, and the researcher through the processes of reflecting, dialoguing, analyzing, and writing. Initially, I was quite structured in my attempts to analyze the data. I began thematic interpretation of the first two transcripts by using the three approaches suggested by van Manen (1990): (1) the holistic or sententious approach, (2) the selective or highlighting approach, and (3) the detailed line-by-line approach.

In the holistic approach I oriented to the overall text and asked what word(s) or phrase(s) could best represent what was being said. In the selective highlighting approach I read the text several times, then highlighted statements, phrases, or words that seemed particularly essential to professionalism. In the line-by-line approach I read through each sentence to seek further insight into professionalism. This approach is rigorous, encouraging attention to the data. Certain words or concepts, such as empowerment and learning, kept reappearing in the data. This repetitiveness formed a starting point for my conceptual organization.

The difficulty lay, however, in the number of concepts that arose from the textual analysis. I more fully understood how rich the interviews with my participants had been. I more wholly comprehended the complex multi-dimensional nature of professionalism. By the time I analyzed the second transcript, however, my understanding of what was said in the first transcript had changed and required that I rework this initial analysis. At one point, I began using a computer program to organize my data. I found that I felt too distant from my data using this tool, so soon went back to the longer, more arduous approach of manually labelling and clustering text.

Having identified a number of important concepts, I began to synthesize and regroup these concepts according to a higher level of abstraction. This is sometimes referred to as a second order clustering of themes (Colaizzi, 1978), a clustering of similar concepts into essential, distinct themes. By this time, however, I had conducted additional interviews, and my understanding of the data had again expanded. I had difficulty deciding which concepts to include within an essential theme, for there were so many concepts and they were so interrelated with each other.

I became so caught up in meaning units, thematic clusters, themes identified within transcripts, themes identified between transcripts, and the number of times a theme occurred that I lost sight of the lived experiences of the participants and the question that guided the process. That is when I gave up the structured method for the process of "Ad Hoc Fumbling Around."

The Ad Hoc Fumbling Around Approach

"Ad hoc fumbling around" is a process Plummer (1983) described as being ultimately more fruitful for him than logical modes of analysis. My own procedures in winding my way

through the maze involved listening to the original tapes, reading the transcripts, observing, conversing with others, thinking, and walking. I diagrammed the themes on large pieces of poster-size paper. I color coded the transcripts. I cut and pasted the text from the transcripts. I divided essential concepts of professionalism according to outcomes, processes, and structures. I read a variety of literature, and then reread it as my understanding of professionalism grew.

When I thought that I had interpreted the protocols to the point where I had an essential summary of concepts, I met individually with the three participants that lived in Edmonton. The purpose of these meetings was to give participants a chance to respond to my interpretation of their experiences, as well as to provide an opportunity for mutual reflection on the themes and the phenomenon of professionalism. To validate the emerging themes, I also met with a career development practitioner whose views I held in high regard. The meetings with the participants and validator were fertile meetings; they provided the occasion for the discussion of subtleties and nuances of professionalism, and an ever deepening "interpretive insight."

> *The conversation has a hermeneutic thrust: it is oriented to sense-making and interpreting of the notion that drives or stimulates the conversation. It is for this reason that the collaborative quality of the conversation lends itself especially well to the task of reflecting on the themes of the notion or phenomenon under study....*
>
> *By setting up situations conducive to collaborative hermeneutic conversations, the researcher can mobilize participants to reflect on their experiences (once these have been gathered) in order to determine the deeper meanings or themes of these experiences. (van Manen, 1990, p. 98 - 99)*

This process meant, of course, that I now had more ideas and more text to consider and incorporate into my interpretation of professionalism. To do so, I decided to write -- to begin my creative construction of the notion of professionalism.

Writing

In more recent years, the writing process of qualitative research has been richly described (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Many writers have written about this connectedness between writing and thinking (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; van Manen, 1990). "Writing fixes thought on paper. It externalizes what in some sense is internal" (van Manen, 1990). It was the writing process that ultimately brought clarity, cohesion, and organization to my thematic interpretation. Writing was a slow process, for I constantly needed to return to the whole: Each time I wrote a section, I read it within the context of all my writings to see if it made sense; I then placed my chapter writings back into the context of the participants lived experiences by re-reading the transcripts. I did both of these activities while holding my original question in mind.

As I wrote I continually asked myself, "What is it that I really want to say?" This movement between thinking and writing helped me to focus, to clarify what I thought to be essential to the notion of professionalism. The process of externalizing my thoughts allowed me to critique and enhance my understanding of professionalism in a creative process of

writing, rethinking, and revising...revising...revising....

Qualitative research relies heavily on writing to elucidate the phenomenon being studied. It is the writing that draws readers into the process, that enables them to understand.

> *The text should...enable readers to participate vicariously in the events described. It should enable readers to get a feel for the place or process and, where possible and appropriate, for the experience of those who occupy the situation. (Eisner, 1991, p. 89)*

The function of writing in qualitative research is epistemic; that is, to help the reader to know (Eisner, 1991). Its purpose is not to embellish or to make something literary. Rather, its purpose is to attend to what is important in order to show something, to persuade us to reflect, to bring to life the tension between the pre-reflective and reflective nature of the every day experiences of people (Eisner, 1991; van Manen, 1990). Writing considers the tone, the ambience of the phenomenon it wishes to portray.

My primary intention in writing the text was to illuminate professionalism in a manner that allowed others an "inside glimpse" of professionalism. I wanted my writing to be persuasive, as I believed in the significance of what I was writing, yet, I did not want to distort the givens of the data. So, while writing, I lived in tension. I sought to use description, the words of the research participants in order to let the data speak. I sought to "vary the examples" (van Manen, 1990) and by so doing, let that which is essential shine through. I used the words of the participants in the interpretive part of the writing; that is, I did not necessarily portray the words of the participants as quotes, but worked their words into the overall text when it seemed appropriate. I sought to increase depth and promote thoughtfulness by moving back and forth between description and interpretation. Ultimately, however, I acknowledge the difficulty in distinguishing between the descriptive and the interpretive, as in some ways, all writing is interpretive, a selection of what one considers it is essential to portray (Eisner, 1991; van Manen, 1990).

Determining Trustworthiness

In acknowledging the interpretive nature of qualitative research, it is important to ask, "How can readers trust what has been written about the phenomenon?" Quantitative research has clearly delineated criteria for reliability and validity by which readers can judge its credibility. The criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research are less defined. In preparation for critiquing qualitative research, one must ask the question, "What should the research portray?" Research bias and interpretation are inevitable, so qualitative research cannot be expected to portray "the Truth" or "the world as it really is" (Eisner, 1991). Rather, one seeks a believability, a resonance of the sense of meaning of the lived experience that is portrayed through the writing.

> *The question of validity is one of meaning: Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one's own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience? (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32)*

Determining the trustworthiness of a qualitative portrayal of a phenomenon is largely a

matter of judgement. The judgement, however, need not be arrived at serendipitously. Similar to legal or clinical practise, it is more a matter of putting together a credible case, of persuading the audience that the research is worthy of attention (Eisner, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Given the interconnectedness of the researcher with the research, for readers to trust the data, they must trust the researcher. A guiding principle to this end is for the researcher "to report any personal and professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (Patton, 1990, p. 472). Throughout the research process, I used a journal to document "my story." Included in my journal is information about the emerging research design, as well as my intentions, reflections, and feelings surrounding the research each step of the way. So that I could record my thoughts and observations while their poignancy lingered, I carried the journal everywhere I went.

Additional activities that increase the probability that credible findings will be produced are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Debriefing and member checks are two further ways to increase the trustworthiness of the data.

Prolonged engagement means spending enough time immersed in the data so that the phenomenon is thoroughly appreciated and scope is provided to the research. In the 20 months that I spent engaged in the research project, my visions of professionalism developed well beyond my initial understanding, allowing my unfolding awareness of the complex nature of professionalism.

Persistent observation means focusing on what is relevant to the phenomenon and provides a depth of understanding to the research. I met with each participant between two and six times. This allowed me to gain a more discriminating view of professionalism, and come to an ever increasing understanding of what is essential to the phenomenon of professionalism.

Triangulation, or structural corroboration as Eisner (1991) referred to it, is relating multiple types of data to "confirm or contradict the interpretation of a state of affairs" (p. 110). Different authors suggest various types of triangulation, including data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Eisner, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

Perhaps the most frequently cited types of triangulation procedures are triangulation of sources (using different data sources within the same method, for example, using numerous interview respondents) and triangulation of methods (for example using different types of data collection, such as interviews and observations). These were the two type of triangulation that I used in the present study. I used triangulation of sources by interviewing different people at different times. I used triangulation of method by using interviews, participant observation, and written protocols.

Debriefing occurs when the researcher consults with a colleague or peer about the research process, including its formulation and its enactment. At each step in my emerging research design I made a point of meeting with at least one of my supervisory committee

members. These meetings proved to be extremely useful by helping me to clarify how my assumptions were shaping the research design. The meetings were also useful for cathartic purposes. At the point of maximum ambiguity, when my pages and pages of data seemed too immense to wade through, I felt very alone in the research process. Speaking with my committee members helped to re-orient me to the research question and to gain the confidence that I needed to proceed.

Member checks, one of the most critical techniques for establishing credibility, involves receiving feedback from the research participants on the data, data analysis, interpretations, and conclusions. I provided each research participant with a copy of their transcripts and the final phenomenological hermeneutic interpretation to provide them an opportunity to respond to the correctness of my interpretive construction and to correct misinterpretations.

Ultimately, however, the reader must discern the trustworthiness of the data by becoming a "connoisseur" (Eisner, 1991); that is, by critiquing the written interpretation of the hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry. In critiquing the text it is important for the reader to revisit the purpose of the research inquiry. In the case of this research, the purpose of the inquiry of professionalism is to deepen and broaden the reader's understanding of professionalism, rather than to determine the Truth of professionalism. Therefore, as the reader engages with my interpretation of professionalism, he or she must ask a variety of questions. Is the research coherent? does it make sense? does it ring true according to what s/he already knows? Did I, the researcher, discuss the notion of professionalism from a variety of angles? Were there any dimensions of professionalism that I obviously avoided? Did the interpretation reflect thoughtfulness on my part? Did I use clear and simple language? or did I try and "hide" behind unnecessary jargon or overly "flowery" descriptions? For a more thorough discussion on the art of connoisseurship, I suggest that readers consult Eisener's (1991) *The Enlightened Eye.*

Summary and Transition

My research question, "What is professionalism?" had a lengthy "incubation" period. In order to answer this question I (a) embedded the question within the context of career development, and (b) chose to use the overriding research perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), while allowing the details of the design to emerge along the way. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of thoughtfulness; its interpretation is grounded in lived experience descriptions.

To explore the phenomenon of professionalism I used a variety of data sources including personal experience, etymological sources, idiomatic phrases, phenomenological and other related literature, and experiential descriptions from others (gathered through written protocols, participant observations, and interviewing.) The interviews formed a substantial part of the data base: I interviewed four career development practitioners (two male, 2 female) and validated the results with one male career development practitioner. Sampling of participants was purposeful (Lincoln and Guba, 1985): I used both intensity sampling (Patton, 1990) and emerging sampling (Lincoln and Guba).

I transcribed the interviews verbatim, then analyzed them for essent themes. To

increase the trustworthiness of the research results, I used a journal to document my "research story," which included information about the emerging research design and my reflections on the research process. Additionally, the following activities suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) increased the probability of credible findings and trustworthiness of the data: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, debriefing, and member checks.

The written interpretation of these themes forms the bulk of the research presentation. The interpretive text is divided into three sections: Chapter 4, which describes the paradigmatic nature of professionalism that arose from my interpretation of the data; Chapter 5, which focuses on professionalism and the practitioner; and Chapter 6, which looks at the others professionals work with and the field within which they work.

CHAPTER 4
A DIFFERENT PARADIGM

This is the first of three chapters that portray my interpretation of professionalism. In this chapter I suggest an ecological paradigm of professionalism as an alternative to the natural scientific paradigm of professionalism. The concepts presented in this chapter provide the ground for the subsequent chapters that focus on (a) the practitioner, and (b) the intentional focus of the practitioner; that is, the "other" (which includes both clients and colleagues) and the field in which the practitioner works.

An Ecological Paradigm of Professionalism

> *The excessive analytical phase of science is over. A countermovement toward integration and interior subjective processes is taking place within a more comprehensive vision of the entire universe. (Berry, 1988, p. 37)*

A paradigmatic shift seems to be occurring in our culture, arising in response to the technocratic age. A paradigm, as suggested by Kuhn (1970), is an implicit, fundamental interpretation that governs understanding within a particular field of thought. Although Kuhn's writings referred predominately to science, the term "paradigm" has been adopted to refer to frameworks of thinking in many contexts (Ferguson, 1980), and can be used to refer to the foundation of beliefs held by communities and cultures. This paradigmatic shift is reflected in a diverse array of literature, including literature on spirituality (Bolen, 1984; Dreher, 1990), ecology (E. D. Gray, 1981), decision making (Gelatt, 1989), career development (Magnusson, 1992; Miller-Tiedeman, 1988), and organizational development (Senge, 1990; Wilson Schaef & Fassel, 1990).

As I engaged in the process of conversing with my participants and interpreting their narratives, I began to perceive a fundamental difference between their descriptions of professionalism and the orientation toward professionalism that was reflected in the majority of the literature on professionalism that I had previously searched. As we saw in the Chapter 2, a great deal of the traditional literature on the professions, within which professionalism is embedded, proposes a rational, hierarchical, elitist perspective; that is, it aligns with the natural scientific paradigm.

In the natural scientific paradigm, often termed the dominant world view because of its pervasiveness in and influence on our North American cultural beliefs and practices, a dichotomy between matter and spirit is exaggerated, and reason is emphasized over spiritual and self-creative experiences.

> *The dominant worldview actually does not trust the spontaneous, expressive creativity of the individual. The proper beliefs and proper ways of acting which lead to social and economic success are predominantly moral, rational, entrepreneurial, and "professional"; in short, they impose rational discipline on the deeper, more impulsive, intuitive, mystical, and emotional aspects of human nature. (Miller, 1990, p. 17)*

In addition, the aim of the natural scientific paradigm is to predict and to control. Many

writers have suggested that our attempt to predict and to control the natural world has influenced our cultural practices, resulting in hierarchical social structures, and oppressive governance and societal practices (Berry, 1988).

Over the last twenty years, the limitations of the natural scientific paradigm and its influence on sociocultural practices have been increasingly felt. There is a challenge to create a new way of thinking and being in the world, including, I believe, a new way of conceptualizing professionalism.

> *What might be proposed here is that one of the historical roles now being assigned to our generation is the role of creating, in its main outlines, the spiritual context of the ecological age....(Berry, 1988, p. 119)*

Rather than attempting to narrow and define the construct of professionalism, my research purpose is to inquire into its nature, to open and expand the question, "What is professionalism?" The themes explored in this chapter illustrate the *nature* of professionalism. As such, they are the cornerstone of the themes portrayed in Chapters 5 and 6; they should be kept in mind when reading these chapters. This alternative perspective of professionalism reflects a more ecological paradigm that acknowledges the spirit of the self and the other. It promotes the empowerment of (rather than power over) professionals, clients, and the systems within which they live and work.

The ecological conceptualization of professionalism that I present does not negate the importance of rationality, but rather, takes a more comprehensive view of professionalism where a rational perspective is one dimension among others. Additionally, the alternative view of professionalism does not negate the numerous contributions and positive influences of professionalism that have resulted to date, such as the weeding out of charlatan practitioners and the maintenance of quality control (Vollmer, 1966). The ecological perspective does, however, reflect a view of professionalism that is seemingly more aligned with our changing cultural belief systems and practices -- a view, I believe, that more adequately portrays the complexity of professionalism -- for now. I suspect and even hope that, given the evolving nature of our world views, one day a new paradigm will replace this one. Therefore, this paradigm should not be taken as dogma, but as an arena for thoughtfulness.

The themes depicted in this chapter are not new: They have been commonly found in the literature since about the 1960's. These themes have not, however, been adequately addressed in the context of professionalism, and they have not yet fully found their way into professional practice. As Bibby and Posterski (1991) reflected, change takes time: It may take several decades for new ideas to find their ways into mainstream practices.

Organizational Pattern

What follows in the next three chapters is a hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation of professionalism. The organizational structure portrays themes that speak to the nature and essence of professionalism. The writing structure synthesizes participants' lived experiences and reflections, quotes and reflections from related literature, and my reflections on the meaning of these. The research participants, as previously mentioned in Chapter 2, had the opportunity to read and contribute to the thematic analysis and written synthesis.

The Holistic Dimension

Professionalism has so many dimensions to me. But I'm interpreting it to do with the meaning of work life for me. It's so pervasive. It covers my entire life and being....There's no clean line between the personal and the professional....

These words were spoken by Joanne in our first interview. They brought to the forefront the complexity of professionalism. If we see professionalism in a broad sense as related to our work, we have a place to begin our exploration of its meaning. In the following passage, Joanne describes the importance to her professionalism of accepting all parts of herself and integrating these parts in a harmonious way.

[In developing my professionalism] I trust my own intuition a lot more because I've come to find that when I've gone against that I've usually gotten myself in all sorts of circuitous routes of trouble. If I attend to my intuitive sense early on, then usually I'm on the right track....And the same thing with my emotions. I initially saw myself as overly emotional and that that was bad. And now I've come to realize that there's a lot of truth in my emotional experience that is my earliest source of insight, in a way, to what's going on....So I feel much more in harmony between my cognitive, my emotional, and my spiritual -- more integrated and respectful of myself and my own growth.

In the past twenty years, the holistic paradigm has gained increasing attention from thinkers in a diversity of disciplines, including physics, psychology, theology, economics, and ecology (Miller, 1990). In psychology, the holistic paradigm is readily apparent in both humanistic and transpersonal approaches. Humanistic approaches remind us of the importance of manifesting the potential of each individual; transpersonal approaches reacquaint us with the spiritual realm. Both approaches recognize the interconnected aspects of human functioning, integrating both affective and cognitive domains.

When we admit the complexity of our human functioning and acknowledge the parts of ourselves that lie outside of the rational domain, we may question the wisdom of a predominately rational perspective of professionalism -- for what is a professional without passion for his or her work? a professional without compassion for those that he or she works with? Further, if intuition, spirituality, and emotionality are part of our being, why not use these capabilities in an integrated manner, embracing their place in our lives, including our work, so that we bring to our life-encounters the fullest potential available by using all the forms of knowing available to us (Walker, 1988)?

The holistic orientation to professionalism has implications not only for us as practitioners, but for the others we work with as well. The importance of working in a holistic way with others is reflected throughout the research writings.

Respect for the Spirit

The holistic paradigm serves to bring the human face back to professionalism, reconnecting us with our spirit. Typically aligned with patriarchal religion, spirituality is often denied because it holds so many connotations, many of them negative, and because it is so difficult to define.

Yet, spirit is something we recognize in our everyday experiences. We speak of "the spirit of the age" or "the spirit of the place." We talk of spirit as our inner world, our life energy, our liveliness, our "spiritedness." We experience spirit when we sparkle with energy, when we have magical moments of communion, and when we have what Maslow (1968) referred to as peak experiences. Etymological roots of the word show spirit to be the essential character, nature, or quality of something. So spirit can be viewed as an inner part, a mysterious part, and a vulnerable part of ourselves.

Intertwined with the notion of spirit is that of respect. A spiritual world view is a global paradigm promoting creativity and reverence for life (Miller, 1990). This reverence for life is embedded in respect -- the valuing of the *dignity* of the inner life of another (Walker, 1988).

> *Respect is not fear and awe; it denotes, in accordance with the root of the word (respicere = to look at), the ability to see a person as he is, to be aware of his unique individuality. (Fromm, cited in Walker, 1988, p. 15)*

Respect means to refrain from interfering with and to give regard (Marion Webster Dictionary). Thus, professionalism can be viewed as respect for the spirit of both the self and others; as seeing and honouring that which is essential; as refraining from practices that violate or de-spirit; as promoting practices that regard and nurture the spirit; and as seeing the uniqueness in ourself, in others, and in each situation.

Nourishing the Spirit of Ourselves and of Others

Feelings of satisfaction that we receive from our work and personal ventures can enhance our spirit. In the research interviews, each co-researcher depicted examples where they had created and responded to opportunities in their life journeys that position them to nourish and to develop their essential character. Joanne described her life paths from childhood, to university, to work, to relationship portrays a journey where she discovered, developed, and nurtured her unique and essential qualities. Ariel portrayed her decision to leave government to find a place where she could express herself more freely, and be truer to herself and others. Robert spoke of the need to follow his passions. Jason spoke of his decisions to enter environments that supported his values and beliefs, and allowed him to work in atmospheres that supported his growth. The concept of nourishing our spirit is closely related to the calling, pursuing our path with heart, to which Chapter 5 is devoted.

