Teacher Unionism and Teacher Professionalization:

A Qualitative Case Study of Alberta Charter School Teachers

by

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Abstract

Publicly funded charter schools in Alberta were created by the Alberta legislature in 1994. The stated rationale for charter schools was that parents and students needed more choice within the public education system (Alberta Education, 2011). However, at the time that charter schools were being established, the legislative structures did not provide charter school teachers with automatic membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). Subsequent to 1994, in five Alberta charter schools, teachers voted to join the ATA to bargain collective agreements with their school boards. I was interested in how charter school teachers' sense of professionalism was or was not influenced by becoming ATA members.

My qualitative case study investigated the relationship between Alberta charter school teachers' unionizing and how this impacted upon professionalization. Data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers drawn from 5 unionized charter schools. Interviews were augmented by reviewing the collective agreements between the ATA and these charter school boards. Strauss' (1978) negotiated order theory was the theoretical lens through which I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data. Negotiated order theory provided a framework for gaining insight into how social worlds are constructed over time by considering the direct negotiations between the teachers, the negotiations at the bargaining table with the school board and ATA present, and by the interplay of both of these phenomena was influenced by broader macroscopic structures such as legislation.

The findings of my study suggest that: (a) unionization was perceived as a mechanism by which charter school teachers earned public status and respect as professionals; (b) formal organization through unions established a more secure employment relationship for charter school teachers; and (c) unionizing solidified charter school teachers as a collective body of

professionals. This study contributes to knowledge about the compatibility of unionism and professionalization as it relates to the occupation of teaching, an area of study that has not been deeply explored.

Key words: *Qualitative case study, collective bargaining, charter schools, teacher unionism, teacher professionalization, negotiated order theory*, *social constructionism, semi-structured interviews*

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Lisa Meredith Everitt. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Teacher Unionism and Teacher Professionalization: A Qualitative Case Study of Alberta Charter School Teachers", No. Pro00057748, May 16, 2016. No part of this thesis has previously been published.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the public-school teachers in my family, particularly my grandmother who was a founding member of the Beaver County Local ATA, my father who was a member of Calgary Public Teachers Local No. 38, and my mother who was a member of Calgary Separate School Local No. 55 and a current member of the Alberta Retired Teachers Association. I am grateful for their leadership in the teaching profession and their example to me. I stand on the shoulders of those who came before me.

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Chapter One: Charter Schools and the Research Question

In 1994, Alberta charter schools were created through an act of legislation, introduced by the Honorable Halvar Johnson and subsequently passed by the legislature. The establishment of charter schools made "Alberta the first province in Canada to take such a bold initiative" (Alberta Education, 2011, p. 1). What, then, is a charter school within the context of Alberta? According to the *Alberta School Act* (2014), Section 35, charter schools may be formed when the following conditions are met:

1. There is significant parental or community support for the school,
2. The school is offering a unique, non-religious program which the local public school board refuses to offer,
3. The school follows Alberta programs of study, and
4. The charter of the school is approved by the Minister of Education (the Minister).

In Alberta, once a charter school is approved by the Minister, students are funded in the same fashion as public, separate, and francophone schools all of which are referred to as public schools. Despite the government of Alberta stating that charter schools are public, there are significant differences between public schools and charter schools in areas such as governance, accountability, and staffing. It is the differences that emerged for charter school teachers that gave rise to this study.

One of the key differences for charter school teachers compared to public school teachers is membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association (the ATA). Public school teachers are automatically active members of the ATA when they sign a contract of employment or substitute teach, whereas charter school teachers are excluded from active membership under the *Alberta Teaching Profession Act* (2012). The decision not to include charter school teachers as active

members of the ATA in the decision-making process that 1994 legislators engaged in meant charter school teachers became the figurative little cousins of public school teachers. Often in Alberta, charter school teachers are paid less, are left with less ability to enforce the terms of their employment, and are required to work in more challenging conditions than public school teachers (Ritchie, 2010; Shaker, 1998). Rather than accept the status quo in terms of their employment conditions and membership in the ATA, charter school teachers in five Alberta charter schools decided to utilize the provisions of the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014) and voted to join the ATA and form bargaining units. Once the bargaining units were formed, charter school teachers, with the assistance of the ATA acting as their bargaining agent, began to exercise their collective voice to negotiate conditions of professional practice with their school boards. Since the ATA agreed to act as the bargaining agent for the charter school teachers, those groups of teachers now have formalized a relationship with the ATA.

Being a unionized member of the ATA raises many questions about what this means for charter school teachers. This study examined the connection between teacher unionism and the professionalization of charter school teachers. The primary research question was '*What is the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization in the context of unionized charter schools in Alberta?*' Questions that flow from the primary question are as follows:

1. How does a collective agreement reflect the relationship between union function and professional function? How does this evolve over time?
2. How do political, economic, and legislative factors impact the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?
3. How does the social context of the charter school influence the relationship between

unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?

To better define the primary research question, it is helpful to consider that teacher unionism is when a group of teachers, all employees of the same school board, vote to unionize to negotiate a collective agreement that codifies their terms and conditions of employment (Price, 2011). Teacher professionalization refers to the process where teachers act collectively, through a professional organization, to establish and enforce codes of conduct and practice, standards of training, and build public trust for the work of teachers (Wilensky, 1964). The nature of the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalism is not agreed upon by scholars, and this study adds insight into and understanding of this relationship from the point of view of unionized charter school teachers. The epistemological position of this study is social constructionism and the theoretical lens utilized to analyze these data is Anselm Strauss' (1978) negotiated order theory. The methodology employed for this research was a qualitative case study that featured semi-structured interviews with unionized charter school teachers as the primary source of data as well as a document review analyzing charter school collective agreements as a secondary source of data.

Significance of the Study

To assist in informing the research questions for this study, I examined the literature on teacher unionism and its relationship to teachers' professional status by searching various databases, mining reference lists of different publications, and drawing from readings in my classes at the University of Alberta. In scanning the literature and writing the literature review for this proposal, I was able to identify a small body of work from various disciplines of study that address the relationship between unionism and professional status. However, I found that most of the scholarship was conceptual in nature. A key theme I identified in reviewing the

literature was the perception that being a member of a profession is not consistent with being a member of a union. The question most commonly echoed by authors on the subject is; how does union interest, which may be perceived to be a self-serving endeavor, align with the professional mandate of serving the greater good (Larson, 2014; Ravitch, 2010; Wilensky, 1964). In addition to conceptual writings, I was able to locate one empirical study that examined the linkages between professional status and unionism for social workers. This large-scale quantitative study, based on structured personal interviews, was completed by Dr. Ernie Lightman of the University of Toronto in 1982. In the interviews, social workers were asked to "give their general perceptions of the compatibility of unionization and professionalization" (Lightman, 1982, p. 131). Lightman found that "the overall conclusion of this study is that the literature and popular perceptions that unionization and professionalization are incompatible are not supported by empirical evidence" (p. 141).

My research builds on the work of Lightman (1982), but rather than use a quantitative approach to understand the connections between unionization and professionalization as described by charter school teachers in Alberta, I have chosen a qualitative approach. To explore the linkages between teacher unionism and professional status, this study focused on the case of unionized charter school teachers, gathering data through interviews with the teachers as well as comparing their collective agreements to public school collective agreements. This project is unique because it is housed within the context of charter schools in Alberta and at this time, there is very little in the Canadian education policy studies literature that examines the employment contexts of charter school teachers who unionize. Most of the research efforts associated with Alberta charter schools tend to emphasize how the charter schools represent school choice for parents, how charter schools are innovative in their delivery of education, and pedagogical

approaches of charter schools (Bosetti & Butterfield, 2016; Bosetti, Van Pelt, & Allison, 2017; Thompson, Gereluk, & Kowch, 2016). In addition, as charter schools have not been in operation for a long time relative to public schools the lack of formal research about the unionization of charter school teachers is not surprising. For this study, it was advantageous to have a shorter bargaining timeline than public schools because many of the participants had a living memory of what it was like to unionize and negotiate a first collective agreement at their charter schools.

Finally, this study is situated within an Alberta context which is unique within Canada because, unlike the majority of its Canadian sister organizations, the ATA performs both college and union functions for public school teachers. When charter school teachers in Alberta decided to unionize and join the ATA, the monitoring and enforcement of professional standards – i.e., the college function – for the charter school teachers remained under the auspices of the Alberta government. This meant that the teacher organizational structures for charter school teachers were more reflective of other Canadian teacher organizations. The implication for this study is that a close examination of how charter school teachers articulated their unionism in relation to their professional lives and how this may or may not intersect with the college function of the ATA is possible.

At this point, it is helpful to contextualize the Alberta context in relation to other Canadian teacher organizations. In reviewing websites of various Canadian teacher organizations, I noted similarities and differences between the ATA and other provincial and territorial teacher organizations. For example, all provincial and territorial teacher organizations in Canada represent teachers working in the public education sector for the purposes of collective bargaining. In other words, all Canadian teacher organizations at the provincial and territorial levels act as unions. That said, collective bargaining varies in its format across the country:

some teacher organizations bargain locally with school boards (for example, Manitoba), others bargain a single collective agreement for all teachers with a central employer bargaining authority or with the provincial government (for example, New Brunswick), while other provinces enact a bi-level bargaining structure where central and local bargaining are combined (for example, Saskatchewan). The authorizing legislation enabling teacher organizations to collectively bargain in Canada also varies, some provinces have separate legislation for teacher bargaining while others cover teacher bargaining under the provincial labor relations code. In the case of the Alberta charter school teachers, collective bargaining is housed exclusively under the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014) and, consequently, there are no restrictions on the scope of collective bargaining in Alberta. In addition, while principals and central office teachers are excluded from teacher organizations (for example, British Columbia) the *Alberta Teaching Profession Act* (2012) includes all certificated teachers, except Superintendents, in active membership automatically. This means that school leaders and most central office leaders are included in collective agreements in Alberta. The unified nature of the profession, including principals and most central office teachers, also exists with unionized charter school teachers. The implication is that school principals and central office teachers cannot apply teacher collective agreements, that is the responsibility of school boards and any disputes arising between the ATA and a school board will be dealt with at the board level not the school level. This differs from other provinces such as British Columbia or Ontario where principals are not part of teacher collective agreements and therefore disputes around the application of a collective agreement will emerge directly from school sites in those provinces.

Where the ATA varies from all other provincial and territorial teacher organizations is in the area of enforcement of standards of practice and codes of conduct. For public school

teachers, the ATA disciplines its own members in terms of conduct and standards of practice. This stands in contrast with other Canadian teacher organizations because in other provinces and territories, teacher discipline and standards of practice are enforced by a teachers' college or by provincial ministries of education. Where Alberta public school teachers are found guilty of serious offenses, their membership in the ATA may be suspended or cancelled and there will be a corresponding recommendation for suspension or cancellation of their certification to Alberta Education. When a teaching certificate is cancelled or suspended, all education ministries across Canada are notified. In this sense, the macro-political structures in Canada operate to protect the public from teachers who should not be practicing, and this helps enforce, on a nation-wide basis, the notion that teachers must uphold specific standards of practice and codes of conduct. In addition to well-developed structural (Strauss, 1978, pp. 98-99) features in Canada to ensure competent teachers, and notwithstanding the differences between provincial and territorial teacher organizations, Bascia (2015) noted that "unions have been providing a wealth of informal and nonformal professional learning programs for teachers for decades" (p. 5) thereby supporting the efforts of teachers' colleges and education ministries to advance teaching as a profession. It is against this complex national and provincial regulatory framework that this study holds potential to provide insight into how charter school teachers conceptualized the ATA, acting solely as a union, in terms of their professional lives.

The relevance of this study arises within the broader context of what charter schools have come to represent on the education policy landscape—a way to privatize schools using full public funding and a way to diminish teacher unions through the hiring of non-unionized charter school teachers (Kachur, 1999; Ravitch, 2010; Shaker, 1998). The study is helpful both domestically, in Alberta, and potentially in other countries where charter schools have been

introduced because it informs charter school boards, charter school teachers, and the education policy community about teacher unionism and its relationship to professionalization here in Alberta.

Epistemological Position

Philosophers have argued for millennia about what constitutes truth and knowledge. Philosophers ask, is it the senses that provide us with what we need to know about the world? Is the world *out there* to be discovered? Does knowledge exist only in the mind of the subject? This study does not purport to answer these longstanding philosophical questions. What is important for this study is that my world view of sense making be explicit to provide foundation for the data analysis and the explication of my findings. My academic training and professional life experiences led me to identify that my epistemological position is located between objectivism and subjectivism. I have long been intrigued by how our social worlds evolve and the complexity under which social order is constituted and reconstituted. For example, as a classroom teacher, I had a semester where I taught two sections of Pure Mathematics 10, and during that semester, I experienced an injury where I could not lift my arm to write on the whiteboard. Consequently, I used overheads to engage with students about key mathematical ideas and examples. In theory, I could have used the overheads from my morning class in the afternoon class. In attempting to do this, I found that it was not possible. Upon reflection after school, I realized that this was because the explanations I was working through depended on my interactions with students and upon their input and questions. We were co-constructing the evolution of each class with the content of the curriculum acting as a structural feature that assisted in learning. The students and I were engaged in the act of creating the social order for our classes. Crotty (1998) wrote that the social construction of knowledge was that, “meanings

are thus at once objective and subjective, their objectivity and subjectivity being indissolubly bound up with each other" (p. 48). In my example, the curriculum of mathematics, a fixed object, and the students and myself, through our interactions, combined to create learning experiences that were distinct within every class of students I got to teach. This example helps explain why I chose social constructionism as an epistemological position, and it gives some insight as to what my lived experience of social constructionism is, but further explanation is clearly required.

Burr (2003) explained that social constructionism is a way of theorizing about social life, but that there is not "one feature which could be said to identify a social constructionist position" (p. 2). Burr (2003) and Lock and Strong (2012) explain that there are a family of characteristics that define social constructionist epistemology. First, social constructionist epistemology privileges meaning making and social interactions as being central components of human activity. Second, social constructionism recognizes that understanding is contingent upon and situated within historical and cultural contexts. Finally, social constructionism takes a critical stance recognizing that there are actors operating from differential bases of power within society.

As a researcher, I applied social constructionism throughout my study, starting with the methods I chose to conduct the study. Consequently, the knowledge contribution of this study represents an amalgam of social interactions I had with charter school teachers through interviews and confirmation of the content of those interviews by the participants from this study. In spending time with the teachers and later examining the transcripts, summaries, and charter school collective agreements I was able to make meaning out of and interpret these data to begin to formulate my analysis and findings. However, my interactions were not limited to the data collection and analysis I was conducting; I also interacted heavily with the literature to

attempt to understand the concepts I was identifying in these data to articulate the ideas in a more thoughtfully and with greater understanding of the phenomena I was exploring and constructing knowledge about. Finally, during the writing process of this dissertation, I engaged in several rounds of editing with the advice of my advisors, my supervisory committee, and finally my examining committee. My interactions with more experienced and senior academics caused me to return to the data set and literature with fresh eyes to discover new insights about these data and my role in analyzing and interpreting it. All these interactions had significant weight in creating this document and while I am noted as the author of the document, it represents a composite picture of what my participants told me, my interactions with the literature, and the peer review I received. However, knowledge generation for this study is also situated within particular contexts, that of the charter school teachers and that of myself as researcher and these are important to acknowledge as a constructionist researcher. Within my methodology chapter, I outline my positionality as a researcher to acknowledge my situated nature with this work as well as identify steps I took to disrupt my own patterns of thinking. In addition, to better contemplate and interpret the constitution of the social world of unionized charter school teachers using a scholarly approach, I adopted a theoretical framework consistent with a social constructionist approach. I now turn to how my theoretical framework and social constructionism are complementary to each other and therefore useful in data analysis and interpretation.

Within the theoretical framework for this study, Strauss' (1978) Negotiated Order Theory, I view the social communities of charter schools as being influenced by the historical and structural contexts which shaped the way the teachers interacted with and negotiated the social order within their work. I also viewed charter school teachers as active agents in shaping their relationships with each other and with their school boards. Lastly, the charter school

teachers engaged, via the available legislative features, with unionization to shape their social world around work, thus they took a critical view of how their employment contexts were shaped and acted to change them. For this study, however, I adopted more specific features of social constructionist epistemology relying on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966). The following paragraph outlines their work more specifically.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, theorized that social reality is made by humans who act to objectivize knowledge, using language and symbols forming patterns of behaviors that they term "typifications." Further, Berger and Luckmann stipulated that "social structure is the sum total of these 'typifications' and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them" (p. 32). Berger and Luckmann noted the efficiency of not having to recreate the rules of the social game with every new interaction between actors. They stated that "a large part of the social stock of knowledge consists of recipes for the mastery of routine problems" (p. 40) or what they termed "*mutatis mutandis*." The routinization of social interactions is, in the view of Berger and Luckmann, important for the conduct of everyday life and the construction of social worlds. It is only if there is a problem of some sort that "mutatis mutandis," or social fabric, is disrupted that social order may come into question and may need to be eventually re-formed. Ultimately, Berger and Luckmann noted that "socialization is never completely successful" (p. 98) and that "despite the objectivity that marks the social world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it" (p. 57).

Social constructionism is an appropriate epistemology because the research questions for this study seek to understand how the social worlds of charter school teachers were rearranged when the teachers unionized and joined the ATA. How was the *mutatis mutandis* of the charter

school changed through teacher unionism and how was this related to teacher professionalization? What do collective agreements reveal about the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization? This study, through its main research methods—semi-structured interviews and a documents review—provide insight into how teachers express their thoughts about their conditions of practice at school and how teachers interacted to realize their aspirations. In addition, through interviewing charter school teachers, I was able to examine what a school community of teachers identifies and codifies as being the relationship between unionization and professionalization. There is not an assumption on my part that the relationship between unionization and professional status is stable in nature. As Crotty (1998) pointed out "what constructionism drives home unambiguously is that there is no true or valid interpretation" (p. 47) and that truth or meaning "comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our world" (p. 8).

Finally, social constructionism is a valid epistemological choice because collective bargaining is a communal act. It is a codification of the conditions of practice teachers and school divisions agree to implement in the employment relationship. Clearly, within a collective agreement, an element of public agreement between employees and employer can be found. Bargaining to create a collective agreement is a shared endeavor and it is a process that involves the review and renegotiation of the agreement on a regular basis. Inquiring into the individual and collective experiences alongside the written documents is necessary to obtain the best picture of the relationship between unionization and professional status for charter school teachers and this reflects how charter school teachers make meaning within their social world. The epistemological position is further enhanced by the theoretical position and this will be outlined in the next section.

Theoretical Position

The theoretical position for this research study is Anselm Strauss' (1978) negotiated order theory. Strauss, an American scholar who started his academic life in the Chicago school of sociology, observed that within the context of institutions, individuals act and interact with each other and that these interactions are informed by rules, roles, and social expectations. Strauss also asserted that humans could act to modify or reify their structural environments and indicated that the basis of these modifications was negotiations. Strauss, in an interview, explained that,

> my version of interactionism is an action-oriented model . . . and with the structural things that have to be brought into the picture because they are constraints to action, they are the context in which action takes place—contexts and contingencies. So you have people who, as Blumer says, are very active; sometimes they are passive, but they try to control their destinies. (as cited in Baszanger, 1998, p. 366)

Strauss' comments align with an epistemology of social constructionism. Lock and Strong (2012), while explaining how social constructionism is useful to sociologists, wrote, "people, through their interactions, create the larger social structures that govern their lives. Our core theme here will be familiar: how humans are shaped by their circumstances, yet through resourceful action they can shape such circumstances" (p. 215).

In his work with negotiated order theory, Strauss (1978) emphasized that the functionality of workplaces and organizations are a result of continual negotiations between actors (Baida-Hireche, Pasquero, & Chanlat, 2011; Baszanger, 1998; Fischer & Dirsmith, 1995). Strauss located the underpinnings for his negotiated order theory within the tradition of symbolic interactionism. An interactionist does "not regard meaning as emanating from the intrinsic

makeup of a thing that has meaning, nor does it see meanings as arising through a coalescence of psychological elements in the person. Instead, it sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people" (Blumer, 1969, p. 4). Both symbolic interactionism and negotiated order theory stipulate that actors play an important part in making meaning of their contexts. In addition, according to negotiated order theory, these social meanings are constructed into negotiated agreements which are revisited and re-negotiated over time. These interactions, according to Strauss, form the basis of social order in communities and enable them to function over time. For my research interests, examining the context of unionized charter school teachers, the use of negotiating order theory is helpful because it provides theoretical basis to study teacher unionism and its impact on the social world of the teachers.

Negotiated order theory privileges the centrality of negotiations to understanding social contexts. Fine (1984) wrote "Strauss argued provocatively that all social order is negotiated order: organization is not possible without some form of negotiation" (p. 242). The unionization of charter school teachers and establishment of collective bargaining was the result of several sets of negotiations and consequently, negotiated order theory is a helpful theoretical lens for this study. The sets of negotiations between teachers and later between teachers and school boards created a trajectory of events linked to teacher unionism. Strauss (1993) explained that "I shall use *trajectory* in two ways: (1) the course of any experienced phenomenon as it evolves over time . . . and (2) the actions and interactions contributing to its evolution" (pp. 53–54). The phenomena under examination in this study is charter school teacher unionism and this phenomenon evolved over time and in discrete phases.

The findings of this study were analyzed through the examination of the interactions and events that occurred along the trajectory of the establishment of formalized labour relations at

charter schools. The first discrete event involving teacher unionism and the trajectory they followed was the teachers' decision to unionize and join the ATA. The second event on the trajectory of teacher unionism was the negotiation for and establishment of the first collective agreements resulting in an ongoing set of subsequent re-negotiations of the collective agreement. To better understand the trajectory of teacher unionism or of any negotiations over time, Strauss (1978) wrote there are three key components that should be utilized in analyzing negotiations and social order. Baıada-Hireche, Pasquero, and Chanlat (2011) visualized the three components as increasingly large "concentric circles: the negotiation itself, the negotiation context, and the structural context" (p. 19). The first and innermost circle of the negotiations model is negotiations. Negotiations is described as "interactions, types of actors, their strategies and tactics, some consequences of negotiations, and embedded negotiations *subprocesses* of negotiation; for example, making trade-offs, obtaining kickbacks, paying off debts and negotiating agreements" (Strauss, 1978, p. 98). The second, larger circle of analysis is the negotiation context, which Strauss defined as "properties entering very directly as conditions into the *course* of the negotiation itself" (p. 99). For this study, the negotiation context included a review of the complexity of the issues being brought forward for negotiations, the nature of the repeated rounds of negotiations over time, and the number of people involved in collective bargaining over time. The final and largest circle of the three concentric circles is the structural context. Strauss (1978) wrote the "structural context is larger, more encompassing, than negotiation context, but the lines of impact can run *either* way" (p. 101). In the Alberta context, structural features included the ATA's policy stance on charter schools and a review of regulatory requirements placed on collective bargaining by the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014).

Even though Strauss (1978) identified the roots of negotiated order theory as being within the symbolic interactionist school of thought, negotiated order theory is also consistent with the social constructionist epistemology. Strauss (1978) stated,

> in general, I believe that issues pertaining to how to negotiate are related to other modes of action and to varying kinds of social order. This means that larger structural considerations need to be linked *explicitly* with a more microscopic analysis of negotiation processes. (pp. x–xi)

In other words, negotiated order theory states that individuals may act to change structural conditions (via negotiations), and that structural conditions may impact the ability of an individual to act. Individuals and structural conditions interact continuously to form and reform social reality using negotiations according to Strauss (1978). Negotiated order theory is consistent with Berger and Luckmann (1966) as they wrote "the symbolic universe is conceived of as the matrix of *all* socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings; the entire historic society and entire biography of the individual are seen as events taking place *within* this universe" (p. 89). This study sought to understand the experience of teacher unionism as it relates to professionalization, particularly in the case of unionized charter school teachers who were active participants in creating and negotiating the collective agreements at their schools.

The linkages between negotiated order theory, social constructionism, and this case study can be crystalized through the following series of events. First, teachers discussed the prospect of joining the ATA and what this might mean for them. The charter school teachers then voted to become unionized bargaining units. In making this collective choice, the charter school teachers were indicating to the ATA and their school board that, as teachers, they wished to influence decisions made about their employment conditions through negotiations. Prior to

unionization, employer school boards determined how teachers would be employed, what the assignments were, how professional development was carried out, how compensation was addressed, and how leaves of absence would be handled. If the school board wished to act unilaterally in these decisions, it had the ability to do so. This study revealed that charter school teachers who unionized wanted to ensure input and agreement was reached with the school boards regarding conditions of practice. Teachers became active agents to negotiate and shape their teaching conditions. In addition, Strauss (1978) explained, "products of negotiation all had temporal limits, for eventually they would be reviewed, re-evaluated, revised, revoked or renewed" (p. 5). Collective bargaining features a structural requirement, stipulated under the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014), that employers and employees meet regularly to discuss and re-negotiate the terms of employment and remuneration for employees in any bargaining unit. My study focused on the relationship between unionization and professionalization, but since these are attached to collective bargaining, the negotiated order approach enabled me to explore analytically how teacher unionism was enacted at charter schools and what the consequences were. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to "become aware of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings and intent" (Crotty, 1998, pp. 75–76) with respect to teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. Considering legislation and ATA policy helped to show "explicit linkages between structure and interaction" (Baszanger, 1998, p. 357) in the context of unionized charter school teachers. Finally, in exploring the broader context of professionalization, trade unions, and charter schools in Alberta and abroad through the literature review, the case study will be contextualized and situated against a broader policy environment. The examination of micro and macro contexts is consistent with Strauss' negotiated order theory because it contends that "specific negotiations

are contingent on the structural conditions of the organization" (Fine, 1984, p. 242). My aim with this was to provide a thorough and reasonable account of the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization through the examination of the trajectory of teacher unionism at charter schools.

Conclusion

The opportunity to examine young bargaining units within the construct of charter schools in Alberta is unique in Canada. This research comes at a time when the international, national, and provincial trend is to suppress the collective voice of workers through various political measures; legislation, globalization, labour mobility, rights for workers, and at the extreme, state sanctioned violence (Ravitch, 2010; Reshef, 2007). The relatively short timeline of collective bargaining in charter schools in Alberta allowed me to investigate some of the reasons for taking collective action and how, therefore, teacher unionism relates to teacher professionalization. I suggest that this study demonstrates that teacher unionism and teacher professionalization are largely compatible and, in many instances, are self-reinforcing.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review is an interdisciplinary, integrative review drawing from the disciplines of education, nursing, social work, sociology, law, and management or labour relations studies and it focuses on three major topics: conceptual models for professions, conceptual models for unions, and issues relating to professional status and unionism for teachers in charter schools. This literature review is "oriented toward the exploration of an issue, or explanation of the nature of relationships or conditions that bear on it" (Hallinger, 2013, p. 131). This exploration will provide conceptual support and linkages between the topics and the epistemological and theoretical frameworks already identified for the examination of the question below:

> What is the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professional status in the context of charter schools in Alberta?

Using a topical approach, this literature review contemplates a theoretical model for professions as well as scholarly approaches to unions. Further, the charter school literature as it relates to professionalization and unionization of teachers in Alberta will be explored. In addition, some of the limitations of the current body of literature will be identified and their implications for this study will be outlined. Finally, debates relating to the research question that exist within the literature will be identified and connected to the line of inquiry for this case study.

In preparing to write this literature review, several data bases such as ERIC, Proquest Education, CBCA Education, CBCA Complete, JSTOR, and Gale Virtual Library were searched in the disciplines of sociology, nursing, social work, education, law, and industrial relations. In addition, the Canadian Teachers Federation, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the Alberta Teachers' Association websites were mined for research reports and position papers.

Finally, the Alberta Education website as well as websites from organizations such as Public Interest Alberta, the Fraser Institute, and Canada West were searched for information specific to charter schools in Alberta. Finally, the searches I conducted became more specific as I noted the citing of specific authors by several other authors and I was able to mine the reference lists of papers for papers.

Professions, Professionalization, and Professionalism

Wilensky (1964), in his seminal theoretical article *The professionalization of everyone?*, examined, from a sociological point of view, what characteristics or traits of an occupation must be evident for that occupation to be considered a profession. Wilensky wrote "any occupation wishing to exercise professional authority must find a technical basis for it, assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy" (p. 138). As a vehicle for discussing what is professional for this literature review and designing the interview and documents review instruments for this case study, a model of traits that constitute a profession can be derived from Wilensky's conceptualization. From Wilensky's work, the four key characteristics defining a profession are

1. Technical / expert knowledge base
2. Exclusive jurisdiction
3. Standards of training and practice
4. Public recognition and trust

For the purposes of this study, I will add a fifth category, that being professional autonomy. Professional autonomy, while it has been important to teachers from the inception of teacher organizations, has become even more important because of the impact on teachers by accountability measures such as high stakes testing, job restructuring, and intensification of

reporting requirements (Gray & Whitty, 2010; Naylor, 2011; Sitch, 2005).

In the sections that follow, each characteristic will be explored, expanded upon, and applied to teachers in the charter school context. It is important to note these characteristics are not mutually exclusive; there will be overlap between them in this discussion. Wilensky (1964) noted "the degree of professionalization is measured not just by the degree of success in the claim to exclusive technical competence, but also by the degree of adherence to the service ideal and its supporting norms of professional conduct" (p. 141). In Wilensky's view, all the four characteristics must be met if an occupation is to claim that it is a profession. Wilensky's professionalization model, or trait approach to professions, while helpful to this study, has been critiqued by scholars. The first major critique leveled at the trait approach to professions proposed by Wilensky is that he recommends a linear pathway to the establishment of a profession but provides little detail empirically about how this is accomplished. Within the field of sociology, Leicht (2005) noted,

> trait explanations do not explain the development of professions very well, nor do they outline a detailed process of change in the professions. Instead, they provide a set of institutional markers whose appearance or disappearance would signal change in the status and relative power of specific occupational groups. (p. 604)

The second major critique of the trait theories for professions is it minimizes the impact of the power that a professional label holds. Haug (1975) pointed out that if an occupation is designated as a professional occupation, this can be used as "a semantic tool with which the members of an occupational group can win status, a better income, more privileges and fewer constraints" (p. 198).

Notwithstanding the critiques of the trait model for professions proposed by Wilensky

(1964), identifying the characteristics of a profession is helpful for this study because as the structural contexts, negotiating contexts, and negotiations (Strauss, 1978) of unionized charter school teachers are analyzed, the traits identified by Wilensky are evidenced in the data. Therefore, the trait model of a profession I have adopted contributes to articulation of the connections between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. A discussion of each characteristic defining a profession will now be undertaken.

Technical and Expert Knowledge Base

Many occupations are founded on an expert knowledge base. For example, I would not try to re-wire my home; I would require the specialized knowledge of an electrician. However, not all occupations, even if they have an expert knowledge base, are considered professional. This may be attributed to some extent to the failure of some occupations to provide accessible mechanisms that "separate the competent from the incompetent" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 143). White collar workers, which includes teachers, are more apt to be considered professional, but Larson (2014) noted, not all occupations characterized as white collar are professions. How then is an expert knowledge base established by an occupation? Historically, one of the first steps to establishing an expert knowledge base is to make linkages with the university community to establish a disciplined approach to studying the field of knowledge. For example, in 1915 in the United States, J. Rosenburg and S. Rosenburg (2006) wrote that in the context of social work the "profession sought to defend itself by consolidating a professional identity. In this context, the profession, in large measure, distanced itself from politics and sought to lay claim to a scientific body of knowledge that would inform professional social work" (p. 296).

Over time teaching has professionalized in terms of requiring specialized knowledge. The widespread establishment of faculties of education in the United Kingdom and Canada was

in place by the 1960s and 1970s when "the status and salaries of teachers improved significantly, and teacher education became embedded in universities" (Phelan, 2010, p. 318). In Alberta, the professionalization of teacher expertise started early. For example, in 1920, the Annual General Meeting of the Alberta Teachers Alliance authorized the establishment of a Bureau of Research which would allow for the growth of knowledge about what teacher expertise is. The rationale for the Bureau of Research was to ensure teachers were "experts in matters relating to administrative problems, educational finance, pedagogy, educational psychology, [and] science of education" ("A bureau of research," 1920). Approximately 2 decades later, the University of Alberta established the first faculty of education in Canada in 1942 ("About the faculty," 2002). This allowed some teachers to obtain Bachelor of Education degrees and by 1977 teachers were required to complete a 4-year degree in order to be licensed to teach in Alberta (The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2002).

The creation of a highly trained and committed teacher workforce has continued to the present day. Hall and Schulz (2010) identify the following trends as being key elements in teacher preparation programs in Canada: "longer teacher education programmes, increased emphasis on extended practicum, preference for a consecutive model of preparation, and decreased government funding" (p. 376). These aspects ensure that pre-service teachers have an opportunity to learn about the theoretical underpinnings of the field of education as well as the practical knowledge required to be an effective professional teacher. Further, the Alberta government's requirement that teachers train at a faculty of education and then be certificated to teach in public, charter, and publicly-funded private schools in Alberta enhances the legitimacy of teachers' claims that they are professionals. For the purposes of this study, the question of professional certification for charter schools in Alberta is largely settled; all teachers working in

charter schools must have their professional teacher certification. Given that the baseline of professional certification for charter schools is determined by regulation, the line of inquiry for this study will be to see if charter school teachers who unionize support the advancement of their expert knowledge base and whether their collective agreements provide supports to enable further professional learning.

Exclusive Jurisdiction

Exclusive jurisdiction refers to the "protection of job territory" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 145) and a profession's "authority and freedom to regulate themselves and act within their spheres of competence" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 146). High levels of status help to establish exclusive jurisdiction because there is a belief that the skill set for the occupation belongs to an "elite group" (Gray & Whitty, 2010, p. 12) and this combines with the perception that the "services of the professionals involved are scarce" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 147). Corresponding to status is economic desirability. As Larson (2014) wrote, establishing an occupation as a profession requires "structural links between relatively high levels of formal education and relatively desirable positions or rewards in the social division of labor" (p. 8). The professionalization of an occupation can be challenging in "human-relations fields" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 145) and even more so for fields that are female dominated and involve children or childcare (Ingersoll, 2005; Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; Larson, 2014). As such, teaching is often regarded in the literature as a semi-profession in part because it lacks the necessary social prestige provided to professions such as medicine and law. Lortie (1969) pointed out that this may be connected to the fact that "all high school graduates have spent approximately 10,000 hours in close contact with teachers in the course of their schooling" (p. 10) and that the familiarity of an educated population with the work of teachers means that the work is not seen as prestigious, esoteric, or even skilled.

Exclusive jurisdiction of a profession is enhanced when there is "support of law for the protection of the job territory and its sustaining code of ethics" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 145). For public school and charter school teachers, exclusive jurisdiction in terms of who can teach arises through legislative structures. The *Alberta School Act* (2014) in Section 92 (1) stipulates that "unless otherwise authorized under this Act, a board shall employ as a teacher only an individual who holds a certificate of qualification as a teacher issued under this Act" (p. 70). The *Alberta School Act* (2014) goes further in S. 93(1) to include the requirement that anyone who supervises a teacher must also be certificated as a teacher. These sections of the legislation apply to all teachers working for public and charter schools in Alberta. The legislative supports provided by the *Alberta School Act* (2014) help establish teaching as a profession for all public and charter schools. However, the question of whether professional status is enhanced for charter school teachers through unionization is explored in this case study.

Standards of Training and Practice

Once a teacher is certificated in Alberta, who establishes and enforces the standards for continuing certification? In developing a profession, organizations such as teacher unions have attempted to "professionalize the status of teaching by handing over governance to members of the profession" (Grimmett, Fleming, & Trotter, 2009, p. 9). This requires, as Wilensky (1964) pointed out, the recognition of legislative authority, and this typically arises only after there is "persistent political agitation" (p. 145) by the organizations representing the occupation. However, legitimization of a profession through the law creates an overly simplistic view of what a profession is. There must be general agreement within those performing the work, the decision makers, and the public that there is autonomy to meet the standards of practice and the authority to govern if an occupation is to be considered profession. As Phelan (2010) wrote with

respect to teaching, this is because "the attempts at professional recognition also assume the possibility of successful mutual recognition between members of the public and teachers, and amongst teachers themselves" (p. 321). As such, professionalization requires collective and individual recognition and acceptance.

The structural components for Alberta teachers in the matter of standards of training and practice are complex, but for teachers to gain permanent certification in Alberta, the teacher must be able to demonstrate that they meet the *Teaching Quality Standard* and have their Superintendent affirm to Alberta Education that this is the case. Once permanent certification is granted to a teacher, if there are questions about whether a permanently certificated teacher is competent to teach, the superintendent may, after going through the supervision, growth, and evaluation process, make a request for an investigation of the teacher's practice. If the teacher is working in the public system, the request for investigation goes to the Alberta Teachers' Association and if the teacher is working in a private or charter school, the request for investigation is properly made to the Professional Standards Branch of Alberta Education. At that point, an investigation will occur and if the investigation reveals there is reason to believe the teacher may not be meeting the *Teaching Quality Standard*, a hearing will be ordered. Should the hearing determine the teacher is not meeting any standard of the *Teaching Quality Standard*, the teacher will lose their certification and, therefore, their ability to work as a teacher. While the administrative mechanisms for adjudicating teacher competence are different, all teachers in Alberta must meet the *Teaching Quality Standard*, and this has a professionalizing effect on teachers in Alberta. In addition, in 2019 a Leadership Quality Standard and Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard will be implemented in Alberta. The updated professional practice standards for teachers, principals, and superintendents were the result of

extensive consultations with education stakeholders in Alberta and "the competencies in all three standards are connected, ensuring a consistent set of skills for teachers and leaders at all levels of the system" (Hare, 2018, para. 4). The professional practice standards are expected to form the basis for teacher professional development as well as influence the design of teacher education programs at universities (Hare, 2018). The interconnectedness of Alberta Education, the ATA, the College of Alberta Superintendents, school boards, and universities means that there are strong structural supports for standards of practice in Alberta. This study reveals how charter school teachers are influenced by this and how teacher unionism interacts with standards of practice.