Much of our work as practitioners is aimed at nurturing the spirit, the essential qualities of others. Thus, our professionalism is intentional. It has another in mind. In the field of career development, it involves helping others to develop their multipotentiality, while meeting their immediate and/or longer term needs. This can be done in a diversity of ways,

for example through working directly with clients or by engaging in practices that support our work with clients, such as research, product development, and policy development. Thus, professionalism requires that we not only respect the spirit of ourselves, but the spirit of others in what has the potential to be a mutually beneficial relationship.

In contrast, spirit can also be violated, for example, by shame or by guilt. When we think about professionalism, it is often because we have somehow been treated in an *unprofessional* way. There is often an unspoken code of conduct that we expect from people, and we recognize when it is violated. The following scenario took place in my first student teaching placement. My role at the time was simply to observe the class and make notes on what I saw. The following is an excerpt from those observations.

> *Today my assignment was to observe a so-called "discipline problem" in a classroom, a ten year old native boy. James, as I shall call him, was poorly dressed: His clothes were torn and dirty. But beside his desk were a pair of shiny, new rubber boots, of which he was obviously very proud. The teacher asked him to put his boots in the coat room where they belonged. James responded by saying that his aunt had just bought them for him and that he was afraid they would get stolen if he put them in the coat room. The struggle was on. The teacher picked the boots up to take them away. First James started crying, then yelling. The teacher hurried to get the principal to "show" him how unreasonable James was behaving.*

When I returned to this classroom the following week, James had been removed and placed in a "correctional" program. I felt sick. This example has been etched in my mind and strongly influenced my own teaching and counselling practices. Many times I imagined how the teacher might have handled this situation in a way that more fully exhibited professionalism, promoting respect for the spirit of the child. I have come up with many interesting and diverse options. The philosophical orientation underlying these options is reflected in the following quote by Ariel. Although Ariel was speaking of working with employees, the paragraph holds general meaning for our work with clients, too. Her words tell of a different way of behaving than exercising power over other people in oppressive ways.

> *It's interesting, when I think of people who are professional, they are persons who let other people do things in a way that suits themselves. So that although I do things in a certain way, I wouldn't assume that there's not another way to do that. I suppose a professional has a great deal of respect for other people's skills and abilities. When I think of some of the problems or issues that I've found personally not very pleasant in my work experience, there has been that lack of respect for other people -- somehow I don't think professionals acquire their recognition through putting down or undermining other people.*

Ariel is speaking of a tolerance for diversity, an acceptance that each person may have a different way of being that is reflected in their tactics and actions. It is a respect for the unique expression of individuals and a willingness to allow others to express themselves in ways that may be different from our own. With children or others who are in clearly vulnerable positions, the need for respect and tolerance may seem obvious. The recognition for the need for respect and tolerance as a reflection of our professionalism may become increasingly blurred, however, as we are faced with biases that remain more subtly engrained

within our cultural beliefs. As the following story by Kara (a career development practitioner) portrays, it is important for us as practitioners to continually reflect on our biases and how they influence our actions with others.

> *I recall a situation when I was working on a committee with a group of professionals in the Health Care field that made me question what true professionalism really is. Our committee of ten was involved in an educational project and had been working together for about six months. Two women in particular were extremely dedicated to the project. Their efforts were praised by several other members. They were considered to be an integral part of our team. Then an incident happened that precipitated rumours about these women being sexually involved with each other. From that point on they were treated differently. Their input was questioned; their dedication de-valued....Would a true professional, especially in the health care discipline, treat a colleague differently because of his or her sexual orientation?*

A Systemic Relationship

> *In respecting the spirit of ourselves and others we must, as we have seen, look to practices that nurture the spirit. In the past, we tended to leave more inclusive visions of reality to poets, romanticists, ecologists, and spiritual and philosophical writers (Berry, 1988). More recently, we are realizing the destructiveness that may happen when we fail to take an encompassing perspective, for "what is good in its microphase can be deadly in its macrophase development." (Berry, 1988, p. 44)*

During the research interviews, participants spoke about the importance to their professionalism of "seeing the big picture," "holding a global view," "recognizing the importance of the contribution of each person working on a project," and so on. They suggested the need to hold a systemic perspective as they worked. This orientation provides an alternative to the mechanistic paradigm, meaning that we study systems as entities, rather than a conglomeration of parts isolated in narrowly defined contexts (Bertalanffy, 1968). This view promotes integrity, recognizing that the character of a living system depends upon the whole.

Many of our current societal systems and practices are based on hierarchical, rather than systemic perspectives and practices. When we view the world from a hierarchical perspective, there is someone above or below us. This orientation holds the danger of promoting the simplistic notion that we are "better" than others because we are higher up the hierarchy on a management scale, because we make more money, because we work in a job with "higher" status, and so on.

> *Apparently many people <u>can't be professional</u>, no matter what their behaviors are, which I object to. Professionalism is a form of conduct -- it's not defined by the credentials one holds. (Ariel)*

The status of a profession is often based on hierarchical concepts of elitism and prestige. In a historical context, elitism was a way of protecting "the other" from people not qualified to conduct certain services. This hierarchical perspective of the professions influences our societal beliefs and practices in ways that may limit rather than promote respect

for the uniqueness and value of individuals. For example, when we say we are a doctor, or a salesperson, or a plumber we often receive different reactions from people. Certain stores restrict shopping membership based on occupational affiliation. I would go so far as to say that we sometimes accord greater personal worth to people in "the professions." This view is supported through research interviews I have conducted with trades people, who often cite the low profiles accorded to the trades and to themselves as workers as one of the biggest barriers they face in their jobs. The following quote by Ariel suggests a different way of thinking that has implications that may affect the worthiness we attribute to people because of their work.

> *When you look at where we say there are professions -- lawyers, doctors -- they're all set up on models where there's a great deal of independence because, in theory, they all have the same status. So maybe we just have to move that into a place where I would recognize that I'm working with people with different skills or different education levels -- they're still equal in a sense of their desire and their need to contribute.*

This perspective is best represented in a circular, more cooperative, rather than hierarchical dimension. It affords us a different opportunity to view reality, a view more respectful of the spirit than a hierarchical perspective may be. This perspective is one that is increasingly reflected in current organizational practices through the flattening of hierarchical structures and the promotion of work teams.

A systemic orientation of professionalism has implications, therefore, for a diverse area of practices, including career development, occupational development, and counselling practices, that may allow people to experience a sense of empowerment. (See Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion of these implications). A hint of how a more cooperative perspective can influence practices and attitudes within an organization is reflected in Robert's words.

> *I pour coffee for people, I do my own photocopying, I do word processing. And I'm not sure that humility's the right word, because you could reframe it and say it's not an issue of humility that you're willing to do low level tasks. There <u>are</u> no low level tasks. Each task is essential to the project, therefore our technical staff are equally worthy in terms of what we produce. Obviously some tasks should be delegated...but it's more a matter of effectiveness than low level, high level.*

Professionalism as Empowerment

> *Life emerges and advances by the struggle of species for more complete life expression. (Berry, 1988, p. 216)*

Empowerment is a growing concept in the human services literature. Although definitions of empowerment vary, central to the concept of empowerment is the powerlessness that individuals or groups experience in a variety of settings and in a variety of ways. When individuals experience powerlessness in their environments, they consequently experience their self-determination as limited (Solomon, 1987) and may see themselves as helpless (Parsons, 1991). "The term *powerless* refers to being unable to direct the course of one's life due to societal conditions and power dynamics, lack of skills, or lack of faith that one can change one's life" (McWhirter, 1991).

In its most basic form, the concept of empowerment refers to the process of increasing power. In reference to empowerment, Kohn (1991) spoke of "people taking charge of their lives"; Rappaport (1987) spoke of "achieving mastery over one's affairs"; Wartenberg (1988) talked of the transformative use of power to bring another "to a more developed manner of existing."

As practitioners we need to ask, "Who must be empowered?" Imagine the potential effectiveness of practitioners who have gaps in the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they hold in career development, who have little trust and confidence in themselves and their ability to work appropriately with their clients, who have not yet reflected on the important issues of their work. How can we expect clients to trust us and to work with us if we do not trust ourselves? How can we expect clients to undertake their personal career journeys if we have not begun our own?

Thus, a part of our professionalism is the continuing empowerment of ourselves as practitioners as we become increasingly able to do our work, congruent in our work, and confident of our abilities. When we become empowered, we become more self-accepting of our deeper selves. We gain courage to act in ways that are more spontaneous and more reflective of who we are, with less concern about being laughed at or disapproved. We become increasingly able to recognize and act out of our personal strengths, rather than out of fear (Maslow, 1968).

To what end is our empowerment as practitioners aimed? One of the reasons we aim to empower ourselves is so that we are increasingly able to help our clients empower themselves. In Robert's words:

> *Our goal is "to render ourselves redundant" -- that is we want to teach our clients the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that they need to experience their empowerment.*

The Relation Between Empowerment and a Systemic Perspective

Our empowerment, and the empowerment of those we work with, is in part shaped by the external forces we encounter. The systemic dimension places individuals and groups within a context, for example, women in a society dominated by men (Wartenberg, 1988); social assistance recipients in relation to large institutions (Parsons, 1991). As professionals, we are shaped by the systems in which we have grown up and the systems in which we live and work. The clients we work with are also influenced by a number of systems.

When we use a systemic view, we realize that individuals and what influences them, such as culture and society, are all part of the same system. This means that at the same time we both influence and are influenced by a dynamic reality. If one part of the system is unhealthy, it has the potential to affect everything within the system. It is not surprising that different people placed in a similar system often behave in a similar manner (Senge, 1990). It is important, therefore, to view our clients within the systems in which they live. For example, we need to address different issues if we are working with an immigrant woman who speaks very little English and is on social assistance than if we are working with a high school student who is in a financially and emotionally supportive home environment. To fail to consider the context of our clients' lives is to fail to see a system's effect on their life situation.

> *All these messages we get of what's supposed to be okay for women are constructed around a very sexist set and dysfunctional set of institutional, organizational, and societal*

practices....In terms of our psyches as women -- and I'm not saying this doesn't affect men, it affects them, too -- but what happens is that we can almost not help but internalize that there's something wrong with us because we're going against the grain, supposedly, of what's supposed to be right and normal. The fact is that the system is screwed up, the whole societal priorities are screwed up....In feminist counselling...the socio-cultural influences on women's psychological experience are really emphasized, talked about, made visible. (Joanne)

What implications, then, does a systemic perspective hold for our professionalism in working with our clients?

One of the things that I pay attention to is the relationship of the individual and the system and the culture and the interrelationships of the attitudes, the environment, which is where the ecology ideas have a certain appeal -- it's seeing the individual within the larger system and the interplay between those, always trying to maintain the flexibility in the level in which I perceive the phenomena between the intrapsychic, the inner experience, the interpersonal and the larger system -- and to treat or to view the larger system as a legitimate and important target of intervention and not just the inner, intra-psychic. (Joanne)

From a mechanistic viewpoint, if we sense dysfunctional practices, we would adopt a dualistic perspective and pit ourself against something -- society, or culture, or the other. We may feel powerless in this relationship thinking, "What can I do against such a powerful force?" In giving away our power, we may also give away responsibility for our lives. With a systemic perspective we recognize the subtle interconnectedness of the components in a system: We see the universe as a dynamic web of interrelated events. Recognition of structures and patterns allows us to target them as systems of intervention, improving our ability to change. We see that we can make interventions at many different levels, for example, we can target ourselves within the system of the components of the larger system itself. We recognize that small interventions of the right kind can have a big influence on the system, particularly over a period of time (Berry, 1988; Senge, 1990). Thus we can begin to think of change as a process, rather than as a static win-loss situation.

To me, it's a fascinating challenge to acknowledge that dimension [socio-cultural influences] and also try to at the same time work with the individual experience in a way that doesn't then just blame the system, blame the society and then say, "Well you can't do anything about it." We always have to still work with the empowerment of the individual within that. But the perspective of recognizing what is...imposed in terms of societal and social attitudes is really empowering as a perspective on the individual's experience. (Joanne)

We need to ask ourselves and teach our clients to ask, "What are the systems we are conforming to? What are the constraints of the systems? Can we find ways to grow within the systems?" We can then work to empower individuals within the systems they are in. For example, we can give high school students at risk of dropping out a variety of skills and knowledge that will help them to increase their effectiveness in their environments such as formal learning strategies, learning to access allies both inside and outside the school (such as teachers, peers, mentors, and advocates), and learning to use networks and resources to their advantage.

The outcome of empowerment includes not only increased interpersonal power of the individual, but also increased power of the group to which the individual belongs, and ultimately constructive change of the dysfunctional influences and systems (Rappaport, 1987). Part of our role as practitioners then is to work to promote change -- to ask, "Does the system itself need changed? Is it dysfunctional? Inefficient? Is it an outdated system that limits our expression of professionalism or our client's development?" It may be important, for example, to promote equity in the workplace or to develop a learning organization. It is important to reflect on how we can best accomplish this change -- from inside the system? from outside the system?

> *I think <u>not</u> raising the questions is unprofessional, so in my capacity it would be unprofessional if we didn't push the system. So within that context, some of what was being a professional was to find a way to work within it [for change]. Eventually you have to make a decision, and I made the decision that I could achieve more on the outside than on the inside.... (Ariel)*

Professionalism as Dialectic in Nature

> *For centuries Taoists have seen life as the creative synthesis of two opposing forces, yin and yang. In the Tao, all existence is created by this dynamic opposition. Recognizing this principle keeps us from falling into the false dilemma that narrows our choices to either/or, right or wrong, us or them, win or lose, all or nothing. (Dreher, 1990, p. 7)*

Researchers measure professionalism according to categories such as career commitment, organizational commitment, and job involvement (Aranya & Jacobson, 1975; Blau, 1985; Morrow, 1983; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). The higher we rate on the scale, the more commitment we are seen to show. If we reflect on the message that is portrayed through this conceptualization, we see a rather dichotomous perspective being portrayed. We have either more or less commitment and satisfaction, quantitatively indicating our professionalism.

According to the traditional belief system, if we struggle with the question of how much time to spend with our families and how much time to spend with our work, we experience less professionalism than someone who does not hold these tensions. As Joanne expressed to me in one of our conversations, this dualistic orientation has produced some dysfunctional societal practices:

> *The fact that you construe your desire to nourish your child and attend to her and your desire to express and develop yourself professionally -- the very fact that you construe those two as a conflict is a product of an oppressive system that's designed around sexist principles that it's woman's responsibility to care and nurture, and that it's men's responsibility to be professional.*
>
> *And yet, somehow with the women's movement, we come to believe that yes, it's our responsibility to be professional and to be carers and nurturers. And if we have conflict that's too bad for us and somehow we're inadequate. Yet the childcare institutions that surround us are inadequate and so contribute to our sense of guilt....The fact that we haven't found a healthy way to create a harmony around the needs to be professional -- to express ourselves professionally -- and the needs to care and nurture....Why should those two be incompatible?*

Conversations with my participants show that their lived experiences of professionalism were filled with tensions, for example between the personal and the professional, between work and leisure, between devoting energy to caring for themselves and caring for others they work with. The participants accepted tension as a part of their work experiences, and looked at the synthesis of opposing forces as a part of their professionalism and growth.

From the dialectical perspective, the importance of these tensions is in their relational and dynamic grounds (Georgoudi, 1983). These tensions are lived -- they are the processes that form the grounds of the development and transformation of each professional and the systems within which they live (Georgoudi, 1983; Howard, 1977). Within the dynamic synthesis of opposites, when we accept tension as a natural part of professionalism and recognize that from the tension comes opportunity for increased integration, we at the same time grow and lay new ground for continued growth.

The dynamic tension of professionalism can be seen as a developmental process that allows for the creation and re-creation of the self (Howard, 1977). Professionalism is a dynamic, transformative process that is continually open to new directions. We don't reach the "ideal" of professionalism. Rather, it is more that as we develop our professionalism, we also influence what professionalism can and should be. The transformation of our professionalism cannot be separated from the transformation of the social structure we are operating within.

> *The possibility for social change is intimately connected with the conceptualization of professional practice as a mode of relating within the broader network of socio-political relations. Thus, in carrying out an experiment, conducting a survey, or even writing a theoretical paper the scientist inserts him- or herself into the full schema of social relationships, and thereby transforms this scheme. (Georgoudi, 1983)*

Summary and Transition

In this chapter I suggest an alternative paradigm of professionalism to the one that is typically portrayed in the literature. The alternative paradigm of professionalism portrays an ecological, rather than natural scientific, view. It promotes a holistic, rather than rational, approach to professionalism that suggests practitioners will be more competent and effective when they acknowledge the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual parts of both themselves and others they work. From this viewpoint, professionalism is seen as respect for the spirit of oneself and others: Thoughts and actions are aimed toward promoting dignity and supporting the unique developmental potential of individuals. The concept of "respect for the spirit" is one of the main guiding principles of this view of professionalism. For example, if practitioners respect themselves and others, they will want to be competent in their work in order to effect change; they will want to consult with clients so that the programs and products they design are appropriate; they will want to work at something that is meaningful that aligns with, rather than compromises, their values.

Many of the traditional approaches to professionalism focus predominately on practitioner attitudes. The nature of the interaction between the practitioner and the other, and a recognition of life/work contexts is often overlooked in these models. The ecological paradigm to professionalism assumes a systemic perspective. Professionalism cannot be separated from those practitioners work with or the systems practitioners and clients find themselves within. A

systemic perspective acknowledges the complexity of the dimensions of professionalism, and provides a conceptual means of organizing and addressing these dimensions. Additionally, a systemic orientation portrays the possibilities for a "flatter," less hierarchical organizational structure that positively affects working practices by giving greater access to decision making.

Empowerment is another important concept in the alternative paradigm of professionalism. In the traditional approaches to professionalism, practitioners aim to have power over their clients, in part to maintain a monopoly on services and to increase practitioner autonomy, so that they are able to exercise professional judgement free from client influence. The alternative paradigm of professionalism suggests that it is more important to *empower* practitioners, others, and systems rather than have *power over* the other and the system. Empowerment occurs, in part, when practitioners and/or clients: increase their knowledge and skills; develop an understanding of the systems they are in; and develop strategies to empower themselves within the current system or to change the system.

The final conceptual characteristic of the alternative paradigm to professionalism is its dialectic nature. Professionalism is usually measured quantitatively, with the assumption that "more is better." From this orientation one assumes, for example, that the more autonomy practitioners hold, the more professionalism they hold. The alternative paradigm suggests, however, that autonomy can be lived as a tension. For example, if practitioners have unlimited autonomy, the needs and wants of the other may be overlooked. If practitioners have too little autonomy, they may not be able to effectively exercise professional judgment. And so, they may feel pulled between the two. The dialectic nature of professionalism suggests that these tensions need not be diametrically opposed, but that they can result in integration and transformation: Practitioners may, for example, find that their attentiveness to clients' needs changes the types of services and interventions they deliver.

The reader should keep the above paradigm in mind while reading the next two chapters, which focus on professionalism and the practitioner, and professionalism as the practitioner engages with others and the field.

CHAPTER 5
FOCUS: THE PRACTITIONER

Through my immersion with the data and conversations with the research participants, it became clear to me that professionalism is relational in nature; that is it involves the practitioner in relation to an other or to the field. In this chapter I focuses on the dimension of the practitioner through an exploration of the following themes: (a) the calling, including the call to learning and the call to inner growth; (b) the developmental nature of professionalism, including the interrelatedness of the personal and the professional, as well as key influences in the development of professionalism; (c) embodiment; (d) engagement; and (e) setting limits. I discuss the dimension of the other and the field in Chapter 6.

The Calling

> *In our time, a secret manifesto is being written....the longing to know our authentic vocation in the world, to find the work and the way that belong uniquely to each of us. (Roszak, 1979, p. 3)*

To experience professionalism is to experience a calling. A calling is intentional in nature; that is, we are called toward something. We say we are "called" to action, we are "drawn" to a cause, we are orientated to a vocation.

The word vocation alludes to the fullness of the possibilities of "the calling." "Voca" originally meant to be drawn or called to a religious order (Oxford English Dictionary). If we extend the notion of religion to mean spirituality, we perhaps come closer to a deeper understanding of the nature of the calling. From this perspective, the calling is being drawn toward an honouring of our spirit in a tension of respecting "the spirit of the self" and "the spirit of the other."