Benveniste (1987) pointed out that "most professions (with some interesting exceptions, such as policy analyst) have developed codes of conduct and ethics" (p. 31). In addition to standards of practice, teachers in Alberta are also subject to a professional code of conduct. Teachers in Alberta may also be held accountable for their conduct. Any member of the public may request an investigation into the conduct of a teacher at any time in the teacher's career and with some limitations, after their career has concluded. If the teacher is working in a public school, the request for investigation is made by going online to the Alberta Teachers' Association website and filling out the forms requesting an investigation. If a teacher is working in a private or charter school, the complainant must contact the Professional Standards Branch to request an investigation. As is the case with practice standards, Alberta school boards, Alberta Education, and the Alberta Teachers' Association all have authority roles to play when it comes to the conduct of teachers. How then does charter school teacher unionism interact with charter school teacher professionalization as it relates to conduct and practice? These are elements that are explored in the data analysis and discussion for this case study.

Public Assurance and Trust

According to Wilensky (1964) and Larson (2014), professionals are trusted by the public, and therefore autonomy to do what is proper for the common good is entrusted to those groups. Of course, as mentioned in the last section, this is affirmed by the ability of the profession to act to protect the public good in the event that individuals are found to be acting contrary to established ethics and against the interest of the client who, in the case of a teacher, will be a student. Normore (2004) summed up a professional approach as being marked by,

> the assumption that quality in the educational system is best ensured by granting autonomy to teachers, and others who have been trained in and have access to relevant bodies of professional knowledge and whose professional ethics leads them to act always in the best interest of their "client" – the student. (p. 63)

The professional approach predicated on service to the other is not unique to teachers. The sense of higher mission, service to the public, and the greater good are important to establishing whether an occupation is professional (Larson, 2014; Wilensky, 1964).

Autonomy

Once an occupation has professionalized by achieving status, creating a code of ethics and standards of practice, as well as legitimizing its knowledge base, Wilensky (1964) noted that professionals must acquire "extraordinary autonomy—the authority and freedom to regulate themselves and act within their spheres of competence" (p. 146). In the 21st century, the autonomy of teachers in performing their work has been seriously impacted by the introduction of narrowly written standards of practice, work intensification, individualized approaches to teaching, cutbacks to resourcing, the introduction of new technologies without support, the redistribution of teacher tasks to other workers, and the usage of high stakes accountability

measures (Beck, 2008; Larson, 2014; Ravitch, 2013; Sitch, 2005). There are many demands on teachers from parents, students, the government, and the employer. This creates a situation where teachers evaluate the number of demands that others are placing on their practice and they begin to "desire increased involvement in decision-making" (Price, 2011, p. 9). Formal involvement in decision making by teachers mirrors the approach advocated by Kerchner and Caufman (1995) in their model of professional unionism. However, teachers are not always provided with an opportunity to have their voices heard in educational policy creation and this calls into question a teacher's ability to exercise their professional autonomy.

In addition to desiring a collaborative relationship with employers in the realm of their professional conditions and policy making, teachers have identified self-directed professional development as another key area of concern. Naylor (2005) noted that in the realm of professional development, teachers wish to be able to act as an "autonomous professional (who) chooses and is trusted to choose the areas of Professional Development he or she wishes to choose" (p. 4). How, then, is teacher autonomy for charter school teachers expressed as a function of collective bargaining? Do charter school collective agreements have provisions which help teachers to express their professional autonomy? These are all questions that are explored in the realm of this case study.

Challenges to Teacher Professionals

Grimmett, Flemming, and Trotter (2009) note that throughout the 1990s and 2000s, that internationally the policy landscape in public education became very complex because two agendas came into play: deregulation of teacher credentials and professionalization. Within the context of this study, teacher certification is not an issue because the credentialing of teachers has been and currently is stable in Alberta. However, as many countries are engaging in

different kinds of models for teacher credentialing, it is not out of the question that teacher certification regulations in Alberta could change. There are early indicators that Alberta Education and the Government of Alberta have considered the question. For example, in the report of the Alberta Task Force for Teacher Excellence (2014), Recommendation Seven calls for increased usage of Letters of Authority to "facilitate the employment of non-certificated instructors in an area of specialization" (Alberta Education, 2014, p. 35), specifically the trades and fine arts. I am mindful of this development because in other countries, such as the United States, charter schools have provided a gateway to allow non-credentialed instructors to teach. This represents a shift away from education faculties as sites where a specialized field of academic knowledge is required to be an effective teacher towards a privileging of practical experience being the proper basis for teaching expertise (Grimmett et al., 2010; Ravitch, 2013). In the United States this manifested itself most obviously in programs such as Teach for America, which is designed to attract academically talented university graduates and provides them with training for 5 weeks. Once the training period ends, the new teachers are deployed to teach in areas of high need for a specified period. Overall, at this point, the Teach for America approach has not been overly successful in righting the achievement gap for underprivileged students or improving public education. Ravitch (2013) points out that meta-analysis of the research has shown that in terms of student achievement (reading and mathematics scores), non-credentialed teachers perform significantly less well than their credentialed counterparts. Academics such as Ravitch (2013) and Giroux (2012) point out that the deregulation of teacher credentials is part of a broader attempt to encourage the privatization of public education. Ravitch (2013) pointed out "most prominent alumni have taken leading roles in the corporate reform movement" (p. 138) which has shifted the conversion from services such as public

schools that serve the public good to corporate models such as privatized charter schools which emphasize private gain.

In Canada teacher organizations have observed that a program called Teach for Canada launched in late fall of 2013. On its website this program explains plans for recruitment and training over an 8-week period for the best and brightest undergraduate students who will be deployed in remote Indigenous communities to improve educational outcomes there (retrieved from https://teachforcanada.ca/en/teachers/teacher-journey/). This controversial program was flagged by the Canadian Teachers' Federation as failing to "treat teaching as a commitment to a profession. Fast-track teacher preparation programs devalue teacher professionalism" ("Teach for Canada briefing bulletin," 2014). While Teach for Canada does not engage uncertified teachers, their appearance on the educational landscape as a broker of staffing for Indigenous schools is a serious development, one which teachers and teacher organizations must monitor. A sub question within this study examines how teacher unionism and collective agreements counter a de-professionalizing agenda, bearing in mind that now there is no real serious effort to change credentialing requirements for teachers in Alberta as the Task Force for Teaching Excellent has been shelved for now.

Ironically, the other key development on the de-professionalization agenda is the creation of new teacher colleges designed to monitor and enforce teacher codes of conduct and competence. While recognition as a profession from the public is "something most teachers welcome" (Sitch, 2005, p. 145), there can be a downside. Sitch (2005) further pointed out that "being held to high standards of behavior and conduct, while onerous, can be rewarding if the result is the reciprocal respect and autonomy that are afforded other professionals" (p. 145). The discipline function designed to uphold standards of conduct and practice in two Canadian

provinces was redesigned in the 1980s and 1990s, with colleges being established in British Columbia in 1987 and Ontario in 1997. The colleges handle all matters of certification and teacher conduct. These entities were defined through legislation and, like other colleges or professional bodies, all teachers in British Columbia and Ontario had "no choice but to pay for the privilege of being registered with a 'professional' body that is in many ways the government's creature" (Beck, 2008, p. 11). Interestingly, the British Columbia College of Teachers was shut down by the British Columbia government and in 2012 the Teacher Regulation Branch, a branch of government, was put in place instead. In reviewing both the Ontario College of Teachers' website and the British Columbia Teacher Regulation Branch, both institutions post an incredible amount of information about teachers in the public domain; it is possible for any member of the public to look up the status of a teacher and any discipline complaint which may end up in a resolution or a hearing to be posted for the public to view. The amount of public scrutiny on teachers is unusual; there are no other professions subject to such a close watch. The creation of these new forms of teacher regulation have allowed for government and some members of the profession to "have their labor externally controlled and intensified by people who criticize them mercilessly" (Apple, 2007, p. 8). In Alberta, the professional standards for public school teachers are enforced by the ATA. Even though the Task Force on Teaching Excellence established by former Minister of Education Jeff Johnson in recommendation 25, stated that "a Ministry-based model or a separate professional college of teachers is recommended for consideration" (p. 64) there has been no more to implement this recommendation. With the changes in the political leadership since the spring election of 2014, it does not seem likely the ATA will lose its responsibility for teacher conduct and competence, leaving undamaged, for now, a unified professional organization for public school teachers.

Limitations to the proposed professional model

Though the five characteristics proposed for this professional model explain the necessary elements contributing to the status of an occupation as professional, Czerniawski's (2011) research indicated these definitions may shift from context to context or country to country and that the concept of teacher as professional is "not necessarily universal" (Naylor, 2011, p. 4). The lack of agreement in national, academic, and policy-making circles has meant that some theorists would put teaching into the category of "borderline cases" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 142). In addition, the lack of clear consensus around whether teachers are professional has led to policy makers and school boards putting in place standards and requirements which have the impact of de-professionalizing the work of teaching (Beck, 2008; Phelan, 2010; Sitch, 2005). Finally, the professional trait model introduced does not articulate what it means to be an individual professional or group of professionals working within the context of a unionized work environment. The extent to which the attributes of a profession are adopted by individual teachers cannot be assessed by the trait model of professions. Yet, the attributes are helpful characteristics to articulate the individual professional values or professionalism of the charter school teachers who participated in this case study.

Trade Unions

Form (2001), Blumer (1946), and Abbott (1993), all writing during different time periods, noted a lack of cohesive theoretical approaches to work and occupations. The notable exception to this observation was explained by Abbott, who wrote, "By the 1980s, the evolving WO [work and occupations] tradition had come to look much as it does today. The only institutional subfield of real strength was the study of profession" (p. 189). My review of the literature is consistent with what these other writers have observed, my searches did not reveal a

cohesive theory of trade unions that could be neatly transposed into this study. What I did find in reviewing the literature about unions and trade unionism was that there were two major ways of conceptualizing unions. Crompton (1976) noted that the first way to theorize unions is to adopt a Marxist perspective. A Marxist approach emphasizes the class divisions between workers and capitalists as well as the alienation of workers from their labour. Additionally, a Marxist approach to trade unions views unionism as part of a greater social movement that aims to emancipate workers and citizens through a changed political system. The second way to conceptualize trade unions is to use an industrial relations lens. Industrial relations emphasize the regulation of the relationship between employees and employers (Crompton, 1976). In the next section of this literature review, I will briefly explore trade unionism from both the Marxist perspective and the Industrial Relations perspective with a focus on teacher unionism in Alberta.

A Marxist Account of Trade Unions

Karl Marx lived during the time that Europe was moving from an agrarian society towards an industrial society. Marx observed that the emerging industrial age concentrated the means of production into very few hands and he was concerned by the exploitation of workers at the hands of factory owners. In addition, the rise of the capitalist class in Europe created inequality in wealth and political power between workers and capitalists (Booth, 1978; Engels, 1848/1964; La Botz, 2013; Randall, 1848/1964). Marx (1848/1964) wrote in *The Communist Manifesto* that "the modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has only established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of old ones" (p. 58). Randall (1848/1964) wrote that Marx predicted that this class struggle would be "marked by strikes, lock-outs, sabotage, wage slashes, bankruptcies, business crisis, the simultaneous rise of industrial combines and

trade union, increasing proletarian 'class consciousness' (realization of its nature and predicament), and violence" (p. 27). Marx further noted that if workers were to have any power against the increasing turbulence of the industrial age, they would need to "club together in order to keep up the rate of wages" (p. 72) and improve their social standing. Marx also fervently believed that each struggle between workers and capitalists would result in "an ever-expanding union of workers" (p. 73) and eventually, the proletariat class would overthrow the political system and replace it with communism where the means of production and wealth of nations were owned by the proletariat. For these reasons, Marx, along with Fredrich Engels, was an enthusiastic supporter of trade unions at their inception in Europe. According to La Botz (2013), Marx and Engels believed that,

> unions in their formative period appeared . . . to have revolutionary possibilities. They could it seemed, bring about the abolition of the wage system itself on which capital was founded. With the abolition of the wage system and the capitalist market would come a new democratic and collective society. (p. 17)

However, as trade unionism matured and legal recognition of unions was granted by governments, unions "functioned to maintain the capitalist system and role of workers in it" (La Botz, 2013, p. 17). Marx noticed that not all workers belonged to a trade union and was concerned that without universal membership in trade unions, the circumstance of the proletariat would not improve. For these reasons, Marx became very critical of labour unions because of their cooperation with and maintenance of the bourgeois and proletariat dynamic in the labour force in Europe as well as the preservation of capitalism as an economic system. Ultimately, Marx critiqued trade unionism because for him, class struggle, labour unions, and political change were intimately linked, and he did not view entrenchment of unions as the

counterbalance to employer interests as achieving the aim of political revolution.

While unions did not lead to the replacement political systems, as trade unionism evolved into the 21st century unions have worked politically to also help the circumstances of both unionized and non-unionized workers. Sran, Lynk, Clancy, and Fudge (2013) point out,

> some examples that unions have won through their lobbying efforts have been minimum wage laws, public pension plans, unemployment insurance and occupational health and safety legislation. Unions also represent the broader voice of all workers throughout the world when it comes to advancing democracy, economic equality and social justice. (p. 37)

Therefore, "Marx's theory of class action [which] is founded on social solidarity as a motivating force rather than on private reward" (Booth, 1978, p. 164) is relevant to understanding the formation of trade unions as social movements targeting the betterment of working-class people. The study of trade unionism is indebted to Marx and Marxist class theory because at its root trade unionism can be housed within concepts of a segmented labour market and the struggle of workers and their unions to deal with the conflict between employer interests and worker interests (Janoski & Hickman, 2013).

Industrial Relations and Trade Unions

Industrial relations can be simply defined as "the study of the employment relationship" (Heery, Bacon, Blyton, & Fiorito, 2008, p. 2). Industrial relations diverge from Marxism because industrial relations, at their core, recognize the interests of both employers and employees, whereas "for Marxists there is only one set of *legitimate* interests, those of workers" (Heery et al., 2008, p. 16). Industrial relations is an applied area of academic study that draws upon law, sociology, psychology, economics, and political science and can address any number

of topics within the employment relationship, including the actors involved, the processes utilized, and the outcomes attained (Heery et al., 2008). One of the major areas of study within industrial relations is trade unionism, but as already noted there is not a single unifying theory for trade unions though researchers do examine aspects such as how trade unions operate, their aims, and the composition of union members. Teacher trade unionism does not occur in a vacuum and so a brief history of trade unionism in North America and Canada is helpful at this point.

In North America, trade unions saw the most growth after the Great Depression and the second World War. However, the great strides made by unions from the 1940s through to the 1980s have been curtailed in the past 3 decades by concerted efforts of "employers and governments everywhere [who] have worked tirelessly to remove the economic, political, legal and social bases of working-class power established in the aftermath of the Second World War" (Ross & Savage, 2012, p. 7). Consequently, by 2011, in Canada "union coverage fell from its peak of 41.8 percent to 31.5 percent" (Sran et al., 2013, p. 21). Part of this decline of union coverage is due to the changing political views of governments who have weakened the legislative regimes that unions relied upon to form and collectively bargain with employers. The Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights (2017) explained that "federal and provincial governments in Canada passed 224 pieces of legislation since 1982 that have restricted, suspended or denied collective bargaining rights for Canadian workers" ("Labour rights under attack," 2017).

The consequence of weakening labour laws and declining union coverage combined with other policies such as lowered corporate taxation and relaxed labour mobility agreements has been that income inequality has grown not just in Canada, but throughout the world (Stiglitz,

2012; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Even the World Bank, a very conservative organization, recognized "that high levels of unionization lead to greater income equality, lower unemployment and inflation, higher productivity and speedier adjustments to economic shock" (Sran et al., 2013, p. 26). Unions are aware of trends to diminish their power and weaken their ability to represent the interests of their members. Consequently, many unions have formed coalitions with other organizations to advance forms of community or coalition unionism to advance the agenda of workers and the interests of their communities (Tattersall, 2009). Scholars are hopeful these new and organic relationships between organizations and communities will help renew union interest and advance the cause of working people. Teacher organizations have not been immune to government legislative directions and in many instances, teacher organizations in Canada have begun to realize the importance of building strong relationships amongst each other and with other like-minded organizations and groups (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). I will now narrow the scope of this literature review to focus on teacher trade unionism from an industrial relations perspective with the occasional nod to Marxism as appropriate. Exploring teacher trade unionism helps set the stage for the consideration of why charter school teachers utilized the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014) to attain collective bargaining rights and how this connects to teacher professionalization.

Teacher Trade Unionism

Teacher unions in the emerging industrial society came about, in part, because of the formalization of public education by governments. For example, Smaller (2015) wrote that the result of this entrenchment of the education department in Ontario during the 1830s meant that for teachers, this new "bureaucratization resulted mainly in the diminishing, or negating, of their input in the overall decision making processes—both within the hierarchies of school staffing

structures themselves and within the ever-expanding school jurisdictions" (p. 12). The loss of decision-making power, as well as the poor treatment of teachers at the hands of their school boards; low salaries, and tenuous employment stability meant the trade union movement impacting other occupations became attractive to teachers. Bascia (2015) wrote that in "the United States, Canada, England, and Australia, teacher unions found their organizational footing around the turn of the twentieth century, in relation to emerging systems of mass education" (p. 2). The struggles of early teacher unionists were rooted in traditional union goals, where the immediate needs of the teachers were to organize to improve their material standing and increase their job security (Marsh-MacNab, 1949; Paton, 1962; Smaller, 2015). Notwithstanding the early focus of the work for teacher unionists, fledgling teacher organizations sought to incorporate professional values into their missions. For example, Paton (1962), a former General Secretary of the Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of Quebec, reviewed the evolution of teacher organizations across Canada and shared that as teacher unions began to stabilize, teacher organizations also aggressively pursued professional qualifications and codes of ethics.

Curiously, while educational scholars attend to many of the industrial relations topics that teacher unions engage with, such as the role of teacher organizations, its socialization of new members, their legal status, collective bargaining with school boards and so on, the role that gender plays within any of these topics is largely ignored, particularly from an historical perspective (Kean, 2007). While the feminization of teacher work is not directly tied to the question of the connection between charter school teacher unionization and professionalization, it is an underlying dynamic that impacts the way that teaching is perceived and how teachers should be regarded and compensated (Ingersoll, 2005). As well, historically it was acceptable to distinguish between the monetary value of men and women's work. For example, the first

edition of the ATA News (June 1920) printed a salary schedule for Edmonton Public Teachers. In that schedule, male and female compensation was separated, and women were paid less than men. This was not uncommon. Gaskell, McLaren, and Novogrodsky (1989) wrote that teachers who were female were paid differently than men even "if they held the same qualifications and positions" (p. 65). The division between men and women was also exacerbated within unions because at the time that teacher unions were being established, classroom teachers, who were often female, were not able to attend the policy conventions or hold leadership positions within teacher organizations (Kean, 2007; Smaller, 2015). The problem of female representation in leadership positions for teacher unions continues to persist to more recent times. The Canadian Teachers' Federation surveyed the representation of women in teacher organizations in Canada and the overall finding of the report was that representation at all levels—local, provincial committees, elected executive officers, and executive staff—was not reflective of the teacher population and the leadership representation was weighted towards men in all categories. However, findings did also point to increasing levels of female involvement in union leadership roles over time (O'Haire, 2003). The data obtained from teachers' organizations is not unique; the leadership gap occurs in other areas of educational leadership. For example, Magnusson (2017) pointed out, "While 74 per cent of Alberta teachers are female, the same can be said of only 41 per cent of principals, 44 per cent of assistant and/or deputy superintendents and only 11 per cent of superintendents" (para. 9). This dynamic was also evident in charter schools in 2018. Each charter school website lists their superintendent and my review of the information revealed that nine of the 13 Alberta charter school superintendents were male. The consequence of the feminization of the teaching profession is that "wage inequality and a decline in occupational status often accompany feminization" (Irvine, 2013, p. 281) and that teachers should accept "the

general cultural norm that women should defer to men" (Simpson & Simpson, 1969, p. 199). Therefore, teacher unionism is a gendered endeavor that has attempted to equalize the societal power relations between men and women from within their organizations and externally.

Teacher Unionism in Alberta. The beginning of public education as it is known today in Alberta can be traced back to the 1901 School Ordinance for the Northwest Territories which allowed for the establishment of schools providing there was enough rate payer support and school choice. Under the 1901 Ordinance, schools in the Northwest Territories could be either public (Protestant) or separate (Catholic) but public schools were given the first consideration. When Alberta became a province in 1905, it adopted the 1901 School Ordinance, and this not only cemented the government's ability to regulate public education but also entrenched the right of Catholic schools to be publicly funded. It also provided local trustees with the authority to hire and fire teachers as well as raise revenue through taxation to run the schools (The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2002; Williams-Whitt, 2012). After joining confederation, public education flourished in the province of Alberta. Williams-Whitt (2012) noted that "within ten years of Alberta's entrance to Confederation, the province had more than 2,000 school districts" (p. 127). As more schools were established, more teachers were needed to staff the schools and in 1918, the Alberta Teachers' Alliance (the Alliance) was founded. The Alliance was "the teachers' response to substandard working and living conditions" (Williams-Whitt, 2012, p. 128) and represented the serious class struggle for the teachers who became involved with the Alliance. The Alliance members experienced similar conditions to other teachers across Canada. Gilliss, Froese-Germain, McGahey, and Riel (2012) wrote that "teacher dissatisfaction finally came to a head in the years during and immediately after the First World War. Teachers' salaries had remained static, but the cost of living had nearly doubled. In one area after another, teachers

formed provincial associations to fight for improvements in salary, tenure and pensions" (para 3).

In Alberta, the Alliance, according to Williams-Whitt (2012), held the following characteristics as of primary importance: namely that it was for teachers only, it endorsed principles of equal rights for all teachers, and its primary objective was to promote education and the teaching profession. Early Alliance members worked diligently to organize teachers, push for minimum wages, create a provision of tenure, and establish certification standards and pension plans (Marsh-MacNab, 1949). In the 1930s with a harsh economic environment and shortage of teacher jobs, there was legislative support for the Alliance with the election of William Aberhart as Premier. Aberhart was, himself, a high school principal and undertook the work of education minister in addition to his responsibilities as premier. In "1936, the Social Credit government introduced a number of improvements for teachers, including an amendment to the Teaching Profession Act, which made membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association automatic" ("A brief history of public education in Alberta," 2002). With the passage of the Teaching Profession Act (TPA), the Alliance was renamed the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). The mandatory membership in the ATA was helpful because it meant the ATA no longer had to expend all its efforts to sign up members on an annual basis. The 1936 TPA was also significant because it also named the ATA as having professional function and therefore "the ATA had become a professional organization that should protect students and the public against illicit acts of any member of the profession" (Reshef & Rastin, 2003, p. 114). In addition, the School Act was updated in 1937 to provide tenure provisions and the Board of Reference, an administrative tribunal, to object unfair dismissal by the Board. Finally, in 1939 Alberta teachers had their pension plan established by the passage of the Teachers' Retirement

Fund Act. The legislative support to lay the groundwork for the current situation in Alberta occurred in 1941, when the ATA was "the first association to acquire full bargaining rights, including the right to strike" (Gilliss et al., 2012, para 1 – collective bargaining rights). The attainment of collective bargaining rights combined with the obligation to police the professional conduct of its members meant the ATA became a bicameral organization and remains so to the present day.

The Debate: Is Unionism Antithetical to a Profession?

The debate of whether unions are at odds with the goals of a profession is a constant challenge for teachers' organizations. Ravitch, 2010, posed the challenging sentiment: "Let's start with the hardest question: Should teachers' unions exist? Do the protections they offer their members depress student achievement? Are they an 'adult interest group,' as their critics charge, whose priorities conflict with the needs of their students?" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 173). If a defining characteristic of a professional is that the occupation is to serve the greater good, it might be tempting to immediately jump to the conclusion that in the name of serving the greater good, that the rights of students should trump those of teachers. However, the assumption that teachers working in concert via union representation with respect to their employment conditions automatically hurts the students deserves examination. The research on this question is beginning to be tracked and assessed. Carini (2002), in his meta-analysis of 17 research studies, found that "despite the relatively small research base, there is an emerging consensus in the literature that teacher unionism favorably influences achievement for most students, as measured by a variety of standardized tests" (p. 202). This raises the question of whether the separation of teacher professionalization and teacher unionism is appropriate and suggests there may be some merit to considering that the service ideal of professions is not damaged by unionization.

Baumgart (1983) pointed out that in the nursing profession, unionism is seen to be a disadvantage to professionalism because the enforcement of a code of conduct can be in direct conflict with the goals of a union, as unions are seen to favor provisions such as employment security and economic considerations above considerations of the service ideal. In addition, because labour relations can, when they break down, as in the event of strike, have a temporary negative impact on those being served illustrates the tension between the service ideal and goals of a union. This is a persistent concern for teachers as well since in the event of a strike or lock-out, students are required to stay home. This can cause significant inconvenience to parents and students and where there is a strike or lock-out in education, typically well publicized by the press and by politicians. Williams-Whitt (2012) also wrote "any strikes, no matter how limited in scope or duration, tend to elicit inflammatory rhetoric and calls to curb the power of the ATA" (p. 140). Reshef (2007), in his case study of the ATA's collective bargaining in the new century, pointed out that governments across Canada have become averse to any sort of labour action in the form of strike or lock-out and have, from time-to-time, used legislative powers to effect settlements to collective bargaining to either avoid or end strike action. He pointed out this is happening with increasing regularity and that "as a result of permanent exceptionalism, free collective bargaining has become a thing of the past" (p. 678). In recent times in Alberta, there has been little disruption to students and parents because of teacher strikes or school board lockouts. The last strike in Alberta was in Parkland School Division No. 70 in 2007. Since that time, the government of Alberta has been heavily involved in teacher collective bargaining, and a bi-level model for collective bargaining has become the norm. Williams-Whitt (2012) explained that a bi-level bargaining model would be a "two-tier system [that] would see economic issues negotiated centrally (between the government and a provincial executive committee of the ATA)

and non-economic issues negotiated at the local level (between individual school boards and ATA locals)" (p. 151). In 2015, the governing New Democratic Party formalized this arrangement, legislating a bi-level bargaining model by passing the *Alberta Public Education Collective Bargaining Act* (2015).

This more centralized approach to collective bargaining in Alberta has shifted the balance of power with respect to teacher bargaining in the public sector. However, there has been no such interference from the Government of Alberta in the collective bargaining process between the ATA and charter and private school operators. This may be because there has never been any sort of labour action in these bargaining units as the collective bargaining process has always concluded without any strike or lock-out votes being taken. In this study, charter school teachers discuss how the concepts of professional status and the labour relations process, such as strike and lock-out, interact and what experiencing these processes might be like in their contexts. In the section that follows, a brief overview of the literature with respect to charter schools, charter school teachers, and unions will be provided.

Charter Schools, Teachers, and Unions

In the early 1990s in the United States, Chile, and Alberta, charter schools were introduced onto the education landscape. This development was part of a larger policy movement across several countries which aimed to downsize governmental responsibility by emphasizing "performance appraisal and efficiency, disaggregating and decentralizing public bureaucracies, the use of market mechanisms and contracting out to foster competition" (Pal, 2010, p. 97). In education, governments attempted to reform education by measures such as vouchers, charter schools, school of choice, and free schools during the 1980s up to the present day. In the United States particularly, there were great hopes attached to charter schools as a

means for public school reform as they were designed "to break the monopoly of traditional public schools" (Malin & Kerchner, 2007, p. 888). The charter school model philosophy, supported by the development of educational policy in the 1980s, centered about "an idealized perception of schools as able to operate like a market-place, able to express practices of competition, choice diversity and market driven funding" (Crump, 1992, p. 416). Since charter schools have been represented as emancipatory places of learning freeing teachers, schools, and students from the bureaucratic and traditional constraints found in public schools there is significant bipartisan and public support for the concept in the United States (Giroux, 2012; Malin & Kerchner, 2007; Ravitch, 2010).

Huerta and Zuckerman (2009) proposed that in the United States the expansion of charter schools has occurred under three distinct theories of action or basic models of management. The models of management they identify are: market driven models, non-profit organizations (a form of market re-centralization), and community start up schools or locally controlled models. The first two forms of charter school management are primarily market driven and are distinguished from each other by profit-making and scale. Huerta and Zuckerman (2009) explain that the first two forms represent an evolution in charter school management which emerged after the local control models were established. The market driven models and market re-centralization models, although interesting and futuristic for the Canadian context, have no applicability to Alberta's context or this study. In Alberta, charter schools are similar to the local control models proposed by Huerta and Zuckerman because they are formed by groups of citizens who have "very specific missions and visions that connected to particular pedagogical themes or particular types of students" (p. 417). To date, there are no corporate models operating in Alberta though the last set of charter school regulatory changes do allow for private entities to operate charter

schools. Consequently, from a regulatory perspective there is no distinction to be made in Alberta between privately held charter schools or publicly held charter schools whereas in the United States there has been considerable controversy because of these distinctions. As such, as the charter school experiment continues over time in the United States, scholars and education policy makers have noted there are serious questions of equity and quality which are emerging from various charter schools. These concerns range from issues of the corporate take-over of public education, access to charter schools, racial segregation, financial accountability of the schools, teacher workloads, teacher compensation, the role of teachers' unions, and student achievement (Apple, 2007; Crump, 1992; Finch, Lapsley, & Baker-Boudissa, 2009; Margolis, 2005; Ravitch, 2010; Urrieta, 2005). While all issues of equity and access with respect to charter schools hold importance, the purpose of this case study is to examine the linkages between teacher unionism, teaching as a profession, and teaching in charter schools. As such, the issues of equity for charter school teachers will now be explored.

Charter schools are founded under a vision that includes them being viewed as centers of innovation and "high performance workplaces where teachers, freed from bureaucratic constraints, take charge of student learning" (Malin & Kerchner, 2007, p. 891). For teachers, the promise of autonomy and professional discretion in matters such as curriculum delivery and assessment were appealing, but in practice, the promise of greater professional authority and status has not been realized. The retrospective look at charter school teachers and their employment conditions reveals that "charter schools became managerially driven organizations rather than a community of professionals as originally envisioned" (Malin & Kerchner, 2007, p. 889). Consequently, American studies show that un-unionized charter school teachers are generally subject to harsher working conditions, less job security, differential salary schemes,

and lower compensation than their unionized public-school peers (Malin & Kerchner, 2007; Price, 2011; Ravitch, 2010, 2013). As such, a small percentage of charter schools have begun to unionize in the United States. Given the distinct nature of charter schools and the lack of legal clarity for what can be bargained collectively for charter school teachers, there has been a reform movement for the way teacher collective bargaining occurs (Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; Malin & Kerchner, 2007; Moss, 2010; Price, 2011). Kerchner and Caufman (1995) have coined this movement as professional unionism and they have identified four distinct features of professional unionism compared to traditional unionism. They note, "teachers are redefining unionism in ways that depart from industrial work norms and authority patterns through such devices as joint committees, decentralized authority, peer review, and new forms of bargaining" (p. 107). The basic premise encapsulated in each of these four areas is that a collaborative and shared model to establishing the conditions of practice for teachers be established within the currently available structures for collective bargaining. This study, through interviews with teachers and examination of their collective agreements, illuminates whether aspects of professional unionism were adopted by charter school teachers when they unionized and engaged in collective bargaining.

Charter School Teacher Unionism in Alberta

Public school teachers' membership in the ATA and coverage through collective agreements is automatic. However, charter school and private school teachers do not enjoy those rights automatically. Therefore, in Alberta, groups of teachers have made the decision to secure collective bargaining rights via the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014). These teachers approached the ATA to be their representative in the establishment and maintenance of collective agreements. Now, in addition to representing 61 public school bargaining units, the

ATA acts as the bargaining agent for five charter schools and one private school. The decision by these groups of teachers to unionize has not been formally explored in Alberta, but Ravitch (2010) wrote "most teachers joined a union to seek higher salaries and better working conditions. Teachers have historically been underpaid in comparison to people in other professions with similar levels of education" (p. 174). Furthermore, Price (2011) explained that in the American context, where teachers in charter schools chose to unionize, both teachers and union officials identified the reasons for the choice as,

> worries about job security, examples of bad management and loss of trust, desire for fair disciplinary and evaluation systems, interest in a more formalized role in decision-making and concerns over burnout and turnover as key factors in their unionizing efforts. (p. 6)

This study explores the implications of charter school teacher unionism on establishing and attaining professional goals in the Alberta context.

ATA policy and charter school teachers: Tensions. In the 1990s the Progressive Conservative party aggressively embarked on its restructuring and downsizing of the education sector. Education taxation was restructured to move control of finances from local boards to the government, funding for education was severely cut, school boards were amalgamated, early childhood services were reduced, and charter schools were introduced as a vehicle for educational reform. The ATA provided responses to all these changes, but this work endeavors to capture some of the documentation regarding the introduction of charter schools to Alberta. On November 22, 1994 the Government of Alberta issued a news release entitled, Draft Charter School Handbook Released (Alberta Education, 1994). In the news release, the government claimed that charter schools were guided by key principles of "providing parents and students

with greater choice in curriculum and education delivery methods and improving student learning" (para. 1). Education Minister Halvar Jonson was also quoted as saying charter schools would "implement innovative or enhanced programs and methods of delivery that will broaden the range of opportunities within Alberta's public education system" (para. 3). The draft charter school handbook released October 31, 1994 is far more explicit in stating the purpose for establishing charter schools. The handbook stated,

> Purpose: Charter schools are expected to provide a different educational environment to improve student learning. The intent goes beyond simply creating a few new or alternative school programs. Charter schools are granted flexibility and considerable autonomy to implement innovative or enhanced educational services which will broaden the range of educational opportunities and enhance student learning. Enhanced student learning means improved acquisition, in some measurable way, of skills, attitudes and knowledge. (Alberta Education, 1994, p. 1)

The handbook also spoke to a parent's right to choose programs which best met the needs of their children and that charter schools were part of the public education system. Finally, the handbook informed those interested in starting a charter school that these schools were to be staffed by certificated teachers and were subject to the *Labour Relations Code* and *Employment Standards Code*.

The ATA provided a quick response to the announcement that charter schools would be created in Alberta. In her December 7, 1994 letter to the Minister of Education, the ATA president, Bauni Mackay noted, "the handbook states that, although teachers employed by charter schools must hold a teaching certificate, they do not have to be active members of the Association" (personal communication). Mackay (1994) also wrote in her letter to Minister

Jonson that "based on the experience in the United States, New Zealand and Great Britain, we believe that charter schools will result in a fragmentation not only of the education system but of society in general" (personal communication). ATA policy formalized its positions over time with respect to charter schools and charter school teachers by passing resolutions at the Annual Representative Assembly held on an annual basis. Currently, there are five statements of ATA policy about charter schools and charter school teachers. These are policies 1.B.19, 5.A.25, 8.A.16, 8.B.43, 10.B.1, and 16.B.24 and they are attached in Appendix A. These reveal a possible tension between the ATA and charter school teachers because, on the one hand the ATA believes charter school teachers should be fully active members of the ATA as defined by the *Alberta Teaching Profession Act* (2012), but on the other hand the ATA does not support charter schools. The rationale identified by the ATA for not supporting charter schools is that these institutions act to fragment public education and are anti-democratic because of their governance structures. This case study examines the implications of the existence of these policy tensions through the research design incorporating semi-structured interviews.

Conclusion

This literature review provided an overview of three major areas: professions and professionalization, trade unions, and charter schools. It also provided context for rise of the Alberta charter schools so that the experience of charter school teachers could be situated within that historical and legal macro environment. Overall, many of the articles and books reviewed were theoretical in nature and this study is designed to address the gaps in the literature, primarily the lack of empirical basis for the theorization of professions and unions in education and for teachers. This project adds insight into the connections between the theory of professions and the major conceptual ideas for trade unionism as explicated by unionized Alberta

charter school teachers. Finally, this study will address the connections between the macroscopic context, the mesoscopic context, and the microscopic context using the empirical data. In the next chapter, Methodology, the research design and data analysis approaches adopted for this study will explained.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Silverman and Marvasti (2008) pointed out that researchers should be clear about "what we are trying to find out" (p. 10) when selecting a research methodology. For this study, I have chosen to utilize a qualitative single case study methodological approach. My contemplation of research design to examine the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization began with the question, "Should my study be qualitative or quantitative?" I elected to use a qualitative approach because I was seeking to better understand what charter school teachers thought about unionization and professionalization. In addition, I was mindful of the epistemological and theoretical framework for this dissertation. My epistemological and theoretical stances call for the close examination of the social world of charter school teachers and understanding their interactions with each other, their school boards, and their structural environment to act collectively in order to negotiate agreements, sometimes in writing, to reflect the way the teachers thought their social worlds should be arranged (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Strauss, 1978). The complexity of these specific arrangements could not, in my view, be adequately captured using the statistical measures of a quantitative approach since there was a need to focus "instead on understanding the nature of the research problem" (Baškarada, 2014, p. 1). As a qualitative researcher's main task is to "describe the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 9) and that "*Qualitative research* is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4), my selection of a qualitative approach was appropriate. The remainder of this section will explain how this research study was designed as a qualitative single case study, my ethical considerations, the description of the participants and

myself as researcher, data collection methods, techniques used for data analysis and finally, the study limitations and delimitations.

Qualitative Single Case Study

I adopted a qualitative single case study methodology for this research study. My rationale for selecting qualitative single case study was described well by Stake (2005), who wrote, "for a qualitative research community, case study concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social political and other contexts" (p. 444). In my study, I drew upon the experiences of the charter school teachers to paint a portrait of their negotiations, negotiations context, and structural context and this allowed me to tease out the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. I explored how teachers worked together to shape their social world through unionization and discuss the implications of this activity. Finally, this study reflects how I, alongside charter school teachers, constructed a picture of their social world. Ultimately, I felt that case study was the most suitable methodological choice for this research because my questions were "anchored in real life situations" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41) and because "the strength of case study research lies in its ability to enable the researcher to intensively investigate the case in-depth, to probe, drill down and get at complexity" (Day, 2012, p. 102).