How is the calling experienced? The calling may be apparent to us in our lives from an early point in time, growing in clarity through our reflections, through our experiences, and through feedback from others. Joanne describes how, at age fourteen, a friend forecast, *"You will be Madame Gattuso,"* intimating that she would be like a fortune teller, or someone who psychoanalyzes people with their problems. Although this was done in jest, Joanne remembers thinking, *"That's interesting, I bet that's right... that's close to what I'm going to end up doing."* As it turns out, her friend's prediction was accurate.

The calling we experience may be apparent to us as a central life mission -- we want to help, we want to teach, we want to create. And yet, to live our calling requires expression within a situation: We direct our calling toward a context to bring it to life. We say, "I want to be a teacher" or "I want to be a counsellor."

The experience of coming to know our calling and to find an expression for it is often lived as tension, as having to choose between one set of interests over another, of having to choose between one occupation and another. For Jason, this initially meant choosing between the seminary and teaching. The process of deciding required reflection, sorting through values, and deciding on lifestyle priorities -- but in the end it was clear. *"When I rode around the tractor that summer, it was truly a calling toward teaching."*

Sometimes the choice does not seem clear and the dichotomy of our choices may seem large. As Joanne's experience indicates, however, the dichotomy may lessen as we are able to more fully integrate into our lives what initially seems like two quite separate choices.

> *The counselling was an early kind of interest or a fit with my temperament. But it was always the creativity or the creative expression of the counselling....Those two were in tension because I thought if I was going to go in one career direction or another that they were going to somehow be mutually exclusive....I've continued to wrestle with those themes. But I feel like I've resolved them fairly well in that I manage to integrate both in my work [illegible]anning to increasingly develop that.*

The calling is not always [illegible] in our consciousness. It may subtly envelop us, seduce us, entice us. It may be [illegible]ve are captivated that we recognize the passion we hold for a cause. Our mis[illegible]sts may arise as we become immersed in our life contexts. For Robert, there was no [illegible] incident, no intentional reflection or premeditated decision where he said, "This is what I want to do." Yet there was an obvious transition from his first work in the area to a complete and utter commitment to both the organization he works with and the field of career development.

> *About two years ago Michael asked me, "When did you commit heart and soul?" And I said, "I don't know. It was months, ago I know that, but I know it was never conscious and I couldn't tell you the time."*

And so the expression of professionalism as the calling is dynamic -- it evolves as we decide what we want to do, as we live what we want to do, as we discover what we want to do, as we create and refine what we want to do. We may express our professionalism in diverse work roles, job, or occupations throughout our work life. Whatever variations exist in being called to our work, believing in and being passionate about it seems to be important to our emotional sustenance and profoundly influences our professionalism.

> *In order to sustain ourselves in the front lines, I think we really have to tap into something that truly nurtures us....There is a deeper need to be in touch with what could be called the archetype of the Self. In order to have a sense that at some really deep level this is sacred work, we need to feel the empowerment of the archetype itself as we do the work. (Bolen, 1991, p. 25)*

What is implicit in the calling? What is it that we are called toward? The calling arises both from within ourselves and from outside of ourselves. In being drawn toward an occupation, a project, or a cause we are being called by something outside of ourselves -- by an other we want to help, by a system we want to change. We are also called toward our personhood: We are drawn toward growth, toward challenge, toward expression of our values and beliefs, and toward generativity and the desire to contribute. Purposeful work creates meaning in our lives and a sense of self-satisfaction. To ignore our personhood in the calling is to deny our Self.

Instead of asking us to deny ourselves, professionalism encourages us to be ourselves more fully. Being drawn to a calling involves listening and responding to ourselves in an evolving process of self-discovery. When we say "to thine own self be true," we are called to

honour the unfolding of the self that is essentially ours in a continuing process of coming to answer the question, "What do I *like* to do?" For when our work becomes a way of self-expression we become "spirited," we transmit our enthusiasm to those around us.

In her humorous way, Ariel reflects, *"Can you imagine 'true professionals' being bored? Using a lifeless and monotone voice to say to a waiting client, 'Please take your place in the corner'?"* Instead, when we are working at something we enjoy we are, as Robert depicts, *"filled with passion, excitement, commitment, energy, interest, intensity, whatever you want to call that....we're into our work."*

What are the implications of being energized about our work? Consider for a moment what can be called "grunt" and "flair" (Redekopp & Day, 1989). Flair is the exciting part of our work. It may be coming up with an exciting idea for a project, deciding the best graphic design for a marketing product, and so on. Grunt is the detailed and usually less exciting work that we engage in, such as making endless telephone calls to organize a focus group, formatting our proposals, writing up our case notes. Yet, grunt is necessary to support the flair and bring our creations to life.

Consider, too, the daily challenges that we may face in our work. We may have an angry client who has just been laid off work; we may be struggling to find the appropriate workshop design to encourage youth at risk of dropping out of school to take responsibility for their learning. How do we generate the motivation and self-discipline to complete the grunt in our work? to face the difficult challenges we encounter?

There has to be something about our work that motivates us to want to do it. Let us consider the interrelatedness of difficulty, meaningfulness, and inspiration. When we see something as meaningful, as having purpose, as being worthwhile, we are inspired, there is "an energizing of life" (Walker, 1988). We gain the energy and the momentum that we need to face our challenges, to pay attention to the details that support our work, to encourage us to work with excellence. And despite the messages we are sometimes given -- *"Some people think it's very, very serious being professional" (Ariel)* -- we can even enjoy our work and have fun.

In contrast, when we are trapped in meaningless work, each day presents drudgery, a day to be "gotten through." When we lose meaning for our work, we "lose heart": We burn out and lose our passionate flame, we expire and lose our vitality for life (Walker, 1988). That enjoyment of our work is important to our well-being is portrayed in Palmer's research that shows this job-satisfaction to be a better indicator of longevity than physicians' ratings, use of tobacco, or genetic inheritance (cited in Herr and Cramer, 1988). Instead of personal satisfaction there is a dis-satisfaction, and we become "de-spirited" so to speak. We may find we are coming in a bit later to work, taking a few more sick days, and working to less than our capabilities, saying things like, "This will do."

We might ask, "Is it possible to dislike our work yet maintain a professional attitude?" Think of a nurse going to work everyday and disliking the hierarchical system within which s/he works; of being tired of working with people; of waiting impatiently for each shift to end. Can s/he not act in a "professional" way, being polite to patients and co-workers; accurately giving medications and conscientiously filling in charts?

We may answer with a tentative, "yes," but perhaps there is a difference between "acting" as a professional and "being" a professional. We might wonder how much extra attention the nurse gives to his or her patients, how much dissatisfaction is portrayed through the voice or an abruptness of actions. Of course no professional is filled with passion for his or her work each moment, and there may be times when "acting" may be necessary, but for the fullest expression of professionalism, we need to respect our personhood -- our personal spirit.

> *...All work is empty save when there is love;*
> *And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God.*
>
> *And what is it to work with love?*
> *It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth.*
> *It is to build a house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.*
> *It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.*
> *It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit....*
>
> *Work is love made visible.*
> *And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.*
> *For if you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds but half man's hunger.*
> *And if you grudge the crushing of the grapes, your grudge distils a poison in the wine.*
> *And if you sing though as angels, and love not the singing, you muffle man's ears to the voices of the day and the voices of the night. (Gibran, 1984, pp. 27-28)*

The Call to Learning

When we work with love, when we care about our work, we become motivated to "do it well"; we are called toward learning. What does this mean? The use of the word "professional" as we often use it suggests a number of images. For example, we have the professional as knowledgeable, we have the professional as expert. Yet, rarely do we portray the professional as quester, the professional as questioner. There is a critical difference between the two set of images, however, that is worthy of reflection. The first set of images reflect a relatively static perspective of holding expertise, as having knowledge. The second set of images portray a process, an active dimension of movement and growth that is initiated by the professional.

This questioning attitude was central to the professionalism of the research participants who described their continuing need to learn, to hone their skills, and to increase their effectiveness as practitioners. It is an attitude that says, "I am a student, I am a learner, I am an explorer" (C. Lewis, personal communication, February, 1993). Compare this orientation to someone who loses interest in learning, opting to "rest on their laurels" instead. To rest is to be still, to cease or abstain from (Oxford Concise Dictionary).

If you're not growing, it's pretty unlikely you're displaying professionalism....The world's just changing too fast. (Robert)

In the case of professionalism we must ask, "What has ceased here?" It is not the world, for as Robert spoke of, the world is continually changing. Our clients and the systems within which they live are in flux. What has stopped is our movement toward learning and our willingness to keep pace with the world. We may be tired of working hard, or we may believe that we are at such a level of expertise that we no longer need to learn. Whatever our reasoning, our skills soon become outdated and we become out of touch with the field. Professionalism requires, then, that we stay attuned to the world and acquire the skills, knowledge, values and beliefs, as well as the confidence necessary to implement our professional intentions.

Professionalism involves empowering ourselves to be more effective in our work. What must we learn to empower ourselves, to increase our personal power? Few would disagree that professionals should hold the skills and knowledge necessary to perform effectively in their field. And so certification exams are often required to ensure this minimal knowledge is attained. But is this all we must do? Once the exams are written, there is the daily reality of maintaining our skills, honing our skills, learning new skills, and applying our skills to new situations.

Robert speaks of this as entrenching his skills and knowledge so that they become embodied. He talks of the continuity of his work as contributing to his professionalism. *"Daily I'm doing something that's engraining my skills and my confidence."*

What are the implications for professionalism? Professionalism requires of us to "be able" -- to have the means to act effectively with our clients and with the systems in which we work. When we work we say, "What effect will that have?" meaning "What difference will we make?" We speak of having a powerful effect and begin to see the relationship between power and our actions. To be able to make a difference requires that we must first answer, "What needs to be done here?" It follows that we then must ask, "What skills, knowledge, and attitudes do we need to accomplish our intentions?"

Moving into Incompetence or Learning New Things

We must recognize that when we are called to learning, we are called to that which is new -- to entering that which is unknown to us. We are challenged to move beyond our competence, to break new ground, and to extend previous limits, either in our learning or in finding ways to change and improve present practices or systems.

Because I am always doing new things, I would argue that I'm always on the verge of incompetence, but I also have developed a pretty good sense of what I can pull off. I know that failure is really unlikely. (Robert)

So the question becomes, "How can we enter our incompetence to attain new levels of mastery in ways that uphold our professionalism?"

Initially being seen to do a professional job is key to my feeling professional ...It's

really the truth of that model....In that transition time when you're just learning the skills, the feedback is really key to what you notice, to what you pay attention to. From the feedback and from being seen in those ways, standards and values and so on become more precise and more differentiated....[You develop] standards of excellence. They're not clear in the beginning, or they're idealized...and then they get a little bit more differentiated and more grounded in the real world. But it's through feedback to me that a lot of that evolves from respected others. And then, over time, self-satisfaction of how I'm doing is as important as other people's feedback. Although it's still important to me to get feedback from people that I respect, my sense of professionalism isn't as dependent on that. (Joanne)

Coming to know our strengths and weaknesses can be facilitated through feedback from others. In our work sites, the feedback that we receive may come from an authority, a person who holds a greater degree of power. We have supervisory reports, we have performance appraisals. But the feedback will only hold weight if we respect it and perceive it to be of value. Feedback is more likely to be valued when it is given by others who base their comments on solid knowledge and experience, and who understand our working situations. When others who are less informed critique us, we may give less weight to their feedback. So the person that we receive our feedback from must be a "true" authority; that is, a person whose opinion we accept (Oxford Concise Dictionary).

We can empower ourselves within the situation when we ask for feedback from respected others, self-initiating the creation of our learning experiences. But think for a moment of what this process involves. When we ask for feedback, we are asking that another reflect information to us. To receive feedback, we must be open and receptive to what is fed back to us.

And so, in asking for feedback, we place ourselves in a vulnerable position. We must position ourselves to become open-minded and receptive to what the giver of feedback is saying. To open ourselves to what another has to say takes courage and requires a certain confidence of ourselves. It requires us to have the courage to recognize and admit when our beliefs may be wrong or our actions ineffective, and to be open to suggestions. If we live in fear of criticism, we will find a need to shield ourselves and protect the vulnerable parts of ourselves. We will fail to move into the learning moments that empower us by transforming our incompetence into competence.

Although we may initially seek feedback from respected others, it is also important to first determine for ourselves what we need to learn and then set personal learning goals. Ultimately, we must be responsible for our own learning.

You have to be pretty self-analytical about what you're doing, why you're doing it. You take responsibility, you're accountable, you use judgement, those types of things. (Ariel)

In other words, through self-analysis and reflection on feedback from others, we must eventually become *our own authority* of when and what we need to learn.

Learning to Believe in and Accept Ourselves

Our ability to learn and to act with competence is related to the views we hold of ourselves, the way we feel about ourselves, the internal monologue that we hold with ourselves. As the research participants described, confidence and skill development are interrelated. In a spiralling manner, confidence allows us to be more effective in our work. When we are more effective in our work, we gain more confidence. When we are more confident, it is easier to ask for and accept feedback in our call toward learning.

Aligned with confidence is the inner monologue that we hold with ourselves. When we lack confidence in ourselves, our inner monologue may be critical. We may undermine and disclaim ourselves, like Joanne's co-worker did, by saying things like, *"How stupid of me!"* or *"How could I have done that?"* We may feel weak, incompetent, and helpless. We sabotage our professionalism. We immobilize ourselves.

In contrast, as we learn to be more self-accepting, the messages that we give ourselves change. We tend to become more nurturing and caring of ourselves. We reframe mistakes to be opportunities for learning. As our self-respect and self-acceptance flourish, our personal power develops. Joanne suggests that part of the growth of her professionalism is the permission she gave herself to not be perfect and to be much gentler with herself.

The Call to Inner Growth

> *[It is that] bravely inquisitive search into that most solitary, unique, and inward moment where our identity finds its decisive punctuation. (Roszak, 1979, p. 8)*

Although honing our skills as practitioners is essential, reflection from a holistic perspective reminds us that there is more to learning than acquiring basic knowledge. Intertwined with our formal training, with our learning from feedback, with our learning from self-analysis is the "inner" learning that occurs. Since each professional is unique, each must create his or her own learning path, responding to "the interior and exterior forces that enter individual life" (Berry, 1988, p. 134). The essence of this path involves "interior articulation"; that is, it seems essential to "know ourselves." This type of learning is often much more difficult than attaining skills and knowledge, but what could be more critical in terms of our empowerment as professionals?

> *Obviously you can't be professional without competence, but I would think it might be the easiest one to acquire because the bench marks are very clearly set for you. Whereas, what is integrity? or what is taking responsibility? (Ariel)*

The type of learning that professionals need to engage in to answer such questions is a deeply personal one. It is related to the growth of the psyche, which means "soul" or "butterfly" in Greek (Bolen, 1991). This type of learning is really about soul growth that allows for empowerment as personal transformation. It may involve "soul searching" to clarify values and beliefs.

As practitioners, we are called to explore our personal values and beliefs. For example, how can a teacher teach if s/he has never considered what teaching is? or how

different kids learn? How can a career development practitioner practice if s/he has never considered what a career is? how its development can best be facilitated?

As practitioners, we need to explore the visions and ecology of the organizations or other settings where we work. For example, what is the ecology of the school? How do those involved propose to deal with drop outs? Do they try to control and mould the students? Are they responsive to the students' needs? If we work in social services, what are the organizational policies as they relate to the [illegible]s? What types of programs are made available to clients?

As practitioners, we need to explore our motivation within the organization. For example, What is our purpose in being there? Are we in government work because we are interested in contributing to the public good? or because they have good benefits? Are we in teaching because we value learning? value students? How do our answers to these affect our work? our interactions with those we work with?

We need to decide what we do when we work within a system and the personal side can't fit the organizational side, for example, when we feel like the work doesn't match our values, or compromises us or others in some way. What do we do when we work within the system and feel that the policies are wrong? Ariel suggests, *"We may have to decide what we mean by wrong. Are they just not very good and we feel we have the possibility to influence them or do they, for example, actually put children at visible risk?"* We may need to decide if and when it is okay for organizational issues and needs to supersede our own. We may have to decide either to fight within the system or to remove ourselves from the system because professionally we may not want to be associated with it.

> *As a professional I have to look beyond my role to what effect it would have on the system....So for me to decide that I would train people to clear cut forests would be a very ethically-oriented decision. I would have to look beyond training to the impact it would have, rather than say that's my job, I'll do it. There's certain areas I would not apply my skills because I would not buy into the end result I would have to declare myself. (Ariel)*

What is the process of our soul searching? the process that allows us to integrate the personal and the professional? the process whereby we decide our directions for growth? the process where we internalize our professional code of conduct?

Research participants responded that reflectiveness in our work is vital. For example, as Joanne indicates, *"If I wasn't a reflective person, I could not be the professional person that I am."* So we engage in our work, but we must also reflect -- on our effectiveness, of what we do and how we do it, whether our work supports our values, whether we are being respectful of the spirit of ourselves and of others, and of directions for future interventions in our work. The process is also a creative endeavour. That is, rather than assuming rules, we create internal rules; we develop a sense of knowing what work we can do, how far we can go in a training organization that can't meet our values.

This integrated learning does not take place in a linear fashion. Rather, it is a subtle evolution; we enter plateaus, we consolidate, we rest, we withdraw from our cause, and we re-

enter our cause. Through our journeys we synthesize and make meaning of our experiences. We become clearer as to what's important to us, we develop our character, we develop the values and beliefs that influence our actions toward others. Through this thought-fullness we synthesize and make meaning of our experiences. We create our narratives and perspectives on the world. (See Schon, 1983 for a thorough discussion on reflectiveness and the practitioner.)

There is, therefore, a strong connection between our professionalism and being real, being congruent in our work situations. In both our personal and professional lives, we may find ourselves in situations where we are "in the minority," particularly when we recognize and challenge what we see to be dysfunctional systems. Sometimes being who we are requires that we have the courage to function from different ways of thinking and acting than those that others conventionally accept. When we fail to conform, we may face difficult situations that we may not otherwise have to. For example, when we work to increase social tolerance toward sexuality issues, when we propose holistic versus lock-step, linear approaches to career development, or other practices that are not the status quo we may meet with resistance.

Empowering ourselves, the systems in which we work, and the systems in which our clients live depends on commitment and courage. It takes courage to remain open minded, to think for ourselves, to make inner decisions, to follow our paths with heart. It takes a willingness to dare to take risks, to be true to ourselves and to others, to free ourselves from "the tyranny of custom and authority" (Dreher, 1990, p. 84) in order to expand the boundaries of attitudes. Yet, as Joanne portrays, when you accept the challenge, *"You have a certain kind of good feeling about being true to yourself."* At times, we may have to develop certain coping strategies that go along with daring to be different, marching to a different tune. *"Each step along the way we make choices, weighing the risks and deciding what's right." (Joanne)* The learning that we undertake in our journeys of professionalism becomes an integrated part of who we are as persons, as practitioners. We are our learning.

Professionalism as Developmental

In the section entitled *The Calling* I discussed the importance of "passion" to professionalism, as well as the importance of entering into learning experiences, including experiences that facilitate our inner growth. In this section I discuss the developmental nature of professionalism. In doing so it is important to ask questions such as: "What are the roots of our professionalism?" "How does it develop?" During the research interviews I became cognizant that the development of our professionalism is placed within the context of our personal journeys, with their accompanying twists and turns, with both their nourishing moments and struggles. Professionalism is seeded in our childhood and remains ever present in our lives. Our life experiences influence us as we become who we are, understand who we are, and get better at being who we are. Like a ripening bouquet of wine, professionalism has the potential to find fuller expression in our work as we mature and come to a heightened understanding of ourselves and the world.

Key Influences in the Development of Professionalism

The stories of the research participants tell us that in our development of professionalism, we are influenced by key people who play many roles including teachers, role

models, and mentors. This essential theme is also recognized by many writers (W. A. Gray, 1989; Kram, 1987; Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1976). Key persons are often sources of inspiration, embodying our aspirations. Described as one of his quintessential role models, Robert was drawn to Maslow who would put forth his thoughts with no conclusions, no clear formulations:

> *That's one of the things I liked about Maslow. He'd start a lot of his writings and talks with, "I haven't really thought this through, but this is so important, the world just has to know."*

What is the influence of this role model on Robert's professionalism? In parallel fashion, Robert puts forth his "thoughts in process" at conferences, in papers, in conversations -- in the hope that others will build upon and use his thoughts to enhance the field.

Jason talks of the teachers and counsellors in the college he attended as being strong influences in his later work. He reflects on how much he learned about guidance and counselling from these salient models, such as learning how to accept and deal with people. Ariel talks of the influence on her professionalism of one of her first jobs. She worked within an egalitarian organization where the people were extremely competent at what they did, and integrity guided their work. Joanne describes the importance of having had several mentors who were important and influential, had qualities she admired, she was enthusiastic about working with, and from whom she learned a great deal.

Aligning ourselves with models can be a creative endeavour, where we choose others who complement or enhance our abilities to create a learning situation. I recall asking a person whose skills I held in esteem to co-teach a counselling course with me. We used to joke about how well we complemented each other. She was "structure" and I was "process." It was a wonderful learning experience.

Just as *we may value key persons* and aspire to their qualities, *others may value us* and aspire to nurture our qualities. These others call to us, sometimes at a very early age -- to be all that we can be -- by nurturing and supporting us in our journey of professionalism. There may be the experience of being chosen, of being singled out as creative, competent, intelligent, or having important contributions to make. In Joanne's words:

> *I remember grade nine being a key time. There were two teachers I had: One was my art teacher; one was my drama teacher. Both very creative individuals. Both eccentric. But they each singled me out as having important contributions to make....So those experiences were really important -- it was at that time that I began to value creative expression...and learned that creativity was important to my feeling good about the kinds of activities that I was involved in. It began to crystallize as an important theme, and it remains a central theme [about professionalism].*

In being singled out by a key person, we are recognized for our potential: We are confirmed, validated, and acknowledged. Joanne describes writing a university paper on the subject, What is the self? She ended up getting an A+ on the paper and affirmative feedback on the excellence of her work. She describes the influence of this feedback. *"I was thrilled. I was so motivated and stimulated intellectually by the course...."*

When we are fully acknowledged by the other, we are accepted unconditionally; we are free to express our hopes as well as our fears; we are supported to develop toward our goals. As Robert expressed, *"There's the whole idea that I'm not being judged -- that if I don't pull through, I'm still okay."*

Sometimes, we may feel uncertain about the attentiveness from the other. We may wonder whose goals are being supported, for example, if we are being pushed toward something we have little desire to do. Or, we may experience confusion when we are uncertain about the intention of the other's actions. Ariel describes her experience with a mentor as initially being one of discomfort, wondering for example, *"Why am I being taken to all these meetings?"* For a while she felt like an "entity," just being at meetings without having the necessary skills to contribute. It was only after she realized that the purpose of her attendance at meetings was *"to learn through modelling and absorption"* that she felt it was okay -- and even desirable -- for her to attend and not have to do anything but listen and observe. In this case, communication of the intention by the mentor would have been valued.

Our development toward professionalism, thus, relies on our response-ability, that is our ability to move into the situation, dependent in part on the felt "rightness" of presenting developmental opportunities (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). In addition to the appropriateness of the situation, a certain orientation is necessary to be able to respond to others. Our development is a blend of choice and chance. Opportunities for growth may present themselves to us, or we may take the initiative and create opportunities. If we fear these opportunities, we may remain isolated and keep ourselves hidden, limiting our growth. Optimizing opportunities requires a certain curiosity, an understanding that we are being given the opportunity to learn, a readiness to respond to our calling, and the confidence to risk within the sheltered environment being offered to us. As Robert indicates:

> *Michael, my mentor, somehow always knows what my developmental needs are. He knows what I can take on and in what sequences, and he always pushes me to the edge. But he is always there as a backup, which is probably what allows me to be confident. Project X is a good example. I tried to back out of Project X at least six times. And he'd say, "Do this. We'll get through it."*

With a supportive mentor as teacher and encourager, the safety net is cast -- there is the notion that we are not in this alone. A part of the safety that we experience is that of emotional nurturance: We are supported by our mentor. To support means to keep from falling or sinking, and to encourage and give strength to (Oxford Concise Dictionary). We are given the opportunity to go further than we could on our own -- the opportunity to enhance our professional identity and increasingly develop our effectiveness. As Ariel articulates,

> *Most of my expression of professionalism comes from learning from models. From them I learned how to act diplomatically in situations, how to engage an audience in an effective presentation, how to diffuse a situation -- all the nuances that can't be gained from reading technical materials.*

The Personal and the Professional

According to the research participants, the development of their professionalism

involves acknowledging the influence of both the personal and the professional in their work. It is an ongoing tension for them to determine how much and when to let the boundaries of the personal and the professional diffuse.

"Traditionally, organizations think the minute you walk in the door you become someone else than when you were in the parking lot." (Ariel) It is important to reflect on such assumptions, to ask the questions, "Is it desirable to keep our work life separate from our home life? our professional life separate from our personal life?" Congruent with the ecological nature of professionalism, Ariel suggests that perhaps a dynamic tension, rather than a dichotomous distinction, exists between the personal and the professional.

Randy is a massage therapist and instructor. He used to let his students call him at home. He found that, despite his requests to students to be respectful of his time, they often called at inappropriate hours, such as early in the morning or after midnight. He no longer gives students his home phone number as he feels that his home needs to be his sanctuary, the place where he can renew himself.

Ariel found it disturbing within an organization that she worked for that people couldn't disassociate the ideas or the work from the person. So if someone were to recommend something that the others didn't like, they didn't like the *person* that recommended it. In her words, *"There was the idea that somehow you align yourself according to your personal likes and dislikes."* Ariel suggests another perspective where ideas are judged on their worth in and of themselves -- the worth of the ideas are kept separate from the person promoting the idea.

Joanne talks of the importance of learning not to personalize. She speaks of having had a couple of painful experiences where people were very negative to her: They felt they had been wronged by the organization and attacked her for things that weren't really about her. In internalizing their expressed frustration, she became less effective, less professional than she would have liked to be. *"It's tricky, because the relational themes are important, yet distinguishing between a personal relationship and a professional relationship is sometimes really, really important."*

Joanne also talks of the challenge of balancing friendship and mentoring while in a training relationship: She felt very close to several mentors, but aimed to maintain enough distance to sustain a constructive training relationship.

Thus, in some ways we do aim to separate the personal and the professional. We learn to create and maintain the boundaries that we need to be able to honour ourselves and others, and to conduct ourselves with integrity. We remove ourselves from our work to rest; we may disassociate ideas from the people delivering them; we script our work lives differently from our home lives; we may speak and act in different ways and with different intentions with our friends and family members than we do with our colleagues and clients.

And yet we must ask, "Do the personal and the professional not also overlap? Can we really say that our personal life does not influence our professional life?" In a dialectical manner, the development in our personal lives affects the development in our work lives; the development in our work lives affects the development in our personal lives. Professionalism

is influenced by our friends, our lovers, our personal issues, and our life situations -- in what may at first seem like unrelated incidents.

When I reflect upon my own life experiences I recognize, for example, that my experiences as a youth in what I saw to be dysfunctional authoritative school systems relate to my current interests in creating products for youth that aim to empower their learning both in and out of school. My experiences as a mother also bring a sense of urgency to my work. I hold the hope that what I create will one day be useful for my own daughter.

Ariel describes the birthing experiences of her child as one where nurses were telling her she *"couldn't be in that stage of labour because it usually doesn't happen this way."* This event underscored for Ariel the importance of attending to and serving clients by seeing each situation as new, the importance of responding to the uniqueness of each situation, rather than responding to others with a prescribed set of ideals.

Joanne describes an interaction she had with her friend's psychoanalyst. One day her friend's therapist asked to see her. She went, thinking (naively, as she phrased it) that it was so he could get her perspectives on her friend's life. As it turned out, this was not the therapist's intent; he wanted to talk about *her*, basically to recruit her as a client (though he did not use those words). He asked her to talk about her life and where she was at. His view was that her life problems were underlying, self-defeating unconscious dynamics that, if she didn't receive his help, would not only plague her for the rest of her life, but get worse. The therapist suggested that she would never have a satisfying relationship and that she wouldn't be able to "get it together" to find a job. She was shocked at the level of "alarm" he expressed, and was indignant and insulted about his comment about her not being able to get a job. (She got a job two weeks later.)

This interaction with the therapist was important to Joanne. Because she experienced what she now sees as unethical practice, it made a permanent imprint in relation to her operating in a professionally ethical way. *"What he did, in so many ways, put him into an expert role and me in a disempowered role."* As Joanne was exposed to more experiential methods of learning, she got excited about the power of those -- the empowerment of them. She became clear in her mind of how she wanted to engage in her work. *"I wanted to work with clients in ways that empowered them, that gave them choices, that reinforced their strengths, rather than my strengths -- or both presumably."* From this and other life experiences, such as the ideas presented in a university course on feminist counselling, Joanne was able to develop projects that both embodied her feminist values and reflected on the use and abuse of power in the counselling relationship.

The research participants' experiences remind us it is important to recognize that negative experiences often provide the impetus for our professional direction and ways of working. For this to happen, though, we must be able to go beyond the felt negativity, frustration, or outrage we might have initially felt in order to be able to work with compassionate action. "Outrage may begin it [changing the world]; but somewhere along the lines, if the shift can be made to sustain that forward movement through the spiritual dimension, it will be greatly enriched" (Bolen, 1991, p. 25). Righting what we see to be the wrongs by finding ways of creating and engaging in projects that let us influence the world provides a sense of continuation and satisfaction.

Setting Limits

Setting limits is one of the tensions of professionalism: As our professionalism increases, our services are often more in demand. It becomes increasingly difficult to take the time to develop ourselves professionally and to nurture ourselves; that is, our "work life" may be compromised and it may also interfere with our "personal life."

> *It's interesting if you look at Michael, who is quite clearly the best in this country. Precisely because of this he has difficulty finding time to write a book, a paper -- he's overcommitted. It's very much a double bind. I understand that. You don't want to say, "No," to requests for your services on projects because they may not get done or get done poorly. Yet, you know that if you accept them you may not have the time to do them well.*

It is an interesting dilemma, because part of our professionalism is the passion that we hold for our cause. Yet, it is precisely this passion that leads to over commitment, to not having enough time to keep up to developments in the field, and to the physical effects of overwork.

Part of our development in learning to set limits is to recognize that we are not going to singlehandedly solve the world's problems. Through self-knowledge, we can decide what our talents are and how they can most effectively be used for the greatest influence over both the short and long term. We must also realize that we cannot do *everything* to our fullest potential of excellence, and that not everything requires this level of perfection.

> *I want to do everything excellently....Yet I realize that it's in my energy balance that I can't do everything to that level, and not everything deserves that level. It's a constant struggle. (Joanne)*

> *It's one of the tensions of professionalism. You need to be thorough to be competent. But you must also understand the pressure and the time requirements of the place that you work. You have to make a judgement call as to when you can competently do something in the time that's been given. Government is often criticized because it takes too long, and I would suggest that a lot of time is taken up in unnecessary meetings that don't really add to the value of the project. Since I've left government, my efficiency has at least doubled. (Ariel)*

Though the message is not new, the research participants' stories tell us that part of setting limits is learning to take care of ourselves, to nourish ourselves. Many of us seem to learn the hard way to slow down. Failing to do so we may face relationship issues, illness, and lack of work effectiveness.

> *With excessive haste we loose our balance and life becomes a dizzy blur. By slowing down, we can recognize life's rhythms and return to harmony. (Dreher, 1990, p. 111)*

Learning to take care of ourselves is a personal journey. Each research participant took a different route. Yet, each spoke of the need to understand themselves and their needs, to come to a position where they valued themselves enough to set limits and make a

commitment to take care of themselves. Acting on this commitment requires that we declare our limits to ourselves and/or to those we work with. As Jason describes:

> *You can do a lot with your work, but you can't be consumed....It put quite a stress in our marriage the first few months deciding just how much time would be for home and how much time would be for work....For example, the person I was working with would say something like we have a meeting in Edmonton. Be ready to leave later today after work....He'd go on night time and come back very early in the morning....This issue had to be addressed....I think that's part of being professional. I'll put up with a lot, but when I say something I want it to count.*

Thus, part of taking care of ourselves is being able to address the issues and reconstruct the work situations that are barriers to our professionalism. Additionally, as Ariel says, we must recognize that the portrait of professionalism we are creating here is one of a person "destined for sainthood." In reality, we will have concerns about our work, things that we both like and dislike about it. Being able to "vent" in frustrating times is important to the maintenance of our well-being. Our professionalism lies in knowing where to vent and who you can vent to. Ariel cites the example of an organization in which she was working where a person with a prominent position had quite a temper. *"Every now and then he would 'go over' one of his senior managers in a room full of people. I thought, 'This isn't appropriate.'"* Thus, in addressing our issues we need to consider the effect we will have on ourselves, the others we work with, and the system we work within. Addressing issues in an appropriate manner has the potential to positively influence ourselves, others, and the system.

Embodiment

Through our learning experiences and the course of our development our competence and experience of professionalism grows. Our skills, knowledge, attitudes, and appropriate ways of acting in a variety of situations become "second nature," a part of us. Participants indicate that the embodiment that comes with their increasing competence is important to their professionalism. We can gain an understanding of the meaning of embodiment through the use of negative examples. During the interviews the research participants recounted moments when they had felt *unprofessional.* Both Joanne's and Robert's experiences in this realm centred around moments when they had failed to embody the ways of being they needed to be effective in a situation.

> *Once when I was a university student, I had a presentation to do. I prepared the paper that I was to submit, but I hadn't really worked through how I could present it. So I thought, "I'll just read these parts of what I wrote....Within about a minute I realized that I didn't want to be reading what I had written....I started getting really choked up and it was like I was almost paralysed from talking....But I learned powerful things from that...to do with my own functioning....If I didn't feel right and comfortable doing what I was doing...I would be nervous, ineffective, poor at communicating, and all those kinds of things. (Joanne)*

> *I certainly don't feel as professional as a counsellor. I'm just not a great counsellor and that's all there is to it. And so that's not where my feelings of professionalism are. I*

sort of struggle through. And part of that is that I haven't embodied counselling. (Robert)

What is missing here that prevents both Joanne and Robert from experiencing professionalism? Merleau-Ponty (1962) spoke of the body as being one's link to the world. When Robert speaks of his struggle in counselling, we can imagine how that might be reflected in his body, in his voice tone, in the words that he uses. Counselling is awkward to him and, as such, is not really a part of him -- his discomfort with it is mirrored in the way he presents to the world. Joanne speaks of being choked, almost paralysed -- a graphic description of her bodily experience.

There is a difference when Robert speaks of theorizing, something he feels he has embodied. "It's part and parcel of me. It's just there, absorbed, embodied, not conscious." How does this influence his actions? He describes giving a presentation on a project he was representing. As he answered questions, he became more and more internally focused on the department staff. Internally he became increasingly alert, more direct, feeling much more competent. *"It was much more than knowing my stuff -- it wasn't just giving rote responses, it was being able to apply what I knew to almost any possible question."*

Joanne speaks of teaching where she was able to respond effectively and creatively in the moment. She invented a process to teach trainees to discover the difference between ethical and less ethical ways of influencing in counselling. *"I thought of the exercise and embellished it on the spot and did all this really neat work spontaneously. The trainees were just riveted on the whole thing."*

Learning that empowers a professional is a continual evolution. It requires taking the skills and knowledge that we hold to "make them ours"; it is a questioning, self-analytic process of asking, "What are my strengths?" "What areas do I need to develop?" As Robert explains, it is a dynamic process of analyzing *"when we are on the mark," "when we have missed the boat"* and *"doing what we need to adjust."* Through this process we may say that we have "mastered" the skills; that is, we have developed the abilities we need to be effective in our work.

With embodiment, we integrate our skill and knowledge learning with soul searching and commitment to our interests, values, and beliefs. Our learning becomes "part and parcel of us." When that happens, our work becomes an extension of ourselves, an outward creation, an enactment of our deepest values and beliefs. We integrate what we are doing in the world in a creative process of construction and synthesis that depends "in part on the inner integration of the person" (Maslow, 1968, p. 140).

Engagement

Related to embodiment is engagement: Part of our professionalism lies in our ability to engage with others, to focus on what we are doing. If we have not embodied our work we cannot be present to it. We will be absorbed thinking such things as, "What do I do now?" We will lack focus. Robert describes the interrelatedness of focus and competence.

It's the experience of Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance: One of the things

that creates competence is complete focus, and for me they're intertwined. Focus can produce competence and competence can produce focus. The better I get at something, the easier it is for me to focus on it.

So embodiment contributes to our ability to engage in our work. What other factors allow us to engage? As Joanne suggests, to be able to engage with others also requires a certain amount of energy that allows us to be present to others, to the task at hand. When we are over scheduled, when we are tired, our ability to engage may wane. Our ability to engage and work effectively with others requires, as we saw previously, that we set limits and take care of ourselves.

Summary and Transition

Much of the literature on professionalism focuses on the practitioner. In alignment with previous work, professionalism in this study is seen as living a calling. The calling in the ecological paradigm portrayed in this research interpretation is a blend of choice and chance, as well as being dynamic and developmental in nature. The calling in professionalism involves practitioners discovering and/or creating what they love to do. The nature of the calling changes, however, as individuals change, their environments change, and the social contexts in which both are embedded change (Bandura, 1982; Brofenbrenner, 1977).

The developmental aspect of professionalism involves both skill and competency learning (that is, learning of skills and knowledge), as well as interior learning (for example, developing attitudes; learning more about one's values, beliefs, integrity, limits in practice). Both engagement in work, as well as periods of time to reflect on life/work are necessary for the development of professionalism. This allows practitioners to integrate the personal and the professional, thus becoming increasingly congruent and genuine in their work. Again, however, this is lived as a tension. It is sometimes necessary to maintain boundaries, and to distinguish between the personal and the professional.

To maintain work effectiveness requires practitioners to discern and deliver the level of excellence necessary for the job, to set limits to the amount and type of work that they do, and to take the time to nourish and replenish themselves. Professionalism requires that practitioners accept their humanness and the limitations this brings. It means accepting one's strengths, and being gentler and more accepting when one fails to be "the perfect picture" of professionalism.

Professionalism is not something practitioners either have or don't have. Rather, the ecological paradigm suggests a life-span developmental approach to professionalism. The interests, attitudes, and behaviors that influence professionalism may be seeded in a practitioner's childhood and continue to develop throughout his or her life. This happens through both positive and negative experiences, and through the influence of key persons, such as mentors and role models.

When individuals combine their passion for work with skills, knowledge, and increasing congruence with their values and beliefs, their work becomes embodied, a part of them. It is this embodiment that allows practitioners to respond with spontaneity to effectively meet the needs of their clients as they arise. It is also an embodiment of work, as well as an

ability to set aside distractions, that allows practitioners to be present to clients and to engage with them in meaningful ways.

In this chapter I focused on the practitioner in the relational experience of professionalism. In the following chapter I focus on the others and the field that the practitioner engages with and works within.

CHAPTER 6
FOCUS: INTENTIONALITY

In talking to the research participants it became apparent that their experiences of professionalism did not take place in a vacuum. They took place in relation to others, in relation to the field. Thus, our consciousness is directed toward something; it is intentional. Further, our consciousness, our actions as practitioners are not directed toward "any" other; they are directed toward a specific other in a specific situation. The other is the client that we meet with; it is the participant in our programs that we spend time agonizing over wondering if we have said or done "the right thing"; it is the colleague with whom we work on a program or write an article with.

In this chapter I focus on our intentionality as practitioners by dividing the writing into two main sections. In the first section I address "the other" as the focus of our intentions; in the second section I discuss "the field" as the focus of our intentionality.

The Other

Orienting to the Other

Shawna is on social assistance. Her benefits are about to run out. It is time for her to search for work. She is terrified about the prospect. Shy by nature and filled with self-doubt about her skills, she dreads the thought of interviews and the series of almost inevitable rejections that she will have to face before finally finding a job. To assist her in her job search process, she has applied to an employability skills program.

Responding to a newspaper ad, she makes her way to the initial screening session that is required before she can be accepted into the program. Her nervousness increases as she sits on a chair in the hall with others who are waiting, too. As typically happens when she gets nervous, her thoughts tend to get muddled and it becomes difficult for her to speak.

Finally it is Shawna's turn. She enters the room where an interviewing team awaits her. They have a list of questions to ask her. "Why haven't you found a job on your own? How many jobs have you applied for? Why haven't you applied for more?" How Shawna aches to tell them of her fears. Instead she replies, "I haven't had time," "One," and "I don't know." The response she gets is, "Do you realize if you don't start looking for work we can talk to your social worker and get your benefits withheld? How would you like that?" As Shawna's stomach begins to knot, she chastises herself for having hope, the hope that someone would hear her.