In reviewing the literature, I learned there are several schools of thought with respect to what case study methodology is and how it ought to be carried out. Merriam (1998) noted, "while many have heard of case study research, there is little consensus on what constitutes case study or how this type of research is done" (p. 26). Merriam (1998), Yin (2014), and Stake (2005) explain the lack of agreement amongst scholars may be partially attributed to the other monikers case studies are given. For example, case studies are also called teaching cases, field

work, case law, or participant observations. As such, the methodology of case study is not always consistently or clearly explained within the literature. In a critical review of methodological descriptions of 34 case studies selected from three high impact qualitative research journals, Hyett, Kenny, and Dickson-Smith (2014) found few studies "provided an accurate description and rationale for using a qualitative case study approach" (Findings section, para 1) and that few studies "described their case study design" (Findings section, para 1). Hyett et al. conclude that if case study is to be credible as a research endeavor, "methodological descriptions that demonstrate a strong theoretical foundation and coherent study design" (Discussion section, para 2) are essential.

In order to create coherence with my theoretical framework and design a case study methodology appropriate for this study, I considered the writings of Robert E. Stake and Robert K. Yin, two well recognized case study methodologists. Stake and Yin, for many case study researchers, myself included, represent a starting point for developing a methodological approach to case study. I found that Stake's approach to case study is most applicable to this proposed case study because Stake is consistently located within social constructionist paradigm (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Hyett et al., 2014). Yin, on the other hand, has a less clearly understood epistemological stance. For example, Hyett et al. (2014) place Yin within post-positivism construct but Baxter and Jack (2008) consider Yin, a social constructionist. In my own assessment of Yin's 2014 book, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* I would agree that he developed a,

> post-positivist approach to case study [that] involves developing a clear case study protocol with careful consideration of validity and potential bias, which might involve an explanatory or pilot phase, and ensures that all elements of the case are measured and

adequately described. (Hyett et al., 2014, Definition of case study report section, para 4) In contrast, Stake's (2005) constructionist approach emphasized "designing a study to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond" (p. 443). Stake also recommended the incorporation of five key elements for every case study: (a) issue choice, (b) triangulation, (c) experiential knowledge, (d) contexts, and (e) activities. My case study aligned best with Stake's five essential elements for case study and these are enumerated in the next paragraph.

My issue choice was the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. This relationship was discovered by exploring the activity of teacher unionism using semi-structured interviews with unionized charter school teachers and examination of their collective agreements. Consequently, this research explored the context of teacher unionism within charter schools relying on insight and the experience of unionized charter school teachers. Themes emerging from the data set were triangulated between the individual interviews and I conducted follow-up interviews with participants to better understand the case. Finally, I used charter school collective agreements to connect to and reinforce the themes arising from the interview data. In having settled on Stake's (2005) approach to case study, the remainder of the discussion will explain how this research was designed as a qualitative case study that is trustworthy and consistent with social constructionism and negotiated order theory.

What is the Definition of Case Study?

As already noted, case study as a methodology does not have a fixed definition and for the purposes of this study, I will draw on the work of scholars to arrive at a definition for this qualitative case study. VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007) pointed out, "the past three decades of scholarship on case study research have produced more than 25 different definitions of case

study, each with its own particular emphasis and direction for research" (p. 81). Then what is it that distinguishes case study from other sorts of methodologies?

The definition I adopt for case study methodology draws from the work of several theorists who have worked to identify the key features of case study research. The first feature of case study is that the research endeavor is designed to gain insight into phenomena that are situated in the real world. Yin (2014) wrote, "case study is an empirical inquiry" (p. 16). The word empirical can have several meanings and for the purposes this research, empirical is taken to mean "originating in or based on observation or experience" (Merriam Webster, 2015) rather than "capable of being verified or disproved by observation or experiment" (Merriam Webster, 2015). The second feature of case studies is that the research phenomenon can be identified by specific parameters. Flyvbjerg (2011) explained that a "decisive factor in defining a study as a case study is the choice of the individual unit of study and the setting of its boundaries" (p. 301). This parameter setting for case studies is referred to as the "unit of analysis" by Yin (2014) or a "bounded system" by Stake (1995). For the purposes of this study, bounded system will be the term chosen to represent the case. Finally, Merriam (1998) pointed out that "the uniqueness of a case study lies not so much in the methods employed (although these are important) as in the questions asked and their relationship to the end product" (p. 31). In other words, the case study report should be coherent start to finish as well as provide "sufficient descriptive narrative so that the readers can experience these happenings vicariously and draw their own conclusions" (Stake, 2005, p. 450) and should attempt to answer questions of "how" and "why" (Yin, 2014).

In combining the features discussed above, I define this case study as an empirical examination of a phenomenon situated within a real-world context where the phenomenon is set out by boundaries which describe the case and the reporting of the research conclusions is

completed in a fashion that is relevant and useful to readers. In my study, the unionized charter school teachers employed by the charter school boards represent the bounded system. The phenomenon or issue to be examined was the relationship between teacher unionism and professionalization with consideration provided to the contextual factors influencing the relationship. The analytic framework for the case study was informed by Strauss' (1978) negotiation order theory which examines negotiations, the negotiations context, and the structural context. In addition, the analytic framework considered the characteristics identified in the literature review for professions and professional unionism. Careful attention was paid to the way that unionized charter school teachers constructed their social world and were, in turn, constituted by their social world. The research report is in the form of this dissertation which endeavors to provide a cogent and useful account of what has been learned from this case. Finally, this case study can be categorized as having intrinsic value in that the purpose of this proposed research is to "achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 28).

Critiques of qualitative case study. Qualitative case study methodology has been critiqued as being a form of empirical research that cannot be moved from hypothesis to theory in accordance with the development of scientific principles (Baškarada, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Traianou, 2007; Yin, 2014). Scholars point out that case studies, whether a single case study or a multiple case study, do not, from a traditional positivistic and quantitative view, consider large enough samples to allow for generalization to a population (Hitchcock & Nastasi, 2010; Murakami, 2013; Yin, 2014).

In answer to the critique that qualitative case studies are not generalizable, scholars argue that the depth and detail captured within qualitative work has the potential to render useful data

to help understand social contexts and design policies and are therefore meaningful and applicable in other settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative case study finds its merit in "being able to deeply pursue facts that are related to that case. From there, it is possible to make theoretical contribution" (Murakami, 2013, p. 91). Research methodologies that enable researchers to learn about human social worlds to guide the creation and evaluation of policy mechanisms to improve or enhance human social settings are very helpful to the field of education. Therefore, case study methodology should be embraced as long as there is careful consideration and explication of: the research questions posed, the coherence of the case study conceptually, and the strategies implemented for trustworthiness (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014).

Research Design and Trustworthiness

For case study, Yin (2014) recommended that case study researchers be rigorous in their research design as, he noted, "too many times, a case study researcher has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, has allowed unequivocal evidence to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions" (pp. 19–20). Stake (2005) pointed out "good case study research follows disciplined practice of analysis and triangulation to tease out what deserves to be called experiential knowledge" (p. 455). While Yin took a more scientific approach to case study and Stake advocated a naturalistic approach to case study, both authors affirmed that good case studies must be structured intentionally to ensure validity in a quantitative research paradigm or trustworthiness in qualitative research paradigm.

To assure readers of qualitative research that the results of a study are trustworthy, strategies for quality must be made explicit. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) pointed out, "terms such as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity" (p. 24). The next sections

will explore the criteria used for this case study to establish trustworthiness, making use of the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, making parallels with the more traditional or scientific terminology as appropriate.

Credibility

In qualitative case study, there is a recognition that the "case to be studied is a complex entity located in a milieu or situation embedded in a number of contexts or backgrounds" (Stake, 2005, p. 449). As such, qualitative case study researchers enter research projects inductively, gathering data over extended periods of time, observing and describing the context of the participants, condensing and verifying the data to draw tentative conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This cyclic process is repeated until there is nothing new learned or the data becomes saturated (Miles et al., 2014). Where these strategies are implemented, credibility is enhanced for a qualitative case study.

Specifically, this case study incorporated what Lincoln and Guba (1985), Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), and Yin (2014) identified as being important to the credibility of a study. They advised that sharing and confirming results with participants and key informants will help establish credibility for a case study. As such, as a part of the research design for this study, summaries of the initial interview were sent to all participants to follow up and test my understanding and interpretation of the participants' perspectives. It was also important to ensure that as Yin suggested, "multiple sources of evidence" (p. 47) were gathered to find "converging lines of inquiry" (p. 47) as a means of ensuring trustworthiness. In addition to checking my summary results with participants, when analyzing my data, I looked for similarities and differences between the interview data as a form of triangulation. Finally, I analyzed charter school collective agreements, the products of the negotiations between charter

school teachers and their school boards, to test whether the findings that were emerging from the interview data were consistent with collective agreement clauses.

In addition to triangulating data or themes, prior to arriving at conclusions about the relationships between data I engaged in a process called explanation building (Yin, 2014). Explanation building is an iterative process where I, as the researcher, reviewed and re-reviewed my data to forge links back to the original research questions as well as the theoretical framework to determine whether the data I chose while memo writing was providing useful information to my answer my questions. In some cases, explanation building led me to explore avenues I had not considered previously. Miles et al. (2014) encouraged researchers to follow up data surprises or outliers with the question "what does this event tell me about my expectations, implicit theories, and taken-for-granted assumptions?" (p. 303) and in analyzing my data I found that I was surprised at times by the direction the data was pointing. My advisors were also extremely important to my explanation building and their editorial comments really helped to focus my research findings as well as ensure the dissertation was coherent throughout.

Finally, establishing clear data collection procedures is important. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the orderly collection and recall of data as "referential adequacy" (p. 313) and they advised researchers to archive their data for "later recall and comparison" (p. 314) when finalizing conclusions about the data. In my study, I kept track of the steps I took when collecting my data through an audit trail which existed in my journal and was complemented by my electronic records, specifically, email correspondence.

Transferability

Generalization of results of case study has been the topic of much discussion by scholars. This is because qualitative case study inquiry "has sometimes been regarded as a weakness, as

indicated by the less-than-scientific or even unscientific character of this kind of work" (Gomm & Hammersly, 2002, p. 2). Yin (2014) resolved the issue for case study methodology by making a distinction between statistical inference (which is theorization about populations) and analytic theorization (principles which can be applied to cases that are similar in makeup). Stake's (2002) solution to the question of generalization of conclusions for case study was to introduce the concept of "*naturalistic generalization,* arrived at by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings. To generalize this way is to be both intuitive and empirical" (p. 22). What Stake stated is that case study can reveal tacit understandings previously unknown. In a response to Stake, Lincoln and Guba (2002) raised the point that if tacit knowledge is written down it is no longer tacit. Lincoln and Guba (2002) extended and reframed the concept of naturalistic generalization into what they called working hypothesis. They suggested working hypotheses can apply from one context to another and "the degree of *transferability* is a direct function of the *similarity* between the two contexts" (Lincoln & Guba, 2002, p. 40). There is an affinity between Yin's (2014) and Lincoln and Guba's (2002) conceptualization of the applicability of conclusions arising from qualitative case studies. Both scholars indicate that, for case study, the knowledge (be it an analytic generalization or working hypothesis) gleaned from the case study may be applicable in new but similar contexts.

I choose to use the term working hypothesis to describe findings that may be transferable to other contexts to inform charter school teachers, charter school boards, policy makers, and academics about the relationship between teacher unionism and professionalization. Working hypothesis is, in my view, more appropriate for this qualitative case study because, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted,

> the naturalist cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. (p. 316)

This does not preclude me from arriving at a working hypothesis, however, the applicability of this tentative theorization in other contexts would rely on whether the context described within this research study are similar enough in detail to be compared with other contexts.

Dependability and Confirmability

The goal for qualitative research is not the replicability of results obtained, it is dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The primary means for establishing these criteria in qualitative research is to use an inquiry audit which, if "properly managed, can be used to determine dependability and confirmability simultaneously" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 318). Lincoln and Guba (1985) wrote that there are "two tasks of the inquiry auditor" (p. 318). The first task links to dependability and requires the inquiry auditor to examine the process of the inquiry. The second task links to the examination of the products of the inquiry—data, interpretations, and conclusions—and this assures confirmability. In my case study research, dependability was confirmed by the protocols I engaged in completing this research and these are described further on in this methodology chapter. As well, confirmability for this study was established using an audit trail which is "a residue of records stemming from the inquiry" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319). The audit trail I created using a journal as well as electronic records is instrumental to showing that this study has credibility, and included in my audit trail are member checks, referential adequacy, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

This case study involved the use of semi-structured interviews with human participants as

well as a documents review, therefore a level 1 ethics review assessing the potential risk to participants was approved by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board in May 2016 and has been renewed twice after the initial approval. The risk to participants was assessed as low because this study follows the minimal risk definition described by the regulations of the Government of Canada. To be clear, "minimal risk" research is "defined as research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life" ("Tri council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans," 2010). As collective bargaining is a process all the unionized teachers of a charter school participate in, seeking further information about linkage between teacher unionism and professional status from the teachers' perspective proved to be minimally invasive. Further to that, the identity of the teachers was protected, and every participant provided explicit and written consent (Appendix B) prior to being interviewed. In addition, participants were fully informed of the research questions under examination as well as protocols undertaken in the case study.

Documents were a secondary data source and took the form of a review of Alberta charter school collective agreements. Charter school teacher collective agreements are public documents easily available on the ATA website (www.teachers.ab.ca). Consequently, no approval from the ATA or charter school boards was required to access and analyze the collective agreements. Finally, in analyzing the collective agreements, aliases were provided for each charter school agreement reviewed. While it was not necessary to request permission of charter school boards to review publicly available collective agreements, it is normal practice to seek permission of the employing school board when interviewing its employees, so a letter of request (Appendix C) outlining the purpose of the study was sent superintendents. Again, as was

the case with participants, a full explanation of the research questions and protocols was shared with the employer boards at the time permission was sought to interview teachers. For participants who agreed to be interviewed, anonymity of their names, position, and charter school was assured.

My Position as Researcher

Researchers cannot claim neutrality with respect to their projects. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) pointed out that "all inquiry is both political and moral" (p. 2). As such, an examination of our contexts, our relationship to those to be researched, and our own reflexive lenses as researcher should be identified. Knowing our position as researcher is part of establishing credibility for the research project and recognizes that in qualitative inquiry the researcher is an instrument for the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

My position as researcher can begin to be established by contextualizing my professional and researcher identities. My researcher identity is newer and less established than my professional identity. As a doctoral student, this project represents my first attempt to engage an original research project; my master's degree was concluded with a capping project that was interesting to write, but it held only limited value in terms of developing a skill set to engage with this sort of research. Consequently, much of my research identity has been constructed by my participation in the Educational Policy Studies doctoral studies program, along with those responsible for helping guide this work to fruition, by my reading and interpretation of literature over my years of engaging with graduate work, and through my discussions with other graduate students who were travelling along the same path I was. Haynes (2012) pointed out that "as researchers we should try to be aware of how our ontological, social and political positioning affects the work that we do by informing the choices we make about research topics, questions,

approaches, methodologies and outcomes" (p. 78). In developing my researcher identity in the development and completion of this document, I have tried to adopt methods complemented by theoretical considerations to construct a solid research project both theoretically and methodologically. For example, I have articulated why I am interested in my research questions, I have outlined my epistemological and theoretical stances, and I have carefully chosen my methodology and my methods, but what I must now do is articulate more fully my own connection to this research and situate myself more reflexively. In particular, it is important for me to consider my professional role as an ATA staff officer in order to better understand how my professional context might impact my data condensation and interpretation of the data set as well as the composition of my findings and conclusion chapters, given its close relationship to my research question.

As an ATA staff officer, my direct experience with the charter schools started from the time I was hired as an ATA executive staff officer in 2006. During my employment with the ATA, I have been assigned to two charter schools as the representative of the bargaining agent (during times of active bargaining) or as staff advisor (in times where bargaining was closed). My role with the ATA has been to help the charter school teachers express, to their employer, their desires and intentions at the bargaining table. As well, up until September 2018, I was involved with helping charter school teachers understand and interpret the entitlements in their collective agreement. I come to this research with a world view about the ATA, collective bargaining, and the importance of both to teachers. I am also a loyal employee to the ATA and am predisposed, in my professional role, to defending its interests in both the public and private realm. Based on those experiences, my personal bias is clear: I came into the research project believing that for public school teachers, the linkages between professionalization, as previously

defined, and unionization are strong. Furthermore, I would argue that without the ATA enacting simultaneous action to improve salary and working conditions through collective bargaining as well as pushing for higher standards of training and professional growth, the profession of teaching in Alberta would not have flourished as it has over time. My belief, formed through my various experiences with the North West Territories Teachers' Association and the ATA, is that it is necessary to assert union function in conjunction with professional function for the ATA to serve its members well and grow the teaching profession.

My knowledge base is situated within my historical context, I grew up in a family of teacher unionists, I have been a volunteer in teacher locals of teacher organizations, and now I work for the ATA. I hold teacher organizations in Canada in high regard, appreciating both the advances made to the economic status of teachers but also for the inspiring work teacher organizations do to make a positive difference in the professional lives of teachers. However, I recognize that the ideas I have formed about the ATA and its role in the working lives of teachers are not shared by all teachers, including ATA members. I have seen and experienced this within my professional role. My awareness that teachers hold multiple perspectives about the ATA helped me to commit to this research project with an open mind and a sense that new perspectives and interpretations might be possible and could emerge from my interviews with charter school teachers that could offer a challenge to my lived experience and understandings of the connections between professionalism and unionism.

Considering the tension between my professional life and beliefs and my commitment to constructionist meaning making, it was critical to be reflexive in my approach to this case study. I define reflexivity to "mean a deeper consideration of the subjectivity and role of the researcher in the process of knowledge production" (Day, 2012, p. 63). Additionally, Haynes (2012) wrote

that reflexivity is comprised of two interlocking components, reflection and interpretation. By reflecting about the situated nature of one's knowledge, researchers can better understand how these aspects enter their interpretations of how their conclusions and arguments are constructed. As such, Haynes (2012) argued that researchers identify the situated nature of their own lives and knowledge frames as well as identify their relationship to those whom they are studying. Therefore, in addition to identifying my researcher and professional identities within this dissertation, it became important to identify that I bear significant relational and ethical responsibilities to the charter school teachers, the schools, and school boards I engaged with for this study as we made meaning about professionalism and unionism across very different experiences of the phenomena being examined. One strategy that was used was to search for shared meaning through the presentation and interpretation of data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews that were then re-presented to the participants for validation and feedback. It was important to work closely with the research volunteer participants to ensure the meaning of interpretations were legitimate in their experience and not simply reflective of my own thinking. My goal in doing so was to ensure that, as much as possible, the research process was accountable to the participants and their understanding of the questions we were exploring together, as well as transparent, and trustworthy.

In addition, it was important to identify other strategies and interventions for disrupting potentially biased pathways of thought to avoid what Crotty (1998) terms reification of knowledge; simply re-writing what already exists as a matter of my own habituation. A part of my strategy was to remember that the "researcher must be critically reflective, considering the potential for both harm and good possible from the research act, always keeping in mind who benefits from the research" (Tilley, 1998, para 24). Therefore, in crafting this dissertation, I

reviewed the data set often to reflect on what these data was revealing to ensure there was consistency between my analysis and what the participants had shared and what we had discussed when data was presented to them for further questions and discussion. I also used my reflective journal and memo writing to check and recheck my codes and data excerpts to create the themes for Chapters Four and Five. In order to separate my own thoughts from the participant data, I kept the following question front and center in my writing process, asking myself often as well as recording in my reflective journal, "Does the data give me permission to say this" (April 18, 2017).

I also tried to articulate where my beliefs were evident in the writing process. For example, following my first interview, I noted in my reflective journal that the participant talked about the "conflicted nature of the relationship with the ATA" (March 29, 2016) thereby leveling critique at the ATA. In the data analysis process, this created a situation where I had to wrestle with my loyalty to the ATA as an employee and with my role as a researcher. On the one hand, I was aware that it might be risky to the ATA to share participant criticism as there is always a small risk that it could be taken out of context by those reading my dissertation. As I wrote in my reflective journal on July 7th, 2019, "I did not set out in this work to tear down the work of the ATA" but I also noted that I did need to "demonstrate awareness of my role as researcher." Therefore, my strategy in dealing with the tensions between my loyalty to the ATA and participant criticism was to be aware of and identify my positionality and step back from it for a moment to adopt an analytic lens to explore what the critique of the participant represented. In my thesis, this resulted in me employing the theme of legitimacy. Using legitimacy as a theme helped me to articulate that when participants criticized the ATA, it was generally related to the ATA policy and to the interactions that charter school teachers had with public school teachers.

As a researcher, I felt that it was important to include this information as it helped show the structural context (Strauss, 1978) that charter school teachers lived in. In being aware of my positionality, I was able to articulate the tension and then resolve it using an analytic approach for inclusion into this dissertation.

In addition to separating myself from the participants through journaling and memo writing, I went to the literature to enable the text to speak to me and call into question my preconceptions and assumptions and to apply a theoretical lens to my interpretations Finally, as I was final author of this project, I was keenly aware of Denzin's (1998) wise reminder that "representation, of course, is always self-presentation" (p. 319) and this document is one of many possible interpretations of this research; it is by no means a definitive or final account of the connections between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization.

Finally, in establishing my location as researcher, I considered my relationship to charter school teachers both as a researcher and professionally. In reviewing Acker's (2001) writings about researchers on the inside or researchers on the outside, I realized I did not fit either label. To be a researcher on the inside I had to be located within the group being studied and this was not the case because, as a researcher, I did not work as a teacher in a charter school and my perspective in relation to teacher unionism was different from that of the charter school teachers. The issues, concerns, and aspirations of teachers with respect to their collective agreement were not mine, though I did help charter school teachers to achieve their goals with respect to their collective agreements and conditions of practice.

To claim the ground of researcher on the outside also met with dissatisfaction since the researcher on the outside implied that, as researcher I was to be objective in my approach to the research endeavor. While role of a researcher on the outside is "to immerse themselves until the

strange becomes familiar" (Day, 2012, p. 74), being an outsider implied a measure of inexperience with the participants and context that I could not claim. The experiential knowledge base I developed as a staff officer and former teacher could not be denied in this project because my professional expertise helped bring clarity to the complex regulatory web constraining and enabling charter school teachers' work.

The inability to be a researcher on the inside or a researcher on the outside led me to conclude that I resided in between the positions. For that reason, I submit that I was a researcher who was caught between the two polarities of *inside* and *outside*. While my research participants were not linked to my every day place of work or my colleagues at the ATA, charter school teachers were a group that I did work with as collective bargaining agreements needed to be renewed and I worked with individuals from those schools who had questions about their collective agreement. My research position therefore captures aspects of being on the *inside* and on the *outside* of the worlds of charter school teachers. This is not unique to my situation as researcher, for, as Trowler (2011) noted in relation to researchers who undertake projects situated within their own organizational contexts, "'insiderness' is not a fixed value: you may be researching aspects of the institution previously unknown to you, collecting data from strangers, and what counts as 'inside' also depends on your own identity positioning" (Endogenous research, para. 1). Therefore, as a researcher, I have insider knowledge about the workings of the ATA, but as I did not work as a charter school teacher, I was able to put some distance between myself as researcher and those whom I was researching.

Pilot Study

For this research project, a pilot study was conducted to refine the semi-structured interview questions. This pilot study, conducted in the late fall of 2015, was conducted with a

retired colleague who volunteered to assist in this study. An interview with my draft semi-structured interview questions was conducted with the retired teacher. Engaging with a pilot study was advantageous for many reasons. First, it allowed for me to test my recording equipment to ensure that it was working properly. In addition, I transcribed the interview and could review it, along with the recording, to assess and revise the questions I had drafted for the interview. This process resulted in a significant revision of the semi-structured interview questions. Finally, the experience of interviewing a retired colleague, whom I knew well, allowed me to contemplate strategies for interviewing charter school teachers, some of whom I had gotten to know through my professional work. In reflecting on the pilot study, I realized that during the interview process it was important for me to identify when it was necessary to carefully clarify what was being said. This was because when I was interviewing a person that I knew well, it was easy to assume that I knew what they meant by their response. In addition to helping refine my semi-structured interview questions, the value of probing questions became clearer to me due to the engagement with a pilot study.

Sampling

Charter School Bargaining Unit Selection

The selection of participants for the case study was purposeful as opposed to random. A purposeful approach was appropriate because the logic for purposeful sampling rests on participants being selected "for their relevance to the research question" (Schwandt, 2007b, p. 170). Initially, I had contemplated restricting the study to a single unionized charter school, but after my candidacy exam it was suggested by the examining committee that the ability to provide the assurance of anonymity for participants was more likely if volunteers were recruited from several different schools as opposed to a single school site. In my view, the suggestion to

expand the selection of bargaining units to include all unionized charter schools helped strengthen the study because it enhanced my ability to triangulate data findings. In addition, because my interview data was gathered from teachers who worked at different charter schools, a greater scope of experience was captured through the semi-structured interviews. Finally, the credibility of this study was increased when the data was triangulated between participants who worked at different schools because their immediate contexts were not the same.

There are five unionized charter schools in Alberta. These unionized schools, also known as bargaining units, and their teachers form the "bounded system" (Stake, 1995) of the case. A search of the ATA website, www.teachers.ab.ca, revealed that the charter schools unionized at different times over the past 15 years. Charter School A formed the first ATA collective bargaining agreement in 2003. Charter School A has completed four rounds of negotiations after 2003. Charter School B formed its first collective agreement in 2015 and this collective agreement is presently in place until 2018. Charter School C formed its collective agreement in 2009 and has completed two rounds of collective bargaining after 2009. Charter School D formed its collective agreement in 2004 and has bargained three more collective agreements since then. Lastly, Charter School E established its collective agreement in 2009 and negotiated one more collective agreement after that. All the current collective agreements, which range from being mature agreements (Charter Schools A and D) to brand new agreements (Charter School B), were examined as a part of my documents review.

There are five unionized charter schools situated in various areas of Alberta. The Alberta Association of Public Charter Schools website (http://www.taapcs.ca/members.html) provides links to the websites of each member charter school in Alberta. My examination of this website and its links allowed me to ascertain the following information about the unionized charter

schools. Three of the five schools are in urban areas with the remaining two being located rural and suburban areas. The population sizes of the schools range from approximately 100 students to 1,000 students. All grade levels are served by the five unionized charter schools, with four of the five schools serving students from kindergarten to Grade 9 and the remaining school serving high school students. Two of the unionized charter schools have multiple campuses. All five of the unionized charter schools have charter statements that are distinct from one another.

Prior to recruiting teachers to interview for this study, I contacted the Superintendents of the unionized charter schools to seek permission to interview the teachers at the school. A letter of introduction and explanation of the research project (Appendix B) was sent to the superintendents via email. I then followed up with each superintendent via email or telephone to ensure they had received the request. By the end of February 2016, four of the five charter school superintendents and school boards had provided their permission to interview teachers at their schools. The fifth charter school superintendent did not provide any response to my request to interview teachers despite several attempts on my part to communicate my request.

Participant Selection

The number of desired interviews was intended to be approximately six to eight, a valid number of participants to provide meaningful commentary through a semi-structured interview process as suggested by Mears (2012). However, after I sent my letter of invitation to participate in this study to the charter school teachers (Appendix B), I received 16 responses from charter school teachers expressing interest in participating in the study. I conducted interviews with 12 of the teachers who volunteered throughout the spring and summer of 2016 at locations away from their schools, usually in coffee shops or restaurants. I was unable to find times to interview the remaining four volunteers by the summer of 2016. As the data was saturated after 12

interviews, the inability to arrange interviews for the remaining volunteers was not detrimental to the study.

The charter school teachers who volunteered for this study had diverse backgrounds in teaching and educational experiences. Of the 12 teachers interviewed, half were female, and half were male. The teaching experience of the participants ranged from 8 years to 30 years and all but two of the participants had taught in both the public school system and the charter school system. The experience of the teachers in their current employment context of the unionized charter school ranged from 7 through 20 years. The charter school teachers also represented a range of teaching experiences: some had taught exclusively in the classroom, others held administrative experience and teaching experience. All but three of the participants had studied at a graduate level, and four of the participants held graduate degrees. Finally, teachers volunteered to be interviewed from three of the four charter schools where permission had been obtained to conduct this research. There were three volunteers from one school, four volunteers from another school, and five volunteers from the last school. To protect the identity of the teachers interviewed, the teachers were not linked to the charter school where they worked.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The primary source of data for this study was semi-structured interviews with charter school teachers. I selected this technique to gather data because interviewing provides an opportunity to "obtain unique information . . . held by the person interviewed" (Stake, 2010, p. 95) and because "recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 8). As the goal of this project was to gain insight into the experience of charter school teachers who were unionized to draw connections with professionalization, I felt semi-structured interviews

were the best way to accomplish this goal.

The 12 interviews for this study were informal and conversational. At the beginning of the interview the participants were provided with a hard copy of the letter explaining the study (Appendix B). In addition, I verbally ensured that volunteers clearly understood that they could withdraw from the study 30 days after the completion of the interview. The participant consent form (Appendix B) was also reviewed and the teachers were asked to provide their signature in duplicate. One copy of the participant consent form was provided to the teacher and the other was retained by me. After this was accomplished, the interview commenced and was recorded using two different recorders. This was important because if one recorder failed, the other would provide a recording of the interview. The questions asked at the start of each interview were designed to allow for the development of "an appropriate rapport with the participant" (Seidman, 2013, p. 98); in other words, the questions were intended to make the participants feel comfortable, but still maintained the boundary between a conversation and an interview, and ensured the interview was "a formal encounter, with specific purpose, and both parties are aware of this" (Drever, 1995, p. 4). As the interview progressed, the open-ended questions (Appendix D) I had prepared for the semi-structured interview were covered. As the interview drew to a close, I asked each participant to review the questions to ensure we had not missed anything from their point of view, and I asked if the participants had any questions of me. Each interview ranged in time from approximately 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Most interviews were about an hour in length. Once the interview was concluded, I explained to the participants that the interview would be transcribed and then I would proceed to summarize the interview. Once the summary was complete, it was provided to the participant to confirm in a follow up interview, conducted either in person or via email, that it accurately portrayed the content of the

interview. In addition, I ensured that I kept journal notes, completed soon after the interviews concluded, to record my thoughts about the interview as well as to identify ideas and themes revealed during the interview process. The initial interviews with teachers took place from spring to summer of 2016.

Transcribing the interviews occurred shortly after the interviews were conducted. Four of the transcriptions were completed by me and eight of the transcriptions were completed by Transcript Divas, a Canadian company specializing in academic transcription. Once the transcripts were completed, I reviewed them along with the recordings to ensure their accuracy. From the recordings and transcriptions, a summary of each interview was compiled and sent to each participant to confirm understandings. The participants were asked, via email, to review the summary and provide feedback to me about the contents of the summary. Participants were given the option to discuss their feedback at a meeting, by telephone call, or by email. All 12 participants provided their feedback via email by early fall of 2016.

Documents Review

The other source of data for this study was a review of the documentary evidence found in the form of collective agreements for all the unionized charter schools. Collective agreements are publicly available legal documents that make explicit the compensation and conditions of practice for charter school teachers. Collective agreements are primary documents. McCulloch (2012) explained primary documents "are produced as a direct record of an event or process" (p. 211) and in this case, collective agreements are the product of negotiations between the ATA and charter school boards. An advantage of a documents review of the various collective agreements is that the negotiation trajectories for each charter school are at different points. As such, the collective agreements range from being new to being more mature and this is helpful because it

helps reflect the negotiations and negotiations context for charter school teachers over time. In the next section, strategies for data analysis and reporting will be discussed.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Qualitative and case study research can generate reams of data, all of which must be distilled into a form that identifies patterns and global themes that can be used to answer the research questions. In this study, I analyzed data in the fashion suggested by Miles et al. (2014) who stated, "we see analysis as three concurrent flows of activity: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing/verification" (p. 12). However, within this framework of condensation, display, and conclusion drawing, I also drew specific direction from Marshall and Rossman (1999) who outline six phases for data analysis: "(a) organizing data; (b) generating categories, themes and patterns; (c) coding the data; (d) testing the emergent understandings; (e) searching for alternative explanations; and (f) writing the report" (p. 152). I combined the steps recommended by Marshall and Rossman and Miles et al. I now discuss the specific steps I took to manage and analyze the data for this study.

The first step in analyzing my data was to keep a reflective journal where I recorded my thoughts immediately after each interview occurred. I found that in noting general impressions as well as specific ideas, I was able to begin the process of data condensation. Miles et al. (2014) explained that data condensation is "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and / or transforming data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials" (p. 12). For example, in my reflections after an interview conducted on April 21st, 2016, I wrote that for this participant there was a "strong belief that teaching was a good place to be and that compensation should be similar to other public education teachers." In other words, this participant believed that

economic parity was very important for charter school teachers. Later, after I worked through all my interview transcripts and develop codes, or categories, I identified that within six of the interviews there were comments about parity with public school teachers. These early reflections were important to the development of my thinking about themes and these early thoughts were later tested against the interview data as the analysis proceeded.

During the spring and summer of 2016, I began to transcribe the recordings of the interview data and while this exercise kept me close to the data, I was not very efficient at it and therefore found the transcription process to be very costly in time. Consequently, I engaged the services of Transcript Divas, a Canadian transcription service, under the terms of an academic confidentiality agreement, to complete the remaining transcriptions. My engagement of two methods for transcribing my interview recordings risked the potential that there would be differences in the fashion with which my data sets were analyzed. I did, in fact, note that the advantage of transcribing the tapes on my own was that an intimacy with what the participants were saying was more clearly established because I had to go back and forth so many times and listen so closely in order to reproduce word for word what was being said. This created a familiarity with the transcript that was harder to establish with the transcripts that were done by Transcript Divas. As I transcribed the first four interviews at the same time period as I was interviewing the remaining participants, I found that engaging in these processes simultaneously helped me to refine the interviews as those occurred. This is consistent with Olson (2011) who argued that when a researcher transcribes their own interviews that a strong reflexive relationship is formed with the data generated. It is possible that my decision to transcribe some interviews but not all of them may have caused some minimal impact to the data analysis process, but because there was approximately a month that elapsed between the interviews and finalization of

the other transcriptions, some distance was created between the interviews I had transcribed and those that were done by Transcript Divas. Prior to starting to code more formally, as a part of checking the accuracy of the transcripts I had contracted out, I listened and relistened to the tapes alongside of reading the transcripts. As such, I can assert that transcribing the interviews manually had minimal impact on my analysis given the time that elapsed between the transcription and the coding process. In addition, the comments selected from the participants in this dissertation are not weighted towards the first four interviews; rather, they are well distributed. Notwithstanding this, it is possible that my analysis did unconsciously swing towards the ideas emerging in the first four interviews, but I believe the participants themselves were diverse enough to overcome this potential bias. When all the transcripts were completed, I checked their accuracy by listening to the interviews several times with the transcripts in hand. Subsequently, I condensed the interview data by drafting summaries of the content of the interviews and emailed these to the participants to confirm that my representation of the interviews was accurate. The email invited participants to respond either verbally, with an in-person or telephone interview, or by email. All the participants opted to respond by email and by early fall 2016 the member checks were complete and feedback from participants was integrated into the summary documents. While the transcripts and summaries were being finalized, I was able to embark on "coding [which] is the initial step toward an even more rigorous and evocative analysis and interpretation for a report" (Saldana, 2013, p. 8). Though I had been writing reflections, interview summaries, and memos about the interviews and the interview data prior to engaging in more formal coding of the interview data, I adopted Saldana's (2013) advice when he said, "qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity (a pattern), they actively facilitate

the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections" (p. 8). In my first cycle of coding, I worked within the margins of several transcripts to assign "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and / or evocative attribute" (Saldana, 2013, p. 3) for each line or lines of interview text. My coding strategy was to use descriptive coding which "assigns basic labels to the data to provide an inventory of their topics" (Saldana, 2013, p. 83) but my thinking about the interview data was also being influenced by my research questions and the literature review where the trait model of professions and professional unionism was explained. Therefore, I blended descriptive coding with a structural coding approach which "applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry" (Saldana, 2013, p. 83). Once I completed the first cycle of coding on several transcripts, I wrote down all the descriptive codes in my reflective journal to find connections, frequency of occurrence, and identify categories. Saldana identifies this as

> Second Cycle coding, [where] you might collapse the original number of First Cycle codes into a smaller number as you reanalyze the data and find that larger segments are text are better suited to just one key code rather than several smaller ones. (p. 24)

I then tested my initial coding and categorization against transcripts not yet coded. Once I was more confident that my codes and categories were plausible choices (Miles et al., 2014), I moved away from coding on the hard copies of transcripts towards the organization and coding of data using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), more specifically NVIVO 11 Pro. As I progressed through the organization of the data from the semi-structured interviews, I was writing analytic memos to link the data condensation and data display to tentative explanations and conclusions. While the accounting of my data condensation provided here would imply that the steps followed were linear, this was not the case. I found that the

activities were concurrent and that I was constantly moving back and forth between the data, the coding, and memo writing to evaluate its trustworthiness and follow up on any incongruencies.

My analysis of the documentary evidence, or charter school collective agreements, was conducted in the fall and early winter of 2016. In my professional life, I review collective agreements all the time, so I felt it important to ensure that my coding strategy aligned with my research aim and that this be complemented by my professional expertise as opposed to the other way around. Rozycki (1981), in his doctoral work which examined hundreds of collective agreements in Alberta and Saskatchewan, noted that "in order to quantify the data from the written collective bargaining agreements, it was necessary to devise an instrument, or utilize an existing instrument" (p. 61). This comment is significant because Rozycki makes it clear that there are pre-existing methods for the analysis of collective agreements. In other words, one can infer there are commonalities shared across collective agreements. My professional experience would affirm this is the case; there are basic structural features that occur in all teacher collective agreements—features such as term, grievance procedures, salary, benefits, and leaves. Rozycki also noted a significant gap in research for the analysis of teacher collective agreements and while I was able to locate limited American-based research on the analysis of teacher collective agreements, this tended to be large scale in nature. Therefore, in choosing a coding scheme for coding Alberta charter school collective agreements, I did not use pre-determined instruments to analyze the collective agreements; I used a structural approach (Saldana, 2013) that aligned with my review of the literature on professions and professional unionism taking into consideration my research sub-question, "*How does a collective agreement reflect the relationship between union function and professional function? How does this evolve over time?"* The results of my examination are summarized in Appendix E. I drew from these results to triangulate the research

findings from the interview data, and these are articulated in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

With the process for data analysis completed as outlined above, I turned my attention towards writing the findings for this dissertation. My work continued to be iterative. While writing my findings I found myself going back into the coded data, journal reflections, and memos to ensure that my thematic development was supported by these sources. My initial attempts to craft my findings chapters could best be described as an accounting of what the participants said. With the encouragement of and feedback from my advisors, I was able to identify and refine the global themes that formed the basis of Chapters Four and Five in this thesis. The constant reflection and checking in as I was writing my findings helped ensure the credibility of the themes I chose to present in Chapters Four and Five. To illustrate the connection between my coding, memo writing and thematic development, I have attached a sample thematic development chart (Appendix F) which illustrates representative data derived from groups of four participants to show evidence supporting the selection of themes found in my findings chapters.