What has happened here? The practitioners were oriented to the task, and the task is important, for careful selection of clients may determine the success of a program. But the orientation was from a mechanistic viewpoint. They maintained what Ferguson (1980) referred to as a "bureaucratic distance" between the program and the people it was meant to help.

Imagine how it might have been. The ambience could have been different. Shawna could have been welcomed at the door with a handshake. She could have been offered coffee and food. The facilitators could have held on open house or a group presentation. Shawna could have been educated about the program so that she could have known what to expect,

and so that the determination of the "rightness" of the program for her could have been a mutually made decision, based on both her impressions and those of the facilitators regarding the suitability of the program for her needs. She could have met present or past participants and had an opportunity to speak with them. She could have been listened to and seen, invited into a mutual dialogue, rather than a one way interview. The interview could have moved beyond the collection of statistical, objective information to an exploration of the uniqueness of her needs. The facilitators could have heard Shawna's calling.

We Care About Those We Work With

What is the motivation for us to hear the calling of the other? If we reflect on the meaning of care, we gain insight into this question. To care is to be interested in or concerned about another (Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary). When we speak of caregiving, of being careful, of caring about, we are speaking of watching out for and paying attention to someone or something. The caring of professionalism is not a hierarchical type of care. It is more a recognition of the webs of interdependence, "that we know ourselves as separate only in so far as we live in connection with others" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 63).

The principle of responsible caring in the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (1988) states:

> *Responsible caring leads psychologists to "take care" to discern the potential harm and benefits involved, to predict the likelihood of their occurrence, to proceed only if the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms, to use and develop methods that will minimize harms and maximize benefits, and to take responsibility for correcting any harmful effects that have occurred as a result of their activities.*

This notion of caring alludes to the importance in caring of being proactive in our actions toward things or persons we care about. It also alludes to the etymological origins of caring, which are rooted in the notion of sorrow. Thus, in caring for other persons we can help to make them "carefree" by relieving their troubles or worries (van Manen, 1990). This way of caring reflects a supportive caring, one that allows a sense of security, providing the foundation for growth and empowerment.

When we view professionalism in the context of career development, we recognize its encompassing nature. When we say we care about our work, we begin to see the interrelatedness between our selves, our clients, our work, and the social structures and policies within which we are embedded. Because we connect the results of our work to those that we care about, we work carefully; the quality of our work is important.

A caring orientation in response to the calling of the other becomes even more important when we recognize that there may be a power differential between our clients and ourselves. Our clients may not come to us voluntarily. For example, management may suggest that a troubled staff member attend an Employee Assistance Program. Although the program is voluntary, the hidden message is that the staff member must attend the program if s/he is to remain with the organization. Our clients may not be used to the ways we facilitate information. For example, imagine the uncertainty youth might feel when they attend an employability group at a youth agency for the first time, and are expected to be able to

participate in the group and disclose information about themselves. Our clients may lack the specialized knowledge that we hold about the field, for example, knowledge of labour market information and trends.

The relationship that we have with the other, therefore, is usually one of asymmetry (Grumet, 1983): We have knowledge that the client does not hold and may have decision-making power that has the potential to affect the other's life. Because of this, it is especially important to listen carefully to those we work with, to hear their needs, and to act respectfully in ways that aim to empower them.

We Need to Hold Hope

> *Problems... are so overwhelming it's easy to lose ourselves in them. But in losing ourselves we cannot act. We become paralysed by despair. I feel terrible....There's nothing I can do. But there is. Each of us can do something, even if we can't singlehandedly solve the problem....We can be more effective if we remain centred, refusing to surrender to guilt or despair.*

Arising from the notion of care is hope -- it is because we care that we hope for another. The meaning of hope is "something one longs to see realized" (Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary). Hope is an orientation toward the future; it supports a belief in human potential. We hope for something. We hope things go well. We hope things get better.

To hope for something requires courage, because with hope comes the possibility that our "hopes will be dashed," that our hopes will not be met. Hope requires maintaining optimism: When we give up hope, we become resigned. We wonder, "What's the point?": We have little sense of purpose, little reason to want to help others, little reason to work for change. When we lose hope as practitioners, we limit not only ourselves, but others, too. Imagine, for example, the limitations a career development practitioner might place on another when s/he believes a client will never make it in the music industry or that women will never achieve equity in the work place. Contrast this to a practitioner who encourages clients to aim for their dreams, or to an organization that provides enhanced career development practices for its employees.

Hope, then, requires that we maintain an openness to possibilities. Hope is a creative process of visioning where we open ourselves up to what *can* be, allowing ourselves the freedom to dream (Magnusson, 1992). Our visions give shape to the shapeless (van Manen, 1991), and provide the inspiration and motivation to promote change. Hope is essential, for as Solomon recognized, "Where there is no vision, people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

For career development practitioners there is the hope that persons will lead fulfilling lives. There is the hope for enhanced opportunities and increased equity for minority groups, such as women, social assistance recipients, and immigrants. There is the hope for improved career development policies and guidelines, and the hope for the empowerment of persons who live within dysfunctional social systems. Hope requires conviction and the determination to go forward, sometimes in the face of difficult conditions. It requires the recognition that there may be barriers to our dreams, but that there are almost always alternatives that can

attempted (Magnusson, 1992) -- that is, when one avenue closes another can be pursued.

> *Every once in a while I can step back, take a look at what I'm doing and quite easily recognize all the drawbacks, the things that aren't going quite right, all the people that I'm not able to help....Part of my professionalism is being able to recognize that and still maintain an optimistic attitude that I am making a difference, that I am helping change people's lives, that what I am doing is worthwhile. Otherwise, for example, when say a project funding source fell through, I'd feel resigned. This way, I start looking for other funding sources, other agencies to run the program...there's lots of alternatives. (Robert)*

As practitioners, part of our calling is to hold hope for those that we work with. Equally important, however, is for us to enable our clients to hope. The clients we see may hold little hope. They may have just lost their job, be worried about economic conditions, or be prematurely conforming to a perceived "reality."

> *Most of our schooling and socialization process[illegible]as to conform, and they therefore stifle our creativity. Although this sets limits on appropriate behavior, it also boxes people into the mundane. What we need instead is the freedom to dream, to be creative in deciding who and what we shall be....Thus, an absolutely essential first step in helping people develop a master plan is to give them permission (and the tools) to dream and to shape a vision. (Magnusson, 1992)*

As practitioners, we need to help others to believe in their own possibilities. When clients prematurely narrow their options, they tend to focus on what *can't* be done, which can lead to discouragement. Hope can open our clients to alternatives, and provide the motivation needed for them to take action (Magnusson, 1992).

Hearing the Calling of the Other

Our calling to the other is rooted in the care and the hope we hold for them. It remains essential, though, to ask the question, "Is this all that we need in order to hear the calling of the other?" It may be useful to reflect on historical examples of times when well-intentioned people cared and hoped for others, and to look at the consequences. Having recently worked with native Canadians and listened to their stories, the example of residential schools comes to mind. The Natives I met with spoke of their experiences of being forcibly removed from their families. They were "cleaned up": Their hair was cut and then washed with kerosene. One participant recalled having to eat raw fish at meal time because it was assumed this was the food they liked to eat. The Natives were no longer allowed to speak their language, being forced to use English instead. All this in the name of care, and the hope for a better way of life for them.

From this example, we can see that the care and hope we hold for others must also be rooted within respect for their spirit. The importance of the systemic perspective of professionalism becomes apparent. Whose calling were the missionaries responding to? Did the missionaries hear the calling of the other? Or were they really responding to the calling of themselves? And so the question remains, "What does it mean to hear the calling of the other?" "What is the uniqueness of this person?" To want to recognize the uniqueness of the

other is to say, "I want to know you. I want to meet you." It is to maintain an open and dynamic interplay between ourselves and the other.

What does it mean to know someone? What is there to know about another? We can know another's name. We can apply categories by saying that he or she is a youth, a woman, or a Native, for example. We can give another a personality code and say that he or she has "artistic" or "realistic" interests. But does this information, particularly when used in isolation, really help us to know another? Of course, as Eisner (1991) suggested, categorization can be useful as it allows us to know "the 'species' of our experience. As Eisner continues, it can, however, also be a liability, "when it forecloses, as it often does, the exploration of the qualities" (p. 17) that make each person and situation unique...*this* client in *this* situation.

There are many ways of knowing, but the knowing that allows us to hear the calling of the other is a knowing based in care (Gilligan, 1982) and connections (Belenky, Clincher, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). It is a knowing that allows us to see the person as they are in relation to the intricacies of their lived experience. To know the others that we work with requires that we put aside our stereotypes, our presuppositions of who our clients are and how they should be. It requires that we gain an understanding of them. Of course we can never truly know what others have lived through, but we can connect to their experiences through an openness, a willingness to discern with an empathic capacity that is at the heart of human understanding (Bowman, 1989).

Imagine a career development practitioner designing a program for incarcerated youth by sitting in an office, writing up plans. The practitioner may have a general idea of what problems incarcerated youth face and a general awareness of strategies that might be successful. A general idea, however, is not enough to provide a landscape for the program. Imagine a second practitioner designing a similar program who begins by visiting the jail and mingling with the youth. In a dialogical fashion, this practitioner informs the youth about the program and seeks feedback to determine its appropriateness. This practitioner asks the youth for suggestions and listens respectfully, with a willingness to incorporate these ideas into the program.

To really know what Beekman (1983) referred to as the landscape of another, we must know the specialness of the situation, in this case, the distinctive characteristics of the youth for whom we are designing the program. To appreciate the unique qualities and needs of the youth, we must meet them: We must go inside their landscape and learn to see what they see. *How* we get inside the landscape of others is important. We must observe and interact without imposing, entering their world with ease and with patience (Beekman). We must become "connoisseurs" and come "to know" their world: We must learn to not simply look, but to see (Eisner, 1991).

Jason describes his first teaching assignment. He came into the class part way through the year, taking over what was supposed to be a behaviorally difficult class. Jason's experience with this class was extremely positive, however, perhaps because he took the time to enter the students' landscapes.

> *The first class that was supposedly so tough -- they were really putty. One thing that helped that I had done -- As a science exercise we were talking about growing*

vegetables so I had the students do a little garden plot at their homes. I used that opportunity to go and see their garden plots. There were 33 in the class and I went to see everyone's plot. It took a while to make the rounds...but that way I got to see the students at home and I got to meet the parents. I could see where they were living and just chat with them. They were all farmers so they all had good gardens. They liked to talk about what they did well. It was an opportunity for both the students and the parents to shine. It laid some great foundations for the next four years.

Meeting Those That We Work With

What does it mean to meet someone? Meetings can take place in many dimensions. There can be meetings of the mind, meetings of collegiality, meetings of companionship. But true meetings go beyond physical proximity or conversing.

A true meeting cannot take place without respect for the spirit, what Harding (1970) referred to as love, spirit, or Self. We can schedule a time for two people to meet, but we cannot schedule the "meeting." We can, however, facilitate it through our readiness in the moment. With this readiness, we portray the message, "I care: I am interested in *you*." Meeting someone requires an emotional presence to them, a willingness to see and to hear them -- for if we are not present, a meeting cannot take place.

Meeting someone does not depend on the duration of time that we spend with them -- for a meeting can take place in a glance, in a handshake, in a welcoming smile. We may only have a few seconds with a person, for example, in gathering information on the telephone, in handing out a calendar or program information, or in responding to a question. And yet, if we are present, a meeting can still take place that indicates our connectedness, our acknowledgement of each other.

This willingness to attend to our clients is reflected in the atmosphere we present to them. "Atmosphere is the way in which space is lived and experienced" (van Manen, 1991). Atmosphere is presented through our physical space. Jason describes the importance of having a room that clients can easily access, but that also provides privacy. He takes care to organize his work space to facilitate client-practitioner interaction.

Atmosphere also extends beyond the physical space that we present to others.

I am reminded of a work experience coordinator that I spent a day with. It was wonderful to watch the way that she worked with the high school students. They felt free to drop into her office just to say hello, to ask questions, or to use the resources housed there. She, on the other hand, made a point of taking routine walks through the hallway, stopping to chat with students to see how they were doing, and to offer encouragement and support.

Atmosphere is reflected in our accessibility, by our very presence, our orientation to the other: It is embodied within us.

Professionalism is Rooted in Action: The Counsellor as the Instrument

> *There's a special wisdom to beginnings. We must have faith in ourselves and the process. Otherwise we procrastinate. Afraid of failure, we postpone it by not getting started. (Dreher, 1990, p. 16)*

When we hear the other, we can procrastinate or we can ignore. But our professionalism in hearing the calling of the other confronts us with the need to act. What may have been a passive acknowledgement of another becomes transformed within us -- we can no longer fail to acknowledge the other. Robert speaks of this transformative moment that comes with truly hearing the request of a client as a growing, implicit obligation -- the call to professionalism that is the call to action in response to the other.

There are many ways of being responsive to those we work with. A response is an answer given in a word or act (Oxford Concise Dictionary). When we respond to those that we work with, we are answering the call to their issue, their problem, their need. The actions we take arise out of our world view, the beliefs that we hold.

> *I went to see a career counsellor to "see what I should do when I grew up." The counsellor didn't talk to me very much. He gave me a test to see what my interests were. I hated doing the test because I had to choose between things -- sometimes the choices seemed so forced. The results showed me to be interested in doing things with my hands and suggested things like agriculture and mechanics. I suppose that I do like doing things with my hands, but I couldn't really imagine myself being a farmer or a mechanic! When I voiced my concerns, the counsellor made some remark about if I knew more than the test results why was I here? I'm an educated person, and I knew enough to know I had a right to voice my concerns -- I didn't want to be "pigeon-holed." But I still felt humiliated, like he was playing the role of the expert and not acknowledging my apprehensions.*

This story, recounted to me by Christine, one of my students, is one that I have heard with slight variations many times over. What happened in this interaction? The counsellor remained detached from the client and used an "objective" tool to measure the client's interests. The client's feelings were negated and not seen to be as important as the assessment, possibly because they could not be quantified. The counsellor, as the expert, is in the position of power; the client is placed in a position of lesser power.

These practices align closely with common practices of career counselling (see Chapter 7 for a fuller description). The process is relatively quick and easy, and provides clients with concrete results. But it is important to question, "What are the implications of these all too common practices? What happened in the interaction described above?" The counsellor, in giving the assessment to the client without incorporating it into a more comprehensive process, failed to come to know this person, failed to meet this person, failed to find the unique landscape in this person's life. Instead, an assessment was given, a type of assessment that was accorded more weight about what was "true" about Christine than she herself was given. The assessment was assumed to be valid, Christine's experience was not.

This story is of a particular technique. But its implications are really about a bigger

issue. It is about a way of working that promotes advice giving, a way of working that promotes the depositing or "banking" of information in a way that asks clients to uncritically accept information (Friere, 1971).

We can assess others, talk to others and tell them that they should not drop out of school, tell them that they should pursue a "stable" occupation. Yet, when we give advice, when we use formal assessment instruments in isolation and without proper interpretations, we take power away from our clients. We may prematurely lock them into a way of being that isn't right for them. We may narrow their options and their potential avenues for growth and exploration. When we do this, *we* create others' lives, rather than *encouraging them* toward a process of *self-creation.*

> *If we conceive of education as self-discovery -- rather than merely the mastery of skills or accumulation of knowledge -- then we must regard every moment of life as equally pregnant with educational possibilities. (Roszak, 1979, p. 193)*

What is the alternative? Imagine another way of working with our clients, where the counsellor *acts as the instrument* that facilitates the client's journey through the career process. Our clients bring with them their intentions, their values and beliefs, and expectations. When the counsellor is the instrument, there is an opportunity for the process to holistically fit the uniqueness of *this* client's enduring values and needs with *this* client's immediate contextual needs in a way that fosters self-reliance, in a way that empowers them. As Ariel says, *"We empower people by letting them be who and what they are, rather than who or what we think they should be."* Our professional intention, therefore, needs to be directed toward strengthening the positive intentions of our clients (van Manen, 1991).

> *I became clearer and clearer in my own mind that that was how I wanted to work with clients -- in ways that empowered them, that gave them choices, that reinforced their strengths, rather than reinforced my strengths -- or both presumably.*

Sharing and Communicating our Knowledge and Insights

Does this mean that there is not a place to share the specialized knowledge that we may hold? the insights we may have about others? their situations? The research participants indicated that sharing knowledge and insights can be empowering to those that we work with -- when we work with others in ways that allow them to dialogue with us and others, to take information in, and to "invent and re-invent" it in a creative transformation of continual meaning-making (Friere, 1971).

Ariel speaks of working with single mothers receiving social assistance. At one point, mothers on social assistance were unconditionally allowed to receive social assistance once they had three or more children. Policies have changed and they are not allowed to do that any more. As Ariel relates, many single mothers have been fulltime mothers to date. They do not want to be workers and think that is alright. The reality is, *"Life ain't so easy [because policies have changed] -- they* ***have*** *to be workers."* As Ariel describes, she would be doing the mothers a disservice if she simply acknowledged their desire to continue to collect their

social assistance pay cheque saying, *"If that's your aspiration..."* because she must inform them of the policy changes.

So the issue becomes *how* to acknowledge clients' individual situations, to allow them a transition, to help them understand themselves and what they're experiencing, and to help them decide how they're going to cope with the situation in a way that gives them what Ryan (1992) referred to as access to their decision making. As Ariel suggests, we are called to use our professional judgement as to *what* information to present and *how* to present it so that our clients will hear it. With mothers receiving social assistance, Ariel finds that an information approach is effective. When she tells them the likelihood of their children being on social assistance if their mother is on assistance, many of the mothers become motivated to change.

Sometimes we need to share our knowledge and insights with people other than our clients. We may find it necessary to educate people that work in the systems that influence our clients, or we may need to advocate for our clients. Jason describes a time when he was introducing a program for the disabled into a major post-secondary institution.

> *The students' reasons for being there were that they wanted productive skills, they wanted to be able to go out on their own. I took exception to both bleeding hearts and those that didn't want to work with the disabled. It was like building an empire in a sense to get people to understand and to support the students. I was trying to fill a void or a gap, so I did a lot of presentations. In the early eighties in Alberta there weren't a lot of people that knew much about integration of the disabled.*

As we have alluded, how we communicate with others is important. Part of our professionalism is finding ways to "make the complex simple or simpler" so that others understand what we are saying. This practice is increasingly reflected in societal procedures. For example, the Alberta Government has a "plain language" guideline. Information that is for public use must be written in language that is easily understood. In real estate, documents that were previously difficult for the lay person to read are being rewritten in a more "user friendly" form. Jason suggests that stories or metaphors are a powerful way to get a message across to others in an easily understood manner.

But is language the only way that we communicate to others? A cartoon I once saw of a doctor with a cigarette hanging out of the corner of his mouth telling a patient to quit smoking comes to mind. What we are talking of here is the necessity of congruence, the importance of "walking our talk," of modelling those qualities we hope our clients will develop (Barth, 1986; Bowman, 1989). If we want our clients to assume self-management skills, it is important that we demonstrate these when working with clients. If we want our clients to be reflective on their life situations, we need to model the importance of reflection in our lives. If we want our clients to become responsible for their own learning, we must demonstrate responsibility for our learning as practitioners, too.

Helping our Clients Toward Self-understanding and Self-reliance

> *The source of self-reliance is, of course, self-knowledge. As you may know, in Zen there is a distinction between "live words" and "dead words." The only way knowledge can be gained with any lasting wisdom is to be able to place that*

knowledge into one's personal experience....And this personal experience can only be accessed if the learner has a sense of personal history; that is, self-knowledge. Only through self-knowledge can the individual find the self-reliance to become the self-teacher to uncover true knowledge. (C. Lewis, personal communication, February, 1993)

When we help others develop towards self-reliance, we help them to *hear and respond to their own calling*: To determine their needs, to acknowledge and create their hopes and visions, to come to know themselves, to be true to themselves, to learn to trust themselves.

The type of change we talk about is deep, enduring change. When we look at current practices, we can see, as Joanne reminds us, the amount of money that's invested in even areas such as corrections, unemployment insurance, and social assistance. Many of "these programs are going toward giving bandaids to problems that need to be addressed in a systems way, in ways that affirm people, ways that develop people, nourish people." To make more enduring change, it is important to have people recognize that "They matter. They're special" (Roszak, 1979). It is this self-knowledge and inner acceptance that allows people to persevere in difficult situations.