Limitations and Delimitations

Despite the construction of measures to ensure quality and trustworthiness, my case study has delimitations and limitations that must be considered. In the paragraphs that follow, I will outline the flaws that impact this study beginning with its delimitations.

The first delimitation that impacts my research is my decision to restrict this study to unionized charter schools in Alberta. This decision was taken with care and with consideration of the comments arising from my examining committee during the candidacy exam. Initially, I had planned to study one charter school but there were valid concerns about the ability to

maintain the anonymity of the participants and the school. Therefore, the study was expanded to include all five unionized charter schools as the case. However, another possibility would have been to study all 13 charter schools in Alberta. Had all Alberta charter schools been included in my study, there may have been more divergence in my data set regarding the connections between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization because the negotiations and negotiations contexts of non-unionized charter schools would likely be different than those of unionized charter schools.

A further delimitation for this study was my decision to confine this work to a single case study involving unionized charter school teachers. Had I considered a comparative case study that included the perspective of unionized public school teachers, I suspect, based on my professional experiences in the field with public school teachers, there would be significant differences between the two groups of teachers in terms of the connections between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. My reasons for this suspicion are based upon the observation that while both public and charter school teachers share the same requirements for certification, public school teachers have had collective agreements for decades and many have experienced several cycles of collective bargaining. There are also many unionized public school teachers who have participated in labour action: either strike or lockout. It is possible that teachers who experience the full spectrum of possibilities of labour relations including labour action may hold divergent views about teacher unionism as it relates to their professional status. Within this study, a perspective from teachers who have been through a strike or lockout is missing because unionized charter school teachers have not, to date, experienced this form of labour action. Finally, public school teachers likely have divergent views about collective bargaining and teacher professionalization because the past three rounds of teacher bargaining in

the public sector have been challenging because of aggressive stances taken by governments to public sector collective bargaining (Teghtmeyer, 2015) as well changing legislative structures for collective bargaining through the introduction of the *Alberta Public Education Collective Bargaining Act* (2015). These data in this study suggest that, while collective bargaining for unionized charter schools was challenging, government has not taken an interest in these bargaining rounds, therefore collective bargaining in charter schools has been politically uncontroversial.

A third delimitation for this study was my choice to use semi-structured interviews as a means of data gathering. While my semi-structured interviews with participants were revealing and provided great insight into my research questions, the participants had to rely upon their recollections to reconstruct and describe events at their schools. Consequently, the data arising from this study is likely different from a study that involved direct observation and witnessing events firsthand to document them in real time. In addition, while there was significant contact between myself as researcher and the participants with respect to their interviews, I did not spend days and weeks in their schools observing the lived reality of any one school. Therefore, while this study provides a detailed description of the connections between unionism and professionalization, it is a composite of data from several different participants working at different schools. While I had control over the delimitations within my study, I did not have control over the limitations and I now turn my attention to those factors.

A significant limitation in this study was researcher bias. Since my professional work relates directly to that which I am studying, I hold ideas, values, and beliefs about teacher unionism and its impact on professional status. I diligently reminded myself to maintain the role of researcher as opposed to professional negotiator, but there were times, particularly early in the

interviewing process where I had to ensure that I did not override what a participant was explaining by inserting my expert knowledge into the interview. This was assisted by my suspending "judgment about the existence of the world and "bracketing" or setting aside assumptions made in everyday life and in the science" (Schwandt, 2007a, p. 25) and ensuring that the participant could fully explain their responses by making effective use of prompts and paraphrasing. I found this to be quite challenging because there were a limited number of times, particularly with participants I knew well, that the expert voice emerged as a matter of familiarity. In these situations, I had to be quite vigilant about learning from these 'slip ups' and scrutinized these data from those interviews more carefully to determine whether the data was compromised and should be discarded. In addition, the data from the interviews with teachers that I had worked with directly as a staff officer was subject to examination and I was careful to ensure that there was corroborating evidence from other participants prior to including their comments in the study. In addition, I was intentional about utilizing techniques to assist in the separation of my professional and research selves. To achieve this separation, I revisited the research questions and epistemological stance often, developed a practical case management protocol, solicited third party feedback frequently, and ensured the data were checked and checked again for accuracy.

A second limitation is that participation in my study was voluntary. It became clear to me in reviewing my data set that those who identified their willingness to spend time being interviewed and participating in the research process had a high degree of affinity towards the ATA. Half of the participants interviewed had participated in collective bargaining and the majority of the participants interviewed were active supporters of unionization in the discussion at their charter schools of whether to join the ATA. As a result, the data gathered for this study

reflected a high degree of convergence with only a few areas of divergence.

Another limitation to this study was the assurance to participants of anonymity. As there are only five unionized charter schools, the conditions described by participants were often very specific to their school sites. In order to protect the identity of the participants and their charter schools, I found there were parts of the data set that could not be revealed in this dissertation as to do so would risk identifying the participants either by position or by school. The consequence to the study is that some of the rich description arising from each individual experience or from the experience of a particular school could not be shared because of ethical considerations.

Further, this case study, while exploring important questions regarding teacher unionism and professionalization, was limited by not being able to interview teachers from all of the unionized charter schools in Alberta. In analyzing the data for this study, I was careful to ensure that as findings reached were plausible and that the data supported the findings. However, had I been able to interview participants from all of the unionized charter schools, I may have been able to attain a greater breadth of understanding regarding the connections between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization.

Lastly, the findings of this report are descriptive and exploratory in nature. The objective of this research was to better understand the connections between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization, an area of research that is not well understood empirically. The findings of this dissertation are constrained by the unique context of Alberta which features a bi-cameral teacher organization, the ATA, and charter schools, neither of which exist elsewhere in Canada. Therefore, the applicability of this study from one context to another is very limited by the specific nature of the Alberta context. It would be my hope that the findings of this dissertation, while restricted in terms of applicability to other educational contexts, may offer potential

questions and avenues for further exploration. In this sense, a contribution to the field of educational policy studies might be made.

Summary

The methodology chosen for this study was qualitative case study. The "bounded system" (Stake, 2005) under consideration was unionized charter school teachers. In my research design, I considered ethical consideration and procedural steps that would assure the trustworthiness of the research and the resulting dissertation. In addition, I worked to ensure that the data analysis was performed in a systematic fashion, one which would ensure the credibility, triangulation, and trustworthiness of the conclusions. Finally, I considered the limitations and delimitations of this study. In the next two chapters, I will outline the results or findings for this research thereby answering the research question "*What is the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization in the context of unionized charter schools in Alberta?"*

Chapter Four: Negotiating Unionism

In this chapter, I will address the main question of this study which is *What is the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization in the context of unionized charter schools in Alberta?* as revealed in my exploration of the conditions under which teachers in charter schools negotiated unionism. Central findings in this study include: (a) unionization was perceived as a mechanism by which charter school teachers earned public status and respect as professionals, (b) formal organization through unions established a more secure employment relationship for charter school teachers, and (c) unionizing solidified charter school teachers as a collective body of professionals. This chapter articulates these insights through the themes of legitimacy, employment uncertainty, and collectivity.

The themes arising from the data in this chapter also shed light on two of the sub-questions within this study: *How do political, economic, and legislative factors impact the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?* and *How does the social context of the charter school influence the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?* More specifically, the theme of legitimacy illustrates how political and legislative factors helped shape the way that charter school teachers in this study perceived themselves as professionals and identifies what gaps they experienced because of their employment at charter schools. Employment uncertainty helps show how economic factors and the social context of charter school teachers may have influenced the relationship between unionization and professional status. Finally, collectivity as a theme illustrates the social context of the charter school teachers. Collectivity sheds light on the charter school teachers' strong orientation towards professional communities and this may have helped spur negotiations to unionize under the ATA.

Legitimacy

Prior to entering into the discussion of legitimacy as a theme for this study, it was instructive to consider the treatment of legitimacy in the literature to ensure that the meaning of the theme was well articulated as this section progresses. Peter (2010) noted that Weber was the first sociologist to formalize a descriptive definition of legitimacy. According to Peter (2010), Weber said legitimacy is established in a group when the participants believe in a system or political regime. In addition, Wæraas (2009) pointed out that "to be successful, organizations depend on voluntary compliance from their environments. Weber referred to such compliance as legitimacy" (p. 303). Weber also identified three sources from which legitimacy could arise and these are charismatic, legal-rational, or traditional sources (Wæraas, 2009). Charismatic legitimacy is formed when followers have faith in their leaders. Legal-rational legitimacy is the result of a belief in the rule of law and its rational basis. Traditional legitimacy arises when followers hold a long-standing belief in the system or regime (Peter, 2010; Uphoff, 1989; Wæraas, 2009). While charismatic legitimacy was not a factor that influenced how charter school teachers situated themselves within the teaching profession in Alberta, traditional and legal-rational legitimacy were.

Charter school teachers believed in their legitimacy as professional teachers because they had complied with certification, practice, and conduct standards expected of professional teachers in Alberta. This sort of legitimacy is a form of traditional legitimacy because the political and legislative structures defining entrance into the teaching profession have been in existence for many decades and are common to both Alberta charter schools and Alberta public schools. However, participants shared that their sense of legitimacy was challenged by their exclusion from the legal-rational legitimacy that public school teachers possessed. In the

discussion that follows, the macro and meso political context within which charter schools existed will be explored. The exploration of the structural political context, which includes descriptions of political decisions about legislation for charter schools and charter school teachers, helps explain why charter school teachers had concerns about their legal-rational legitimacy. Participants also described how the structural political context in Alberta provided them with a sense that they had traditional legitimacy as teachers.

Structural Political Context

The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2015) explained that "A political system is any persistent pattern of human relationship that involves (to a significant extent) power, rule, or authority" (Political Sociology, para. 1). Charter school teachers operate within an education system that was created by the political decisions of the government of Alberta in the early 1990s. The formation of charter schools caused a renegotiation of the political relationships between institutional actors within the education system; specifically, the relationship between the government of Alberta, charter schools, the ATA, and public-school boards. This discussion of the political context, inclusive of legislative decisions by the government with respect to charter schools, will help inform how structural features influenced the charter school teachers' perceptions of their own legitimacy as professionals.

The structural political context features both macro level and meso level interactions between education stakeholders. Blackstone (2012) wrote that "sociologists […] conduct macro level research study interactions at the broadest level" (p. 18). The macro political level, or structural context (Strauss, 1978, pp. 98-99), includes the global political context under which charter schools were brought to Alberta as well as the reactions of the ATA and school boards to the government of Alberta's choice to expand the *Alberta School Act* (2014) to include charter

schools, which I will address further below. Blackstone (2012) also wrote that "at the meso level, sociologists tend to study the experiences of groups and the interactions between groups" (p. 18). Within this study, the meso political level, or negotiating context (Strauss, 1978, p. 99), refers to the examination of the interactions between charter school teachers, the ATA, public schools, and public-school teachers. The macro and meso political contexts globally, in Alberta, and between charter school teachers and public education stakeholders formed the structural and negotiating contexts (Strauss, 1978) that gave rise to charter school teachers' concerns about their legal-rational legitimacy and this, in turn, undermined their belief in their traditional legitimacy. Based on these structural and negotiating contexts, I propose that the charter school teachers turned to unionization as a possible solution to their concerns. In the analysis that follows, the connection between professionalization and unionization for Alberta charter school teachers is explored because these data suggest that unionization may have been chosen by the charter school teachers as the mechanism to enhance their professional status and legal-rational legitimacy. The remainder of this section explains how the structural features in Alberta—both legislative and political—influenced how charter school teachers thought about their traditional and legal-rational legitimacy.

On a macro political level, the introduction of charter schools internationally was part of the neoliberal global education political context during the 1980s. At that time, charter school advocates denigrated the public education system as having a monopoly on education and argued that led to a lack of innovation and stagnation in schools. Proponents reasoned that because charter schools were new and experimental in nature, they would inform the rest of the education world with breakthroughs in pedagogical approaches and the infusion of school choice onto the education landscape (Crump, 1992; Huerta & Zuckerman, 2009; Ravitch, 2010). The

Conservative government in Alberta during the 1980s and 1990s was a strong supporter of school choice and those policy makers were influenced by the emergence of charter schools internationally.

In the early 1990s charter schools in Alberta were presented "as part of a larger initiative to increase the education program choices available to Alberta parents. It was intended that charter schools would stimulate innovation and diversity in educational delivery" (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 1). Ultimately, in 1993 the government of Alberta changed its education policy and regulation to allow charter schools to be formed. The political decision to allow for charter schools meant that politicians passed laws and regulations to enable the formation of charter schools. The politicians of the day also created funding regulations for the charter schools. These legislative and economic decisions by the government of Alberta created a macro political environment in which education institutions like the ATA and public school boards placed themselves in opposition to the creation of charter schools.

On a macro political level both public school boards and the ATA pointed out that creating charter schools was inefficient and should be avoided because, from their perspective, the public education system was already working well. Opponents of charter schools pointed out that while the Progressive Conservative government was creating charter schools, it was simultaneously amalgamating public school boards, rolling back education budgets, eliminating thousands of public school teaching jobs, and introducing salary roll backs for public school teachers. Critics reasoned that the rules created by the government of Alberta required the charter of charter schools to be monitored and to do so, government provided additional resourcing to create new bureaucratic structures to monitor charter schools. This was incongruent with the cuts being faced by public education (Kachur, 1999; Wagner, 1999).

Ironically, while charter schools were marketed as the decentralization of educational systems coupled with the freedom to engage with decision making locally, the Alberta government created new and expensive centralized bureaucratic structures. Charter schools, unlike public schools, "required interventions of a more powerful executive arm of government to create conditions for this quasi-market education system" (Kachur, 1999, p. 116).

At the time, the paradoxical nature of the government's policy was raised by Bauni MacKay, president of the ATA in 1994 in her correspondence to Minister Halvar Jonson. MacKay wrote, "establishing charter school boards at a time when government is amalgamating school jurisdictions in order to reduce expenditure and bureaucracy seems contradictory" (personal communication, December 7, 1994). Alberta public school boards expressed similar concerns, and the Alberta School Boards' Association (ASBA) actively opposed the establishment of charter schools in its policy stances (Bosetti, 2001). In addition to the concerns the ATA had about charter schools, the ASBA and school boards expressed concerns about competition for students and resources between public and charter schools.

The impact of the political rejection of charter schools by both the ATA and the ASBA was that charter schools and the charter school teachers felt marginalized from the mainstream organizations representing public education and the teaching profession. Charter school teachers participating in this study opined that they were viewed by the larger education establishment as second-class citizens within public education as well as within the teaching profession. As a part of the meso political or negotiating context (Strauss, 1978, p. 99), five of the participants shared that they encountered opposition to charter schools from public school teachers. For example, when Participant Bev shared with an ATA member that she planned to apply to work at a charter school, she was told, "Don't go to a charter school, don't ever do that, it's a terrible decision."

Macro-level political decisions of the government of Alberta, both legislatively and economically, were instrumental in creating further political divisions at the meso level between charter schools and public schools as well as charter school teachers and public school teachers, and this caused charter school teachers to feel that their traditional legitimacy was challenged by the broader educational community in Alberta. This is illustrated by Participant Barb's observations that she "did not know what else we have to do to prove we are a teacher just like everyone else. I don't like being a second class teacher." To help manage their exclusion from the broader educational community in Alberta, charter school teachers may have turned to unionization with the ATA.

Legal – Rational Legitimacy

The legislative exclusion from the *Alberta Teaching Profession Act* (2012) and opposition of the ATA and public school boards to charter schools held political consequences for the charter school teachers. Some participants reported that prior to unionizing, they felt isolated from a larger professional community of teachers in part because they did not belong to the ATA—a result of the government of Alberta's political decision to bar charter school teachers from automatic membership via applicable statute, in this case, the *Alberta Teaching Profession Act*. This legislative exclusion, or what Strauss (1978) would describe as a structural feature, influenced the way charter school teachers experienced and conceptualized their standing in the Alberta teaching profession.

These data from participant interviews reveal that at a political level there were two main sources for the charter school teachers' perceptions of exclusion from the teaching profession: the ATA policy stance and interactions with public school teachers. The charter school teachers' interactions with public school teachers reflected meso political interactions because these were

interactions between individuals who belonged to distinct groups defined by their legislative standing. In debating the merits of unionizing and joining the ATA, charter school teachers had to contend with structural and negotiating contexts (Strauss, 1978, pp. 98-99) and interactions with public education stakeholders that caused them to feel marginalized. Given this negotiating context, I posit that Charter school teachers had to wrestle with whether joining the ATA would help legitimize them as professional teachers in a legal rational sense, or not.

Charter school teachers shared that they researched and discussed at length the policy position of the ATA in debating whether to join the ATA. Participants in this research study also reported that their school boards asked them why the teachers would want to join the ATA given the ATA's explicit rejection of charter schools. For example, Anne shared that in her school, "our board made [an argument] against us joining [pointing out] 'They hate you, why do you want to join them?'" Anne further reported that her school board's comments caused the charter school teachers to examine the ATA policy more closely to assess the truthfulness of the board's assertions. Participants reported that they found that the ATA's policy position stood in opposition to the establishment of charter schools but that the policy also called for charter school teachers to be automatic members of the ATA. More specifically, the ATA policy 8.A.16 (Appendix A) states that publicly funded charter school(s) should (a) include all students, (b) operate under the same requirements as all public schools, and (c) engage teachers who are unionized and members of the ATA (Member Handbook, 2017). Furthermore, the ATA policy 10.B.1 (Appendix A) urged the government of Alberta to automatically include charter school teachers in active ATA membership and therefore be accountable to the ATA for their conduct and competence. Notwithstanding the ATA policy, participants shared that at their charter schools, teachers did not hold uniform views about the ATA policy positions.

Participants who agreed with the ATA policy tended to focus on the parts of the ATA policy that stipulated principles of equity for all students and the same expectations for both public and charter schools. Charter school teachers stated their belief in the importance of universal access to public education for all students. The teachers also recognized that the charter itself might dictate that only certain students would be able to access their charter schools. For example, John, a research participant, noted when he started working at his charter school "it was an unfamiliar beast, . . . it had the overtones of private [schools] . . . I wasn't too sure about whether or not that was a step closer to privatizing, and private schools." Other teachers expressed the view that the public education system in Alberta was already quite strong and the creation of charter schools seemed to have the potential to undermine the public system. Nancy's comments below illustrate her uneasiness about the disruptive potential of charter schools:

> I see the charter school system as being a little bit of a slippery slope especially with our last government, that was in for a long time, it was on its way to privatization. I really don't like the two-tiered education system. I think [Alberta city] has an incredibly strong public school system.

Charter school teachers resolved their internal misgivings about charter schools being a means to privatize education dollars by examining their own work within their charter schools. Through their reflections, charter school teachers reported that they found value in their work for students and families and they felt their own contributions mattered to their school communities (Participants Nancy, John). In addition, these data showed that in some cases, charter school teachers who reviewed the ATA policy stance came to realize that the ATA was not opposed to them as charter school teachers, but to other concerns regarding the establishment of charter

schools in Alberta. For example, Anne, another participant, said that at her school,

> We reviewed a lot of those things [ATA policy statements], and we reviewed a lot of reasons why. And we were able to tick off a bunch of them and go well we don't do that, we don't do that, we don't do that. There's really only two things and we're not in charge of those two things anyway. So it's not a big deal for us.

Other participants adopted a pragmatic stance towards the ATA policy, as illustrated by Chris' comments:

> I was never offended by it. Because it's obvious I think. I'm supportive of the ATA for sure. But I was never offended by it. I probably would have done the same thing. The ATA is a teacher union but it's also a union that it protects the organization of teachers and outsiders . . . could bother that equilibrium.

When asked, half of the participants noted that the ATA policy, while standing in opposition to the establishment of charter schools due to concerns about the privatization of public education, also sought to include charter school teachers as active members. For that reason, it is a reasonable understanding, based on their comments, that these charter school teachers had confidence the ATA would work to represent their interests in securing legal-rational legitimacy as well as bolster their sense of traditional legitimacy as professional teachers. As I listened to and considered these comments, I determined that, for the participants, seeking a deeper understanding of ATA policy helped them to resolve their concerns arising from their exclusion from active membership in the ATA and it became a motivating factor in voting to join the ATA as unionized bargaining unit members.

One third of participants also shared concerns about how the ATA's policy statements were expressed. Inflaming the frustration of charter school teachers with the ATA's policy were

the publications from the ATA. Teachers noted that the ATA News often had articles that they felt denigrated charter schools and thereby charter school teachers. Barb observed that "there's always something … against charter schools in the Newsletter and ATA magazine" and the teachers at her school "get upset" when they see this. The perceived bias of the ATA News against charter schools caused the teachers to feel distressed because they viewed their work as fundamentally the same as that of public school teachers. Consequently, I came to understand that charter school teachers felt they should be considered full members of the teaching profession and to do otherwise was perplexing for them. For example, when I asked John about why he thought the government of Alberta excluded charter school teachers from automatic membership, he replied, "I don't know. It doesn't make much sense to me, it's a publicly funded school, it's the same certification, it's the same job. I don't know what the intent was behind that. To me it makes no sense." In addition, charter school teachers were concerned about the disconnect of the ATA's policy positions with their lived experiences within the charter school context. All the participants voiced strong support for the value of the work of their charter schools and for the contribution of their school's work to public education in Alberta. Teachers pointed out that the ATA's stance on charter schools was ill-informed and largely based on the experience of charter schools in the United States (Participants Barb, Chris, John). Participants stated their belief that charter schools contribute to the public education landscape by enhancing school choice and serving students that are traditionally underserved in the public education system. Anne summed it up when she stated, "there's a reason schools like ours exist…it's because other schools are not meeting their [students'] needs." These data reveal that ATA policy stance about charter schools was significant point of debate for charter school teachers as they moved towards the decision to unionize. Consequently, the teachers studied the ATA's

policy position and debated it amongst themselves prior to deciding whether to join the ATA. My interpretation of their debates around ATA membership was that charter school teachers had to feel certain the ATA would be an effective bargaining agent for them given a structural and negotiating context (Strauss, 1978) that marginalized them from full membership in the teaching profession.

The political divisions resulting from legislative differences between charter schools and public schools can be found in the political positions of individual Alberta public school boards as well as one of their representative organizations, the Alberta School Boards Association. Operating within austere budgetary environments during the 1990s and 2000s, public school boards considered charter schools as competition and therefore public "school boards [were] also hostile towards charter schools" (Thomson, 2008, p. 39). The messaging to public school teachers from both their employers and the ATA was that charter schools should be opposed. Participants in this study identified tensions in their interactions with public school teachers and they explained that this was because charter school teachers were not unionized and therefore were not "real teachers" (Bev). In addition, Nicole shared that ATA members have said to her "Oh, you're not part of the ATA," and in her view this was divisive. Finally, Anne reported she noticed that when she attended ATA sponsored events such as teachers' conventions, the "ATA reps who are there are not super welcoming to us." Anne also shared that the tension between charter school teachers and public school teachers did not make sense to her because charter school teachers "tend to look at it as teachers are teachers and this is our professional organization." My interpretation of the participant's statements is that the structural (Strauss, 1978, p. 101) exclusion of charter school teachers by their public school counterparts, caused charter school teachers to feel delegitimized as professional colleagues and was a source of the

motivation for charter school teachers to unionize as it was perceived as lending credibility to their standing as teaching professionals. In addition, while unionizing did not solve the perception that charter schools were competition for public schools, it did hold the potential to resolve some of the isolation charter school teachers felt from their public school colleagues as well as bolstered their legal-rational legitimacy. I believe that, for the charter school teachers, belonging to a broad community of teachers in the ATA, had the potential to have a professionalizing effect.

Traditional Legitimacy

In 1994, when the Alberta government enabled the establishment of charter schools, politicians amended the *Alberta School Act* to create new sections within this legislation and its regulations. During the process of re-writing the *Alberta School Act*, politicians decided that charter school teachers should be fully certificated, in the same fashion as public-school teachers. The implication of this macro political decision was that like other beginning teachers in Alberta, charter school teachers were to be socialized into the teaching profession following similar pathways as public-school teachers. In addition, all the charter school teachers interviewed for this study viewed themselves as professionals and articulated clearly what it meant to be a professional teacher. Their views about what it means to be a professional teacher were informed by several factors: their previous educational experiences, their prior work experiences in other school systems, and by their current work as charter school teachers. The data from this study is consistent with what Strauss and Bucher (1975, Chapter 1) explained were necessary components to the establishment of individual professionalism and professions. Strauss and Bucher wrote "socialization of recruits consists of induction into the common core. There are norms, codes, which govern the behavior of the professional to insiders and outsiders" (p. 10).

The socialization of new teachers is foundational to the professionalization of an occupational grouping (Wilensky, 1964).

How then did participants talk about what it meant to be a professional teacher? For example, even though charter school teachers are not obligated to follow the ATA Code of Professional Conduct, participants placed a premium on being on a school staff where professional behavior was the norm. Four teachers shared that at their schools, the ATA Code of Professional Conduct was held up as the model for professional conduct of teachers. For example, John stated that at his school,

> We review it [the ATA code of conduct] every once in a while, we do have one, we are bound by it. Everyone certainly agrees to it, no one real issue with that. Again, as professional individuals [it is] just something we expect to have.

In addition, Anne stipulated that for teachers the ATA "code [of conduct] is province-wide" and that "if you don't agree you're not going to be a teacher." From Anne's perspective, the ATA code of conduct was a fundamental and necessary part of being a professional teacher and serious transgressions of the ATA code of conduct meant a teacher would no longer be fit to practice in Alberta. Given that the charter school teachers' voluntary decision to follow the ATA code of conduct, inclusive of the ATA's ability to sanction public school teachers for lapses of conduct and competence, I understood that to mean that the charter school teachers signified an affiliation towards the ATA and its professional functions. Interestingly, some of the charter school teachers shared that they felt accountable to the ATA for their conduct and practice after unionization. For example, Nicole explained that "I feel like being a member of the ATA holds me accountable" for a greater standard of practice and conduct. Nicole's comment suggests that or some charter school teachers, unionization represented a means to

formalize their sense of traditional legitimacy into a more legal-rational sense of legitimacy including the obligation to follow the ATA code of professional conduct. Wilensky (1964) noted that in established professions, members of that profession support code of ethics. These data from this study confirm that for at least one third of the participants, the ATA Code of Professional Conduct was identified and voluntarily adopted as the model for teacher conduct and which these particular teachers had a high degree of confidence with respect to their traditional legitimacy as teachers in terms the trait model of professions (Wilensky, 1964).

In addition to adopting in the ATA Code of Professional Conduct, participants pointed to the importance of a profession having expectations for high standards of practice. My data condensation and coding revealed that the ongoing commitment of a teacher to grow and improve their practice was a shared view for all the participants in this study. Mark explained, "The professional teacher has to care enough about his or her work to ask hard questions. Kind of over and over. Like that fire in the belly needs to be there." Mark spoke in strong terms about the need for teachers to grow their practice, almost as a moral imperative. In addition to deep commitment to professional practice on the part of individual teachers, participants recognized the structural requirement to adhere to the *Alberta School Act* (2014) and the Teaching Quality Standard. Participant Anne noted that for charter school teachers, these legislative requirements "apply to us whether we're unionized or not." For these participants, having the minimum standard for ongoing career growth and improvement of teaching practice through the Teacher Quality Standard was important to their conceptualization of what it meant to be a professional teacher. While the participants did not point to the necessity of joining the ATA to have traditional legitimacy as professional teachers, it was a means for the charter school teachers to add legal-rational legitimacy to support the charter school teachers' belief in their traditional

legitimacy. I arrived at this finding based on my review of charter school collective agreements (Appendix E) where a connection to professional development can be found and this triangulates with the comments of the participants. The combination of these data suggests that the legal-rational legitimacy of the charter school teachers was enhanced through unionization because collective bargaining insured access to ATA specialist council conferences, teachers' convention, and resources for ongoing professional development.

Finally, charter school teachers, particularly those who had worked previously in environments where professional values were not demonstrated, were unequivocal in their view that teachers should be treated with respect and that they should be provided with compensation that was commensurate with their training and expertise. With the exception of one teacher, all the participants in this study had worked in either public schools, private schools, or band run schools prior to their employment as charter school teachers. Teachers cited examples from their prior and current employment contexts to illustrate their views that the teaching profession should be held in high esteem and respected by the public. One of the areas identified as being problematic for charter school teachers in establishing respect from the public was the perception that "a lot of people think that they can teach because they've gone to school" (Participant Anne). This view was also articulated by Participants John, Robert, Bev, and Nicole. Teachers speculated that as professionals, teachers should claim their professional expertise and insist to the public that teachers do require a "unique knowledge base" (Anne). Mark indicated that "it is the responsibility of the profession to grow" and this points to the obligation of the profession to build and claim the ground of expert knowledge. Teachers also viewed their work as professionals as contributing to the betterment of students and therefore society. Nicole reported that for teachers at her school, "we feel like what we do matters." Ingersoll and Merrill (2011)

pointed out that "professions are high status, high prestige occupations. In other words, they are respected and envied" (p. 194) and the data arising from my interviews suggests that charter school teachers wrestled with the notion of whether their work was fully respected as being professional by the general public, their students, and board members. Also, participants discussed the importance of being well compensated as a part of reaching the status of a professional and the reciprocal relationship between compensation and professional status. For teachers who had worked in the private education system or in a band-run school system, they noted their compensation packages were substandard when compared to the compensation of public school teachers. Teachers described annual salaries in those contexts that were far below what a public school teacher would earn and more on par with what those working in the retail industry would earn (Participants Anne, Chris, Dave). In those instances, it made little sense for the teachers to remain employed in these schools and participants reported turnover as high as 90% every year in those schools. Jason pointed out, if "you're being treated as a professional, you're being paid as a professional" and this correlated with greater expectations for teachers in their work and conduct. The discussion of compensation was important to charter school teachers and parity with public school teachers was part of the reason why charter school teachers decided to unionize (Participants Barb, Robert, John, Mark, Pam, Nancy, Dave). Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) wrote that "professionals typically are well compensated and are provided with relatively high salary and benefit levels throughout their career span" (p. 192) and these data indicate that charter school teachers identified that respect for their work as teachers as well as compensation parity was linked to their status as professionals. These data for this study suggest that charter school teachers, in their determination of whether to unionize, viewed the ATA as an organization that could help them achieve greater status as professional teachers

because the ATA could assist them with achieving greater compensation levels consistent with their education and expertise.

The participants revealed that throughout their induction into the teaching profession, they believed in the professional norms for Alberta teachers and this included commitment to standards of practice and conduct, fair levels of compensation, and a desire for respect for their role as teachers. Thus, my interpretation of the data would suggest that charter school teachers viewed themselves as possessing traditional legitimacy as any teacher would in Alberta. However, despite believing in themselves as competent and committed professionals prior to unionization, charter school teachers had no formal ties to a teacher organization that would undertake to advocate for their expectation of respect, standards of practice and conduct, and compensation and benefits befitting their perceived professional status. Data from participants revealed that charter school teachers felt excluded from the teaching profession in Alberta because of their interactions with ATA members and the public stance the ATA and public school boards took against charter schools. My synthesis of the data from the interviews led me to contend that, when the charter school teachers' traditional legitimacy was juxtaposed with the lack of legal-rational legitimacy this precipitated a search for solutions to bolster their legal-rational legitimacy, and this included the decision to join the ATA. These data from this study support the notion that charter school teachers believed that joining the ATA and engaging with the legal process of collective bargaining could help them achieve parity with public school teachers, gain respect from their employers with regards to their professional voice and expertise, belong to a larger group of teachers, and enhance their legitimacy as teaching professionals. The charter school teachers I interviewed expressed the belief that belonging to the ATA would bring them resources and expertise that they did not possess on their own as well knowledge about

how their conditions of practice could be made to be more secure. In the next section, employment vulnerability, participants shared how working as teachers employed at charter schools prior to joining the ATA was precarious in terms of their employment.

Employment Vulnerability

Malin and Kerchner (2007) wrote that charter school teachers in the United States "are less secure and protected than teachers in public schools" (p. 394). Malin and Kerchner went on to explain that in the United States, the employment of charter school teachers was more precarious because charter schools featured differential compensation schemes, temporary employment contracts, longer work hours, and less experienced teachers. In addition, from the American research perspective, charter schools were not usually unionized, and in many instances, teachers experienced start up conditions at their charter schools (Carter, 2011; Malin & Kerchner, 2007; Montaño, 2015). Many of the factors cited in the literature as causing employment vulnerability for charter school teachers were also evident in the case of Alberta charter schools. For example, Bosetti (2001) explained that in Alberta charter schools, "teachers work long hours with limited resources, and often for less money than they would earn in the regular public education system" (Bosetti, 2001, p. 112). Participants in this study confirmed what Bosetti (2011) asserted but their comments were not solely restricted to financial concerns. Participants in this study noted that prior to joining the ATA, they felt insecure and vulnerable as employees of charter schools. The reasons charter school teachers cited for their feelings of employment vulnerability were many fold and included: high rates of teacher turn over, uncertain employment status, authoritarian approaches by senior level administration and school boards, the charter review process, and inadequate compensation. Teachers shared that if they felt their employment was insecure, their professional autonomy via the ability to exercise their

professional voice was diminished. This section will explore the negotiations context (Strauss, 1978, p. 99) of the charter school environment to highlight why participants described their employment as vulnerable prior to their joining the ATA. Furthermore, the linkages between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization will be made clearer once the social context of the charter school teachers and economic factors influencing the charter schools are explored.

The unpredictable nature of teacher employment, particularly in the initial stages of the establishment of charter schools, was a factor that contributed to teachers' sense of employment uncertainty. High rates of turnover in charter schools is well documented in the literature (Bosetti, 2001; Carter, 2011; Margolis, 2005). Participants (Pam, Robert, Barb, Dave, Nancy) indicated that teacher turnover in their charter schools left a more unstable working environment for those who remained. One of the first reasons identified by participants for teacher turnover was the departure of key teacher leaders. In these cases, factors causing teacher leaders to resign and leave the school included conflict with the school board, low compensation, and frustration with the conditions of practice within the school. If the school leader was well respected, there was a ripple effect and participants shared that other teachers would also submit their resignations (Participants Barb, Robert). Sudden teacher turnover highlighted the importance of leadership within fledgling charter schools: when key leaders left, teachers who were frustrated but loyal to their leaders found no reason to continue to work at the school. The second reason for teacher turnover was due to charter schools having unpredictable financial resources year-to-year, particularly in the early stages of the life of the charter school when student enrollment fluctuated. Bosetti (2001) pointed out, "teachers in charter schools remain un-tenured and on term contracts" (p. 102) because of unstable funding. Teachers who participated in this study seemed largely unaware of the specifics of the legislative protections afforded to them by the

contract regime outlined in the *Alberta School Act* (2014), but they did note that prior to joining the ATA, there was little that individual teachers could do if terminated, even if their contract was a continuing contract. The resulting insecurity regarding employment caused teachers to question whether they should stay at their charter schools. For example, Nicole indicated that at her school, "we just needed something more solid [because] it was so unstable at the time that there were people considering leaving." Teacher turnover at charter schools meant that the social work environment had to be re-negotiated frequently and the collegial and professional atmosphere had to be re-established and renewed with each new staff member. The teachers who remained at their charter school felt they should have greater support for their employment situation. In discussing why his charter school unionized, Chris reasoned that "when people feel unsafe, they want something to protect them" and that "if people don't feel secure, they're going to try and find that stability somewhere." Wilensky (1964) pointed out that when an occupation is moving towards being a profession, in other words professionalizing, the members of that occupational grouping commit to the work full time and consider the work to be a career choice. In considering the data set alongside the literature, the need for career stability was revealed as an important factor for charter school teachers I interviewed; after all, they had invested significantly to become teachers and they believed that as teaching professionals, they should not have to live with "a fear [of] being let go for whatever reason" (Participant Pam). Charter school teachers' awareness that the ATA would support them if they experienced contract issues coupled with a desire for a stable employment environment was a contributing factor in the teachers' decision to join the ATA as a bargaining unit. In this sense, I interpreted this to mean that the charter school teachers were able to use teacher unionism to meet the goals of professionalization, in particular career commitment, thus reducing the teacher turnover within

their schools.

Another key finding around the theme of employment vulnerability that emerged from these data was the impact of turnover in senior administrative levels as well as in school board positions, leading to a changed negotiation context (Strauss, 1978, p. 99) within the school. When superintendents or school board members left their positions and new people filled the roles, if the philosophies of the incoming people varied significantly, policy shifts were implemented, often without any consultation with the teachers. Three quarters of the participants reported that this threatened the close knit and collegial approach taken within the school community and the balance between teachers and the school board shifted to reflect a more authoritarian and hierarchical relationship. Bev remarked that in her context, the changes in employer personnel created a situation where it was "the first time we really haven't meshed" with respect to views about how their charter school should be administered. For the teachers at Participant Bev's school this led to a division that developed very quickly between the school board and teachers. Ruptures in the relationship between the teachers and the school board meant it was more difficult for teachers to communicate their ideas about policy decisions affecting the school (Participants Anne, Nicole, Nancy, Dave, Robert, Bev, Chris, Barb). Since the teachers valued their ability to communicate and influence their board on professional matters, the move towards more authoritarian styles of leadership caused the teachers professional uncertainty. For some of the participants, having a professional voice was fundamental to their sense of professional wellbeing. Anne noted, "I think it's really important for people's psychological wellbeing to feel that they're being listened to." Additionally, participants also noted the changing policy directives of the school board created tension at the school level, particularly if the teachers did not agree with the changes being implemented.

Dave noted that “the backlash kind of came” when the school board seemed “like they wanted to run the school.” Nancy took a similar, though muted, approach to the active management of school boards when she stated that the board “tried their best to think about us, you know, it wasn’t really adversarial, but it was still really authoritarian.” Teachers did report trying to negotiate with the school board to work out their concerns, but they became disillusioned when they realized the school board was not interested in their feedback. For example, at her school, Bev shared that “as a teacher group, my impression is we really tried. Let's get in a room together and see if we can figure this out and it was very - we were really shut down.” Later in the interview, Bev also noted that with the change of the school board that “I don’t know that all our Board wants to be communicated with. I think some do but I think the majority don’t.” Within an unstable employment milieu, participants shared that teachers wondered how much they should exert their professional voice when it came to policy decisions made by the school board. In considering the comments of the participants, my synthesis of this data led me to think that when senior leadership or board leadership adopted authoritarian management styles, and the negotiating context (Strauss, 1978) within the school shifted, it caused the charter school teachers to feel de-professionalized. When teachers felt disrespected as professionals and felt insecure with respect to their employment, the conditions were optimized for examining whether to join the ATA.

Another aspect impacting the uncertainty experienced by charter school teachers was the requirement to review and renew the school’s charter periodically with Alberta Education. The increased accountability via the charter review is a structural (Strauss, 1978, pp. 98-99) feature arising from the charter school regulations, which impacts the negotiating context of Alberta charter schools. Bosetti (2001) described the process of charter renewal as events occurring

when “an external evaluation team reviews the school and determines if it has complied with the legal and financial requirements, has fulfilled its charter objectives, and can demonstrate parental and community support” (p. 103). The charter review process is extensive and time consuming for teachers and the school board and is specific to charter schools; public schools do not have this added level of scrutiny. If the charter school was performing satisfactorily and according to the terms of its charter mandate, Alberta Education would renew the charter for a specified period. In the event the charter was not renewed because Alberta Education deemed the school was not meeting its mandate, remedial action could be taken up to and including the closure of the school. Some teachers reported being highly involved with the submission of the charter review to Alberta Education (Participants Chris, Barb, Pam) while others were involved tangentially (Participants Dave, Nicole, Anne, Robert, Bev). The participants noted that the charter renewal process may have added uncertainty to their employment at charter schools because they were constantly being evaluated for their fidelity to the charter. For example, I asked Bev if the permanency of her charter school was assured and she responded that with the ongoing charter reviews there was a sense that charter schools are experimental so the viability of her school “still feels transient” in spite of being in existence for nearly 20 years. There was not universal agreement within my data set that charter schools, even those 20 years in, would be shut down by Alberta Education. For example, Participant Chris noted that he did not feel his school would be shut down, but he did acknowledge that it was a concern for some of the teachers working at his school. Participants also shared that newly hired teachers in their charter schools who did not adopt the values expressed in the charter found themselves at odds with the teaching staff. For example, Anne shared that in her school,

> We had a new teacher on staff who has all these ideas about projects and finally a couple

> of us sat her down and said, "So your ideas are awesome, but we want to keep our jobs." So if you're going off and doing 8000 projects on your own and my class – and I'm supposed to be with you, and my class is not, that's a problem, because you're not meeting [the requirements of the charter]– And she, you know, I don't think she kind of realized just how big of a deal it actually is.

In addition, the charter renewal process was viewed by some charter school teachers as being a layer of additional accountability that other public schools did not have to deal with. For Pam, having to "prove we are doing all those things in our charter . . . upsets me a little bit" because other public schools did not have to justify their work this way. In this respect, it is my argument that the charter renewal process created a sense of otherness and resentment for charter school teachers. In addition, my interpretation of these data suggest that the charter renewal process caused some charter school teachers difficulty in committing on a long-term basis to working at their charter school. The additional accountability requirements from the government of Alberta may have become a contributing factor towards an uncertain employment environment for the participants I interviewed. As such, I believe that in considering whether to join the ATA, the charter renewal process was part of what contributed to charter school teachers' sense that their employment environment was uncertain, spurring a need for support for their status as professional teachers in terms of their careers.

Finally, participants discussed the importance of being well compensated as a part of reaching the status of a professional (Participants Barb, John, Pam, Nancy, Dave, Mark, Robert). Since public school collective agreements are publicly available online at www.teachers.ab.ca, charter school teachers had access to information about the compensation for public school teachers and could compare their compensation packages quite easily. Participants also shared

that prior to unionizing, their compensation packages were less generous than those enjoyed by public school teachers and this led to frustration because there were no formal avenues to address the concerns about issues of compensation with the school board. Nancy remarked that what occurred in her charter school prior to collective bargaining was that the "school board and the superintendent" would determine compensation structures and that teachers "were just told every year what our salary would be, what our benefits would be." Participants commented on the importance of having a mechanism to achieve relative parity to their public school counterparts. Pam described her feelings of parity as follows, "I think for us the ATA was more, just from my standpoint it's more just a way for us to have collectively come together as a group to be financially sound and have a comparison" with public school teachers' compensation packages. The discussion of compensation was important to charter school teachers and parity with public school teachers. As a result of my consideration of these data and my experiences bargaining for charter school teachers, informed by the literature, I speculate that compensation parity formed a part of the reason why the charter school teachers in this study decided to unionize. Charter school teachers identified that compensation parity was linked to their status as professionals and they viewed the ATA as an organization that could help them achieve the same status as other professional teachers in the public school system. In the section that follows, the participants shared how their early socialization into school communities and an orientation towards collectivity allowed them to negotiate, using democratic methods, the decision to join the ATA as a means to help alleviate their concerns with respect to legitimacy and employment vulnerability.

Collectivity

Collectivity was not a concept that I had given serious attention to at the time of my

candidacy proposal. I believed that I could rely solely on my analysis of collective agreements to tease out the connection between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. After my interviews with teachers, I realized I had neglected to consider the importance of charter school teachers' underlying orientation towards collectivity within their charter school communities. Collectivity is a concept arising from the literature concerning social movements and collective engagement of groups of people. Parsons (1959) defined collectivity as "a system of concretely interactive specific roles" (p. 39). Pollini (2001) expanded on Parson's definition to explain social belonging as "the state in which an individual, by assuming a role, is characterized by inclusion in a social collectivity" (p. 2631). Both Parson's and Pollini's explanations of collectivity are helpful lenses to understand the negotiation of teacher unionism in charter schools. Collectivity requires that individuals work together to fulfill specific roles which are agreed upon by a group or system. Collectivity also implies that for individuals within the social unit, there is an awareness of the other and an individual orientation towards the collective wellbeing of others. The data set in this study points towards collectivity as being an underlying condition necessary for charter school teachers to engage in conversations around unionization and professional status.

My interviews with participants revealed that the charter school teachers, influenced by the social context or negotiating context (Strauss, 1978, p. 99) at the charter school, adopted a collective orientation towards the wellbeing of their students and families, the school itself, and each other as colleagues. These data from my interviews suggest that when the collective orientation of the charter school teachers became more focused on their mutual concerns about their professional status and employment uncertainty, they drew upon their beliefs surrounding professional conduct to engage in difficult conversations around unionization. The negotiations

(Strauss, 1978) between the charter school teachers about whether to join the ATA were democratic and fair, rooted in the teachers' collective need for harmonious relations and concern for each other. Participants shared that within their respective charter schools, there were three main factors that fostered their orientation towards collectivity: the impact of the charter on the school community, the small size of charter schools, and the mentorship and collegiality between staff, particularly between experienced teacher and beginning teachers.

All of the charter school teachers shared that the charter of the school required a commitment from all staff to carry forward the mandate of the charter and this is a structural feature of entering into the negotiating context of the charter schools and directly into the negotiations between teachers themselves (Strauss, 1978, pp. 98-99). For example, Pam noted that in her school, the charter "keeps us collectively focused on that particular goal because we are mandated to fulfill it." The imposition of the requirements to adhere to the charter goals led to a communal and co-operative stance between the charter school staff to work together to achieve the aims of the charter. While the mandatory nature of the charter created a common focus for all employees of charter schools, teachers described other voluntary aspects within their school communities that fostered collective engagement amongst the members of the school community as well as established communities of professional teachers within the larger school community.

Goode (1969) and Turner and Hodge (1970) explained that in communities of professionals, members have a strong sense of identification with the ideals of the community, they agree on the core functions of the work they are performing, and they develop strong social networks which foster "feelings of solidarity among those carrying out essentially similar activities" (Turner & Hodge, 1970, p. 32). The participants talked about how their colleagues at

school engaged in relational behavior to form a positive school culture and school identity. For example, Barb indicated that "I really enjoy the camaraderie of a small school" and being in an environment where the teachers helped each other to meet the needs of students. Barb noted that within her school community, she was "very proud of the people I work with." The collegiality between professional staff was informed by the belief that teachers must be resilient, hardworking, and committed to their students and the charter of their school (Bosetti, 2001). Teachers remarked that a community of professionals evolved in their charter schools and within these communities an informal mentorship system between teachers was established (Participants Barb, Mark, Anne, John, Nancy, Pam, Nicole). Consequently, when new teachers were hired at a charter school, participants said that the more experienced teachers connected with their new colleagues to mentor and assist them with learning how to operate in the complex world of a charter school. For example, Bev shared that at her charter school, the experienced teachers supported each other as well as new teachers. In the context of her charter school, Bev expressed the view that this approach,

> really builds professionalism. And I guess it's the tone that some of your more leader teachers set as well. We have some teachers at our school that really present themselves that way and are professional and on top of things and guiding the younger teachers

The relational and communal approach the charter school teachers took with each other and teachers new to their schools resulted in strong social cohesion between teachers within the requirements of the charter. Based on the data from my interviews, I have come to believe that socialization that participants noted in their comments which helped establish collectivity within the teacher group and this was fundamental to the process of teacher unionization and teacher professionalization.

The building of the community of professionals was not restricted to the close negotiations between teachers; it extended to the negotiating context (Strauss, 1978) between the teachers and system leaders. Participants shared that system leaders were integral members of the community of professionals in part because system leaders encouraged them to grow in their professional practice as teachers. Charter school teachers shared that system leaders supported the engagement of charter school teachers with professional development and this helped form and crystalize professional values within the charter school community. In consideration of my interviews with teachers and my own experiences with charter school superintendents, I submit that support of teachers from their superintendents with respect to professional development could be partially attributed to structural legislative supports - specifically that all superintendents appointed by Alberta charter school boards must be certificated teachers. Standards of practice for certificated teachers require career-long learning and, these data reveal that, in the case of charter school teachers and charter school superintendents, there was a shared commitment to teacher professional development. Participant Nicole shared that within her context, the superintendent played an important mentorship role by encouraging teachers to pursue graduate work and actively engage with research projects. She also reported that, "the superintendent has been really encouraging" her to engage in a Master of Education degree. Nicole's experience was not unique as Participants Bev, Mark, Pam, John, and Jason reported similar encouragement from their superintendents. In addition to encouraging individual career growth for teachers, superintendents were instrumental in helping to create an atmosphere at charter schools where collaborative learning networks amongst teachers were normal. Nancy shared that for her it was important to be able to engage meaningfully with her colleagues to improve her teaching practice because she was involved in "constant" investigation to identify

"better ways of doing things" as a teacher. Pam indicated that she enjoyed the "camaraderie" with her colleagues and valued the "ability to go and talk" to other teachers to discover ideas "that can help in my classroom and in hers." Anne said that in her context, the teachers have "moved towards a collaborative model" to share materials and approaches to teaching. My interviews with charter school teachers helped reveal that the pre-existing community of professionals in charter schools was of consequence because as the teachers moved towards the decision to join the ATA, they had already built the collective infrastructure required for successful unionization. These data showed that the charter school teachers' orientation towards collectivity was fostered by the strong socialization processes at the charter schools and was geared towards a professional and collegial approach with each other, system leadership, the students and parents.

Even though charter school teachers worked within a collegial, supportive, and socially cohesive environment at school, as they moved to unionize, they had to negotiate (Strauss, 1978, p. 6) the creation of a new collectivity that focused solely on teacher concerns. This process is called boundary making. Whooley (2007) described the effects of this rearrangement of social order: "Social movements [that] create new group values and structures that delineate who they are in relation to other political actors" (para. 2). In one charter school, two long serving teachers at their charter school remarked that because of the strong interdependence of the teachers and other professional and para-professional staff at their school, it felt strange to only advance the professional interests of the teachers through unionization. Participants from this school shared that it even felt strange to hold meetings with teachers only because the usual practice with staff meetings was to have all staff present. The two other participants from that same school had not experienced the school environment prior to unionization, therefore it is not

unexpected that they did not comment on the renegotiation of the social environment at their school. The articulation of a *teachers only* collectivity was a potential source of tension between staff groups as well as with the school board. While redrawing the boundaries of the collectivity around themselves through unionization could be characterized as an indicator of occupational professionalization, it also caused tension amongst charter school teachers. The tension between charter school teacher unionization and professionalization will be explored in the sections that follow.

Study participants indicated that they valued the professional communities that had evolved in their charter schools prior to unionizing (Participants Barb, Pam, Bev, Chris, Nancy, Dave). Therefore, when teachers were considering unionization, they were concerned about how joining the ATA might shift to the operation of the professional community at charter schools. Consequently, the participants indicated that the decision to unionize was a negotiation (Strauss, 1978, p. 5) between teachers that occurred over time at their schools (Participants Anne, Robert, Dave, Chris, Nancy, Nicole). The commencement of the debate to join the ATA started with understanding whether charter school teachers could unionize. Once the charter school teachers had more information about joining the ATA, they shared it with their teacher colleagues. However, participants indicated that the response of the other teachers to joining the ATA varied. For example, Dave indicated that early in the establishment of his charter school, he "and another staff member actually approached the ATA" to find out more about how to unionize. Dave indicated he was told by ATA staff that unionization was possible, but that "you have to get half your membership to agree to it." Upon learning this, Dave and his colleague brought the information back to the school, but at that point in time, the teachers on his staff were not ready to unionize. Dave reported "it wasn't the ATA that we had to convince, it was our own staff."

Dave noted that it took time and a changing context at his school to establish consensus among teachers about unionizing because the teachers were concerned that joining the ATA would alter the way their school operated and the community of professionals that they had worked so hard to establish. In addition, the charter school teachers' ability to hold frank discussions and hearty debate about joining the ATA pointed towards secure collectivities founded on professional codes of behavior and democratic principles. Furthermore, the teachers had to negotiate consensus prior to approaching the ATA for support to hold a certification vote through the labour relations board. The democratic and consensus-based approach is exemplified by this comment,

> It took a lot of conversation. And a lot of teachers who were very anti joining, then something else would happen and they'd say like this is . . . Really, this is what – and we said yes, this is the way it's going. So the dominoes just kind of fell after a while and we got everybody on board. (Participant Anne)

Ultimately, the interviews with charter school teachers revealed that prior to unionizing, teachers realized that joining might disrupt the social order of the charter school and its established professional community. Teachers shared that there were specific concerns expressed about unionization and these centered around the changes this might cause within the established community of professionals in each charter school.

The potential changes unionizing might bring to the professional community featured undesirable outcomes as well as desirable ones. Participants shared that charter school teachers were concerned that joining the ATA would lead to a loss of autonomy with respect to their own ability to act individually as well as with respect to administering the charter school. In addition, teachers were worried that joining the ATA would require the adoption of new norms and

require acceptance of external control by the ATA. For example, Jason remarked that at his school teachers were worried that "the union would dictate to us or something" and this would be detrimental to the established norms at the school. Additionally, teachers noted that in many cases they had enjoyed a productive relationship with their school board in the past and consequently, there was reluctance to engage with unionization. For example, Participants Bev and Chris indicated their initial views of whether to unionize was informed by their positive experiences working with their school boards as well as within their school staffs. Bev remarked "I did not want unionization to happen" providing the explanation that at her school she believed it "was [a] real feather in our cap to be able to be at the school that didn't have to" unionize. She also stated that her experiences with the school board and Superintendent prior to unionization were mainly positive. Bev explained that as a school, the staff and school board would "work together without this piece of paper making it so" and that this collaborative relationship between teachers and the employer worked well for a long time at her charter school. Chris explained his initial view against joining the ATA as follows: when the school board and teachers are "working together you tend to work things out." Thus, Chris did not support "having a bargaining unit because I didn't think it was necessary. It was a good relationship." For Participants Jason, Dave, Chris, and Bev there was a fear that joining the ATA might lead to change to the norms of the collective charter school culture and therefore rupture the professional communities they had worked so hard to establish. My interpretation of the comments from participants led me to conclude that charter school teachers were conflicted about how unionization would change the negotiating contexts (Strauss, 1978) of their schools because forming a teacher bargaining unit meant the creation of a collectivity that drew its boundaries around the specific concerns teachers had. This led to an *othering* of those who were not

teachers and the participants noted this created a tension at the school level and served as a possible deterrent to unionization.

On the other hand, some charter school teachers argued that unionization with the ATA was not in conflict with the community of professionals they had established because the teachers believed that boundaries of the professional community for teachers extended beyond their charter schools into a structural context (Strauss, 1978). The unity with other teachers was an important reason stated by participants for the support of unionization. Charter school teachers indicated that being part of a larger group of professionals was important. For example, Robert recognized that having the ATA represent most teachers in the province allowed them to benefit even if they were not members and this created an affiliation for charter school teachers to the ATA. Pam remarked, "This whole idea of being this big collective group of such diversity and it really opened my eyes" to perspectives province wide and the importance of being a member of the ATA. Finally, charter school teachers also shared that there was value in unionizing with the ATA because being part of a greater community of teachers meant they gained improved access to compensation structures and employment security commensurate with other professional teachers (Participants Nancy, Pam, Mark, Dave, John). In this sense, standing together as a collective body of teachers allowed participants to feel secure in their employment context and feel legitimated as a group. John stated, "I'm always behind it, I think that as professionals, I think we do a lot of work and we need to be compensated in the right way for it." Chris alluded to the vulnerability teachers may experience as employees when he noted,

> I think my whole career's been pretty positive, I've had great relationships with the people I work for, that I work under, it's been just smooth. And I didn't really, when I was 22, understand the need for unions. I didn't in my head think how bad are you? If

> you need union support, what are you doing wrong? And after 20 years in you think okay it's not just you, it could be you.

Chris' statement illustrated his awareness that given certain circumstances, even good teachers may require access to advice and support if they are placed in harm's way with respect to their employment. As noted on pp. 108-110, prior to unionization, these data show that charter school teachers recognized the fragile nature of their employment status with their school board and the teachers who supported unionization felt that they, alongside their teaching peers, should have access to supports if they ran into employment difficulties. The desire to protect members of their own profession from unfair treatment by their school boards appears to be an important reason for the charter school teachers to engage with teacher unionism.

My interviews with participants demonstrated to me that the charter school teachers worked within the pre-existing structure of their communities of professionals to negotiate whether to join the ATA. The conversations occurred over time and at times in response to changing conditions at the charter school. Teachers worked hard to establish consensus, often taking multiple votes on the question of unionization. The participants spoke about those experiences at their schools. For example, Nancy remarked, "We felt like it took us a long time to get to that place where we felt like we could take the vote" about whether to go to the ATA. Anne summed up the process in her school when she stated, "We discussed it with the staff, back and forth and we took like three votes about should we even approach the ATA, and by the end it was almost 100% yes." The negotiation and re-negotiation of whether to unionize enabled teachers to articulate with certainty their decision. Nicole noted, "we knew what we were doing by the time we had called the ATA." The result of the ongoing conversations between charter school teachers was the development of a close bond amongst the teachers; a new type of

'teacher only' community between them was established. Chris observed that even though the teachers at his school were not all in favor of joining the ATA, through communication and in response to shifting circumstances at the school, teachers came to believe that unionization "was necessary" and "that's why the teachers unanimously voted in favor of it." Finally, Nicole stated the certification process "pretty much united the entire staff together" and that prior to that point, "the staff was not as close as they are now." I contend that the collectivity between the charter school teachers that they described in response to my questions is significant because it demonstrates the strength of the community of teachers in charter schools as well as their willingness to engage with each other to solve commonly identified problems to build a safety net that any one of them could utilize if it became necessary. In addition to helping charter school teachers debate teacher unionism, collectivity helped the teachers to enact professional goals such as the initiation of new teachers into their community of professionals.

Summary

At the outset of this chapter, legitimacy, employment uncertainty, and collectivity were identified and explored as themes that would shed light upon the main study question, which is: *What is the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization in the context of unionized charter schools in Alberta?* In addition, two of the sub-questions for this study - *How do political, economic, and legislative factors impact the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?* and *How does the social context of the charter school influence the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?* - were explored. This summary will encapsulate what I learned from the data set in this study to formulate my interpretation of the broader themes arising from these data in order to enhance my

understanding of the questions above.

The theme of legitimacy illustrated how political and legislative factors impacted the relationship between unionization and professional status of charter school teachers. These data in this study revealed that teachers in charter schools considered themselves to be professionals both before and after they were unionized. The data set showed that charter school teachers believed in their traditional legitimacy as teaching professionals because they identified with many of the central characteristics of professionalization: an expert knowledge base, standards of practice and conduct, exclusive jurisdiction or certification, and a high degree of autonomy within their work (Wilensky, 1964). However, charter school teachers noticed differences and similarities between themselves and public school teachers. In considering the structural context within which charter schools in Alberta exist alongside the data from participants, I suggest that the differences noted by participants can, in part, be attributed to the political and legislative decisions by the government of Alberta in the 1990s and the reaction of public school stakeholders to those decisions. These structural features entered the negotiating context and negotiations of the charter school teachers; participants identified experiences that caused them to perceive that charter school teachers were outsiders within the broader public education community. While the participants in this study may not have used the theoretical terminology I found helpful in my analysis, I argue, based on the meaning that was revealed in their comments that their sense of marginalization resulted in charter school teachers wrestling with questions of legal-rational legitimacy and their rightful place within the teaching profession. The desire for legal-rational legitimacy was a factor that helped propel charter school teachers towards the decision to unionize and join the ATA. Ultimately, my interpretation of the data set, within my conceptual framework and methodology, was that many participants felt their professionalism

was validated and strengthened through unionization, but that it was not a perfect solution as other participants noted that joining the ATA did not fully resolve their sense of marginalization from the mainstream public education system. Overall, by weaving together the comments of participants with ideas about legitimacy that arise from the literature (Peter, 2010; Uphoff, 1989; Wæraas, 2009), I found that the legislative and political divisions between charter schools and public schools could not be fully resolved through teacher unionization, but participants shared that unionization was helpful to bridge some of the gaps between themselves and public school teachers by improving their status as teaching professionals.

In addition to their desire for legal-rational legitimacy, charter school teachers noted that joining the ATA was important because it helped them resolve the employment vulnerability they experienced prior to unionizing. The theme of employment vulnerability showed how economic factors as well as the social context of charter schools influenced the relationship between teacher unionization and professional status for charter school teachers. These data showed there were several inter-related factors that contributed to employment vulnerability arising from the charter school context and these included uncertainty about employment status, teacher turnover, the influence of key leaders, respect for their status as professional teachers, and inadequate compensation. For many of the charter school teachers, teacher unionism was important to their employment longevity at their schools as well as their ability to express their professional voice when it came to policy decisions. In addition, it was very important to the participants to attain similar financial status to public school teachers; it was a concrete recognition their work as professional teachers was valued. Finally, participants shared that it was vitally important to them to have formal avenues to provide input towards board policy and move towards a more collegial model of management rather than an authoritarian one.

Ultimately, in analyzing the data and supporting literature along with feedback from the participants I was able to conclude that the social context of the charter schools in this study had been uncertain, and the charter school teachers in those schools, acting with confidence that their role as professionals should be fully recognized, chose to unionize in order to stabilize their employment situations, gain parity with their public school peers, and have their professional judgement and voice respected. The choice to join the ATA held potential for the study participants to fulfill what Wilensky (1964) referred to as public recognition and trust. Therefore, for study participants, unionizing was viewed as a means to further professionalize.

Finally, these data showed that the socialization of teachers towards collectivity and the existence of an established community of professionals allowed the teachers to contemplate unionization using democratic methods. As collectivity emerged as a theme from the findings, I chose to adopt it as a theme, which enabled me to articulate my interpretation of how the social or negotiations (Strauss, 1978, pp. 5-6) context of the charter schools influenced charter school teachers to thoughtfully consider the relationship between unionization and their professional status. As the charter school teachers at each research site considered joining the ATA, they developed shared views that were shaped over time through interactions between the various actors and often as a response to an event or events (McAdam, 2007; Parsons, 1959; Smelser, 1963; Whooley, 2007). Charter school teachers did not make their decision to unionize quickly and there were many events that influenced the negotiation of teacher unionism. I submit that the decision to unionize caused the teachers to examine, using a critical lens, their status as professionals within the charter school setting. As well, the teachers had to contemplate whether defining themselves as a teacher bargaining unit was a beneficial move for the social order of their schools and for themselves as teaching professionals. The underlying collectivity and

cooperation of the charter school teachers which was fostered by the social context of the charter schools was fundamental to the process of unionization.

By deciding to join the ATA as bargaining units, I suggest that charter school teachers sought to further their legitimacy by joining the larger community of teachers, particularly public school teachers. In addition, the data from the participant interviews suggests that charter school teachers sought to secure respect for their professional status and parity in terms of their compensation by unionizing which was the only option available to them under legislation. While the charter school teachers in this study had undergone significant professionalization because of their post-secondary education, certification, and early career experiences, they recognized that they needed to continue to professionalize and this was accomplished by joining the ATA. Once the decision to unionize was completed and teachers at charter schools embarked on the work of entrenching unionization via establishing the first collective agreement, participants shared that what began as a collective orientation coalesced into a greater social cohesion between the charter school teachers. In addition, many participants shared that unionization helped them achieve fairness through collective agreements and often their collective agreements reflected the values of the teacher profession. The next chapter, Unionization, will explore teacher unionization to draw connections between unionism and professionalization.

Chapter Five: Unionization

In Chapter Four, the themes arising from the data analysis suggested that prior to joining the ATA, charter school teachers were already highly professionalized because of structural (Strauss, 1978) or legislated requirements in terms of teacher certification in Alberta and prior employment experiences in other negotiating contexts (Strauss, 1978). As a result, I think that charter school teachers believed in their traditional legitimacy as teachers but recognized that their legitimacy was threatened by political decisions that excluded them from the ATA and marginalized them from the public education system. In addition, the negotiations context (Strauss, 1978) or social milieu of their charter schools featured aspects that caused teachers to feel their employment was not secure and that their status, as professional teachers, was not being honored. Finally, the participants described an orientation towards collectivities, and this manifested itself within the teacher group as communities of professionals at charter schools. In Chapter Four, I argue, using Negotiated Order Theory (Strauss, 1978) as a theoretical lens, that the social, political, and legislative factors challenging the charter school teachers as well as their orientation towards collectivity caused them to consider unionization to resolve their outstanding issues as employees and uphold and strengthen their professional status and values. The themes from Chapter Four help shed light on two of the sub-questions within this study: *How do political, economic, and legislative factors impact the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?* and *How does the social context of the charter school influence the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?*

In Chapter Five, the connection between teacher professionalization and teacher unionization following the decision by the charter school teachers in this study to join the ATA

and is explored using two themes: re-forming social order and fairness. The first theme to be explored is re-forming social order which will explain how charter school teachers negotiated the change they voted for via the supervised Labour Relations Board votes. This exploration includes the changes resulting from the teachers' negotiations amongst themselves, the re-ordering of the negotiating context at the charter schools, as well an exploration of how features of the structural context entered into both the negotiations and negotiating context as a result of unionization (Strauss, 1978, pp. 98-99). The second theme focuses on how collective bargaining brought about a greater sense of fairness in terms of the employment context of charter school teachers. The themes of re-forming social order and fairness will be used to illustrate why charter school teacher unionization was mostly successful in addressing the concerns of charter school teachers and their professional status. Two of the sub-questions framing this study will be addressed within the discussion that follows: *How does the social context of the charter school influence the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?* and *How does a collective agreement reflect the relationship between union function and professional function? How does this evolve over time?*

Prior to the discussion of the Chapter Five themes, it is helpful to utilize the theoretical framework for this study to help situate, on a timeline, how the events leading to charter school teacher unionism unfolded and how these events shaped the data analysis for both Chapters Four and Five. Strauss (1978) wrote that negotiated order in any organization can be traced on a trajectory over time. Strauss (1993) explained further, "I shall use *trajectory* in two ways: (1) the course of any experienced phenomena as it evolves over time . . . and (2) the actions and interactions contributing to its evolution" (pp. 53–54). The development of the trajectory of charter school teacher unionization can be considered in temporal stages; the first stage is pre-

unionization and the second is unionization. Chapter Four examined pre-unionization and the themes arising from these data during this time at charter schools. More specifically, Chapter Four focused on the development of the charter school teachers coming to the decision to formalize their relationship with the ATA by considering the teachers' interactions with their macro or structural, meso or negotiating context, and within their micro contexts or negotiations (Blackstone, 2012; Strauss, 1978). The Chapter Four findings suggest that for charter school teachers, coming to unionization was a decision that resulted from the teachers' quest for legitimacy within the broader teaching profession in Alberta, the teachers' desire to stabilize their employment, and career experiences that socialized the teachers towards collectivity. The charter school teachers, seeking a solution for their concerns, formalized their association with the ATA by participating in a successful Labour Relations Board supervised vote. Once the vote was conducted, the first stage of the trajectory for the unionization of charter school teachers in Alberta was complete; the decision to unionize was made.

Chapter Five addresses the second stage of the trajectory for charter school teacher unionism to illuminate the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. This second stage of the trajectory is the unionization of charter schools. It is important to note that the unionization of charter school teachers is a process that was not fully complete after the decision to join the ATA was made. Following the vote to unionize, teachers had to set about the process of negotiating a first collective agreement. The task of bargaining first collective agreements is fraught with uncertainty; if an employer wishes to oppose unionization, there are many tactics that can be undertaken to ensure that a first collective agreement is never established, which was especially true from 1997 to 2009 during which time the teachers at five Alberta charter schools voted to unionize. Up until 2018, the *Alberta Labour*

Relations Code (2014) did not mandate binding arbitration for first collective agreements; this left those who were seeking their first collective agreement particularly vulnerable. Binding arbitration for first collective agreements is a useful last resort for unionized employees who cannot reach agreement with their employers about the terms and conditions for a new collective agreement. Therefore, until 2018 in Alberta, if unionized employees could not reach a first collective agreement, the only option available to them was to engage in strike action. As Ross, Savage, Black, and Silver (2015) wrote, where negotiations for a first collective agreement may fail, it is often because the employer utilized tactics to "exhaust workers until they decide[d] they have no hope of creating a collective agreement and then decertify the union" (p. 79). Ultimately, when a union is decertified because of the failure to establish a collective agreement, then unionization is deemed to have failed. Completing the trajectory of unionization was important to this study because the analysis of the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization rests on being able to examine that relationship within collective bargaining agreements. For this study, had teacher unionization failed, it would have been more difficult to ascertain the explicit connection between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization, particularly since no documentary evidence for collective bargaining agreements could be gathered. In the following discussion of re-forming social order and fairness, I will explain how charter school teachers, after voting to unionize, re-ordered their social worlds through actions and interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Strauss, 1978) ensuring that the work of unionization was brought to fruition and how the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization became explicit.

Re-forming Social Order

In Chapter Four, charter school teachers described a strong inclination towards acting as a

harmonious community of professionals within their schools. The data analysis in Chapter Four revealed that teachers formed informal collectives within their schools through the establishment of a collegial atmosphere, one that was fostered by mentorship of new colleagues and shared expectations of what it meant to teach and work in schools in Alberta. The informal collectives extended to all members working in the school community: teachers, school board members, paraprofessionals, and the superintendent. The social context of the charter school encouraged an orientation towards the other and every actor understood their role within their social context. The data from chapter four showed that the negotiating context of the school was continually renegotiated because of changes to personnel, shifting expectations around board policy, and the charter review process. As such, re-forming social order was an ongoing process, but these interactions were grounded in "patterns [that had] become part of the stable structure" (Copps, 2005, p. 525). The decision to unionize meant the charter school teachers disrupted the social structures of their schools as unionization brought the structural features of the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014) and the ATA directly into their negotiations among themselves and their negotiations context or their schools (Strauss, 1978).

The data in this chapter will show that by voting to unionize, the charter school teachers in this case study drew a boundary (Whooley, 2007) around themselves to form unionized teacher bargaining units. By defining themselves as teachers only, the participants shared that in their charter schools, the roles and relationships within and outside of the teacher bargaining unit had to be re-ordered. Another implication of the boundary demarcation as a teacher bargaining unit was that the teachers had to articulate and negotiate their goals and expectations as professionals and I posit that these negotiations between teachers represented a form of professionalization at a micro level or professionalism (Strauss & Bucher, 1975). Finally, after

unionizing, the informal collectivity that existed between the teachers grew into a more formal arrangement and this re-formed the social world of the teachers, their schools, and the teachers' interactions with the broader educational community. The remainder of this section will explore how the charter school teachers' negotiations amongst themselves, the negotiations context of their schools and their structural context (Strauss, 1978) resulted in the re-ordering of the social worlds of the charter school teachers. From this exploration, linkages between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization are also examined.

Negotiations Between Teachers

After voting to unionize, the charter school teachers engaged with a new body of work that needed to be completed for unionization to be successful and potentially raise their professional status. Therefore, the teachers had to negotiate among themselves to determine who would do what and decide upon strategies for ensuring collective bargaining was successful. Strauss (1978, p. 11) talked about the centrality of negotiations between actors to establish social order but also pointed out that direct negotiations can be influenced by the negotiating context as well as structural considerations. Interviews with study participants showed the direct negotiations between teachers to divide the work of collective bargaining was strongly influenced by the negotiations context of the charter school teachers (Participants Anne, Bev, John, Nicole, Nancy, Barb, Robert, Pam, Mark) as the participants had to articulate what their needs were within their contexts. Participants also reported that in working to create an initial proposal for bargaining and engaging with collective bargaining, the charter school teachers came to rely on each other to achieve their common goals (Participants Nancy, Barb, Anne, Bev, Nicole, Chris, Dave). This mutual reliance and sharing of work gave rise to a newfound social cohesion between the teachers.

As a part of the rearrangement of the social order among the participant schools, teachers shared it was necessary to organize themselves to decide which of their colleagues would join the ATA staff officer to represent their interests at the bargaining table with the school board. Participants identified several factors that impacted how the teachers would participate in the work of collective bargaining. Nicole reported, "the more permanent staff really took on a mentorship role" highlighting the importance of support and leadership from senior teachers during the collective bargaining process. Her comment echoed others who noted the importance of leadership from within the ranks of the more senior teachers after conducting the certification vote. Five participants shared that the leadership from tenured teachers at their charter schools was important because these teachers were in a better position employment wise to raise concerns to the school board. Participants also shared that the teachers who were not directly involved in negotiations found ways to support the teacher negotiating sub-committee (NSC) that was directly involved in collective bargaining with the school board. Bev indicated, for example, that on her staff there were many "people who were really quietly supportive of the people taking their time and effort and putting themselves out" by joining the teacher NSC. Bev also noted there were perceived risks to teachers participating in the NSC in terms of career advancement and explained that, because of the perceived risk, she found the efforts of the teachers on the NSC to be "noble." The teachers fostered unity between one another by adopting different roles within the teacher bargaining unit resulting in interdependence and support for one another.

In addition to the closeness that developed due to the division of labour between members of the bargaining unit, the social cohesion between the teachers was enhanced because, over the course of negotiations, the teacher NSC obtained advice from teachers who were not at

the bargaining table. Participant Anne indicated that in her context the teacher NSC went back to those not directly involved in bargaining to seek their advice on what issues at the bargaining table were most important. She noted the NSC "actually asked our staff, 'What's the hill you want us to die on?' and . . . [we] took a lot of the advice." Other teachers reported that communication between the teachers occurred in several ways throughout the course of collective bargaining and the common thread winding its way through the conversation was concern for each other. Nicole shared that in her context,

> emails went back and forth on our private emails. We talked all the time, the staff is really close, so we would go out for dinner and we would have conversations, we would have coffee. The staff is also really small so what's happening to me is probably happening to you.

The supportive network and unity for mutual benefit that developed among the teachers was fundamental to the success of the unionization process. In addition, by having to articulate their most important priorities, both professional and more traditionally union priorities, the charter school teachers had to evaluate what aspects of collective bargaining were essential to the resolution of their concerns regarding employment uncertainty and their lack of legal-rational legitimacy.

After joining the ATA, charter school teachers had to work cooperatively to establish who would do what work and their negotiations around re-forming the social order took into consideration the positioning of various teacher actors at the school. Regardless of the role a teacher took on, these data indicate that there was a high degree of support for each other in the efforts to bargain a first collective agreement. Nonetheless, these data are silent on how charter school teacher dissenters to unionization were positioning themselves within the negotiations

between the teachers. This represents a gap in the data, but it would appear that, overall, those teachers who dissented with joining the ATA did not undermine the efforts of the supporters of unionization nor did they enter forcefully into the re-ordering of the teacher bargaining units. Thus, I argue that these data are an accurate reflection of the negotiations and re-ordering of the teachers' negotiating between themselves.