Helping our clients to move toward self-reliance implies a developmental orientation. To do so means meeting our clients where they are, seeing them within their context, and giving them the support they need to grow from there, in a way that we are constantly called to use our professional discernment.

Developing others who don't necessarily see their own weaknesses, to build positively on their strengths without putting them down....Choosing when to help people look at their strengths and weaknesses and choosing other times to meet them where they are...and not necessarily with an amount of reflection on that. (Joanne)

Depending on our clients' developmental readiness, support systems, and familiarity with the situation they are facing, they may need different types of support, at different times, and in different situations (Magnusson, Day , & Redekopp, 1988). We may need to teach them the knowledge, techniques, and processes they need to meet their needs and to increase their options and potential in their situations. We may need to provide them with intensive support or simply act as a consultant to them. All these interventions are aimed toward client empowerment; that is increasing their self-reliance and lessening their dependence on us.

Improvising: Let's Us Be Responsive to Others

Becky, a single mother who is living with a male friend, has spent the last few months in an employability program. She is getting beyond the belief that her life has little potential and is starting to investigate possible training programs. She's gaining confidence in herself and coming to trust herself. One day she arrives at the program in tears. Her roommate has said she must leave. Rent was cheap there. She does not know where she will go. The program facilitators respond by tapping into their network to get some rental leads for Becky, which she pursues. The next weekend the facilitators use their truck to move Becky to her new home.

Shaza is an inner city youth with a background of abuse and drug and alcohol addictions. She is attending a job readiness program. Although her attendance has been sporadic, the last couple of weeks she has started to drop by daily. She seems to be developing a sense of trust in the program. She is actually starting to participate in some of the activities and has started attending school on a more regular basis. The other day, Shaza went to court and was put on probation. The conditions of her probation were that she could no longer hang around in the inner city area -- but this is where the centre is, this is where her school is -- the two things that have started to matter to her in recent weeks. She is upset, because she will have to move away from everything that is familiar to her. After consulting with Shaza, the program facilitator decides to talk with her social worker to see if he can get permission for Shaza to still come to the centre, where she is beginning to feel she has some support in her life.

The practitioners in these situations were both working within prescribed programs. They both had program agendas and tentative plans for working with their clients. The practitioners could have felt bound by circumstances and locked into completing their program agendas, narrowing their options for acting.

Despite our preparedness, there will always be times when we are faced with the unforeseen. Part of our professionalism, our responsibility in working with others, then, involves holding qualities that let us respond to others with creativity, facilitating the unexpected in ways that let us stand back to let our clients experience the space they need to grow and yet move in and to provide support when needed (van Manen, 1991). Like a jazz musician (van Manen), the effective practitioner holds improvisational qualities that allow him or her to constantly adjust in creative ways to the dynamic circumstances of the others s/he works with.

> *Responsibility means to respond, and genuine response is the response of the whole person. In every situation we are asked to respond in a unique way....This means we must have that courage to address and that courage to respond which rests on, embodies, and makes manifest existential trust. (Friedman, 1983, p. 40)*

Professionalism as Integrity

The meaning of integrity lies with its root to integrate, which means to synthesize or to make whole (Oxford Concise Dictionary). The integrity of professionalism is multi-layered, it is pervasive, it is central to our relating with the others that we work with. For how could we exhibit professionalism if we were not acting with integrity to ourselves? to the others that we work with? to our projects? to the systems within which we work?

> *I worked during a political change-over....Some people began to feel that, given the government change, you had to say what the government felt -- your job as a bureaucrat was to anticipate what the politicians wanted to hear and then tell them that. For me, my job was to evaluate or analyze something to the best of my ability and let that speak for itself....You don't try and skew the results to meet an anticipated need, or to appease a personality or a political interest. (Ariel)*

What Ariel is speaking of is acting with honesty, a truthfulness. In this case the

truthfulness comes from an openness, a willingness to let ourself and our work be "seen" for what it is. Robert describes a similar situation.

> *I simply responded directly, representing the project as directly as best I could (rather than trying to "sell" the project). I felt good that I represented the project as it was without attempting to "fudge" my descriptions to please the department, being true to the art of career development in this case -- this is an intrinsically worthy project.*

Robert, too, is speaking of acting with honesty, acting out of what he believes to be true, acting out of the values and beliefs that he has integrated into his learnings. Robert holds a belief about the worthiness of the product: To represent the product is to speak "his truth." Imagine how the integrity of the situation would have changed if Robert did not believe in the project, yet still tried to promote it. A belief in the product would not be "integrated" into his worldview. There would be a discrepancy between what he believes and what he is representing. It would require a dishonesty, a hiding of what Robert sees to be the product's shortcomings.

We might also ask, however, "Is it realistic that organizational or project beliefs will always align with our personal beliefs? Are there not times when we will, despite our best intentions, find ourselves working within systems that compromise our beliefs? working on projects that we come to feel are somehow wrong?" As Ariel reflects, this is a complicated issue because *"in some ways it would be unprofessional just because you didn't get your own personal way or couldn't move your personal values through the system that you would sabotage it."* So it becomes important that when we accept a job or a project that we first seek to understand its limitations, for when we accept it, we are in some ways agreeing to work within corresponding limitations.

But what if we accept, for example, a project in good faith, and as the project progresses we find that we are asked to compromise our values and beliefs in ways that we can no longer be true to ourselves? to others? to the field? Robert speaks of beginning a project. As the project advanced, the client's expectations changed. They moved into something that Robert no longer believed held integrity for the field. It was not something that he could believe in. For Robert, it was a dilemma of wanting to fulfil his work commitment and at the same time not wanting to compromise his integrity.

Jason, too, tells a story where he felt his integrity was in jeopardy. He was acting as a consultant to a law firm involved in settling disability insurance claims. Jason's role was to assess the person's vocational potential. One of Jason's personal rules was that he wouldn't take a case if he had dealt with the client before as a student at the institution where he taught. *"I didn't want to mix those two worlds."*

There was an instance, however, when Jason found himself involved in a situation where he did in fact compromise his personal rule. As per his customary routine, Jason conducted a file search before agreeing to consult to an insurance claim that was to be settled in court. Jason had found no record of having previously worked with the client filing the insurance claim. Yet, part way through the trial the client became agitated, claiming that Jason had previously counselled him. That night, Jason once again searched the institutional files -- and this time found the man's records: They had been misfiled. Jason was in a

difficult position; he felt terrible. Although in his attempt to gain settlement money, the man was claiming all sorts of things that private investigators had already determined were not true, Jason knew that he must tell the judge of his prior counselling relationship with the client and its possible bearing on this case.

Ariel tells of an active feminist who was working within government. The women's views and those of the Alberta Cabinet's were quite discrepant, which angered the woman. At a certain point the woman began to publicly criticize political decisions at public forums, something Ariel saw to be quite unprofessional.

These descriptions are just a sampling of the experiences reported by the research participants. They suggest that despite our best intentions we may find ourselves in compromising situations. How to handle these situations becomes an important issue to reflect on, however, for as Joanne reminds us, some of the times when we might feel least professional are when we have agreed to go along with things that do not feel quite right to us.

Perhaps then, as Ariel suggests, there is a tension of seeing if we can maintain our integrity within an organization or situation while we help relevant others to develop improved practices. To do this we must determine if and to what extent the current organizational practices compromise our integrity, and the potential for the growth or development of the organization or situation we are working within. We also need to determine our tolerance for waiting; to determine if it is right for us in this situation to wait for changes that might occur. If it compromises our integrity meanwhile, or the wait seems too long, or the obstacles too foreboding, we must be prepared to deal with the issue in another way. As Robert recounts,

> *I want to please the client. But there's a certain line I just won't go beyond. I mean I don't know exactly what that line is, but there is a certain line where I think a project is going to lose integrity because a client has asked me to do something. When that happens, I'll just say, "I'm sorry, we can't do that. It no longer has integrity given what we know about our discipline."*

Part of acting with integrity is using our professional discernment to decide where our boundaries lie. When we are faced with something that compromises our integrity we may, as Robert did, set our limits. Or, we may decide to voice our objections and push for change. In some cases we may decide to leave an organization or resign from a project so that we can voice our concerns with integrity.

This brings to the forefront the concept of commitment. To resign from an organization or to withdraw from a project requires a good reason. That is, integrity implies that we act in ways that allow *others* to believe in us; to believe that we will keep the promises we make. Robert describes the ultimate in unprofessionalism as *"pulling out of"* a project or engagement with a client without sufficient reason, for example because we no longer feel like committing to our promises, because we misjudged our time, or we found something more interesting to work on. *"If I don't do X when I say I'm going to, it had better be for some very excellent reason and not just I overcommitted or I made a mistake -- oops, sorry."*

Integrity also implies showing concern for our clients and being willing to take action -- "the buck stops here," so to speak. Imagine practitioners, for example, whose actions are guided by their concern to *"cover themselves,"* rather than from concern for their clients. Ariel describes a work environment where she was a counsellor. Practitioners would *"pass off"* to their supervisor difficult cases such as incidents of physical and sexual abuse disclosed by their clients -- not because they weren't trained to deal with the situation or for their welfare of their client, but because it then became the supervisor's concern and the counsellors *"didn't have to deal with a difficult issue."*

> *In other words, you don't do this because you're concerned about your client or because someone's in danger, you do this to cover your behind. (Ariel)*

The Field

Contributing to the Field

A part of our professionalism is being drawn to contribute to the field in which we work. We want to develop our field, enhance our field, maintain standards in our field. But first we must ask, "What is the field that is the intention of our thoughts and actions?" It is an interesting question, for the field is created by its members. Without career development practitioners there would be no field of career development. As Robert suggests, *"It's rather circular. The field is the practitioners, the practitioners are the field."* The field also has its own life that extends beyond the practitioners -- for if any single practitioner leaves the field of career development, the field still remains.

The field, like its members, is dynamic: It is a creative process that begs for a fuller expression. What, then, does it mean to contribute to the field? What is the importance of contributing to our felt feelings of professionalism? In addressing some of these questions, Robert describes his experience of writing university papers. As a student he became a theoretical expert in many areas. Even though he held specialized knowledge and turned out many work, there was not the same feeling of professionalism that he attains from his current What was missing for him was a sense of purpose. There was no link to an other, a witness for his actions. *"As a student I was reading and writing certain things that weren't useful. There's a difference between I need to write something and somebody else needs what I write."*

Thus, part of contributing requires that we care about our work and that it has the potential to impact. As Ariel says, *"I don't know many people that would like to do a good job and not have it used."* Ariel describes her shifting experience in completing a research study for a client. The research conducted was done in a quality manner and went beyond the requirements of the study. The results were interesting and pointed in some surprising directions. For whatever reasons, the client decided not to make public the findings of the study. When that happened, something shifted for Ariel, because the study no longer had the potential to impact the field and provide direction for client interventions.

Contributing, then, is tied to a purposefulness, the feeling that we want to advance the field in which we are engaged. Contributing requires initiating the process. *"It's seeing what*

can be done and creating what didn't exist before." It is extending our visions beyond our previous limits into new and uncharted territories. It is looking for new and better ways to do things.

Developing what didn't exist before requires both an understanding of what is as well as an openness to what could be. It is a creative process requiring the imaginative capacities of visioning, of seeing a possible world, of holding a direction for change, of doing something to bring clarity to our vision and our vision to fruition.

> *I designed a program for women on income assistance who were getting back into the labour force. And I worked with one of the employment counsellors in the counselling centre for women. And that became a roaring success....For whatever reasons, what we designed worked tremendously well, and people would come from all over and observe....[The centre] was moving into more enhanced service from the usual employment counselling. I enjoyed bringing a different professional dimension to the work that was happening in the employment arena. (Joanne)*

Our contributions can be enhanced when the visions we hold are comprehensive ones that take into account "the big picture"; that is, they take into account the systems in which we live and the impact one project might have on another. When we hold a comprehensive vision, we can use each project as a building block to expand our knowledge base, our products, and our ability to work effectively with our clients.

> *I had a professor years ago who knew virtually everything, and I'm not kidding. I asked him if he had a photographic memory, and he said, "No, I just have a very large framework in which I can fit everything I learn." That comment taught me a lot, and now I try to see every project, and the whole field of career development, in a much larger picture of what's happening to humanity globally. This includes a picture of social, economic, political, and environmental spheres. (Robert)*

When we hold a global vision that we work to bring to life, it is important to remember that this vision is constructed, that it has the possibility to change, and perhaps *should constantly be changing* to accommodate the dynamic world in which we live. Part of contributing to the field, as Joanne portrays, is to contribute to the quality of ethical practice by developing guidelines and communicating these guidelines to practitioners. Yet, as we develop guidelines and policies, what we know about working effectively within the discipline evolves. So we are faced with an interesting challenge in finding a way to maintain and enhance the credibility of our field and its practitioners in a way that does not limit and stagnate our professionalism, but rather allows for continuing responsiveness to the growth of the field and its practitioners. We must recognize that whatever we create is simply a model, and allow our constructions the freedom to move and change in a responsive manner.

Additionally, we must keep a balance between our vision, and the means we choose to attain our vision. Our work toward changing the field, replacing traditional career development practices with newer ones more respectful of ourselves and those we work with, needs to be done creatively with a celebratory orientation. The visions and goals that we set are important. We can not however, know the future with certainty; thus the process of

working toward our visions is important in itself, and its integrity must not be sacrificed as we strive to attain our goals.

Disseminating: Getting the Word Out

> *There's the feeling of wanting to advance the discipline that I'm involved in, whatever that may be, not just in the formalized sense of the discipline, but in sharing my learnings, being part of contributing, and that if I share them, if I publish them...I enable other people to benefit from what's developed in a kind of context of practical application. If it can be brought to the level of application, if it can be brought to the level of communicating to other people about it, then it can be harvested by other people and contribute to the ways that other people practice professionally. (Joanne)*

The meaning of contributing is linked to the word profess, the root of professionalism. To profess is to teach (Oxford Concise Dictionary). So a part of our professionalism lies in "getting the word out" about what we know. As Robert suggests, it is one thing to have an innovative idea or to have created an innovative product or program and completely another to make sure that the rest of the field knows about it. To contribute, then, requires a willingness to share what we know. It may mean sharing ideas that are not yet finished so that they can stimulate the field. We can share through presenting, through publishing, through teaching our colleagues.

We want the field to know about it in a way that it can make a difference. As Robert says, "I want to put stuff out in the hope that others will take it and do something with it." There is a sense of wanting to work in a way that is purposeful, in a way that allows other practitioners to take what we present and integrate it into their practices. As Robert describes,

> *I've given purely theoretical talks. I love doing that. To me, it's just fun. However, it's not nearly as fulfilling or as important as giving a talk where I can give indications as to how to apply the theory, where my partners will walk away with something they can use starting the next day.*

Part of our ability to contribute then is to find a way to communicate what we know so that others can understand what we say. This involves a tension between trying to add new concepts to the field, yet bridging the current knowledge gap to make what we are presenting conceptually attainable to other practitioners, without compromising our ideas. To find a way to make our contributions accessible to a wide variety of practitioners is important, for when we contribute to the growth of practitioners within the field we contribute to the growth of the field itself. As our skills, knowledge, and attitudes increase to the point that we can make significant contributions to other practitioners and the field, we must not forget the teaching opportunities that await us with those that we work with on a daily basis, for example, through coaching, mentoring, or consulting to others.

I have talked about contributing as meeting a need, as being purposeful. Does this mean that contributing is a selfless act? To say our work is selfless would be to create a false dichotomy. There is the possibility of resolving the dichotomy and fusing selfishness and selflessness in unity (Maslow, 1968). When we contribute to the field, we engage in a creative endeavour where we construct ourselves *and* the field through our visions and actions.

For example, Joanne tries to enhance the quality of her profession while embodying values that are personally meaningful to her on quite a deep level. Robert also describes this fusion in his work.

> *There are so many things that need to be done, so many ways I could contribute. So I have to make choices. And one of the ways that I do that is by working toward what I like to do, and working with my strengths. I'm more likely to make a contribution when I choose innovations that build on my strengths. And I feel a sense of pride at being recognized, for example, when I see my name in a conference program. But at the same time, what I choose to do also leans toward the selfless. For example, I could publish numerous articles that I was passionate about, but that did little to contribute to the field -- so I don't do that. I'm more selective.*

Creativity is also a way of making a contribution. As Joanne reflects, it's a way of finding value and it's a way of returning things back to ourselves. When we work creatively, we get excited.

> *I mean I'm excited during it, and I feel really satisfied afterwards. I find it stimulating, energizing. It doesn't feel like work to me when I'm into an active creative mode. (Joanne)*

Collegiality

In holding a comprehensive vision, we open possibilities for the development of the field. At the same time, however, we must also face our limitations; that is, there is the reality that one person can't do it all. *"Sometimes being professional can be seen as having all the answers and I don't think that's the case." (Ariel)* Facing our limitations requires a selection on our part of where we can best use our talents. It also requires the willingness to acknowledge the strengths of others and to work with them to implement our visions.

"Organizations are more based on interdependency than in the past so you can't just put a box around yourself." We have increasingly specialized knowledge and an increasingly rapid pace of change in the world. We are living in a time when professionals within the same occupational field, professionals from different occupational fields, and members of both local and global communities collaborate.

> *Given the development of telecommunications and the increasingly global economy, we have to realize that our practices take place within a global community....The contexts we are working in have exploded. This hasn't changed the ways that we should be working. It was never really healthy to work in isolation without a more comprehensive picture in mind. However, it has made the whole notion of interdependency more obvious and the means to achieve it easier. Since I've worked in different countries, the cultural orientation that I bring to my work has become clearer to me -- we can't detach our ideas from the culture in which they arose. I feel fortunate now that I have a colleague in Finland. I can fax him information and get a completely different perspective than I would get from someone in my culture. It forces me to question my assumptions from another perspective. When we collude on projects, we each contribute a different perspective, which contributes to their overall*

potential effectiveness. (Robert)

When we work together to implement our visions, we transform parallel behavior, and adversarial and competitive relationships into more cooperative relationships (Barth, 1986). When we act in a collaborative way with other professionals, our commitment to the field can have more impact.

> *Although I like working on my own to create things...the interaction [of working with others] is exciting and creates, to me, better product. It's collaborative -- if you've got good people to work with of course. I also value...helping other people maximize their talent and the contribution that they're making on their individual projects. (Joanne)*

Part of being able to work with others is knowing the network of people within the systems in which we work. This includes understanding an individual's philosophical orientations as well as their areas of expertise. When we move into more interdependent work, sometimes the most talented people are the ones who act as choreographers, bringing all those skills together in one place, even though they may not have any of those particular skills themselves.

Working cooperatively requires holding and working toward a vision, as well as having the ability to compromise. *"You can't be so rigid about what you would argue is correct or valid to the point that you won't let anything else get in the way."* Working together involves a "give and take," a balance between having ownership and pride in what we do and being able to say that there are other ways to do things that may also be effective. Robert speaks of giving a presentation to his peers and being quite knowledgeable about what was being discussed. The peers, however, were knowledgeable, too, and were easily able to contribute to what he was saying.

> *Even though it was a lecture format, it was much more interactive. I was updating them, rather than teaching them...helping them to develop their professionalism, their ability to be better professionals....I was helping them to develop themselves, and through their comments and feedback they were helping me to develop myself, too. (Robert)*

What do we need to sustain ourselves as professionals? As Ariel suggests, we often talk about what we as practitioners *need to give to others.* It is also important to look at what *we* need for sustenance. Working with others can provide a sense of collegiality, a sense of belongingness. There is something special about working with colleagues who hold similar knowledge about the field, who have a similar knowledge base and practical understanding that form the basis of our interactions.

> *We're saying so much of our felt worth depends on our view of ourselves as practitioners. But we also have to find our own ways to get acknowledgement and recognition. I think peers are important. They validate you. Peers can give you feedback that you're doing good work. (Ariel)*

When we work with others we become known among our colleagues for our strengths, our professional identities: When we embody our work, it becomes our personal style (van Manen, 1991). For example, people know Joanne professionally for her charts, diagrams, and

maps. Colleagues use humour in saying, *"If you want such and such done, Joanne's the one who will do that."* Jason became known for his work in disabled student services at a post-secondary institution. He developed a good reputation both inside and outside of the province. Law firms approached him to do related legal work.