The coordination and cooperation within the charter schools by the newly unionized teachers was essential to the development of a common vision for what it meant to them to be a professional teacher in Alberta. After unionization, the participants described a newfound sense of cohesion within their teacher community because a common vision was articulated for collective bargaining using democratic processes. For example, Mark discussed the value of having "collective reinforcement" because it "helps make it clear what the group needs." Nancy also talked about how having a collective agreement allowed teachers to engage more fully with professional conversations about teaching because matters contained within collective agreement were settled. Wilensky (1964) pointed out that to establish a profession, the members of that profession must subscribe to commonly held views and norms. Therefore, I suggest that establishing a shared vision within an occupation for what should define that occupation is a signpost of professionalization. Charter school teachers, by articulating what they wished to accomplish via collective bargaining for their professional conditions of practice, were living out processes that demonstrated how an occupation professionalizes. In terms of fairness, connections between the traits of professions and the collective bargaining will be brought forward later in this chapter, but the ability to articulate and agree upon a commonly held framework is foundational to the process of professionalization. Participants, particularly those working in younger bargaining units, shared that the charter school teachers negotiated networks

of support among themselves to enable the completion of the work of collective bargaining (Participants Robert, Bev, Anne, Nicole). The willingness to work collectively to achieve a collective agreement was foundational to the success of the teacher bargaining unit and, in doing so, the charter school teachers I interviewed helped to paint a picture of the negotiations between teachers after unionization.

Re-forming the Negotiations Context

After the charter school teachers in this study voted to unionize, the negotiation context (Strauss, 1978) within charter schools shifted and the relationship between the school board and teachers changed because of the legal requirement to collectively bargain under the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014). Negotiating a collective agreement places considerable obligation on both the teachers and the school board. Prior to unionization, school boards enjoyed "unrestrained power over workers" (Ross et al., 2015, p. 11) and could set the terms and conditions of the teachers' employment as they determined to be appropriate. Unionization presented a challenge to the school board's authority because now teachers could negotiate their terms and conditions under the *Alberta Labour Relations Code*, and the school board had to bargain in good faith and make an honest effort to arrive at a collective agreement. Therefore, the structural support of the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* caused a fundamental change in the relationship between the teachers and the school boards because now the teachers had a more equal footing to negotiate their conditions of practice. In the traditional professions, the authority to set out favorable terms of compensation and conditions of practice is assumed (Wilensky, 1964), but these data show that for charter school teachers, this professional authority to set out their compensation and conditions of practice was not adequately recognized by the board prior to joining the ATA. Therefore, at the outset of unionization, participants shared how

their attainment of more equal footing with their school board caused tension. As three quarters of the participants had been employed at their charter schools when the decision to unionize was made, the data presentation reflects the first-hand experience of teachers in newly unionized charter schools. In Mark's context, he opined that his school board initially may have felt "challenged" by the teachers because, from the school board's perspective, they had "always done things in a certain way and they felt it was good." Pam indicated that in her context, "there was a lot of fear on the part of the board. I really felt the board felt they were going to lose something by doing this."

Despite concerns school boards may have had about teachers unionizing, the participants commented that overall the approach that the school boards took to collective bargaining was constructive. Dave reported that at the bargaining table, "even the times where it was kind of tense—it wasn't a depressing tense." For Dave, the type of interactions between the teacher and board negotiators during the first collective agreement negotiations signaled that the process of collective bargaining would eventually be successful. The charter school teachers who were involved in the collective bargaining process at their schools reported that even though the negotiations process was uncomfortable for everyone involved, it did not seem the process would fail and that there would eventually be a collective agreement successfully bargained by the teachers and school board. Mark pointed out that in his context,

> good faith and strong relationships went through the process, and I have to say, our secretary treasurer and our superintendent are excellent negotiators and [have] a lot of experience, so they [had] seen this kind of thing before and you know, the conversations were civil, and you know, they ended up with a really good contract that's good for everybody.

In addition to a professional, civil, and reasoned approach to collective bargaining, the direct involvement of the ATA in collective bargaining influenced the negotiating context (Strauss, 1978, p. 98) within the charter schools. For example, both Participants Mark and Robert pointed out that their superintendents had "a certain respect for the ATA" arising from their past experiences as teachers and administrators in other school systems. I do not interpret this data to mean that charter school superintendents or school boards are active supporters of the ATA, but rather that these particular superintendents recognized the role and powers of the ATA in collective bargaining to assess whether, as employers, they would contest the formation of a first collective agreement for teachers. In addition, based on my experience as an ATA staff officer, I believe that it is reasonable to conclude that because of prior employment experiences with other school systems and the ATA, many of the superintendents and secretary treasurers at charter schools were familiar with the collective bargaining process and understood the roles within that process.

These data show that impact of collective bargaining on the re-ordering the negotiations context within charter schools came with a mixed result. In some charter schools, an improved relationship between the charter school teachers and their school boards and superintendent was established, but this was not always the case. The participants shared that, generally, the charter school teachers were aware that their decision to join the ATA could impact their relationship with the school board negatively (Participants Mark, John, Robert, Pam, Nicole, Nancy). Some teachers reported that during collective bargaining, teacher NSCs engaged in strategies to mitigate a breakdown in the relationship with their employers. This meant the charter school teachers considered how they would meet their collective bargaining goals and balance these with the concerns of their school boards throughout negotiations. For example, Nicole noted

"we didn't want to cause any controversy between ourselves and the board" and consequently, the teacher NSC tried "to be really, really fair." Despite the best efforts of teachers and school boards, the process of collectively bargaining was difficult in some contexts and the tone in those schools shifted.

Bev discussed how prior to the events leading to unionization, there was a sense of camaraderie amongst the staff and school board. She reported that if an issue presented itself, the attitude was, "we can get through this" and that it would be "an adventure." Bev noted that leading up to the decision to joining the ATA and after formally unionizing, there was "a very different feeling" and "there were teachers almost in tears" and "afraid to cross a Board member in the hallway." In other schools, participants noted that after an initial period of unease about collective bargaining the negotiation context incorporated both the process of collective bargaining and the collective agreement as a part of the normal organizational structure of the charter school (Strauss, 1978, pp. 5-6). For example, John remarked that in his context "the bargaining that's happened" had not "created any animosity or anything like that. It's been well received by both sides." I contend that John's comment is significant because it demonstrated how it was possible for charter school teachers and school boards, having been socialized into professional communities within their charter schools, to take elements of the way the community worked—democratic decision making, mentoring, and collaboration—and apply these elements to renegotiating a more equitable relationship with each other.

Thus, while these data show that overall, teachers supported each other as the social order was re-negotiated, there was a loss of relationship and professional community between the teachers and the school board in some of the schools. That is, in some cases the teachers and board were able to successfully re-establish a sense of community while in other cases,

particularly in newer bargaining units, there was a breach in the relationship between the school board and teachers. I propose that this shift in the relationship between the teachers and their school board could partially be attributed to the teachers' decision to advocate for teacher interests more exclusively and this may have been received by the school board as a move coercing them into a more equitable relationship. For that reason, the social context in those schools was less cohesive and the relationship between the teachers and the school board deteriorated. In all cases, unionization shifted the social context or negotiating context (Strauss, 1978, p. 98) of the charter schools, in some cases positively and in others negatively.

Re-forming and the Structural Context

Unionization and collective bargaining caused charter school teachers to examine and articulate what it meant to be part of a larger body of professional teachers. Participants described increased affinity with the broader teaching profession in Alberta because of their decision to join the ATA (Participants Bev, Mark, Dave, Chris, John, Nancy, Nicole, Jason, Anne). Participants shared that after teachers decided to unionize, an affinity with the teaching profession was evidenced in the articulation of collective bargaining goals as well as during the negotiations process that resulted in collective agreements that teachers supported. Following my examination of these data as expressed in the following section, and drawing upon the literature, I contend that the process of the adoption of norms of a profession by those engaged in an occupation moved the teachers closer to public school teachers in Alberta, potentially leading to further professionalization of the charter school teachers.

The articulation of what it meant to belong to the Alberta teaching profession for the purposes of collective bargaining began for charter school teachers shortly after voting to unionize. There are standard processes in place for teacher collective bargaining in Alberta and

some participants described in varying levels of detail what these looked like in their schools (Participants Barb, Nancy, Pam, Nicole, Anne, Dave, Robert). The first step to engaging with collective bargaining, is for teachers to elect representatives to sit on the teacher Economic Policy Committee (EPC) and the teacher Negotiating Sub-Committee (NSC). These representatives, along with an ATA staff officer acting as the Representative of the Bargaining Agent (RBA), were charged with preparing to open for negotiations with the school board. To prepare an initial proposal for collective bargaining, charter school teachers had to articulate very clearly what their priorities were for bargaining as well as what issues would be bargained. The work involved in creating a first bargaining proposal is considerable for newly unionized bargaining units. For example, Nancy remarked that for her context, the initial proposal was substantial and that the NSC "had to think about everything" when getting ready to bargain for the first time.

There were several strategies that the EPCs utilized to negotiate and this began with the preparation of their initial proposals. The first strategy used to identify issues for collective bargaining was to survey the teachers about collective bargaining priorities. While this approach helped establish clear bargaining goals among the teachers, there were two other tactics (Strauss, 1978, p. 162) that helped the EPCs to articulate their bargaining goals. These approaches drew upon the negotiations context of the school as well as the structural context of public school teachers, their collective agreements and the knowledge of the RBA. The first strategy used by charter school teachers was to review their existing school policy and incorporate elements of that policy into the initial proposal (Participant Anne). As school board policy must be consistent with the regulatory environment within Alberta, it therefore had to reflect the legislation that governed how teachers were employed and certificated in Alberta. I suggest that

by incorporating elements of school board policy into their initial proposals, the charter school teachers were *de facto* using unionization to adopt the structural and legislative norms and conventions of the Alberta teaching regulatory environment. Additionally, based on my experience as an RBA, embedding school board policy into an initial proposal was an effective negotiation tactic (Strauss, 1978, p. 106). The strategy of using board policy as a bargaining item at the bargaining table meant the school board was not faced with entirely new ideas and there was recognition and affirmation to the school board from the teachers that in some respects the employment conditions set out in policy were positive. The effectiveness of the tactic was that school boards could hardly argue against their own policy in terms of the substance of the policy and it meant that the only difference to be sorted out through the collective bargaining process was whether the policy should reside on the collective agreement.

Second, according to the data collected for this study, the adoption of norms from the broader Alberta teaching profession was a strategy that was evident in initial proposals and later in the collective agreements, which demonstrated the desire of charter school teachers to professionalize using unionism. Teacher participants shared that members of the EPC examined the collective agreements that existed for both public and charter school jurisdictions to ascertain what might be possible for their collective bargaining. For example, Anne noted that at her school, "we talked about our initial proposal we just took a bunch of the policies that we already had and we drafted them into an initial proposal and we also look at what [the neighboring public school jurisdiction] had." Collective agreements of other school jurisdictions can be described as structural factors (Strauss, 1978) that entered the negotiation context because in many unionized charter schools, aspects of public school collective agreements were embedded into initial proposals put forward by the bargaining committee. The structural features that the charter

school teachers adopted are discussed in more depth in the next section, but there is evidence from my examination of charter school collective agreements (Appendix E) that there are linkages that exist with public school collective agreements. My interpretation of this data is that the willingness of charter school teachers to adopt ideas from other collective agreements to prepare for their negotiations spoke to commonly held beliefs across the teaching profession about how teacher compensation and procedural fairness should be expressed within collective agreements. In adopting aspects of other teacher collective agreements into their initial proposals, the charter school teachers established a greater affinity to the broader community of professional teachers and this represented structural features (Strauss, 1978) that shaped the re-ordering of their social worlds. In the section that follows, I examine how the work and unity of the charter school teachers that enabled unionization also resulted in the establishment of a fairer and more just work place.

Professional Fairness and Justice

As already asserted (see pp.125-129), participants perceived unionization as a solution to their employment uncertainty and their de-legitimatization as professional teachers. In addition, unionization was perceived as a process by which they could create a fairer workplace for themselves and their colleagues. Furthermore, unionization was a way for charter school teachers to join the ATA and the broader teacher community. By re-ordering the social context within their charter schools, the participants shared that, overall, they felt their work place became fairer. How then did the teachers achieve fairness and what, within the context of their discussion, did fairness mean? The theme of fairness in the workplace will be framed by two concepts arising from the literature: the capacity or ability of individuals to achieve fairness (Sen, 2009; Sondak, 2010) and principles against which fairness can be evaluated (Iyer, Franco,

& Crosby, 2004; Schminke & Arnaud, 2004; Sen, 2009; Tyler, 2005). In the discussion that follows, these data reveal that charter school teachers in this study believed that by joining the ATA they developed an ability to enter into meaningful negotiations with their school boards to effect change and achieve a fairer set of conditions of practice at school. In addition, using the lens of fairness to examine the collective agreements resulting from unionization, links to teacher professionalization were explored and this helped address my study sub questions, *How does a collective agreement reflect the relationship between union function and professional function? How does this evolve over time?*

Capacity for Fairness

Sen (2009) and Sondak (2010) pointed out that the ability to achieve fairness is linked to the ability of individuals within a social group to access mechanisms for justice. Sondak (2010) wrote "increasing capability or agency in individuals is the key to increasing justice" (p. 352). However, as Ross, Savage, Black, and Silver (2015) pointed out, in employment situations that are not unionized, "workers are left to fend for themselves in the workplace, [and are] subject to arbitrary management rules and procedures, [and have] few rights and even less power" (pp. 1–2). Prior to unionization, the charter school teachers in this study shared that they felt vulnerable as employees and that their ability to negotiate order within their employment context was constrained for two reasons. The first impediment to negotiating a fairer workplace was that the school board had no obligation to consider the teachers' concerns. Second, the teachers believed that they lacked the resources and skill set to conduct negotiations informally. Participants shared that there were attempts between the teachers and school boards to negotiate more satisfactory terms for employment, but ultimately the teachers concluded that any arrangement would be transitory in nature and that the process would ultimately tilt in the favor of the school

board due to the charter school teachers' own inexperience and a lack of equal standing with the school board. Dave shared that in his school there were attempts to negotiate employment conditions with the school board informally but following "our first meeting I said [to the teacher negotiating team], you know what, I don't know what I'm doing in this." Dave's example illustrates how, for charter school teachers, joining the ATA changed the negotiations context at their schools by providing support that led to growth in the teachers' capacity to achieve fairness in their employment conditions. Barb shared that after her charter school unionized, the ATA was a strong support for the teachers. She said,

> it was neat, that was when the ATA definitely showed how much its supports teachers, because they were right here for us right away giving us everything we needed to do [to bargain collectively]. They walked us through. They gave us everything we needed. It was fabulous; that part was a very good experience.

These data from interviews revealed that joining the ATA was necessary to attain collective bargaining expertise but also to provide a "vehicle to promote their collective interests with respect to employers" (Ross et al., 2015, p. 1) without calling into question the employment status of any individual teacher. Nicole shared that as employees of the school board prior to unionizing, having fruitful conversations about teacher issues was difficult because there was a "conflict of interest. I'm the teacher of your child but also you're my boss." By reflecting on the participant comments and assessing the literature, I suggest that unionization interrupted this close dynamic because it provided for more clearly defined roles and protocols for engagement in a conversation of professional conditions of practice between the school board and teachers. Professionalization requires that the public—in this case the school board—recognizes the right of professionals to influence the way their work is carried out (Wilensky, 1964). In the case of

the charter school teachers, unionization was the mechanism that caused the school board to recognize their desire for a fairer work place. Ultimately, these data show that joining the ATA helped charter school teachers grow their capacity to negotiate collectively with school boards to establish fair terms and conditions for their employment. In addition, unionization allowed the charter school teachers in this study to engage in a meaningful fashion with school boards to discuss their professional concerns (Participants Barb, Nancy, Dave, Pam, Nicole, Anne). Having attained greater capacity to achieve their goals by joining the ATA, charter school teachers engaged with their school boards to negotiate collective agreements. In the section that follows, participants shared their perspective that greater workplace fairness was achieved for charter school teachers through engagement with the labour relations process and establishment of collective agreements. As well, two of the sub-questions for this study are addressed in the following section by assessing the relationship between union function and professional function through examination of collective agreements and explanation of the relationship between unionization and professional status within the social context of the charter schools.

Assessing Fairness

These data from the study showed that charter school teachers felt that their collective agreements were helpful in establishing a fair employment environment for them to work within. In fact, teachers saw the collective agreement as being an essential part of ensuring fairness at work. Nancy summarized this consensus as follows,

> if you don't have . . . [a collective agreement] then every time something comes up, you're back at the foundation, you have to build it up again. And this just gives you a foundation to stand on. All this has already been dealt with by thoughtful people, it all makes sense, there's nothing there that doesn't make sense, so . . . you don't have to build

> the foundation every time you come to an issue or question. You can then step above it . . . [and there are other] things you talk about now. It gives everybody that sense of equality among the teaching staff.

Participants shared that collective agreements formed a base that was agreed to by both the teacher bargaining unit and the school board, and that the parties were better able to exclusively focus on educational matters arising in the charter schools. In addition, participants shared that having a collective agreement and belonging to the ATA helped them feel more professional and equal to other teachers in the province (Participants Nancy, Jason, Pam, Nicole, John, Dave, Mark, Bev). Bev summarized her thoughts on the issue as follows,

> I think unionizing puts us one step closer to not being the enemy in a way, you know what I mean? So, I think being able to say oh well we have a collective agreement in the eyes of bigger groupings, like teachers and Boards, I think that makes us a little bit closer to everybody else.

Bev's comments also help illustrate the uneasy relationship that, for some charter school teachers I interviewed, continued to exist once they joined the ATA. Being closer to public school teachers while it does help to deal with issues of fairness, did not fully resolve the divisions which persisted between charter school teachers and public school teachers because there was no evidence suggesting the charter school teachers felt fully welcomed into the ATA after they unionized. In summary, my interpretation of the comments of participants and their frequency was that, overall, the establishment of collective agreements helped teachers believe their workplace was fairer and that having a foundation for employment matters helped focus conversations at the school on professional matters more exclusively.

Beyond the collective agreement providing a level playing field for conditions of practice

for all the teachers at their charter schools, there were more specific indicators of fairness in the workplace after unionization occurred. Organizational justice theories (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005; Greenberg, 1987) equate fairness with justice and the principles of justice. A definition of how fairness can be evaluated in organizations was provided by Schminke and Arnaud (2004) who draw on three of the four major areas of scholarship outlined by Colquitt et al. (2005). Schminke and Arnaud argue:

> Research on the impact of justice in the workplace has centered around three distinct fairness types. *Distributive* justice refers to the fairness with which pay, promotions, perks, and other outcomes are allocated. *Procedural* justice emphasizes the process and procedures by which these outcome allocations are determined. *Interactional* justice involves whether leaders provide those around them with fair interpersonal treatment. (p. 1124)

Elements of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice emerged from interview data for this study. Furthermore, my examination of charter school collective agreements was reflected in the comments of the teacher participants. One could ask, why does fairness matter to teacher unionism and teacher professionalization? Schminke and Arnaud (2004) might respond by noting that "employees respond strongly to unfair treatment in the workplace" (p. 1124) and in response to unfair treatment in their workplace, the charter school teacher participant' desire to create a fairer work place led to teachers unionizing. I suggest, then, that, based on this analysis, at the root of both teacher unionism and teacher professionalization is a longing for fair treatment. I will now turn to the interview data and collective agreements themselves to show that unionization and the related professionalization helped build a fairer employment context for charter school teachers.

Distributive justice. Distributive justice is related to resource allocation within an organization and is rooted in theories of equity. Iyer et al. (2004) wrote, "a situation is considered equitable when people receive rewards in proportion to their level of contribution" (p. 785). One of the measuring indices for distributive justice is money—that is who gets what, how much, and for what tasks—but there is recognition that when the indices are expanded to consider opportunity, then "money must be combined with other indices" (Lamont & Favor, 2017, p. 9). Prior to unionization, charter school teachers reported they received compensation packages that were not equitable with their public-school colleagues. These data for this study indicate that parity with public school teachers was a key motivating factor for the unionization of charter school teachers because they desired the same professional status as public school teachers. To evaluate whether distributive justice was achieved through unionization, it is necessary to explore how collective bargaining agreements featuring comparable salary, benefits, leave, and professional development collective agreement provisions brought the charter school teachers closer to the status of public school teachers and to consider, from the point of view of the teachers, whether distributive justice through unionization was achieved.

The linkages in these data between fairness and parity with public school teachers in terms of salary and other types of compensation was two-fold: the teachers needed adequate compensation to achieve financial security and the teachers linked compensation with professional status. Pam described this as follows: "I think for us the ATA was . . . a way for us to have collectively come together as a group to be financially sound and have a comparison" with public school teachers' compensation packages. Many participants in this study noted that unionization was a vehicle for creating financial stability for themselves (Participants John, Barb, Nancy, Dave, Jason, Robert, Anne). Several participants indicated that prior to unionization they

had considered leaving their charter school because they knew they could find higher compensation packages with other school jurisdictions. For example, John noted that in his context, "if the salary [was not] fixed I'd go work elsewhere." Given that certificated teachers in Alberta hold qualifications to teach in the public-school system as well as charter school system, it seems obvious to me that if charter school compensation was inferior, that the teachers would seek better compensation elsewhere. These data suggest that unionization and the achievement of parity in collective agreements helped the charter school teachers to commit more fully to working at their charter schools. In addition, the participants noted that unionization also brought the salary compensation for charter school teachers closer to public school teachers and my interpretation of these data is that this solidified the teachers' perceptions that their status as professionals was recognized, thereby achieving economic distributive justice.

Second, participants indicated that having a safety net with respect to benefits plans and leaves allowed them to focus more fully on their role as a teacher. Wilensky (1964) wrote that commitment to a full-time career is a key indicator of professionalization and for participants in this study, unionization helped them to commit to their employment at their charter schools. Jason explained that for him distributive justice meant that "you don't have to worry about paying for a massage or paying for acupuncture or paying for health benefits or anything like that" so your work at school during school hours is "all you [have] to focus on." The achievement of financial security as well as a robust safety net for leaves and benefits meant that the teachers did not have to contemplate having a second job to be prepared for unexpected life events. Consequently, charter school teachers felt well protected under their collective agreements and could focus solely on the work of teaching. Finally, participants shared that through the collective bargaining process, charter school teachers who were initially opposed to

unionization grew to see the economic advantage of belonging to the ATA. Dave remarked that at his school, teachers who had been opposed to unionization had "come around" because "we've gained equity with all the other teachers." These data support the notion that equity is important for the achievement of distributive justice but achieving equity with public school teachers meant more charter school teachers embraced being part of the larger collective of teachers in Alberta. Status and respect are important concepts underlying the professionalization of an occupation. As Roos (2001) argues, professionals hold a high degree of status and respect and this translates into the attainment of high levels of income, extraordinary autonomy, and deference from the public. While scholars of sociology hold that teaching is a semi-profession for many reasons including the fact that teaching is a feminized profession (Etzioni, 1969; Larson 2014; Wilensky, 1964) and because teachers work within a hierarchical administrative structure (Lortie, 1969), charter school teachers did not hold the same economic status as public school teachers. Therefore, I reason that professionalization of the charter school teachers was enhanced through engagement in unionization to secure parity with the status of public school teachers and to enjoy the financial freedom allowing them to focus exclusively on their work as teachers.

In addition to distributive justice with respect to compensation, charter school teachers shared that achieving compensation parity with their peers brought them a sense of heightened professional status and a sense of equality with other public school teachers in Alberta. For example, Nancy shared that "personally, for me, [and] I think for all the teachers," with a collective agreement,

> You just feel like you're on an equal, level playing field with every other teacher in the province. You feel like your work is as important, your successes are as important, it just

makes you feel that you're equal to all the other teachers in the province. That has a huge impact.

My examination of the collective agreements for the five unionized charter schools revealed that these agreements mirrored provisions of neighboring public school collective agreements. The results of the analysis of charter school collective agreements is shown in Appendix E and within that analysis there are many provisions in charter school collective agreements where linkages to public school collective agreements can be made. For example, all the salary grids for the collective agreements have two dimensions for the calculation of teacher salary: teacher education and teacher experience. The structure for charter school salary grids is the same as the public school salary grids and while the number of steps for experience vary between the grids, the number of teacher education years reflect a maximum teacher education recognition of 6 years post-secondary. All the charter school collective agreements require that the number of years of education for the purposes of salary be determined by the Teacher Qualifications Service which is administered by the ATA. This requirement is the same for public school teachers. The calculation of education credentialing for the purposes of salary placement is an example of a structural (Strauss, 1978) feature that enables consistent standards for the calculation of years of education in both the charter school system and public school system. In addition, the entrenchment of education credentials on the salary grid has a professionalizing effect because it helps establish the exclusive jurisdiction of the ATA as the gatekeeper of teacher education recognition. Therefore, I submit that the collective agreements attained through teacher unionism bear direct linkage to exclusive jurisdiction and the expert knowledge base that Wilensky (1964) described as fundamental to the professionalization of an occupation. The remainder of this section will discuss the relationship between profession and union function

within collective agreements to address the first sub-question of this study.

All but one participant identified many provisions in their collective agreements as being helpful to them in their professional lives. The data from interviews revealed that for charter school teachers, their collective agreements (including time clauses, leaves of absence, and professional development) held importance because these provisions supported their work and professional aspirations. The first collective agreement articles discussed by participants that supported charter school teachers professionally were instructional and assignable time clauses. My examination of charter school collective agreements showed that time clauses are designed to demarcate where the school board's time ends and the teacher's time begins. Typically, these clauses outline the maximum amount of time a teacher can be required to perform employment-related tasks. While it may seem counter-intuitive to place restrictions on the time of a professional employee, the teachers understood the collective agreement only restricted part of their time, not all of it. As time clauses existed in three of the five collective agreements (Appendix E), in two of my interviews, participants spoke to the importance of parameters around time, but for these charter school teachers, regulation with respect to time had not been realized in their collective agreement. For example, Pam remarked that having time provisions in the collective agreement was important because it allowed her to understand better when she could exercise her professional autonomy. Pam explained that because of the assigned time clauses in the collective agreement, she clearly understood what time she was obligated to dedicate to the tasks provided to her by her school board. Pam noted it was helpful to know the "time that you were allotted, that you know that you are held accountable for. I like that because then it ends up being you could be working" all day, evenings, and weekends. Having clear parameters around employer expectations on her time meant that Pam was able to spend the rest

of her work time deciding what tasks to spend time on using her professional judgment. In summary, boundaries around teacher time gives teachers "the autonomy to act in the best interest of the students based on their professional judgement" (Thomas, 2012, para. 1) as opposed to spending time on new initiatives created by their school boards. In the literature about teacher professionalization, scholars such as Larson (2014), Ravitch (2013), and Sitch (2005) expressed concern about the diminishment of teacher autonomy resulting from educational policy decisions based on neoliberal agendas. Therefore, I suggest that unionism and collective bargaining clauses that assist teachers to reassert their autonomy are helpful to countering de-professionalization agendas.

The ability to find opportunities for career growth was a challenge identified by teachers working at charter schools (Participants Bev, Anne, Chris, Jason). For the most part, and unlike public school jurisdictions, teachers who worked in charter schools were not able to transfer to other schools or central office positions due to the small size of their charter schools resulting in limited opportunities for advancement or change. As such, the attainment of extended leaves under the collective agreement was identified by participants as being important to alleviating potential career stagnation. All of the collective agreements for unionized charter schools had general leaves of absence available to allow teachers these opportunities (Appendix E). While the attainment of a general leave of absence without pay or benefits may be helpful to teachers, Bev also shared that bargaining future provisions like a deferred salary leave where a teacher could work for "four years at 80% [salary] and then have the fifth year" of leave with the deferred salary income "would give some of our teachers opportunities to travel or teach in other places and bring that knowledge and experience back to our school." Bev also pointed out that a deferred salary leave would provide "our teachers the opportunity to" pursue graduate work

while on their year away from teaching. Anne talked about the value of having leave provisions if she wished to take a year away from teaching to pursue further education or other career prospects without resigning her contract. She stated that "I know that when I come back, I'm guaranteed a job," which was helpful for her sense of opportunity and growth within the teaching profession. My interpretation of this data is that the ability to improve one's expert knowledge base or work across the education sector without resigning an employment contract allowed for charter school teachers to continue to pursue career growth while being secure in their employment. For the participants, leaves of absence were important to supporting professional goals and I believe that this is an exemplar of how professional ideals can be enhanced by and buoyed by union function.

Teachers identified that another important area of total compensation was professional development. Under the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard (1997/2018), teachers have an obligation to engage in career long learning. The participants interviewed for this study noted they were proponents of career long learning, but they also identified that various opportunities for professional development such as education conferences or university course work could be very expensive and, depending on a teacher's ability to pay, the opportunity to access high quality professional development or continued learning was assisted by having support through the collective agreement (Participants Anne, Dave, Barb, John, Nicole, Nancy, Bev, Mark, Jason). Clauses in the collective agreement also signified the shared commitment of the teachers and the school board towards professional development. For example, Mark shared that having professional development clauses in a collective agreement was helpful because it identified "what a board is mandated to provide in terms of support" to each individual teacher and this enhanced the commitment of teachers towards their own professional growth. Pam shared that it

was useful to have professional development in the collective agreement because teachers then knew "there is standard there set for us that part of what we do is further our PD [professional development]. We are guaranteed funds to do that and it's an expectation". Nancy also indicated that having professional development resources allocated in collective agreements was important to enhance career-long learning for teachers. She also noted that it was an area that she was glad to see enhanced over successive rounds of collective bargaining at her school. Professional development, in the eyes of the participants, was important to developing a stronger expert knowledge base for teaching as well as continuing to improve upon their professional practice. The remainder of this section illustrates, in detail, how professional development was supported by union function within the charter school teachers' collective agreements.

My examination of the collective agreements for charter schools showed that all agreements featured an article that spoke to professional development for teachers (Appendix E). The specifics of the articles varied, but four of the five collective agreements (Charter Schools A, C, D, and E) provided resource and release time for teacher professional development. The structure of the funds provided to teachers were in the form of individual professional development accounts that teachers could access to attend conferences, forums, or courses that would further their professional knowledge. In all cases the funding could accumulate for a minimum of twice the value of the annual fund or for two years. What the funding was intended to cover varied amongst collective agreements. In some instances substitute costs and expenses for a teacher were provided in addition to the professional development fund, but in others the substitute costs and expenses were to be provided for by way of the fund itself. The individual amounts available to teachers varied from $375 per year per teacher (Charter School D) to $1000 per year per teacher (Charter School C). In addition to providing support for professional

development, the collective agreements provided procedural information to teachers about how to apply for the funds and what to include in their applications. In collective agreements specifying individual professional development accounts, teachers had to apply to the superintendent and their applications had to specify how the professional development related to their own teacher professional growth plan, the goals of the school, and the goals of the school board. Finally, in Charter School A, the collective agreement obligated teachers to share what they learned at professional development opportunities with their colleagues.

While the individual PD accounts were a shared feature in four of the five collective agreements, individual collective agreements also provided other opportunities for PD to teachers. For example, three of the five collective agreements (Charter Schools A, D, and E) reviewed had support for teachers to attend the ATA teachers' conventions and two of the five collective agreements provided support to teachers to attend a conference specific to the charter school. Lastly, Charter School A's collective agreements provided resources to the school to purchase educational literature related to charter schools and the fee for membership in an ATA specialist council.

Finally, in recognition of the Teaching Quality Standard for professional development, both Charter School A and Charter School B had language in their collective agreements that recognized the importance of balancing the possible kinds of professional development teachers engaged in. Charter School A's preamble spoke to the need for balance in professional development between individual professional development and school-based professional development. Charter School B's collective agreement committed teachers to consider individual, school-based, and school board-based professional development in their career growth planning. The extensive nature of the clauses in collective agreements for professional

development combined with the comments of the teachers suggested that career-long learning was a high priority for both teachers and school boards and, therefore, resources were allocated for that purpose during collective bargaining. In addition, many of the public school teacher collective agreements also provided for professional development support which meant that charter school teachers were able to attain greater parity with their public school peers (Appendix E). The recognition of the professional needs of teachers through collective agreements would seem to affirm teachers' professional status by encouraging and supporting the continued growth of teachers' expert knowledge bases. As these data in this section demonstrate, collective agreements for charter schools helped support professional values such as autonomy, career growth, and professional development and I think this helped the charter school teachers achieve distributional justice. The following section discusses how collective bargaining helped charter school teachers address their concerns about procedural justice in their work places.

Procedural justice. The ability to contribute to decision making and belief that the process is fair are characteristics of procedural justice. Tyler (2005) wrote that "using fair decision-making procedures is the key to developing, maintaining, and enhancing the legitimacy of rules and authorities and gaining voluntary deference to social rules" (p. 599). Charter school teachers shared that prior to unionization, they had little ability to shape whether their workplace was procedurally fair. These data suggest that some charter school teachers may have turned to unionism because they recognized that "unions give workers tremendous voice in the workplace and, in turn, the potential to reshape or transform their working conditions and participate in decisions concerning how their workplace is run" (Ross et al., 2015, p. 91). In the literature, professionals are accorded a high degree of professional autonomy to shape their conditions of practice and this implies an ability to shape policy that impacts their work places (Larson, 2014;

Price, 2011; Wilensky, 1964).

Participants in this study shared that in their charter schools, the teachers turned to unionization as means to secure their professional autonomy and influence policy decisions at their schools. In seeking to have their professional voices heard and respected, charter school teachers needed to access mechanisms that provided them procedural justice. All the participants shared that the first way procedural justice manifested itself for charter school teachers was through the collective bargaining process itself. These data confirm that at all stages of the negotiations process, the teachers had the ability to participate in the process directly or indirectly through their elected representatives. Participants shared that once a memorandum of agreement was reached with the school board, all teachers had the ability to vote on whether to accept the agreement thereby providing a measure of procedural justice. In addition, collective bargaining between the Association and school boards is bounded by the rules set out in the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014). For example, Section 60(1) sets out the expectation that when notice to commence collective bargaining is served, that the parties will "(a) meet and commence, or cause authorized representatives to meet and commence, to bargain collectively in good faith, and (b) make every reasonable effort to enter into a collective agreement" (*Alberta Labour Relations Code*, 2014, p. 51). Furthermore, the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* stipulates that if either the Association or school board believes that there has been a breach of the duty to bargain in good faith, they may file a complaint to the Labour Relations Board for consideration. In other words, being unionized guarantees that collective bargaining is protected by law and there are significant good faith obligations on both parties to make a collective agreement. Teachers shared that structural supports through legislation and the expert assistance provided by the ATA helped them access fair negotiations and this was important to the success of collective

bargaining and unionization. For example, Barb shared that when her school unionized, "it was neat, now that was when the ATA definitely showed how much its supports teachers" and that staff from the ATA just "walked us through. They gave us everything we needed. It was fabulous." The participants shared that for their schools, joining the ATA helped charter school teachers build their capacity for collective bargaining as well as helped enforce fair negotiations.

Participants shared that their direct access to and participation in collective bargaining increased as the collective bargaining rounds progressed over time. Charter school teachers described that in the first rounds of collective bargaining with their school boards that they did not actively participate in the conversations at the bargaining table even though they directed the course of negotiations during their caucus sessions. For example, Robert indicated that from his perspective, "I was more of a member of the audience, I think. I said a few things [but] the [ATA rep] did all the, you know, the talking. But, you know, it was good." Barb indicated that the more formal approach of a single spokesperson representing teacher interests was later modified to include teachers and a less formal approach to negotiations has been adopted at her charter school's bargaining table. She noted, "I have shared at negotiations now." Nancy also reported "I think that those [first] meetings were difficult, it was difficult to sit there, and I had to learn to be quiet" and that with successive rounds collective bargaining got easier. She stated, "I wish the whole bargaining process [was] more like what it is now, like let's just be reasonable." As charter school teachers became more comfortable with and learned about the process of collective bargaining, it got easier for them to participate more directly with their school board at the bargaining table. In addition, as collective bargaining evolved over time at the charter schools and procedural fairness was routinized, the approach to negotiations grew to be more incremental as the number of issues addressed in subsequent bargaining rounds was greatly

reduced after the first collective agreements were established. Nancy explained that at her school, "[The collective agreement is] already good, so you're going from something that's really good to something that's potentially a bit better and sometimes people just say really not that important. Given what we have, let's not push that one."

In Alberta, through my examination of many collective agreements, both public school and charter school, I have learned that there are many that feature clauses designed to create procedural fairness for the development of policy in the workplace. Traditionally, unions act to counterbalance employer authority, but as Kerchner and Caufman (1995) pointed out, "teachers are redefining unionism in ways that depart from industrial work norms and authority patterns through such devices as joint committees" (p. 107). The participants in this study noted the importance of having a voice in the policies being implemented in their workplace. For example, Mark pointed out "that maybe the bargaining issues don't need to be around money, but like, how we do this." His observation gave rise to the question of how policies and practices were established outside of the collective agreement. The teachers interviewed for this study expressed a desire to have a collaborative model for decision making in their schools. Nicole spoke to the importance of this in her context, when she said,

> the unionization gave us . . . the Liaison Committee where now we the teachers can speak to the board directly and say, "Here's the thing we notice you're doing, here's the research behind it. If you proceed with that, please have all the information."

In her school situation, being able to establish a direct link of communication and consultation with the school board was very important in terms of being able to exercise professional expertise and teacher voice. In the section that follows, I provide descriptions of how procedural fairness was built into various charter school collective agreements.

My review of collective agreements for unionized charter schools (Appendix E) revealed that in two of the five collective agreements there were negotiated provisions to set up a teacher–school board liaison committee (Charter School A, Charter School B). In Charter School A, the language in the collective agreement recognized the value of the school board and of working together collegially to solve professional issues of concern to teachers. In addition, the composition of the liaison committee included representation from teachers and the school board and committed the parties to meeting early in the school year. In Charter School B the goal of the liaison committee was to work collaboratively to provide advice on professional matters to those charged with making decisions. Like the composition of the committee for Charter School A, Charter School B's collective agreement included teachers, principals, and the Superintendent but unlike Charter School A, Charter School B's collective agreement provided for a member of the school board to be a member of the committee. In addition, Charter School B's collective agreement specifically narrowed the scope of issues to be discussed at liaison meetings to be exclusive to matters outside of the collective agreement. Finally, the liaison committee in Charter School B was not required to meet by a certain date, but where one of the parties requested a meeting, it would occur within 4 weeks of the request. Participants noted that the formation of liaison committees in their collective agreements was extremely important to their belief that the collective agreement was a vehicle for access to procedural fairness, however, given that the clauses were very new in one specific school, some participants noted that the actual effectiveness of the clauses were yet to be tested. Finally, I suggest that these data support the perspective that unionization and collective bargaining served to enhance teacher voice and provided a vehicle for the recognition of the expertise of teachers as it related to education policy creation and implementation in charter schools. This recognition and enhancement of status of

the charter school teachers as contributing members to the charter school's policy environment is an important marker of professionalization, and it guaranteed the teachers a measure of procedural fairness.

Grievance arbitration is another aspect to procedural fairness. While none of the teachers discussed the grievance arbitration clauses in their collective agreements, it should not be overlooked as an important structural feature (Strauss, 1978) that guarantees procedural fairness with respect to the application of collective bargaining agreements. Grievance arbitration is the "mechanism for resolving disputes that arise out of the interpretation, application, and / or administration of the collective agreement" (Ross et al., 2015, p. 88). According to the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014), all collective agreements are subject to the grievance arbitration process. This legally binding process allows for informal steps to resolve issues around the administration of a collective agreement, but if these fail then the dispute is referred to a neutral third party who will hear the dispute and adjudicate how the collective agreement should be interpreted and applied. Ultimately, I believe that grievance arbitration helps uphold the collective agreement provisions thereby ensuring that the professionalizing features within those agreements are applied fairly and consistently.

Interactional justice. Schminke and Arnaud (2004) suggest "fairness perceptions are directly linked to the quality of the interpersonal treatment people receive as procedures and decisions are enacted" (p. 1127). According to Schminke and Arnaud (2004) interactional justice can be considered from two perspectives: interpersonal justice and informational justice. The first point of view is interpersonal justice and this refers to "the degree to which people are treated with dignity, politeness, and respect during the implementation of procedures and the distribution of outcomes" (Schminke & Arnaud, 2004, p. 1127). Charter school teachers

reported that, in some instances, unionization helped achieve interpersonal justice because their status as teaching professionals was recognized via the achievement of distributive justice and procedural fairness. For the participants, this helped them feel valued and treated with dignity at work and I believe this helped them achieve interactional justice.

Interactional justice was important to the participants within the context of negotiating collective agreements because it helped elevate the teachers to a more equitable relationship with their school boards. These data from this study affirmed that collective bargaining can be a challenging endeavor, particularly when the participants in the negotiations know each other well. In a small school, such as a charter school, the teachers usually get to know the school board and superintendent well. This creates a dynamic at the bargaining table that can be "more personal" because "we know each other really well" (Participant Pam) in comparison to school jurisdictions where there are hundreds or even thousands of teachers within the bargaining unit. Participants noted this heightened their own emotional response as well as intensified their commitment to the bargaining process while negotiating with their employer. Anne described her experience as being frustrating at times and that "I would get home so angry, so angry. And then I think about it and say you know what though, I'm glad I'm angry because I want this so bad that I'm willing to fight for it." Participants Nancy and Pam echoed this experience and Pam reported "it was just too personal for me; I couldn't separate it." To resolve some of the emotional reaction to negotiating, Nancy said she "had to learn the process" and that for her, "the process of going back and forth and seeing that we had a say and we could move a conversation in a direction that felt good for us and not just on the other side" was helpful to her and it "helped me resolve that" anger she felt at times when negotiating. Nancy also explained why she felt so committed to the bargaining process when she said, "I thought that it might be neat. I thought

that because I'd been at the school for a long time and I knew a lot of the history that I kind of wanted to be at the table" and that "I just wanted to be a part of the conversation because I believed in it." Despite challenging times at the bargaining table, Anne indicated that collective bargaining was "something everybody should do at least once regardless of what side you're on" because "you learn an awful lot about people and about yourself and how to talk and how to listen and how to compromise and how to let things go." My interpretation of this data is that initially, interpersonal justice for unionized teachers at the collective bargaining table was not present though it did evolve as the process unfolded. The participants in this study shared how important it was to them to be recognized as more equal partners in the education process by their school boards. As the process of collective bargaining unfolded, these data suggest that unionization helped ameliorate the teachers' perception that they were achieving interactional justice because they were being heard by their school boards and they learned how the collective bargaining process could be used to bring greater fairness to their work environments.

The second component of interactional justice is informational justice and this "includes the quality of explanations people receive about the implementation of procedures, decisions, and specific outcomes" (Schminke & Arnaud, 2004, p. 1127). By unionizing, charter school teachers could access information and advice from the ATA about how their collective agreement should be applied in addition to support for their rights as employees via their contracts of employment. Teachers shared that where they or their colleagues contacted the ATA for advice about their employment context, it was a positive experience, even if the advice did not resolve the concern they had. This is illustrated by the following observations from the charter school teachers. Chris said, "I contacted the ATA and I've never contacted the ATA" and the result of this was a sense that the ATA was "helpful" even though "they really felt they

couldn't help my cause." Nicole noted that when she reached out to the ATA and that she "had called a couple times and every time it's just been nothing but really good solid advice" and that "they were really, really great; I felt supported." Finally, John reported that the staff officer assigned to his school by the ATA to assist them with collective bargaining had "listened closely and we saw some changes happen after that. He didn't have to, but it was good for us." In researching the key documents for this study as well as condensing and codifying the data from interviews, I was reminded how charter school teachers in Alberta are subject to many pieces of legislation and regulations for their employment as teachers as well as their professional obligations. I assert that charter school teachers work within a complex regulatory environment that is, at times, difficult to navigate. Charter school teachers, once unionized, could turn to the ATA for advice and assistance and the ability to do this helped the teachers attain informational justice they did not previously possess. Two of the participants did note that this did not suggest that the ATA could always give advice that was favorable to the teacher's perspective, but it did allow charter school teachers additional insights they had not previously enjoyed (Participants Chris and Nicole). In this sense, informational justice meant that charter school teachers had access to advice and information from the ATA and this was a structural support (Strauss, 1978) that the charter school teachers utilized to better understand their own contexts in terms of both their union contract and better understanding of what is required of members in the teaching profession in Alberta.

Finally, collective agreements set out the terms and conditions for teachers in unionized charter schools and were easily accessible to every charter school teacher. Participants noted that it was helpful when all teachers read and understood their collective agreements. In the context of his charter school, Mark indicated that with a collective agreement, he "as an

administrator" could turn to "this whole set of rules that are written down" and that the rules "will protect everybody." In addition, Mark shared, "I'm glad, because there's been a lot of stuff to come up that would have made you pull your hair out in trying to be consistent in application of rules." He also observed, "I don't know how they did it before" the collective agreement. Other teachers interviewed reported the collective agreement helped everyone on staff to understand "what you can ask for, what you can't ask for, like all of the things that are in the contract for you like personal days and family sick days and how you apply for leave and everything is laid out" (Participant Nancy). John explained that the collective agreement was advantageous because "the agreement is the thing that defines what the limits are" and Dave pointed out that having a collective agreement meant that for the charter school teachers at his school meant that "inconsistencies don't exist" in the application of procedures and rules. I interpret these data from participants to suggest that negotiating a collective agreement was a way for charter school teachers to have informational justice because the rules were transparent and known by all members of the bargaining unit as well as school boards. For charter school teachers, collective agreements and unionization helped teachers to understand and have access to the norms that defined the teaching profession in Alberta and this included parity within compensation structures and advice about the rights and responsibilities of teachers. For many participants, the structural support available to them from the ATA allowed unionized charter school teachers to better understand their employment contexts and as teacher professionals.

Summary

The two themes discussed in Chapter Five were re-forming social order and fairness. The discussion within these sections was intended to shed light on the main question of this study as well as the sub-questions: *How does the social context of the charter school influence*

the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools? and *How does a collective agreement reflect the relationship between union function and professional function? How does this evolve over time?* The findings within the first theme, re-forming social order, and second theme, fairness, revealed that many of the aspects within the social context of charter schools that influenced charter school teachers to join the ATA were largely resolved through unionization. In addition, the findings suggest that in some instances, unionization did provide the structural supports and supports within their negotiating context which enhanced the participants perception of their professional status as charter school teachers. The findings in the second theme, fairness, also examines how collective agreements encode the relationship between union function and professional function over time.

The data presentation in this chapter emphasized that after charter school teachers voted to unionize, they set about re-ordering their social worlds at work. The re-negotiation of the social world of the teachers' charter schools resulted in higher levels of social cohesion between the teachers and that the teachers worked collaboratively to adopt roles within the collective bargaining process. These data show that some teachers were involved directly in negotiations with the school board while others were involved as supporting actors. In all cases, the process of creating and ratifying initial proposals helped the charter school teachers identify more closely with their occupational group, both at the negotiations level and at the structural level as member of the ATA. These data also reveal that teacher professionalization was evident in the initial proposals: charter school teachers held expectations about how their conditions of practice should be expressed in relation to Alberta public school teachers. The expectations of charter school teachers were rooted in the adoption of a common framework premised on a shared

consciousness of what it meant to be a professional teacher in Alberta. In this sense, I suggest that charter school teachers, because of their decision to unionize, experienced a professionalizing process that helped them focus more exclusively on their occupational goals and expectations. In addition, the participants shared that teachers became invested in the outcome of collective bargaining because they were an active part of the process from the very beginning. The affinity that grew between the teachers helped them withstand the challenges to their relationship with the school board as the social order at the charter schools was renegotiated. In some instances, participants reported that collective bargaining brought about an improved relationship between teachers and their school boards as they reached common agreement about what their conditions of practice should be. However, for other participants, a residual tension continued to exist with their school boards throughout the process of unionization because the teachers prioritized their needs as an occupational group, a signpost of professionalization. Finally, participants shared that they believed that charter school teachers grew closer to the rest of the teaching profession in Alberta because of unionization and this enhanced their perception of their status as professionals. Ultimately, the increased social cohesion emerging from the charter school teachers' decision to unionize was rooted in the social context of their charter schools as it precipitated the teachers coming together as an occupational group to advance important goals; both union goals and professional goals.

In addition to re-forming social worlds between themselves as the charter school teachers, as well as renegotiating their relationship with their school board, and closing some of the gap between charter school teachers and the teaching profession in Alberta by unionizing, the second theme of fairness and justice help illustrate why the charter school teachers' decided to unionize and how they were impacted by the unionization process. The first consideration for

the teachers was based on their capacity (Sondak, 2010) to negotiate the social order surrounding their employment circumstances. Participants shared that charter school teachers needed to be able to access the structural supports (Strauss, 1978) of legislation to bargain collectively with the school board. In addition, charter school teachers shared that prior to having the ATA as a formal part of their negotiating contexts (Strauss, 1978), they were ill-equipped to renegotiate their conditions of practice with their school boards because the teachers did not understand the legislative underpinnings for collective bargaining nor did they have knowledge about how to bargain collectively. In this sense, I submit that the union function of the ATA helped the teachers to experience success in collective bargaining to achieve fairness as employees. Secondly, the teacher participants noted the importance of having distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Schminke & Arnaud, 2004) to accomplish fairness at work. For the charter school teachers, the mechanism for achieving organizational justice (Greenberg, 1987) was unionization and joining the ATA. In proceeding along this path, the teachers, with the help of the ATA, were able to negotiate collective agreements that provided economic equity with public-school teachers, thus providing a sense distributive justice for the charter school teachers. I submit that parity with public-school teachers coupled with specific collective agreement provisions (Appendix E) had a professionalizing effect for the charter school teachers because they felt their work was being valued in the same way as their public school counterparts. In addition, participants shared that they felt procedural justice (Schminke & Arnaud, 2004) within their employment contexts was enhanced through the establishment of joint committees to study and work on educational policy changes for their charter schools. Malin and Kerchner (2007) wrote that joint committees are a form of professional unionism because this moves the employment relationship from an authoritarian approach to a more collaborative approach.

Finally, participants shared that joining the ATA allowed them to access supports for information and advice as well as achieve recognition from their school boards as more equal partners in their employment contexts. Not only did this accomplish interactional justice goals (Schminke & Arnaud, 2004) at work, but unionization helped the charter school teachers achieve professional goals through greater recognition of their status as professional teachers. In the chapter that follows, a discussion of the importance of the findings for this research project will be presented as will the implications of the findings for this project. Finally, suggestions for further research will be outlined.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

At the outset of this study I was intrigued by the teacher unionism demonstrated by charter school teachers I was working with as an Executive Staff Officer with the ATA. My lived experience working at the ATA in both the union function as a labour relations negotiator and in the professional function as an investigator of alleged teacher misconduct, caused me to wonder what, in the charter school context, is the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization from the perspective of charter school teachers? In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of this study as they relate to the research questions, the literature on professions and unions, and the theoretical framework guiding this study. In addition, I will explain why the findings of this study are important as a contribution to the field of educational policy studies and identify some of the implications of the findings for policy makers, teacher organizations, and charter school boards. Finally, I will suggest further possibilities for future research endeavors that this study invites and end with brief concluding thoughts.

Discussion

The primary question for this study was, what is the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization? The related, secondary questions that arose from the primary question were

1. How does a collective agreement reflect the relationship between union function and professional function? How does this evolve over time?
2. How do political, economic, and legislative factors impact the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?
3. How does the social context of the charter school influence the relationship between unionization and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?

In the discussion that follows, I will provide analysis of how the data emerging from this study answers the questions above, link the analysis to the literature on professionalization and unionization, and illustrate how the structural contexts, negotiations contexts, and negotiations (Strauss, 1978, pp. 98-99) of charter school teachers were instrumental to the evolution of professionalization and unionization within their charter school contexts.

To better understand how, within the study of work and occupations, a profession is established, I turned to the sociological literature. Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) pointed out that "although education reformers often disagree over what is meant by profession, professionalism, and professionalization, students of occupations, notably sociologists, do not" (p. 185). Thus, the literature explaining the traits of professions is well established (Abbott, 1993; Alexander, 1980; Goode, 1969; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011; Larson, 2014; Wilensky, 1964). For this study, the traits of professions I adopted were derived from Wilensky's (1964) professional model with the addition of the category of autonomy. The five traits used to identify a profession were a technical and expert knowledge base, exclusive jurisdiction, standards of training and practice, public assurance and trust, and autonomy. While the trait theory of professions is well established, how an occupation professionalizes is not as well understood empirically (Leicht, 2005; Roos, 2001). This study illuminated this gap in the literature by exploring, through the interviews with participants, how they experienced processes of professionalization through their university educations, their early career experiences, and their experiences as teachers within charter schools. My analysis and interpretation of these data from this study supports my argument that the professionalization of teachers was very important to charter school teacher unionism. The next section outlines these connections to shed light on the primary research question.

The findings revealed that the participants in this study viewed themselves as professionals, they ably identified and applied the model of professional traits described by Wilensky (1964) to their work as charter school teachers. These data show that the participants believed in the importance of their university training and certification, career long learning, being accountable for their work and conduct, and providing service to their school community and students.

In addition, my analysis of collective agreements of charter schools showed several provisions that held connection to the model of professional traits that I adopted for this study. For example, every collective agreement I examined stipulated that unionized charter school teachers were members of the bargaining unit and that they belonged to the ATA, a form of exclusive jurisdiction within the professional trait model. Another example that shows a linkage between union function and professional function is the evaluation of teacher qualifications. By naming the ATA as the adjudicator of what post-secondary education counts for the purpose of the salary grid, both exclusive jurisdiction and the expert knowledge base of teachers was clarified and, in this sense, the importance of the ATA as a union and professional organization was affirmed. These qualities referenced by the participants and found in collective agreements are housed within Wilensky's professional model which demands that professions demonstrate an expert knowledge base, exclusive jurisdiction, standards of training and practice, and public assurance and trust and I suggest, therefore, a connection between teacher unionism and aspects of professionalization can be made. In addition, the charter school teachers who were interviewed shared that, while they were very loyal to the charter of their schools, they also believed there should be an ability to share in the decision making and the educational policy making within their charter schools. The ability to participate in decision making reflected the

participants' belief in their professional authority and their belief in their right to exercise professional autonomy. The highly professionalized view that the charter school teacher participants held of themselves was foundational to their work as teachers and their professional communities.

These data from this study demonstrate that the charter school teachers' belief in professional values was present prior to the unionization of their charter schools and my theory is that this belief gave the teachers a sense of traditional legitimacy (Peter, 2010; Uphoff, 1989; Wæraas, 2009) as teachers in Alberta. Participants shared that, at a basic level, their work was much the same as that of public school teachers and that their university education and certification enabled them job mobility; they could move from their charter school teacher positions to employment as teachers with public school boards. In addition to identifying the traits that described what it meant for an occupation to be a profession, participants discussed how they were socialized into the teaching profession as new teachers and as well how newly hired teachers within their charter schools were socialized through their interactions with experienced staff members. Participants shared that mentorship of new recruits by experienced teacher staff members imparted a high degree of service ideal within the school and towards each other. The adoption of and belief in professional traits meant the charter school teachers were highly professionalized (Alexander, 1980; Larson, 2014; Turner & Hodge, 1970; Wilensky, 1964). Furthermore, participants reported that the adoption of these important ideals was encouraged through the socialization of new teachers within the charter schools. The socialization of new recruits was rooted in professional values where an emphasis on teamwork, collegiality, career long learning, service to students and parents, and professional autonomy and judgment were highly valued by the charter school teachers I interviewed. I, therefore, argue

that the socialization processes coupled with the high degree of interdependence and co-operation within charter schools that the participants reported contributed to the growth of collectivities (Parsons, 1959; Polloni, 2001) within the charter schools.

The high degree of professionalization and collectivity of the charter school teachers was, in my analysis, a contributing factor to consider teacher unionism within charter schools, culminating in the decision to unionize. Participants reported that they became concerned when their expectations for employment security and fair treatment as a group of employees were not met within their charter school contexts in spite of attempts by both the teachers and the school boards to resolve outstanding issues informally. Larson (2014) noted that "both proletarianization and professionalization touch collectivities, not individuals only" (p. 11). In this sense, I suggest that charter school teachers, who were already professionalized and attuned to collective behavior, drew upon their collectivity to advance their shared interests as teachers employed in charter schools by using formal mechanisms under the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014). More specifically, I contend the teachers turned to unionization as a solution to their employment uncertainty and their lack of legal - rational legitimacy (Peter, 2010; Uphoff, 1989; Wæraas, 2009) created by the legislative exclusion from the ATA. To situate these ideas within a negotiated order framework, my analysis is that the structural context (Strauss, 1978, p. 101) in Alberta, with regard to charter schools, created an environment where charter school teachers viewed themselves as having traditional legitimacy but lacking in legal-rational legitimacy. These data reveal that the orientation of charter school teachers towards their own professionalization and collectivity within their school communities was important to the negotiations between teachers; commencing with the debates over joining the ATA, the eventual vote to join the ATA, and the successful negotiations of collective agreements as a teacher

bargaining unit. In addition, I believe that charter school teachers' confidence in their traditional legitimacy because of their university training as well as their early career experiences had oriented the teachers towards an expectation of what it meant to be a professional teacher in Alberta. This awareness caused the teachers to survey and analyze their negotiations, negotiations context, and structural contexts to ascertain that their employment context and status as charter school teachers was not the same as public school teachers. The charter school teachers then set out to ameliorate their situation at work and their standing as professional teachers in Alberta using the structural features of the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014) and inviting the ATA to their negotiations and negotiations contexts. Consequently, I suggest that the underlying professionalization assumed by charter school teachers lent warrant to their belief in their traditional legitimacy as professionals and this was foundational to their efforts to gain legal-rational legitimacy via unionization.

By joining the ATA, participants shared that the charter school teachers acted and interacted amongst themselves and with their school boards to reorder their employment contexts. These data reveal that the reordering of the social contexts at the charter schools achieved the perception of fairness at work for the charter school teachers (Schminke & Arnaud, 2004). The meaning making through collective bargaining between the teachers with their school boards led to a codification of their shared values in a collective agreement; a clear example of social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2003). Participants indicated that the successful negotiation of collective agreements set out a foundation for the employment relationship between the school board and the teachers and this is an example of how trade unionism regulates the employment relationship (Heery et al., 2008). These data from this study showed that the collective bargaining agreements between charter school boards and

the ATA addressed professional issues (Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; Rabban, 1991). Collective agreements were found to include clauses that provided the opportunity to contribute to policy making decisions via Teacher Board Liaison Committees, clauses that provided access and resources to enable professional development and professional learning, clauses that defined teacher work, and clauses that allowed for leaves to study and grow professionally. In this sense, I submit that the collective bargaining agreements intentionally incorporated values encouraging the teachers' professional values as well as professional unionism (Malin & Kerchner, 2007). In addition, based on these data for this study, I argue that collective bargaining agreements helped raise the status of charter school teachers because "professionals are well compensated and are provided with relatively high salary and benefit levels throughout their career span" (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011, p. 190) and in relation to their comparator group, public teachers, participants identified a gap between their compensation and the levels of compensation enjoyed by public school teachers that needed resolution. Finally, participants said that being unionized and working under a collective agreement within the Alberta charter school context meant that the teachers and their school boards could redirect their energies away from the compensation structures used in the charter schools and expand their conversations towards matters of educational and professional concerns. For the charter school teachers that I interviewed, these data would suggest that joining the ATA allowed them to achieve fairness at work, but also continued their professionalization because they achieved comparable economic status with public school teachers, collective agreements codified supports for career growth and opportunities for input into educational decision making, and gave teachers access to organizational support for their employment questions. My study of charter school collective agreements triangulated what the participants shared. Appendix E outlines the many

professionalizing features existing within the negotiated agreements between school boards and the ATA and charter school teachers. The participants also noted that joining the ATA helped them to feel legitimated as professional teachers within the broader educational community of Alberta. The preceding discussion provides insight into the primary research question, but I now turn my attention consider how the data set speaks to the three sub-questions posed for this study.

The first sub-question for this study is: *How does a collective agreement reflect the relationship between union function and professional function? How does this evolve over time?* Charter school collective agreements are the result of negotiations between the ATA and school boards and these documents regulate many aspects of the employment relationship between teachers and the school board. As such, I suggest that the regulating effect of collective agreements is that they influence the interactions within the negotiating contexts of charter schools once they are formed. For the charter school teachers in this study, collective agreements provided economic parity with public school teachers, and participants noted that this helped raise the professional status of the charter school teachers. In addition, I argue, based on these data, that collective agreements allow for aspects of professional unionism (Malin & Kerchner, 2007) such as joint committees that required school boards and teachers to meet and discuss matters of educational policy and professional concerns. Salary grids, experience clauses, and education clauses in collective agreements embed standards of training and experience, and where an occupation asserts its exclusive jurisdiction through certification as well as entrenchment of university level standards of training, there is evidence of professionalization according to Wilensky (1964). In addition, as many participants noted, career long learning was encouraged through leave clauses and professional development clauses

and this helps teachers to continue to develop their expertise over time meeting practice standards as well as developing their expert knowledge base, both of which are signposts of professionalization (Wilensky, 1964). Finally, since collective agreements are for specified lengths of time, negotiations between school boards and charter school teachers are recurrent and improvements to articles and clauses become incremental in nature recognizing the changing needs of both the teachers and the charter school boards. The collective agreements I examined showed varying levels of sophistication and incorporation of professional aspects. These data show that the highest degree of specificity with respect to the articulation of professional values are found in the most mature collective agreements and this can be assessed by comparing the collective agreements summarized in Appendix E. Overall, I submit that the collective agreements for charter school teachers triangulates with the data derived from participant interviews and these in combination lead me to conclude that collective agreements incorporate union and professional values without conflict in this particular provincial context due to the bicameral nature of the ATA In this sense, I suggest that professionalization and unionism can co-exist and because collective agreements are enforceable under law, teacher unionism can be viewed as a mechanism of support for the professional lives of teachers as employees of school boards.

The second sub-question for this study is: *How do political, economic, and legislative factors impact the relationship between unionism and professional status for teachers working in Alberta charter schools?* The political and legislative decisions made in 1994 that created a separate public charter school system that also excluded charter school teachers from the ATA had significant implications for charter school teachers. These data suggest that these structural factors marginalized charter school teachers from public school teachers and, by unionizing,

charter school teachers acted to try and resolve their exclusion from the formal professional organizations representing and supporting the teaching profession in Alberta. However, these data also show that unionism did not fully resolve the concerns of the teachers, but it did help normalize their existence as charter school teachers. This is not surprising, within the context of social constructionism, since social order constitutes and re-constitutes over time and the relationship between unionized charter school teachers, the ATA, and public school teachers is going to shift as interactions between them unfold.

The data set from this study showed that charter school teachers were highly professionalized because they met certification requirements in Alberta, their work was substantially similar to public school teachers, and were socialized to adopt the professional standards for Alberta teachers. Wilensky (1964) argued that professionalization occurs when occupations attain exclusive jurisdiction through establishing licensing requirements, there was an acceptance of an adherence to standards of practice and conduct, a strong service ideal, commitment to a career within the specific occupation, and the formation of a professional organization. These data in this study demonstrate that charter school teachers were highly professionalized prior to joining the ATA but I believe, based on the data from the theme of fairness and justice, that for charter school teachers, joining the ATA enhanced their professionalization because it brought them closer to public school teachers in economic and professional status.

The third sub-question for this study is: *How does the social context of the charter school influence the relationship between unionization and the professional status for teachers working in Alberta schools?* According to these data, the social context of charter schools was a significant factor in terms of charter school teacher unionization. Prior to joining the ATA,

participants described an employment milieu as uncertain. These data reveal that the teachers desired, as a result of the social environment in their charter schools, greater stability at work and this motivated the teachers to join the ATA. In addition, charter school teachers wanted to have their professional expertise recognized by their school board and they expressed a desire to have their voices heard when it came to policies that would impact the policies and practices shaping the administration of their schools. The closely-knit community of professionals within charter schools prior to joining the ATA meant that charter school teachers came to the decision to unionize using democratic methods. The orientation of the teachers towards collectivity grew into greater social cohesion between the teachers because in choosing to unionize, the teachers had to articulate and agree upon what priorities were most important for their work as teachers. Based on this data and using Wilensky's (1964) work as a guide, I suggest that the identification of occupation specific sentiments such as recognition of their post-secondary education or establishing economic parity with public school teachers was a form of professionalization which resulted in enhanced affinity between the charter school teachers as well as built their affinity with public school teachers. In addition, participants shared that unionization helped them achieve professional goals such as support for career long learning as well as a fair environment that allowed for equitable treatment of teachers attaining clear entitlement to items such as leaves and allowances to meet their employment needs. For charter school teachers, it would appear that unionization was a method that enabled the teachers to modify their social context to better reflect their perception about how their standing as teachers should be in relation to their employment context.

Underlying my question about the connection between teacher unionization and teacher professionalization is a debate in the literature that suggested that the two concepts were not

compatible. I now turn to the literature and the data set for this study to discuss further how this debate unfolds within the context of unionized Alberta charter school teachers. For example, J. Rosenberg and S. Rosenberg (2006) wrote that "the literature suggests that conflicts between professionalism and unionism are present in several professions" (p. 300) but that "relatively few studies have examined the relationship between collective bargaining and professional values" (Rabban, 1991, p. 98). This study sheds light on the compatibility of professionalization and unionization and I found that empirically, as was the case of Lightman's (1982) study of social workers, charter school teachers did not view unionism and professionalization as antithetical nor did they view the concepts as incompatible. My interaction with readings on the issue of compatibility of unionism and professionalization leads me to conclude that the theoretical debate surrounding the compatibility of professions and unions is largely informed by the examination of both organizations at their most abstract and ideal forms. Alexander (1980) suggested that "the occurrence of unionization and professionalization as complementary processes, then, appears least likely when both are examined as ideal types exemplifying the most mature and successful of each" (p. 476).

In practice, the organization of professions and the organization of unions evolve in response to structural and negotiations contexts they are situated within—simply put, the ideal type does not exist exactly as scholars envision. In this case study, I drew upon the ideal model of professionalization to draw linkages between teacher professionalization and teacher unionization. In the case of the unionized charter schools, teacher unionism was new to the charter school context and, therefore, through interactions and negotiations between the charter school teachers and their school boards, I believe a professional approach to teacher unionism was adopted. I interpret these data to suggest that the evolution of teacher collective bargaining

and teacher unionism in charter schools was tied to the structural environment; charter school teachers were excluded from professional membership in the ATA because of legislation, but their belief in their traditional legitimacy was well developed. Therefore, the professionalization of the charter school teachers was at a mature stage when the teachers decided to unionize. The newness of the union model, transposed onto the charter school environment, enabled an interconnected evolution of the two concepts of professionalization and unionism within the contexts of the unionized charter schools.

In this study, these data show that aspects such as employment security and compensation, which would traditionally be considered union values, as well as expectations to support their professional lives in clauses such as professional development and leaves of absence were important to the charter school teachers. In addition, participants shared that at their schools there was discussion that their conditions of practice should be the same or substantially the same conditions of practice as public school teachers. In this sense, my findings and interpretation indicate, that by unionizing, the charter school teachers were incorporating aspects of their professional values with union values and these were not in conflict from the perspective of the participants. I also submit that the interaction of evolving concepts of professionalization and unionization within the charter school environment reflected what Alexander termed a hybrid model that "assumes that when unions and professionals interact over time, each begins to assume some characteristics of the other; new forms emerge that borrow from, but do not entirely conform to, either the traditional union or the traditional professional model" (p. 479). Interestingly, the hybrid model of teacher unionism and teacher professionalization within the unionized charter schools is mirrored by the structural setup of the ATA itself, as the ATA performs both professional and union functions for public school

teachers in Alberta. I suggest that the structural context, which includes the presence of the ATA, influenced the charter school negotiation context and the negotiations of the teachers. For example, teacher participants noted the influence of the ATA's hybridized or bicameral nature when they stated they felt accountable to the ATA for their conduct and practice, as well as noting support for the ATA's traditional union goals. It should not come as a surprise that both charter school teachers and the ATA enacted a hybrid model of unionism and professionalization, for teaching has long been considered a semi-profession (Etzioni, 1969; Larson, 2014; Lortie, 1969; Rabban, 1991) and has never fully been accepted a member of the traditional professions. Therefore, very early on in the establishment of organizations representing teachers, scholars noted the interplay between professionalizing teaching by advocating for higher levels of education, adherence to standards of practice, peer review, and high levels of autonomy, and unionizing teaching by advocating adequate compensation, job security, and fair processes (Marsh-MacNabb, 1949; Smaller, 2015; Williams-Whitt, 2012). In the ATA, the interaction between professional function and union function has led to a hybridized teacher organization, one that promotes both professional and union goals. Ultimately, unions and professions share common features; they both seek to control the labour market for an occupation, they seek high status and compensation for their members, and organizationally, they require collectivity and solidarity from their members (Larson, 1980).

This study's findings paint a complex picture emerging from interviews with charter school teachers, one that considered the impact of political and legislative structures on the negotiating context of charter schools as well as on the charter school teachers themselves. These data suggested that the relationship between the concepts of teacher unionism and teacher professionalization are largely compatible within the context of unionized Alberta charter

schools. In addition, I interpret these data to point towards a hybridization between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization in the context of unionized Alberta charter schools. Does this mean that a teacher cannot be a professional without belonging to a union? I do not believe this study should be used to point to this conclusion. These data show the charter school teachers were well professionalized prior to joining the ATA, and I suggest that this is in part due to strong requirements for certification, excellent teacher university preparation programs, and a public education system that insists on excellent teaching and learning. I propose that the professionalization of teachers in Alberta has been assisted by the presence of a powerful teacher organization because the ATA has advocated, in partnership with other educational stakeholders, such as school boards, universities, and Alberta Education, for excellence in the Alberta teaching profession (Bascia & Osmond, 2015).

In the sections that follow, I will discuss why the findings of this study are important as a contribution to the field of educational policy studies and identify some of the implications of the findings for policy makers, teacher organizations, and charter school boards. Finally, I will suggest further possibilities for future research endeavors that this study invites.

Importance and Implications of the Findings

The central findings for this study were: in the context of charter schools in Alberta, Canada (a) unionization was perceived as a mechanism by which charter school teachers earned public status and respect as professionals; (b) formal organization through unions established a more secure employment relationship for teachers; and (c) unionizing solidified teachers as a collective body of professionals. This section will explore the importance of the findings, particularly as they relate to two of study sub questions: specifically, the relationship between professionalization and unionism within the charter school context and how the political,

legislative, and economic factors impacted that relationship. In addition, this section will identify possible implications of the findings.

Importance of the Findings

> Ball (1993) argued persuasively that,
>
> there is a tendency (another idealisation) by politicians in particular to talk about markets only in terms of positive effects and outcomes—they envision a market Utopia when every school gets better (irrespective of resources differences) and the magic of competition ensures that every consumer is happy—Adam Smith meets Walt Disney (p. 5).

While Ball was writing about how a marketized approach to public education is harmful for families and society, his thesis, which is that "the market works as a class strategy" (p. 17) to fracture social cohesion and diminish democratic institutions, has applicability to the findings of this study. In Alberta, charter schools were intended to create an educational market that featured choice for parents and students as well as foster competition among schools, both public and charter schools (Bosetti, Brown, Hasan, & Van Pelt, 2015). The structural forces separating charter schools, both politically and legislatively, from public schools resulted in fragmentation. The divisions created for Alberta teachers meant that the teaching profession was further segmented as charter school teachers were not automatic members of the ATA. Participants reported that their exclusion from automatic membership in the ATA caused them to feel marginalized by public school teachers, the ATA, and public school boards. However, participants shared that they were able to, in part, bridge the gap between themselves and other public education teachers by unionizing. The structural supports available through the *Alberta Labour Relations Code* (2014) for teacher unionization were critical to the achievement of

teacher unionism.

Once the charter school teachers were unionized and attained their collective agreements, participants reported that they felt like every other teacher in Alberta because, based on my analysis of these data, they, held both traditional and legal-rational legitimacy as teachers. The experience of Alberta charter school teachers is markedly different from charter school teachers in other jurisdictions, particularly the United States. For the participants I interviewed, the political and legislative fragmentation they experienced from the rest of the teaching profession in Alberta was partially addressed by unionization and joining the ATA. Unionizing did not fully resolve the marginalization felt by the charter school participants, but it did help, as reflected in many of the participants' comment, build a bridge between their schools and the public school system. These data also suggest that the ability of the charter school teachers to overcome their separation from the rest of their teaching peers can be attributed to the relative strength of the teaching profession in Alberta. I suggest, based on my experience and scholarly studies, that a contributing factor to the strength of the teaching profession in Alberta may, in part, be due to the high degree of cooperation between the ATA, the government of Alberta, universities, and other educational stakeholders such as school boards in Alberta. An example of the educational partnerships in Alberta is the relationship between the government of Alberta and the ATA. Bascia and Osmand-Johnson (2015) wrote that "the Alberta government and teacher union have moved away from adversarial and opposing discourses related to teacher professionalism and have come to a negotiated agreement about what constitutes good teaching" (p. 79). The agreement between the ATA and government of Alberta about what constitutes good teaching applies to all teachers working in accredited schools in Alberta, not just ATA members. The implication of the positive working relationship between the ATA and the

government of Alberta is that unlike other jurisdictions, there is not a highly developed public discourse that debases teachers and discredits their work. Where teachers and public schools are criticized mercilessly, by both the media and politicians, as is the case in the United States, there is an "effort to privatize schools and undermine the promise of public education" (Weiner, 2015, p. 189). In addition, de-professionalization agendas by governments become easier to put in place leading to a very divided and weakened teaching profession (Beck, 2008; Larson, 2014; Ravitch, 2013; Sitch, 2005). Furthermore, these measures have not been shown to improve the quality of education in any substantial way (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Giroux, 2012; Ravitch, 2010). This study demonstrates that even though the Alberta government decided to exclude charter school teachers from the ATA, that the charter school teachers continued to see themselves as professionals because of their credentials and early career experiences. In addition, the charter school teachers had firm beliefs about what their conditions of practice should be, and this, combined with their professionalization as teachers, was fundamental to the charter school teachers' decision to join the ATA and belong to a larger group of teaching peers.

Implications of the Findings

For policy makers. The data set for this study revealed that Alberta has a strong structural backdrop for the professionalization of new recruits into teaching. During their post-secondary and pre-service experiences, participants described how they, as novice teachers, learned about the expert knowledge base that was foundational to entry into the teacher profession. In addition, these data show that pre-service teachers learned how their content knowledge could be applied to the act of teaching through the practicum portion of their university training. The extended training period for teachers in Canada meant that when teachers entered their employment contracts with school boards, they had already been socialized

about the norms of the profession and they had an expectation for what their work arrangement should be. However, once novice teachers entered classrooms, their structural supports varied depending on what kind of school board the teacher was employed by. For example, public school teachers automatically became members of the ATA, public school teachers and charter school teachers were automatically enrolled in the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund as part of their compensation package, and private school teachers worked in temporary contracts year over year because their employers were not subject to the employment regime outlined in the *Alberta School Act* (2014). This study provides some insight into the impact of the marginalization charter school teachers experienced within their macro and meso environments creating their need to overcome the compensation and employment security through unionization.

Attraction and retention in the Alberta workforce is a stated goal in the workforce planning documents (Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2010). Therefore, I suggest that to improve retention of teachers at charter, private, and band-run schools in Alberta, policy makers and legislators should consider what structural supports can be put in place to stabilize schools in receipt of public funds and offering K-12 education. This study suggests at least two possible policy options. The first option would be to ensure that all teachers practicing in Alberta are active members of the ATA and therefore accountable to the profession for their conduct and standards of practice. Second, if all teachers are active members of the ATA, then unionization would ensure that all teachers would have access to collective bargaining agreements and negotiations on a regular basis as well as assistance in employment matters. While this study is situated within the framework of the Alberta context, policy makers outside of Alberta may find the results of this study helpful within their own policy environment. For

example, London (2018) wrote that in the United States in spring of 2018, there were teacher uprisings in several states including protests, sick outs, and general strikes. The current militancy of teachers in the United States is not restricted to within its borders; teachers in other countries are reacting to the neoliberal agenda to privatize education systems and divert funding away from the public good into private hands. London wrote, "As nearly 150,000 teachers in several parts of the United States threaten strikes, opposition to attacks on public education is emerging worldwide" (para. 15).