Facilitating Our Potential to Contribute

How can the potential for contributing be facilitated? Ariel assumes that people hold the tendency to want to achieve something and to do it well. Yet, when we work in a hierarchical model, we have little authority, little freedom to act upon our ideas, little freedom to question present ways of working. An authoritative management style tends to "mold people" to fit its form, rather than allowing people to shape their job to suit their working style. *"Professionalism is beaten out of people. Creativity and taking responsibility are not seen to be of value in an authoritarian organization." (Ariel)*

If we have little input into the design and result of our work, we are less likely to care for what we are doing, and to care about enhancing the field than if we have access to decision making in our jobs. As Ariel suggests, without this access, "At a certain level, why would I care?" If we do care, we may be frustrated by our attempts to improve things, to make changes, to do what needs to be done. *"Times when I find it hard to be professional are times where I feel limits that are imposed by others give me a sense that I am blocked from using my talents or skills." (Joanne)*

Summary and Transition

In this chapter I explored the intentionality of practitioners by focusing on the others with whom they work, as well as the field in which they work.

The Other. Professionalism exists in relation to others, whether the other is a colleague or a client. Two themes important to professionalism are care and hope for the other. Without care and hope, there would be little motivation for practitioners to work as career development practitioners. It is equally important, however, for practitioners to *help clients to care and to hold hope* for present and future situations.

Practitioners' professionalism lies in seeing each client's uniqueness. This means that practitioners must be willing to maintain an openness to their clients' life situations and a flexible working approach. Practitioners need to go beyond using standardized assessment instruments in order to meet the needs of the individuals. Ways of working should aim toward client empowerment. That is, it is important for practitioners to teach clients to be adaptable in their life/career. A part of the empowerment process involves teaching clients to hear and respond to their hopes and dreams, to move toward increased self-understanding and self-reliance, and to accept themselves and believe in their self-worth.

Professionalism requires integrity in practitioners' work with others -- that is, they are must represent themselves, their programs, and their products with honesty and truthfulness. Practitioners need to set boundaries or limits that they will not easily compromise.

The Field. As well as focusing on clients, professionalism obliges practitioners to focus on the field, to care about their work and its influence and to contribute to the field. Contributing requires enhancing the field as well as disseminating information. Part of contributing to the field, particularly in light of the rapidly changing world, is a willingness to collaborate with other practitioners and disciplines, as well as to recognize one's work possibilities at both a local, national, and international level.

The potential of practitioners to contribute can be facilitated by having access to decision making and by being in supportive situations where they are allowed to use and develop their talents. This type of working environment is best promoted by facilitating, rather than controlling talent.

This chapter completes my hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation in response to the research question: "What is professionalism?" In the following chapter I discuss the pragmatic implications that this interpretation holds for career development practitioners.

CHAPTER 7
RESEARCH DISCUSSION

In this study I used a hermeneutic phenomenological research method to address the question: What is professionalism? The main data source was a series of interviews with four career development practitioners who were identified by colleagues as "truly" exhibiting professionalism. Interview questions were open-ended, which allowed the resulting discussion of professionalism to be grounded in people's experiences, rather than a conceptual ideal of the professions. Being ecological in nature, the analysis and textual description of professionalism suggested a different perspective than the natural scientific perspective of professionalism that has been typically portrayed in the literature.

I organized the thematic interpretation of the notion of professionalism into three sections. The concepts presented in this section provide the ground for the subsequent sections, which focus on (a) the practitioner, and (b) the intentionality of the practitioner; that is, the "other" (which includes both clients and colleagues) and the field.

In this chapter I discuss the contributions of the research. I also discuss the implications for professionalism in career development, the area in which I chose to develop my interpretation of professionalism. Specifically, I discuss implications for: (a) career development assumptions and practices, (b) the development of professionalism among practitioners, (c) organizational structure, and (d) professional associations. Finally I suggest areas for further research.

Contributions of the Research

1. A Grounded Approach. To date, most research on professionalism places this construct within a model of the "ideal" professions. The characteristics of the ideal professions are primarily based on those occupations historically considered to be the "true" professions, that is, law and medicine. This study, however, assumes a different beginning for the exploration of professionalism -- the experiences of career/organizational development practitioners identified by their colleagues as "truly" exhibiting professionalism. This inductive approach to professionalism, therefore, is *grounded in the experiences and practices* of esteemed practitioners, rather than in a theoretical model built on a traditional, rational ideal of the professions.

2. A Reflection of Current Practices in a Helping Occupation. It is commonly accepted that the world is continually changing and that, more recently, change is occurring at an accelerated rate. Grounding the analysis of professionalism in the experiences of practitioners presently working in the field of career/organizational development allows for a conceptualization of professionalism that reflects current, rather than historical, practices.

Additionally, the present research provides a perspective on professionalism that is grounded outside the assumptions of the medical model and the justice model, two traditionally rational models. Perhaps one of the most notable differences of the ecological perspective of professionalism from the traditional perspective is its movement away from an idealized, rational orientation toward a more holistic orientation that portrays themes such as hope, care, spirituality, and interior learning.

3. An Ecological Paradigm. This research portrays an ecological paradigm of professionalism that reflects the current trend toward a more holistic, systemic way of working that is increasingly found in many occupational practices. This paradigm provides a structure that supports the dynamic, complex nature of professionalism.

4. An Opening of the Question. Rather than attempting to narrow the construct of professionalism, this study "opens" the question of professionalism and explores its complexity. Opening the question permits commonly held assumptions of the professions/professionalism (for example, that the practitioner has the right to have power to decide what is right for the client, whether or not the client agrees) to be challenged. Varying the examples and circling the question portrays the subtleties of professionalism.

Lived-experiences, that is, the stories of clients and practitioners, bring a context and concreteness to the construct of professionalism. These stories provide an entrance to the question and an understanding of professionalism that definitional lists of essential characteristics do not.

5. Opportunity for Reflection. Readers may or may not agree with the resulting description and analysis of professionalism. The descriptive analysis of professionalism does, however, provide the opportunity for readers to be "drawn" into the question -- and to reflect on their personal beliefs and practices, and their consequences.

Implications for Professionalism in Career Development

The following section is a *brief* overview of the implications that the alternative paradigm of professionalism holds for career development practices. Each section could easily become a chapter, if not a book. The suggested implications should, however, provide a meaningful blueprint to practitioners with a career development background. These implications address: Career development assumptions and practices, the development of professionalism, the organizational structure, and the function of professional associations.

Career Development Assumptions and Practices

Theories of career development can *broadly* be divided into structural approaches, process approaches, and composite approaches. (Weinrach, 1979). Structural approaches can be thought of as matching approaches, as they attempt to define the characteristics of the individual, the characteristics of work environments, and find a compatible match between the two. Process approaches assume a more developmental orientation, with career development being viewed as a process that occurs over a period of time. Composite approaches are eclectic in nature and may integrate elements of both structural and process approaches (Redekopp, 1990).

The structural approach to career planning (that is, a variation of Parson's (1990) original propositions) utilizes formal assessment instruments to help clients understand their aptitudes, abilities, interests, and so on. Clients are then encouraged to use a rational process to match themselves to a suitable type of work. In many cases, assessment results include suggested occupations. Although most career planning models suggest that assessment

inventories be used within a larger process, the reality is that, in common practice, assessment instruments are often administered -- sometimes en masse -- without proper introduction or interpretation. Clients may make major life decisions based on the results of these assessments. The structural approach to career planning, which aligns with a natural scientific point of view, has numerous limitations:

1. It doesn't consider the relevance of developmental considerations to the career decision. The structural approach fails to account for changes people may have in their aptitudes, interests, attitudes, and skill and knowledge capabilities. It also presumes a readiness of clients to work, which is not always a correct assumption.

2. It places emphasis on rational decision making. The structural approach is cognitive oriented, and places little emphasis on emotional factors.

3. It holds a narrow perspective. The structural approach focuses on a person's work role. As Super (1980) suggested, there are many other roles, such as leisurite, citizen, spouse, and parent that interact with each other and need to be considered in a career building process. Thus, the structural approach lacks a contextual orientation as it does not acknowledge a person's unique life situations.

When one views professionalism as acknowledging the uniqueness of and supporting the development of clients, one sees the limitations of formal assessment practices, particularly when these are improperly administered. The alternative model of professionalism suggests the need to go beyond these typical formal assessment practices by using a developmental, holistic, systemic approach to career development. There are a variety of theories and approaches to career development that are in alignment with some or all of these characteristics (e.g., Astin, 1984; Magnusson, 1992; Super, 1990). Readers interested in these approaches are encouraged to read the original sources for more detail.

In order to provide a succinct and easily understandable structure from which to discuss the implications of the alternative paradigm of professionalism for career development practice, I have organized the discussion around a series of five assumptions that have implications for career building. A consulting team, of which I was a part, conceptualized a draft of these assumptions; Redekopp (in press) refined these. The assumptions were inspired by the participant's descriptions and reflections on professionalism. The assumptions are meant to be guiding messages that reflect current social, economic, and technological "realities" that influence people's lives, and to be suggestive of principles that can help them to meet those realities. We aimed to make the principles comprehensive enough to reflect current social, economic, and technological "realities," yet simple enough that other practitioners as well as clients can easily understand them. The messages are: (a) change is constant, (b) learning is ongoing, (c) access your allies, (d) follow your heart, and (e) focus on the journey. They reflect the view suggested in the alternative paradigm and suggest implications for practitioners, clients, and organizations. Like the phenomenological themes presented in the previous chapters, the assumptions provide organizational anchors for the current discussion.

Change is Constant

People change. The world changes. Life situations change. These concepts sound deceptively simple, yet managing change, which is the essence of career planning (Magnusson, 1992), is a complex issue. The ecological paradigm of professionalism suggests a developmental approach that assumes change; its systemic orientation suggests that change needs to be addressed in a variety of contexts. The following quote addresses the types of changes and potential effects that individuals may see in the near future:

> *During the next twenty years, career development opportunities and programs will be affected by technological, organizational, and individual changes. New jobs and job displacements will result from new technology. Some organizations will experience pressure to decrease their size due to increased competition. Most organizations will need to be adaptable and employ a flexible work force. In addition, changes in family responsibilities and personal values will affect work patterns. Confronted with change and uncertainty, individuals will need to be adaptive, able to handle ambiguity, and resilient in the face of career barriers. (London & Stumpf, 1987, p. 21)*

Technology is said to be changing the face of the workplace. Although there is some disagreement as to the nature of these changes, there is general acknowledgement that there is a decrease in some types of jobs, such as production jobs, that can now be accomplished by robots. Other occupations are becoming more specialized, requiring a more highly skilled labour force than previous times. There is a shift from goods production toward service orientation (London & Stumpf, 1987). Environment-related occupations are increasing. Many of the jobs of the 21st century have yet to be created. Major economic shifts are taking place, in part because of the changing political picture. Free trade agreements such as N.A.F.T.A. and the Canada - U.S. agreement are impacting our economy and labour force. Eastern block political changes present unique needs as their countries struggle to reform old policies (Day, 1993).

Because of the complexity and the constancy of change, practitioners need to empower clients to manage their life situations and transitions (Magnusson, 1992). It no longer makes sense to return, for example, the focus of social services programs or unemployment programs to one of job placement: If practitioners simply match people to jobs/occupations they may actually limit individuals' options and adaptability. What practitioners need to do is teach clients core knowledge, skills, and career-building *processes* that will increase their adaptability in a changing world and reduce dependency on career development services.

As former communist countries move toward a free market place, there is an increasing need for economic and career development strategies. When practitioners work in different countries, or even with different cultures within Canada, it is important to remember that they cannot simply transpose standard interventions into these environments. Rather, so that suggested strategies are appropriate, practitioners must take care to assess the developmental level, needs, and contexts of the people they are designing interventions for. The career development interventions should themselves be developmental, so that a progression of strategies can be implemented over time.

Information is increasing at a staggering rate. Career development practitioners need

strategies to facilitate the access and organization of information. There is a need for the development of information banks that would house, for example, a summary and critique of career development products and programs. To maintain expertise in program delivery and product development, there is an increasing need for work teams, where each member brings his or her area of expertise to the group. There is a need for a return to "generalists" who hold a global perspective and act as career development "brokers," co-ordinating the work of specialists.

Learning is Ongoing

The increasing rate of change in the world means that there is a greater need for ongoing learning and development, both to maintain currency within an occupation and to facilitate change between occupations. The alternative paradigm to professionalism suggests the need for both practitioners and clients to engage in a variety of types of ongoing learning. The most obvious learning need is that of identifying and attaining both core and specialized skill and knowledge competencies. There is another type of learning, however, that research participants suggest is equally important; that is, entrenching skills and "making them theirs." This process involves not only using, refining, and integrating skills, but an inner learning as well, where individuals learn more fully about the nature of their values and beliefs, and develop the confidence they need to be more effective when engaging in daily practices. As D. T. Hall (1990) indicated, "I would argue that it is precisely more personal learning that is required if truly effective task learning is to occur" (p. 436).

Because both the amount and diversity of what people must learn is changing, there is a need to look at ways of learning that are alternative to traditional educational programs. Morrison and Hock (1987) suggested that a substantial amount of meaningful learning occurs through work experience. In work settings, people learn not only knowledge, skills, and how to apply them, but work norms and values essential to their work. The latter are much more difficult to acquire through formal learning programs. People have opportunities to learn from a diversity of key influences in work settings, including peer pals, role models, and mentors (Kram, 1987). (See *Access Your Allies*, this section, for a further discussion of key influences in learning).

This suggests that work settings may be a reservoir of overlooked and untapped learning opportunities. Additionally, educational/training programs may be more effective when they move toward a more cooperative education approach, alternating or integrating work placement with training. Or, it may mean that core competencies are identified and that learners in both work and educational settings are encouraged to learn these in a variety of ways, for example, by aligning themselves with "experts" in the area or by organizing peer study groups. In this way, learners can bridge the gap between theory and application, and meet their learning needs in a relevant context.

People are learning all the time, often without being cognizant of what they have learned. It is relatively easy to identify competencies gained through formal learning. As people increasingly learn in informal ways, however, one of the challenges that faces them is to identify the "assets" they have developed. This self-knowledge optimizes individuals' workplace flexibility and their potential to facilitate transitions between projects/jobs/life stages. Feedback from others, perhaps through supervision, is one way for individuals to

increase their self-knowledge and competency base. Individuals will have greater control over managing change in their learning when they take the steps to self-initiate supervision/feedback.

As learning situations become more informal there is an increasing need to teach people to "learn to learn" and to provide them with an organizational structure, skills, and strategies for learning. Examples of some models that may be useful for this purpose include Dalton, Thompston and Price's (1977) model of career stages and Robb, Redekopp and Day's (1991) model of professional development.

Access Your Allies

There is a myth in society that people need to be independent in most of their life efforts; that they should be able to do things on their own. The alternate paradigm of professionalism, however, suggests that this may not be a particularly functional way of living, and promotes a more collaborative, relational orientation for both practitioners and their clients. This way of being is reflected in the increased tendency toward: Learning from colleagues; collaborative organizational trends, such as the use of work teams and co-operative decision making; and increased interdependency among nations for economic and career development initiatives.

In the theoretical realm, collaborative efforts such as those portrayed at the 1992 career development conference in Michigan, suggest an alignment of allies. The purpose of the conference was to gather some of the more prominent career development theorists, such as Super, Holland, and Krumboltz to work together to enhance theory development. In the research and development realm, the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation has, over the past three years, orchestrated the development of a series of products and programs aimed at enhancing career development strategies for youth. The Federal Government is currently coordinating the development of numerous Stay-in-School initiatives. All these efforts involve the collaboration of a number of individuals and groups across the country.

Accessing allies requires individuals to know what their learning and/or change intentions are and then to approach others (for example, through networking or mentoring) who can help them meet these intentions. The literature on mentoring is substantial, so I will not review it here. I would, however, like to address Kram's (1987) writings on alliances, including mentorship, which are in alignment with the orientation of professionalism suggested in this study.

Given people's diverse needs and changing life situations, it seems important for them to develop many "developmental alliances," rather than just one. Kram (1987) suggested that "relationship constellations" provide an encompassing view of potential alliances.

> *The relationship constellation is the range of relationships with superiors, peers, subordinates, and (outside work) family and friends that support an individual's development at any particular time. It reflects the fact that mentoring functions frequently are embodied in several relationships rather than just one. (p. 171)*

Similarly, Magnusson, Day and Redekopp's (1988) "Hierarchy of Self-Directed Adaptation" is

built on the premise that different interventions, such as advocacy, counselling, coaching, and peer support are appropriate, depending on a client's situation and developmental needs.

Although mentoring and other alliances often serve the purpose of fulfilling career needs (for example, sponsorship or exposure), it is important to recognize that they also fulfil a psychosocial function, (for example, role modelling, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and friendship) (Kram, 1987). Psychosocial functions influence individuals' feelings of self-worth, both inside and outside the work setting. The development of self-worth is an important part of the empowerment process suggested in the current study.

Given the interpersonal nature of building relationships with allies, it is important for both parties to learn skills that will facilitate the relationship, and to identify past personal patterns that may limit the relationship. Individuals can learn skills to facilitate the process of selecting, developing, and maintaining alliances. For the optimal creation of learning situations, individuals may want to be pro-active in initiating some of these relationships. Additionally, individuals need to be alert so that they can recognize and maximize chance opportunities that are extended to them by allies.

In the course of their development, people not only access allies, but become allies themselves. As people develop expertise, influence, and confidence they become more able to help a variety of others, some with less expertise than themselves. Dalton, Thompston, and Price (1977) suggested that the following developmental career stages occur within organizations: Apprentice, colleague, mentor, and sponsor. The various relations that people develop have the potential to be mutually beneficial. The person being assisted has the opportunity be supported in his or her development. The person assisting has the opportunity contribute. "Each individual experiences acceptance and confirmation of self-worth through interaction with the other" (Kram, 1987, p. 163).

Follow the Path with Heart

One of the desired outcomes of career building is to encourage people to live more meaningful lives by engaging in what they love to do; that is, to find/create and respond to their calling. In order to encourage themselves and others to engage in meaningful work, practitioners need to undertake, and help their clients undertake, the process of acquiring self-knowledge; that is, identifying their values, beliefs, interests, and so on.

Self-knowledge, however, is not simply a process of listing traits. Learning about oneself is more active and developmental in nature. People modify values, interests, and beliefs as they gain life experience. For example, an individual may imagine that s/he would like to engage in a certain occupation, such as graphic design -- that s/he would enjoy the freedom of being self-employed and being able to draw and design for a living. Entering this occupation brings the realization that being a graphic designer also means working when the customer demands it, which may be on short notice and include working evenings and weekends. Being self-employed means running a small business where there is a lot of accounting and record-keeping to be done. Having engaged in this occupation for some time, s/he becomes clearer about what aspects of the business are appealing and what aspects impede work enjoyment. S/he now needs to consider ways to overcome the barriers to maintain satisfaction (for example, by hiring an account manager or entering into a partnership

so that the work load can be shared.)

Following the path with heart means allowing one self to dream. This is how many organizational think tanks work. Initially all ideas are accepted. Only at a later step is the feasibility of the project *at this particular time* brought into the discussion. This is a difficult task for most people as they tend to prematurely constrain themselves with perceived realities, such as "The economy's bad" or "I'd never be able to do that." By doing so they may create artificial barriers.

In addition to having the capacity to dream, people need the confidence to risk. The need for confidence points to the importance of developing self-esteem and a belief in one's self-efficacy. Individuals can learn to minimize risk taking, for example, by discerning degrees of risk and equipping themselves by gathering information, developing skills and knowledge, utilizing allies and support networks, and having back-up plans in place.

Following the path with heart is about finding and/or creating meaning in one's life. Meaning can be viewed as both structural and contextual (Magnusson, 1992). Structural meaning refers to "relatively enduring characteristics of the individual, such as interest patterns, value and belief systems, and general personality traits" (Magnusson, 1992, p. 15). For example, a person who values the wilderness may find structural meaning in working for an environmental group. Contextual meaning refers to "meaning that is derived from the context of one's immediate circumstances" (Magnusson, 1992, p. 15). For example, during a recession, a person may take a job that holds little structural meaning, but provides contextual meaning in that it pays the rent.

Practitioners often need to help clients satisfy their contextual needs before they can help them pursue their structural needs. It is not, however, always a matter of choosing one type of meaning over another. For example, in the case of the graphic designer, s/he was able to address contextual barriers to allow for greater structural meaning. Or, practitioners may encourage clients to create opportunities for structural meaning in other parts of their lives, for example, through recreational or volunteer activities. Given changing work conditions and changing occupational structures, it is increasingly important to find/create meaning outside of our work settings.

Organizational practices, too, can facilitate following the path with heart. For example, when employees are involved in developing the organizational mission and mandate, they have an opportunity to create an organization that aligns with their values and beliefs. Additionally, giving people a choice of projects to work on supports structural meaning. When practitioners design training programs or career building interventions, it becomes important to assess the needs of the individuals for whom the interventions are designed, so that training is meaningful. This suggests that training programs may be most effective when they are tailored to suit participants' needs.

Focus on the Journey

Traditional career development models are typically rational and linear in nature. The emphasis is on setting a goal and following a lock-step set of procedures aimed toward meeting the goal. This strategy focuses on an end-point, a destination so to speak, which is

usually the choice of an educational training program, a job, or an occupation.

Many messages are engrained within this perspective. Influenced by societal norms, well-intentioned others encourage youth, for example, to make decisions about their future occupations between the ages of 13 to 17, to pursue their post-secondary education, and then find long-term work in an occupational field -- a process no longer appropriate for the current labour market and rate of change. Additionally, individuals' career paths are rarely so linear. Those that do follow this rigidly structured path may find that they have foreclosed their identity too soon in life and/or limited their life opportunities, particularly in the face of transforming economic realities.

Changing the message from "focus on the destination" to "focus on the journey" suggests the importance of adaptability in creating, responding to, and learning from one's life situations.

> *Always starting with clear objectives discourages a person from making choices that lead to new experiences. New experiences help develop new information, new values, new goals, and new wants. Being uncertain about goals and wants leads to new discoveries. (Gelatt, 1989, p. 254)*

Remaining open-minded and being willing to take risks allows individuals to optimize opportunities, a skill that is becoming increasingly important in "the age of change" (Beck, 1992; Gelatt, 1989). In contrast to other models of decision making that aim toward certainty, Gelatt (1989) suggested that one of the biggest skills decision makers of the future will need is a positive outlook in the face of uncertainty. He further suggested that reflection, imagination, and creativity may become individuals' most important decision-making skills.

Decision making, therefore, is not necessarily a process where individuals begin by assuming they know what they want and then proceed to aim for a steadfast course to attain *this* goal or reach *this* destination. Instead, decision making can be a journey that allows individuals to re-plot their course and re-shape their goals many times.

> *Most people's life decisions are influenced by both choice and chance. The wide variability in individual career patterns is caused by this interaction [between a changing individual and multiple changing contexts] and, in large part, influenced by the ability of the individual to control, cope with, and learn from unexpected changes, either internal or contextual. (Cabral & Salomone, 1990, pp. 8-9)*

Chance does not necessarily imply an absence of control. Planfulness, preparedness, and an ability to recognize and optimize chance or unplanned events increases one's ability to control, interpret, and respond to these (Bandura, 1986; Cabral & Salomone, 1990; Krumboltz, 1976). This view, and a recognition of the increasingly rapid rate of change and unpredictability of one's future, suggests the need for career decision-making practices that help individuals to accept and deal with change and ambiguity (Gelatt, 1989).

The Development of Professionalism

The development of professionalism includes the acquisition of skill and knowledge. Common professional development sources that practitioners use to increase their skill and knowledge include journals, seminars, workshops, and conferences. Involvement in professional activities of this nature are sometimes used as indicators of the behavioral component of professionalism (Jorde-Bloom, 1989). A greater degree of engagement in professional activities is thought to indicate a greater degree of professionalism.

Although most people would agree that these activities contribute to their professionalism, the results of the present study suggest that there are other essential dimensions of professional development to consider. Perhaps as important as the number of articles practitioners read and conferences they attend are the strategies they use to maintain and enhance already held skills, and to *integrate* newly gained knowledge into their daily practices.

To optimize the development of professionalism, it seems important for practitioners to set learning intentions. This can be done in a variety of ways, for example, by analyzing learning needs and setting directions for learning. Practitioners can also set more *meaningful* learning intentions by embedding their professional development within the context of the life/career plans, for example, by asking: In what direction do I want to develop short-term? longer-term? In terms of knowledge? skills? interests? future life/career paths/opportunities?

To empower themselves in the professional development process, practitioners must take responsibility for their learning and not assume that it is the responsibility of others or the organization they work for to orchestrate their professional development activities. Practitioners need to understand that what they invest in their professional development in the way of time, money, and effort has the potential to become a personal asset that will remain with them for the duration of their life/career. When practitioners assume responsibility for their learning, the need for professional development strategies and models that promote both self-analysis and self-initiation becomes paramount.

Participants in the present study indicate that feedback from respected others is important to their skill integration, particularly as they face new learning situations: It helps practitioners to recognize their strengths and to set future learning intentions. When practitioners take the initiative to select someone whose feedback they respect, they may increase their receptivity to feedback.

Given the developmental nature of professionalism, practitioners need different types of feedback, depending on their developmental level, the type of learning they are trying to integrate, and the context they are working in. For example, individuals' needs may vary from intensive one-on-one supervision, to peer supervision, to consulting with another. Ultimately, however, practitioners must work toward self-analysis of their work, particularly as their specialization and expertise increase -- and there are fewer people with the ability to critique their work.

Perhaps because they are abstruse and difficult to measure, strategies to support the growth of professional and personal qualities (such as honesty, integrity,

congruence, commitment, flexibility and adaptability, reframing mistakes or negative experiences as opportunities for learning) that reflect a practitioner's interior dimension are missing from most discussions of the development of professionalism. Yet, this dimension is central to an individual's professionalism.

One strategy that practitioners can use to facilitate interior learning is reflection on the effectiveness of their practices that encompasses contemplating and clarifying their values and beliefs. Other strategies practitioners can engage in include discussions of focal issues, perhaps with people in their relationship constellations; therapy/counselling; journalling; positive self-talk; and so on. Which strategies people choose will depend in part on their confidence level, needs, available resources, and familiarity and comfort with a particular strategy.

The research participants also suggested that contributing to the field is a way to develop professionalism. Contributing requires a willingness of practitioners to share what they have learned and to give something back to the field, for example through research and development, speaking at conferences, engaging in professional training, advocating, and mentoring. To contribute effectively, practitioners may need to develop a different set of competencies, for example, speaking skills, program delivery skills, writing, and research skills that are not directly related to their area of practice.

So far, I have been addressing the development of professionalism as occurring within the context of one's work. Research participants, indicated, however, that the development of their professionalism was often rooted in early sources of inspiration, beginning in childhood, continuing through the teen years, and following them into their early work positions. They were influenced, for example, by others who demonstrated qualities they admired and saw as displays of professionalism.

I suggest that this may indicate the need to expose youth to work settings and favourable role models early in life and to continue this integrative exposure throughout the school years. This may serve to ease the transition between school and work for adolescents, a currently topical area in the literature. As one research participant reflects:

> *If one were trying to teach professionalism -- if we want to inspire children to learn -- you would think our schools would have more integration or let the kids come to work and see it. We stifle that curiosity with kids -- it's a natural curiosity -- who we work with, where. To understand it, you have to be exposed to it. A lot of people I've talked to had no idea about what the stresses were for their parents. When we talk about professionalism we need to ask, "When do people develop these skills?" It has to begin in their childhood. Yet, we isolate them from work completely until they're finished school and then expect them to walk through that maze with no transitional problems. We say, "You just don't have the right attitude" but maybe it's because they don't have the opportunity to see those concepts in action.*

Organizational Structure

Research participants in the current study indicated that access to decision making; the opportunity to shape their work situations to align with their values, beliefs, interests, and strengths; and the freedom to utilize their talents facilitated their professionalism. This suggests the importance of creating work settings/organizational environments that support the development of professionalism. The current organizational trend toward continuous learning aligns with the alternative paradigm of professionalism.

The concept of learning organizations is a relatively new one; it is in the process of being explored and created. Underlying most definitions of a learning organization, however, is the notion of a dynamic organizational culture that supports continuous learning. Peter Senge (1990), author of the best seller, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, is one of the more notable writers in this area. Influenced by David Bohm, Senge suggested that it is important to destroy the illusion that the world is made up of "separate, unrelated forces" that people can piece together to make a whole.

> *When we give up this illusion -- we can then build "learning organizations," organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (p. 3)*

Senge (1990) based his portrayal of learning organizations on the concept of discipline, a word whose Latin root means "to learn." Used this way, discipline suggests a developmental path that allows the best in people to be "drawn out." According to Senge, five disciplines are necessary for learning organizations to sustain themselves: Systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning.

Systems thinking is the cornerstone of the five disciplines. It encourages people to see the whole, as well as the interrelationship between the five disciplines. *Personal mastery* is an individual's continual clarification of his or her personal vision -- the elucidation of what is important to him or her, what s/he cares about, is passionate about. It forms the "spiritual foundation" of the organization. *Mental models* are the world views, the biases, the assumptions that individuals hold. Continual learning requires individuals to be willing to "expose" their thinking and to reflect on how their views influence their actions in the world. *Visions* provide the foundation for commitment by the individuals in a learning organization. They cannot be dictated from the top down, but must continually be developed with input from all organizational members. *Collaborative team learning* allows individuals to work and learn together. Dialogue, or a genuine flow and interchange of ideas is at the heart of team learning. Collective ideas greater than any one individual contribution often result from this type of exchange.

Learning organizations support not only reactive or adaptive learning, but also generative learning, where individuals learn about things that they care deeply about: A learning organization is seen as "a group of people continually enhancing their capacity to create what they want to create" (Senge, 1990). Members at all levels are involved in learning, expanding, and shaping both their future as well as the organizations'. Mistakes are

seen as opportunities for learning. Employees are empowered as they are encouraged to think for themselves; they are given the authority to take action, to innovate, to make improvements. Further, they are not expected to do this alone. Generally, people are assigned to work teams or task forces that last for the duration of a project. In a learning organization individuals continually increase their capability and adaptability. At the same time the capability and the adaptability of the organization expands, too.

Professional Associations

It is established practice for a "professional" occupation to be governed by an association, which is typically involved in determining ethical guidelines, establishing training schools, and attaining licensure for its members that allows the profession to hold a monopoly of its services (R. H. Hall, 1975). When considering the role that a professional organization should play, it is important to address its intended outcome. Should the purpose of a professional organization of career development be to promote movement of the occupation toward an ideal model of the professions? Or should the purpose of an organization be to promote the professionalism of its members? The first outcome, movement toward a profession, suggests the promotion of practices based on the rational, objective natural scientific paradigm. According to the results of this research, the second outcome -- movement toward professionalism -- suggests the promotion of practices based on an ecological paradigm. It is my belief that changing beliefs and practices, both within the field of career development and the world in general suggest that the latter outcome is more appropriate.

Professional associations often focus on licensing and disciplining their members. However, many professional groups are dissatisfied with their professional assessment procedures. McGaghie (1991) specified five reasons for this:

1. Professional assessment tends to focus on measuring the knowledge base of practitioners. The procedure is used because of its tradition, ease of measurement, and psychometric technology.

2. There are measurement problems associated with professional assessment, including issues of validity.

3. There is little direct assessment of practical skills.

4. Professional assessment usually measures a narrow range of applied skills. In contrast, professional practice is complex, and involves "judgment, tact, physical endurance, and tenacity" (p. 4) in addition to specialized skills.

5. Minimal attention is given to the assessment of qualities such as "honesty, judgment, work habits, maturity, psychological stability, and adaptive capacities" (p. 4).

The dissatisfaction of these professional groups is well founded. The results of the current research suggest that a core knowledge base is essential for practitioners to have, but that qualities such as honesty, acting with tact, displaying adaptability, and using discernment are also essential to professionalism. The association needs to facilitate the empowerment of

and relations between the practitioner, the other (colleagues, clients), and the field. More specifically, the professional association needs to create a learning culture that facilitates the development of not only a core knowledge base, but the embodiment of learning through contextual skill development and inner learning.

In determining the role of the organization in facilitating learning, several tensions need to be addressed, for example, between:

1. Autonomy and control: How much control should the professional association have over practitioners? How responsive will the association be to its membership? For example, how involved will members be in setting and re-visiting the vision? in providing input for the development and ongoing evaluation and adjustment of organizational strategies? Should the organizational mandate include ongoing competence evaluation? If so, who will determine the nature of the competencies -- the organization? the practitioner?

If the organization mandates the competencies, they may not reflect current practices or be relevant to a practitioner's work context, particularly if the practitioner's work is in an innovative area. However, leaving the determination of competencies to individual practitioners would require them to be familiar with the latest developments in the field. This may be difficult for some practitioners, for example, who work in isolated areas, who have limited resources, and/or who have limited time to continually search for new developments.

2. Theory and practice: Both theory and application through practice are important to professionalism. Members of professional organizations need to ask: To what extent should practitioner education/training focus on theory? on practice? The same needs to be asked of practitioners in the field. Is there a need for greater integration of theory and practice in both academic and work settings? How can this be facilitated?

3. Constancy and fluidity: There is a need for some constancy within an organization, for example, in the organizational mandate; guidelines that suggest appropriate ways of practising (e.g., guidelines for counseling women); and strategies to promote professionalism (e.g., orchestrated networking.) There must also, however, be a mechanism to allow for the evolution of these dimensions that corresponds to changes in the field. That is, organizational structures and practices need to reflect the evolution of skills, knowledge, and attitudes and their implications for practice.

Future Research

The current research study indicates several areas for further research. The following suggestions are not exhaustive, but are meant to stimulate thought and indicate future research potentials.

1. The notion of creativity is an underlying thread to the discussion of professionalism. Research participants spoke of a variety of dimensions of creativity, for example, the creation of Self through work, the creation or structuring of a work environment, and the creation of innovations and future directions for the field. It would be fruitful to explore the following questions: What is the *nature* of creativity in relation to professionalism? What *role* does creativity play in professionalism? Is it important to *facilitate* creativity in practitioners? If so, what *strategies* can be used to facilitate the various dimensions of creativity?

2. In the implications section I suggested strategies, such as accessing relationship constellations, that practitioners could use to facilitate the development of their professionalism. Further research should be carried out to see if these interventions are appropriate and effective. One could also ask if their effectiveness would increase if (a) these strategies are presented in the form of a comprehensive, pragmatic model of professional development that organizes these strategies; (b) an accompanying training program is delivered with the model; and (c) if the organization takes an active role in supporting the model.

3. In the implications section I suggested that different organizational environments, such as learning organizations, hold the potential to facilitate the development of professionalism. One could compare the development of professionalism within traditional organizations and learning organizations.

4. The overlap and tension between the personal and the professional was noted in this study. One could ask: What personal needs must be met to facilitate the development of individuals' professionalism? What structures and strategies can be put in place to support this process?

5. Research participants indicated the importance of key influences on their development. One could undertake longitudinal studies to determine the effect that interventions such as integrated work/school programs, peer support programs, and structured mentorship programs have on individuals' professionalism in later years.

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APPENDIX A
FORMS AND CORRESPONDENCE

What follows is a general guide to the forms and correspondence I used throughout the research process. I modified each letter slightly, depending on my familiarity with the research participant and the unique contextual circumstances that surrounded each research participant. The participants' release agreement was a standard form that I used with each participant. In addition to the correspondence contained here, I also sent cards or contacted participants by phone, as necessary, to keep them informed of the research process.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Date:

Dear :

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta. My area of research is exploring the question "What is the meaning of professionalism?" I am choosing to investigate this question with organizational/career development practitioners.

Through my initial review of the literature in this area I recognized that the term "professionalism" is often defined and used in a narrow and confining way, without reflection on its nature. My own life experiences and discussions with others have led me to believe that there is more to professionalism than is typically presented in the literature.

Thus, the purpose of my study is to put aside popular conceptions of professionalism and to use open ended interviews to explore this phenomenon -- to understand it from the "inside," so to speak. I hope to bring the concept of professionalism to life by placing it within a context of individuals' life-stories. Looked at from another perspective, this process is a way of defining professionalism by going to the source and interviewing those who exemplify this phenomenon.

Through my inquiries with other individuals involved in helping occupations, you were identified as a person who "truly" manifests professionalism. For this reason, I am particularly interested in interviewing you -- to hear your life experiences of professionalism, its development, and what it means to you. If you agree to participate in the study, your anonymity will be retained, if you so desire.

Based on my pilot studies, I expect that we will to meet for two to five interviews, each approximately one and a half to two hours in length. The interviews will take place over a series of months, being interspersed with the analysis of the data I collect. If you agree to participate in this research project by engaging in a series of interview, I will be more than willing to meet with you at your choice of location and at times that are convenient for you.

The research process will provide you an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of professionalism. This may result in increased self-awareness regarding this notion. Additionally, the written text resulting from the research has the potential to increase motivation or thoughtfulness among other professionals or aspiring professionals, and to broaden the way professionalism is depicted in the literature.

I recognize that this introduction provides only a vague overview of the research study, and that you will probably want additional information before deciding whether to become a research participant. To answer any questions that you might have, I will telephone you on _____. If you wish to contact me, my number is (H) (403) 452-8379.

I look forward to talking with you regarding your potential involvement in my research study.

Sincerely,

Marnie Robb

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Date:

Dear :

Thank you for your interest in my doctoral research project. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study. The intentions of this letter are to review the purpose for and the format of the research, and to attain signed consent for your participation in this research project.

In the completed project, I hope to portray the essence of professionalism as it is provided to me through your life experiences. In the interviews, I will ask you to: (1) recall specific incidents in your life related to your experiences of professionalism and then (2) discuss with me the meanings of these experiences. I am seeking to create a "verbal portrait" of professionalism, one that will allow readers an "inner glance" of this construct. Thus, I am predominately pursuing vivid descriptions of professionalism -- your depiction of experiences of professionalism, including your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and the setting (places, events, and people) connected with your experiences. You may also wish to share other media through which you have recorded your experiences and/or development of professionalism, such as journals, metaphors, poems, or art.

The data you provide during the interview will be subject to thematic analysis and used to support the themes that arise. During this part of the research process I may consult with another researcher to assist in interpretation. Before this consultation occurs, however, I will remove all identifying information from your interview transcript. When I am interpreting the data, I may confer with you from time to time to gather your additional interpretations of the data. This is a part of the anticipated five interview sessions and <u>not</u> "in addition to."

I value your participation in my study, and thank you for your willingness to share both your time and your stories. If you have further questions regarding the study or the signing of the consent form, please call me at (403)452-8379.

Sincerely,

Marnie Robb

PARTICIPANT RELEASE AGREEMENT

Researcher: Marnie Robb
Doctoral Student, Department of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta
492-5245

Advisor: Dr. Rob Short
Professor, Department of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta
492-5245

I agree to participate in the research study that addresses the question "What is professionalism?" as described in the attached narrative.

I understand the purpose and nature of this study, and that the contents of my interview will be a primary source of data.

I grant permission for this data to be used in the process of completing a Ph.D. degree, including a dissertation and any other future publications.

I understand that, unless I otherwise give written permission, my name will not be disclosed at any time and that other potentially identifying demographic information will not be used.

I understand that the interviews will be taped and transcribed verbatim (subject to the previous condition) and give my permission for this.

I understand that I am free to ask questions about the research and to expect them to be answered explicitly.

I understand that the research will require a series of interviews; that is, about five one and a half to two hour sessions, spread over a period of a few months.

I understand that I am free to refuse to answer specific questions, to disclose specific information, and to withdraw from the study at any time.

_____
Research Participant

_____
Date

REQUEST FOR MEMBER CHECK

Date:

Dear :

At last!! I have completed my written interpretation on professionism to be used in my Ph. D. dissertation. The purpose of the interpretation is to "open up" and explore the question, What is professionalism? including the experience of professionalism, the development of professionalism, and the meaning of professionalism.

The data that I used to explore the question came from the following sources:
* conversational interviews with yourself and three other practitioners (this was the main data source)
* a validator, who critiqued the themes and concepts that arose from the conversational interviews
* my own lived experiences
* written protocols from career development practitioners, as well as some of my students
* participant observations
* etymological meanings of words, as well as current meanings of key words and their roots
* literature, including related phenomenological descriptions, books, articles, and poetry
* movies, as suggested by research participants

I have enclosed a copy of the resulting "hermeneutic phenomenological" interpretation. I would appreciate it if you could read this text to ensure that I used your stories appropriately. I have enclosed a questionnaire so that you can provide me with feedback on: (a) the conversational interviews, in which you told me your stories surrounding professionalism, and (b) the written interpretation of professionalism that I have enclosed.

It has been about a year and a half since I conducted my first interview on professionalism. The conversations that I held with you and other research participants had a profound influence on me. Inspired by our conversational moments, I have spent many hours reflecting on what I believe in, what is important to me, and the avenues I would like to pursue and create in my lifework. Through this process, I have also learned the importance of being much gentler with and accepting of myself.

Thank you for the time and effort that you donated to this project and the care with which you did so. I truly appreciate your contribution.

Marnie Robb