In part, the stability of the teacher workforce has been undermined by the de/professionalization agendas of governments, the introduction of non-unionized charter schools, and the defunding of public schools (Giroux, 2012; Grimmett et al., 2009; MacKay, 1994; Ravitch, 2013). This study suggests there are macro structures that can be developed to ensure a professionalized teaching workforce that has access to strong economic and procedural mechanisms to ensure the ongoing viability of a career in teaching, thus enhancing the delivery of public education to meet societal needs.

For teacher organizations. The data set from this study suggests that teacher professionalization and teacher unionization are at a minimum compatible, but I suggest that these concepts in action are connected in mutually reinforcing ways. Kamery (2005) discussed the importance of the integration of professional values into union function and wrote "many professionals still believe that affiliation with a union entails the rejection of key professional values" (p. 43) and that "leaders of traditional unions now emphasize that collective bargaining can and should address distinctively professional concerns" (p. 43). To maintain credibility as teacher organizations, leadership within these structures must balance professional needs against the more traditional union concerns. Within teacher organizations, this balance will be

continually negotiated and re-negotiated (Strauss, 1978, pp. 5-6) as the structural and negotiations contexts surrounding the organization shifts and changes (Strauss, 1978, pp. 5-6). But what this study demonstrates is the importance of ensuring that the concepts of professionalization and unionism remain mutually reinforcing. This will ensure that the teacher organization reflects its members' values and needs, and this study shows this can be accomplished through collective bargaining.

In addition, this case study points out that it is important for teacher organizations to build responsive administrations for all teachers, including those who are not automatically members of their organizations by legislative requirements. In today's political environment, which is heavily influenced by monied interests wishing to privatize education (Ravitch 2010), it is important that teachers' organizations work to ensure a unified professional front. To attract new members, teachers' organizations must be sensitive about their communications around private and charter school. In addition, teachers' organizations must be willing to represent teachers who are not public school teachers as well as embrace those teachers even when the policy of the teacher organization does not align with the type of school the teachers work within.

Finally, this study challenges teacher organizations to seek to understand the collectivity and commitment of charter school teachers emerging from their underlying professionalization and moved them towards unionism. Weiner (2015) pointed out that "deep thorough union democracy depends on the union having a presence in the workplace, such that members understand that *they* are the union" (p. 195) and charter school teacher unionization is a reminder that this is the case. The active participation of charter school teachers in forming their new bargaining units demonstrate elements that serve to inform the mature bargaining relationships

seen in Alberta public schools. Activities such as democratic decision making and peer mentoring coupled with a strong sense of commitment to their charter schools and each other, allowed for charter school teachers to actively negotiate their social contexts at work. Teacher organizations can share this study to encourage the sorts of activities in more mature bargaining units to remind public school teachers of their ability to be active agents in negotiating their social realities at work.

For charter school boards. This study can inform Alberta charter school boards about what it means for teachers, already highly socialized as professional teachers, to be employed within non-unionized and later, unionized environments. As employers, charter school boards have an interest in ensuring that teachers commit to the vision of the charter at the school as well as commit to a career with their charter schools. This study suggests that teacher unionization can help charter school teachers to meet their expectations for fairness in their employment context. This case study showed that the negotiations between the charter school boards and charter school teachers led to collective agreements that formed the foundation for the employment relationship. Kamery (2005) noted that "contractual guarantees increase the quality of an organization's professional services, which contributes to overall organizational effectiveness" (p. 45). In this study, participants shared that this allowed the school board and the teachers to focus on issues of pedagogy and educational policy development for implementation within their charter schools. Charter school boards can make use of this study to reflect upon their own contexts and ascertain where their energies are being spent as employers. Charter school boards can reflect on many questions such as the ones that follow. Do charter school boards find themselves having to re-write the employment rules or having to re-explain the rules they have set up? If so, is this taking energy away from the teaching and learning in the

charter school? Are teachers choosing to remain employed at the school? This study showed that a collective agreement may be helpful for charter school boards as well as the charter school teachers and that collective bargaining may help stabilize employment environments that are uncertain and viewed as unfair.

For First Nations teachers. For teachers working for First Nations education authorities, there may be resonance with this study, particularly with the themes of legitimacy, employment uncertainty and collectivity. Kavanagh (2000) pointed out that "the funding guidelines established by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) require that all First Nations schools meet the provincial learning outcomes established by the BC Ministry of Education" (p. 25). The implication of this requirement for First Nations education authorities in British Columbia is that they can only employ certificated teachers. As INAC is federal regulation, the requirement to employ certificated teachers in Alberta First Nations also applies. Therefore teachers who work in First Nations schools are similar to the charter school teachers prior to their decision to unionize and join the ATA. Teachers in First Nations schools are professionally certificated, but they work in non-unionized environments. The professionalization of charter school teachers is also likely evident with teachers working in First Nations schools. For example, Kavanagh (2000) reported that teachers working in First Nations communities viewed themselves as professionals who enjoyed being able to work autonomously within their roles. Like charter school teachers who participated in this study, Kavanagh's work shows that the ability to exercise professional judgement and discretion within the First Nations context is very important to First Nation teachers. Kavanagh (2000) wrote that in her research, teachers working in First Nations schools "have commented positively on their involvement in school decision making, their inclusion in choosing and evaluating programs, and their

opportunities to creatively integrate cultural learning into their classrooms" (p. 5). Consequently, like non-unionized charter school teachers, teachers working in First Nations are fully certificated a teachers in Alberta and therefore may view themselves as having traditional legitimacy as professionals but like the charter school participants within this study before joining the ATA, they do not have the legal-rational legitimacy that teachers in the public school system enjoy as members of the ATA.

In addition, and like charter school teachers, teachers working in First Nations communities experience employment uncertainty. The negotiating context for teachers in First Nations schools also expands beyond the school and school authorities into the communities themselves and this is distinct to their environment. Danyluk and Shepard (2015) pointed out that in First Nations communities, "local politics regularly take on increased importance. Teachers in remote, northern and small communities often report "living under a microscope" and there can be immediate repercussions for any misstep" (p.18). In addition,

> teaching on a reserve presents unique challenges stemming from (a) a pervasive culture of poverty, (b) educational disadvantage and scarcity of resources, (c) the complex dynamics of small, close-knit communities, and (d) the pressures of working in an educational environment that is often highly politicized, where teachers and administrators rarely enjoy stability or security. Consequently, high teacher turn-over is common. (Wimmer, Legare, Arcand, & Cottrell, 2009, p. 831)

The implication of high teacher turn over in First Nations schools creates employment uncertainty like that described by participants in this study. This study demonstrates that unionization may be a potential pathway to help teachers in First Nations improve their legal-rational legitimacy and deal with their employment uncertainty. The literature studying the

experience of teachers working in First Nations schools is sparse, but Wimmer, Legare, Arcand, and Cottrell (2009) that found that "our participants expressed much interest in becoming a part of the provincial teachers' association, because teachers employed in band-controlled schools are not members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation." (p. 835). This work seems to indicate that teachers working within Alberta First Nation schools may welcome the opportunity to unionize and join the ATA. As such, this study might be helpful to teachers employed by First Nations school authorities.

Future Directions for Research

This study sets out an empirical example that can assist scholars in the continued exploration of how unionization can impact the professional status of occupational groups. As there is a gap in the literature empirically about these connections, the structure of this study could prove helpful to scholars wishing to explore how professionalization and unionization connect. The choice of case study was effective because it allowed for an in-depth examination of the events and perspectives of charter school teachers. Negotiating order theory (Strauss, 1978) was also very helpful in terms of being able to understand the connections between structural contexts, negotiating contexts, and negotiations as charter school teachers moved to re-order their work places and regulate their employment contexts. I suggest that the theoretical model and methodology utilized for this case study may prove helpful to other scholars if only to provide them an example of how to approach the connection between teacher professionalization and teacher unionism. However, I acknowledge it is possible that if a different theoretical model, such as critical feminist theory, were used as a lens to examine the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization, different findings and perspectives could emerge. My choice of Strauss' (1978) negotiating order theory as my theoretical lens meant that

the study was built around the interactions of the macro, meso, and micro contexts of charter school teachers. This would not explicitly raise insight into the gendered nature of the teaching profession and this connection to teacher unionism, whereas critical feminist theory most certainly would.

This case study may also help frame future studies to inquire into the perspectives of school teachers in Alberta that are unionized under the ATA and compare these perspectives with teachers working in non-unionized settings. As there are many charter school teachers in Alberta that have not unionized, this comparison of unionized and non-unionized schools may shed further light on the questions raised by this study as well as either confirm or negate the conclusions of this study. In addition, this study might provide an interesting starting point for a future research endeavor exploring the connection between teacher unionization and teacher professionalization during times of labour break down, such as a strike or lockout. As the participants for this study had never experienced this, it is difficult to know how these concepts might be re-evaluated during a period of extreme conflict between teachers and school boards.

This study is helpful because it shows how unionization helped settle the employment context within charter schools and allowed the teachers, school board, and other staff to focus on educational goals because collective bargaining addressed many of the outstanding concerns teachers had. As a result, future research may be able to assess whether teacher unionization had a positive effect on the learning of students because teachers and school boards were able to better dedicate their energies to educational matters. This study also opens many lines of inquiry for educational researchers working with charter school teachers and charter schools. My examination considered the perception of charter school by teachers with respect to employment uncertainty and unionization in Alberta, but other studies might contemplate the same question

from the perspective of charter school boards and charter school superintendents. Finally, this study might be enlightening to scholars wishing to understand more about how unionization and professionalization influences employment stability for charter school teachers and how this influences the fulfillment of the mandate of the charter schools.

Concluding Thoughts and Final Reflections

This study made a serious attempt to show the connections between the negotiations (microscopic), negotiations context (mesoscopic), and structural context (macroscopic) outlined by Strauss' (1978) negotiating order theory to explain how these features converged to influence charter school teachers and the construction of their social worlds. I hope this study contributes to a better understanding of how people act to construct and re-construct their worlds by negotiating within the structural contexts that both enable and restrict their actions. Having thoroughly reviewed the literature on both unionism and professionalization, I believe that this study meets a gap in the literature identified by Abbott (1993) who wrote that sociologists, who are,

> Our official theorists do little more than relabel the problem with new words like structuration. A serious theory of micro to macro can emerge only from an empirical area. In WO [work and occupations], it will emerge from people working with multilevel data on work: data that brings together exact career information (micro), network structure among careers and jobs (meso), and occupational/organization level information (macro) on occupations and work structures in conflict and process. (p. 205)

This study attempted to show how particular unionized charter school teachers in Alberta, Canada negotiated and influenced their negotiations context within their charter schools to construct social order. In addition, this study examined how the particular structural context in

Alberta impacted their negotiations and negotiations context. Overall, using the data from semi-structured interviews with charter schools and reviewing their collective agreements, I argue there are complementary features between unionism and professionalization and that, within unionized Alberta charter schools, the relationship is hybridized and evolving over time. I am hopeful that this research provides greater insight into the relationship between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization addressing the current gap in the literature around this topic, specifically within the field of educational policy studies.

A Reflective Coda

As I come to the end of the writing process for this dissertation, I now have the luxury and privilege to reflect upon my research journey over the past four years. As I reflect upon the experience of conducting my doctoral research, I am struck by how difficult this process has been intellectually and emotionally. It has been challenging to go from a professional place where I am confident and regarded as an expert to the role of a researcher where I am a beginner. I have had to think very carefully about to how to manage these competing identities as they both enter into my worldview. Without question, these aspects of my identity impacted the decisions I made along the way with respect to the winnowing of data and writing of this report, but I worked hard to maintain my role as researcher first. Following my oral examination, I was challenged to think more deeply about my positionality as a researcher, my findings and interpretations, and how I situated myself as a social constructionist researcher. In my reflections for this coda, my last few thoughts, I have tried to adopt a stance of humility and reflexivity. I dove back into the literature as I was preparing to write this last part of my dissertation and found wise words from Holt (2012) who wrote "an acceptance of mistakes being integral to good research, insofar as insight comes from working along the edges of acquired

skill, coupled to a willingness to engage in retrospective reasoning as to why the mistakes occurred" (p. 104). In my re-visioning of this dissertation over the past number of years, in particular, the more recent edits for this dissertation, I have come to see that I made mistakes with respect to the strength and certainty with which I expressed my findings and this might dishonor the contributions of my participants to this work. I have worked to correct this problem and, in the following paragraphs, I will discuss how.

In reviewing my data set, the findings, and discussion chapter following my oral examination, I came to realize that I had not made sufficient divisions between the data set in the study and my own interpretation. Throughout chapters four and five, I have incorporated changes to try and separate these data from my own thinking and, in doing so, I have learned more about how my positionality as a staff officer at the ATA was influencing my interpretations. Consequently, through reflection, I stepped back from the data and findings to reconsider what I had written and in many cases to revise my original findings to incorporate a more nuanced analysis that was better connected to these data and more clearly declared my own thinking with respect to my interpretations. Haynes (2012) argues that reflexivity for a researcher must incorporate both reflection and interpretation and, in doing so, a researcher must consider there may be multiple perspectives and interpretations within qualitative research. As I considered the data set again, I realized that I had not been as reflexive as I needed to be in terms of my own positionality and needed to consider how my experience might have shaped my interpretations. Therefore, I have tried to bring forward a more multi-perspectival view within the findings and the discussion of this dissertation including a consideration of the negative cases within these data set that my worldview in relation to unionism had not allowed me to see without further reflection as well as a return to the literature to seek out other points of view.

Additionally, in this re-visioning exercise, I thought very carefully about my obligations to my participants to honor their contribution to this study. My journey with the participants began with the interviews and this was highly relational and very enjoyable. I learned so much from them by listening to their words; most specifically, I learned about what life is like as a charter school teacher, day in and day out. I contemplated and recorded impressions and details of my interviews right away in my reflection journal, followed by a summary document that captured the main threads of our interviews. I then asked the participants to confirm that the summary was an accurate reflection of the interview. Many took the time to provide me with further feedback, all of which I incorporated back to the data set. However, in aspiring to be a reflective and ethical researcher, it was also important to better appreciate my relationship to my participants. In my latest review of my data alongside of my draft dissertation, I have worked to differentiate between the data that should rightly be attributed to the participants and what my interpretation of that data was. My revisiting these data alongside of my writing caused me to re-evaluate the findings and express them in a way that was more reflective of the meaning of what the participants were saying. However, there remain times in this document where the participants' voices have been further informed by my own interpretations to extend the ideas beyond the participants' as this is part of the interpretive work of an academic researcher. That being said, during the data gathering process, I ensured that I did not silence the participants' understanding of an issue with my professional expert knowledge and, in writing this dissertation, I have tried to honor the participants and their multiple perspectives within this document; I am indebted to them for their contribution to the work we have co-created.

In considering the ethics of qualitative research and a qualitative researcher, I turned to Holt's (2012) advice on maturity within qualitative research and researching your own

organization. Holt (2012) wrote a qualitative researcher must develop an "awareness that methods are far from innocent, and that in making an incision into the world, human lives are being effected and affected in some way, no matter how small" (p. 104). In this thesis, I have worked to ensure that the participants and their schools remain anonymous, that their voices are heard fairly and accurately within this document, and that I have been fair with my interpretations to create a dissertation that is credible and resonant.

Greene (2014) argued that insider research is complicated but that there are advantages and disadvantages to employing this mode of qualitative research. One of the pros, Greene (2014) noted, was that "insider researchers often do not have to worry about orienting themselves with the research environment and/or participants" (p. 3). This was true for my research project as the participants and I all 'spoke the language' of teaching and collective bargaining. We quickly formed collegial interactions during the data collection process that allowed for insightful observations and thoughtful responses to my questions. Within these interviews, however, I was aware that there were ethical considerations that had to be confronted. In addition, I became aware that there were factors I had to consider during the data collection process that, when layered in with my positionality, created challenges.

Perhaps the most obvious challenge as researcher was my insider knowledge of labour relations and its processes. Simply put, my insider knowledge placed me in a situation where I often had more experience with and knowledge about the topics my participants were discussing. During the interviews, I found that I had to 'hold back' my expert voice to allow the participant voice to emerge fully in the data collection. I was aware that if I failed to hold back my expertise within an interview, these data were suspect and could not be included in the data analysis. My reserved approach to interviewing was borne out of the knowledge that as a researcher

conducting an interview, I had to hold my position as staff officer in abeyance. Therefore, I developed semi-structured interviews to adopt an inquiring and ethical approach that emphasized the participants 'voices' not my own (Seidman, 2013).

Where I struggled to separate my research self from my employment was within the context of analyzing and writing this dissertation. While I utilized the usual methods of data condensation, triangulation, peer debriefing, reflective journaling, and an audit trail to ensure data analysis and report writing reflected a trustworthy approach (Greene, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008), as well as carefully followed the requirements laid out within my ethics review, I did not fully articulate the complexity of the ethics of my own positionality as a social constructionist researcher until well into the writing of this dissertation. Through my most recent revisions, I have worked to better articulate how I have interpreted these data as a social constructionist researcher and my own positionality while maintaining my ethical commitments to both the participants and the research process. These ethical commitments included confidentiality, a deep sense of responsibility to honor the voices of the participants, an articulation of my position as researcher, and a re-examination of the data set in conjunction with my emerging awareness of the complexity of ethics within research.

Where I have struggled and continue to struggle in the writing of this report, is how much my 'expert voice' is influencing my 'research voice'. I have tried to capture these disparate but related selves through reflexive journaling and peer review, but this is a practice that, for me, is still evolving and is not yet as well refined as I would like it to be. This is consistent with social constructionist epistemology that takes the perspective that knowledge is never fully formed, it is an ongoing process that we refine through our interactions with others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). If I were to repeat this research or any type of research as an insider in the future, I

would, from day one, work to articulate the distinction between myself as researcher and an ATA staff officer with particular life experiences and understandings and to act on that knowledge of my positionality – particularly in my interpretations of these data. In doing so, I believe that this would help me articulate more clearly greater awareness of the integration of ethics, trustworthiness, and my own positionality. In addition, if there were a greater abundance of time, I would go back to my participants to share my analysis with them to ask for their feedback about the theorizing I have done. Both approaches would ensure greater trustworthiness of my written report and they would help show how I conducted my research with a deep understanding of a researcher's ethical obligations.

Finally, while I am the sole author of this dissertation, the work was co-constructed with my participants and was based on their experience of deciding to unionize. The ideas within this dissertation come from the participants through the data I recorded and documented for the study and further refined by the literature I drew upon to help make sense of the connections between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization for charter school teachers in Alberta. As well, this document has had the benefit of extensive peer review and my advisors, supervisory committee, and examining committee have pushed me to think and re-think my data, findings, position as a social constructionist researcher, and my interpretations of these data. The synthesis of all these interconnecting and interacting parts is this dissertation and the knowledge created within reflects my best attempts to make sense of all the contributions made to me by participants in this study. For that I am ever grateful. While I acknowledge this work only offers a snapshot in time, my hope is that it makes a difference, even if only in a small way, to the field of education policy studies and that it will serve to broaden our empirical understanding of the

connection between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization in Alberta's unique context.

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Appendix A: Alberta Teachers' Association Charter School Policies

1.B.19 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to ensure that student evaluation regulations are applied to, and enforced equally for all students engaged in K–12 educational programming that receives public funding, including those who are home-schooled, or enrolled in charter and private schools. [2000/03/06/09/12/15]

5.A.25 No teacher should suffer a reduction in salary or in administrative status as a result of the amalgamation or regionalization of school districts or the formation of charter schools. [1970/75/79/84/85/91/95/2001/11]

8.A.16 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes the establishment of publicly-funded charter schools that

1. exclude students on any basis that violates human rights legislation,
2. exclude students because of the economic or social circumstances of their parents,
3. threaten the survival of local public schools by diminishing their enrolments,
4. ask for or are granted permission to operate under provincial regulations less restrictive than those applicable to public schools,
5. recruit students by offering financial or other incentives not generally available to students in public schools,
6. admit only students of higher levels of ability or achievement,
7. claim to have the right to remove students for purported violations of a special agreement and to deny further responsibility for those students,
8. seek to engage members of staff under agreements that are not subject to collective bargaining,
9. employ teachers who are not active members of the Association,

10. are dominated by any special interest group.

[1994/97/2000/03/06/09/14]

8.B.43 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that applications for establishment or renewal of charter schools be refused if a school authority commits to providing in the community an alternative program substantially similar to that proposed in a charter application. [2012/15]

10.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend the Education Act to make teachers employed by charter schools active members of the Association. [1996/99/2002/05/08/11/14/17]

16.B.24 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association opposes government funding of for-profit cybercharter schools. [2014/17]

Appendix B: Participant Letter of Information and Consent Form

Participant Information Letter

Study Title: Teacher Unionism and Teacher Professionalization: A Qualitative Case Study of Unionized Charter School Teachers in Alberta

Research Investigator:
Lisa M Everitt
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
7-104 Education North
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2GS
leveritt@ualberta.ca
780-447-9463

Supervisors
Professors J. Wallace & B. Stelmach
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
7-104 Education North
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2GS
wallacej@ualberta.ca / bonnies@ualberta.ca
780-492-7625

Invitation to participate in a research study

My name is Lisa Everitt and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. I am conducting research into the relationship between teacher unionism and professionalization in a study entitled: "Teacher Unionism and Teacher Professionalization: A Qualitative Case Study of Unionized Charter School Teachers in Alberta". The results of this study will be used to support my doctoral thesis project as a part of the requirements for the completion of my degree program.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a teacher working in a unionized charter school environment. This information letter is being shared with you with the permission of the School Board. I am contacting you because I am hoping to interview you about your thoughts about being a member of a charter school bargaining unit and the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between teacher unionism and the teaching profession in the context of a charter school in Alberta. More specifically, this study proposes to examine how collective bargaining impacts professional status, how charter school teachers view their relationship to the Alberta Teachers' Association, and how collective agreements for teachers in charter schools reflect the relationship between teacher unionism and professionalization.

In part, it will be possible to examine these questions by reviewing the evolution of your collective agreement over time. However, your input is critically important to understand what it means to participate in the labour relations process as a unionized charter school teacher. Please be advised any findings from this study will appear in a report to be read by my dissertation committee and my co-supervisors, Dr. Janice Wallace and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach. In addition, the findings may be published in academic journals / books, trade publications or presented at conferences or to school boards requesting a presentation. Please be aware however, I am recruiting volunteers from all unionized charter schools in Alberta and that all data for reports, presentations or publications will be anonymized.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, I request that you forward your name and contact information to my email, leveritt@ualberta.ca. From there, I will contact you to arrange for a convenient time, location and date to interview you. During the interview process, you will be asked questions about your experiences as a unionized charter school teacher and member of the ATA. I estimate the initial interview will last for approximately one hour. After the initial interview is completed, I will condense the interview data into a summary document that I will send to you to confirm understandings and verify accuracy. Ideally, the initial interview will take place in person. Subsequent contact will be either face to face, by telephone, or by email. Face-to-face and telephone interviews will be tape recorded for the purposes of keeping an accurate transcript.

All your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Any identifying information, such as your name, will be removed from the transcript resulting from our interview(s) or email communications and will not be included in any publication that might come from this study. Please be aware that although direct quotations may be used in the writing of the report, your anonymity will be ensured by the use of an alias chosen specifically for this study. The alias will also be attached to any documents resulting from our interview. Interview recordings and transcripts will be kept on a password protected computer accessible only by the researcher. All data and records related to this research project will be held securely for a minimum of five years of completion of the research project and when appropriate, the data will be destroyed in manner which preserves confidentiality.

Risks & Benefits

The risks of participating in this study are minimal and are no greater than the risks of everyday life. During the interview process, you are not required to discuss anything that causes discomfort and you will have opportunity to provide feedback on the interview summary document. While you might not experience direct personal benefit from participating in this project, your participation will help address a gap in the education policy studies literature. Your contribution will help clarify the connection between teacher unionism and professionalization for the academic community as well as practicing educators. There will be no honoria or expenses provided for participation in this study.

Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study up to one month after our initial interview without explanation. During the interviews, you can refuse to answer a question, and request that the interview and recording device be stopped at any time. If you choose to withdraw, please advise me of your intentions in writing (email, facsimile, or mail) and any data collected will be destroyed. In addition, your participation in the study will remain confidential should you choose to withdraw.

If you have any questions, would like further details, or would like to schedule a time to speak with me, please contact me at leveritt@ualberta.ca or (780)447-9463. My co-supervisors, Dr. Janice Wallace (wallacej@ualberta.ca) and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach (bonnies@ualberta.ca) are also available should you have further questions regarding the study.

Sincerely,

Lisa Everitt

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 (REB1) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the REB1 Chair at (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researcher.

Participant Consent Form

Study Title: Teacher Unionism and Teacher Professionalization: A Qualitative Case Study of Unionized Charter School Teachers in Alberta

Research Investigator:
Lisa M Everitt
Department of Educational Policy Studies
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780-492-7625

I, _____ (Name of the participant) confirm that I have read and understood the information letter regarding the above named study. By affixing my signature to the bottom of this page, I am providing my consent to participate in this study. I also confirm the following by providing my signature:

- I have read and understood the contents of the information letter
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any concerns I may have about this study

In addition, I am aware that I can withdraw my consent up to one month after the initial interview for this study takes place by providing written notice of my intention to withdraw. Both researcher and participant will possess one signed copy of this information and consent form. The participant is to keep one copy for their records.

_____ _____

Participant signature Date

Researcher signature Date

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 (REB1) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the REB1 Chair at (780) 492-2615. This office has no affiliation with the study investigators.

Appendix C: Letter of Permission to Charter School

Year Month Day

Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr
Board Chair

Mr/Ms/Mrs/Dr
Superintendent

Dear Board Chair and Superintendent:
Re: Doctoral Research Project Teacher Unionism and Teacher Professionalization: A Qualitative Case Study of Unionized Charter School Teachers in Alberta
My name is Lisa Everitt and I am pursuing a doctoral degree through the University of Alberta's Department of Education Policy Studies. My research for the final dissertation project focuses on the relationship between teacher unionism and professionalization in a study entitled: "Teacher Unionism and Teacher Professionalization: A Qualitative Case Study of Unionized Charter School Teachers in Alberta".
As a part of the case study, I wish to conduct a documents review to analyze the articles and clauses of the Charter School collective agreements since the establishment of the first collective agreement. The purpose of this review is to explore the relationship between teacher unionism and professionalization as characterized by the literature using Wilensky (1964) and Malin and Kerchner's (2007) models as shown in the chart below.
Characteristics of Professions and Professional Unionism

Professions (Wilensky, 1964)	**Professional Unionism (Malin & Kerchner, 2007)**
1. Technical / expert knowledge base	1. Joint committees
2. Exclusive jurisdiction	2. Decentralized authority
3. Standards of training and practice	3. Peer review
4. Public recognition and trust	4. New forms of bargaining
5. Autonomy	

My intention is to see if collective agreements reflect these characteristics over time and if so, how they are codified. In addition, I seek to interview teachers at Charter school to obtain their perspective and experiences with the labour relations process and as members of an ATA bargaining unit.

Therefore, I am writing to formally request the School Name Board of Directors agree to allow me access to teachers employed at School Name to interview as a part of my case study about the relationship between the establishment of collective agreements for charter schools and professionalization in Alberta. Should the Board authorize my contacting the teachers to solicit volunteers to be interviewed, all interviews will be conducted outside of school hours and away from the school buildings unless acceptable to the Board. In terms of a timeline for the interviews to be completed, it is my intention to have the interviews completed by the end of November 2015. The data analysis and findings will be concluded by the end of 2015 and, should the Board wish, I am committed to sharing the results of my findings with the Board once the research project is completed.
My decision to research the link between teacher unionism and professionalization at School

Name is not random. As a teacher welfare staff officer of the Alberta Teachers Association, I am acquainted with the successful and stable labour relations framework established between the Board and the ATA since the first collective agreement was established in 20____. In addition, from my professional work with the ATA and School Name , I have found that the Board has, with the support of strong administration in the board office, found ways to support teachers to carry out vision expressed in the School Name charter. It is my personal belief there is value for the broader education system and for the teaching profession in examining School Name's labour relations over time. Finally, the last factor in selecting School Name for this case study, is the school staff is large enough to find an excellent cross section of views about teacher unionism and professionalization.

All data and records related to this research project will be held securely for a minimum of five years of completion of the research project and when appropriate, the data will be destroyed in manner which preserves confidentiality. As well, please be advised any findings from this study will appear in a report to be read by my dissertation committee and my co-supervisors, Dr. Janice Wallace and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach. In addition, the findings may be published in academic journals / books, trade publications or presented at conferences.

If you have any questions, would like further details, or would like to schedule a time to speak, please contact me at leveritt@ualberta.ca or (780)447-9463. My co-supervisors, Dr. Janice Wallace (wallacej@ualberta.ca) and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach (bonnies@ualberta.ca) are also available should you have further questions regarding the study.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Lisa Everitt
Doctoral Candidate, University of Alberta

Appendix D: Semi Structured Interview Questions

Introductory comments (Scripted and including consent)

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as a participant in my study exploring teacher views about the connection between teacher unionism and teacher professionalization. Let's take a few moments to go through the consent agreement and if you are comfortable with the parameters for the interview, please sign this in duplicate and keep one copy for your records. As you are aware, this interview will be anonymized, but will be taped and later transcribed as a part of the research process. Let's get started. **(TURN ON TAPE)**

Participant Semi – Structured Interview Guide

1. Name _____
2. What were some of the factors that influenced your choice to be a teacher?
   PROMPTS
   a. Did the teachers you knew influence your choice to be a teacher?
   b. What role did post-secondary education play in preparing you to be a teacher?
   c. What is your vision of what it means to be a teacher?
3. Can you tell me a bit about your teaching background?
   PROMPTS
   a. Why did you become a teacher at a charter school?
   b. How do you see public school system compared to the public charter school system? Are there similarities or differences?

4. What are your thoughts about teachers as professionals? In what ways do teachers act as and become professionals? Are teachers professionals?
   PROMPTS
   a. Think back to your first experience of being a teacher, how were you socialized as a beginning teacher?
   b. What are some of your experiences in becoming an experienced teacher? Did these experiences inform your thoughts about whether or not teaching is a professional occupation?
   c. How is professionalism exercised within the context of a charter school?
   d. Is being a teaching professional something that is intrinsic within a teacher or

does there need to be a collective effort involved to support professionals and professional behaviors?

5. What are your thoughts about being a member of the ATA?

   PROMPTS

   a. Why do you think the government chose to exclude charter school teachers from automatic membership in the ATA back in the 1990s when charter schools were created?
   b. Were you working at the school when the staff voted to unionize? What are your thoughts about that process? Did you agree with becoming unionized?
   c. What are some of the advantages / disadvantages of being unionized and ATA members?

6. Does belonging to a union and the ATA change the way you think of yourself as a teacher and or professional?

   PROMPTS

   a. Does having a collective agreement with salary, leaves and benefits defined conflict with the idea of being a professional?
   b. Does the negotiations process conflict with being a professional or a member of a profession?

7. Does being unionized and participating in collective bargaining influence your thinking about teachers as professionals?

   PROMPT

   a. Does having a collective agreement help with attaining professional goals? If so, how?
   b. Where is your school in the collective bargaining process?
   c. What are some of the important issues to teachers being bargained? What if there is no way to bargain the issues – what does breakdown mean in the context of a charter school?
   d. Do you volunteer with the ATA or participate in the ATA? Why or why not?
   e. Is being unionized only for the purposes of improving your life as a teacher or is there more to it?

8. Teachers are employees of their school boards. If this is the case, should teachers have a

say in the way their work is carried out at the school level and classroom level?

PROMPT

a. If so, how do teachers find a way to have a say in their work?
b. Is it helpful to have a say in the way work is carried out at the school level?

9. This brings me to the end of my questions, do you have anything you'd like to add or ask me?

Appendix E: Professionalizing Features Found in Collective Agreements

Article/Clause	Found in Collective Agreement(s)	Description of provision	Professionalizing Feature
Preamble	A, B, C, D, E	ATA as bargaining agent for teachers	Exclusive jurisdiction
Preamble	A, D	Shared commitment to positive learning environment for students	Public recognition and trust
Preamble	A	Shared commitment to provide opportunity for parental involvement	Public recognition and trust
Preamble	A	Privileges professional and collegial relations over management practices	Decentralized authority
Preamble	D	Shared commitment to effective communication and relationships founded on trust	Decentralized Authority
Scope	A, B, C, D, E	Application of collective agreements to all certificated teachers except Superintendent	Exclusive jurisdiction
Term	A, B, C, D, E	Commitment to revisit and re-negotiate terms of the collective agreement at specified periods of time	Decentralized authority
Term	A	Commitment to re-open specific articles of the collective agreement part way through the term of the collective when there is mutual agreement	Decentralized authority
Salary schedule	A, B, C, D, E	Salary grids include increased compensation for more years of education	Expert knowledge base
Salary schedule	A, B, C, D, E	Salary grids include increased compensation for years of experience	Expert knowledge base
Salary schedule	A, B, E	Links salary grid increases to neighboring public school jurisdictions	Public recognition and trust (parity)
Teacher education	A, B, C, D, E	Stipulates that the Alberta Teachers' Association Teacher Qualification Services will determine educational attainment	Exclusive jurisdiction
Teacher experience	A, B, C, D, E	Prior teaching experience is recognized for the purposes of salary if earned while holding an	Exclusive jurisdiction

		Alberta teaching certificate or its equivalent	
Administrators	A, B, E	Links allowance increases to neighboring public school jurisdictions	Public recognition and trust (parity)
Administrators	C, D, E	If there are new administrative positions created, the parties will negotiate the allowance	Decentralized authority
Substitute teachers	A, E	Links increases to the daily rate to neighboring public school jurisdictions	Public recognition and trust (parity)
Bargaining unit fees	A, C, D, E	Stipulates that the school board will deduct ATA fees and submit them on behalf of teachers	Exclusive jurisdiction
Conditions of practice	A, C, D	Regulation of how much time the school board can direct the activity of teachers	Autonomy
Benefits plans	A, C	The ATA and school board agree to discuss changes to the benefits plans. In one case, there must be agreement if changes are to be made	Decentralized authority
Leaves of absence	A, B, C, D, E	Teachers could access general leaves of absence for a variety of reasons including further study or other teaching experiences	Standards of training and practice
Leaves of absence	A, B, C, D, E	Teachers could access personal leave days to attend professional development opportunities	Standards of training and practice
Leaves of absence	A, B, C	Teachers could access convocation leave for their own graduations.	Standards of training and practice
Leaves of absence	B, C, E	Teachers could access leave if they are providing service to the ATA	Exclusive jurisdiction
Liaison committees	A, B	Obligates the teachers and school board to meet and discuss matters of professional concern	Joint committees
Professional development	A, C, D, E	Allocates time and / or money to professional development opportunities	Standards of training and practice
Professional development	A	Obligates teachers to share what was learned at professional development events	Expert knowledge base
Professional development	A	Provided membership fees for ATA specialist councils	Exclusive jurisdiction
Professional	A, B	Reinforced the Teacher Quality	Standards of training

development		Standard by encouraging a balance between individual, school, and school board professional development	and practice
Code of conduct	A	Stipulates that the ATA code of conduct will be the standard for professional behavior of teachers	Standards of training and practice
Grievance arbitration	A, B, C, D, E	Compels the ATA and school board to resolve disputes with respect to the application of the collective agreement	Decentralized authority

Appendix F: Sample Thematic Development

[1] Denotes teachers within each thematic sample that worked at the same charter school. It is important to note that for this study, my ethics documents assured participants of anonymity (See Appendix B). Given the very small number of charter schools identified for this study, participants are identified by aliases and are presented without school identifiers. The lists below represent comments from three of the possible five of charter schools represented in this study.

Theme	Sub-theme	Explanatatory Notes	Representative Quotes from Participants
Legitimacy (Participants John, Nancy[1], Mark[1], Robert)	Legal-rational legitimacy refers to a belief in the rule of law and its rational basis	Charter school teachers were challenged by their exclusion from legislative structures and the public-school educational community. Participants referenced two main reasons why they perceived a lack of legal-rational legitimacy – interactions with ATA policy and interactions with ATA members and public schools. The comments selected represent a range of views held by the participants about ATA policy as well as exemplify interactions between charter	**Interactions with ATA policy** ***Support for ATA policy opposing charter schools as a means to privatize education*** * I see the charter school system as being a little bit of a slippery slope especially with our last government, that was in for along time, it was on its way to privatization. I really don't like the two tiered education system. I think [Alberta city] has an incredibly strong public school system. (Nancy, Dissertation p. 97, Int 3, p. 8) ***Support for ATA policy stipulating inclusion of charter school teachers as active members*** *I think teachers are entitled to be a part of a professional body and to be excluded I think it I don't know, it doesn't make sense. (John, Dissertation p. 99, Int 2, p. 9) *I like the fact that the ATA has decided or whatever or encouraged people to become members even though we're only associate [members] (Robert, Int 7, pp. 24-25) ***Critique of ATA policy opposing charter schools*** *That message [from ATA publications] is that there's not need for them that they don't necessarily add to the diversity of educational programming in the province and then quite often some of the charter schools from the US based on the private

		school teachers and public school teachers and public schools.	charter schools, I think we see we do play a role in the fabric of the provinces education. We aren't competing with it. (John, Int 2, pp. 10-11) * I didn't …[understand] the combativeness that they [teachers employed at other charter schools] experienced with what they perceive is coming from the ATA and like this kind of stuff that's in the news now. (Mark[1], Int 11, p. 3) ***Exploration of the ATA and its policy*** *I'd always wondered about the ATA and wondered, and I became an Associate member of ATA on my own. I thought it was important to at least be that close to it and yeah, then we started to talk about. (Nancy[1], Int 3, p. 10) * Through the School Act and our own research, we found you know some professional standards that should apply for us as well. (Nancy[1], Int 3, p. 9) **Interactions with ATA members and Public Schools** * ATA members or teachers that don't have a clue what charter schools are about. (Robert, Int 7, p. 29) *The vast majority of Albertans not understanding what charter schools are. We're always lumped in, in the conversation about private schools. (Mark[1], Int 11, p. 20) *I know that not all teachers like charter schools, and there's all that I'm getting better responses when I call schools. (Nancy[1], Int 3, p. 14)
Legitimacy (Participants John, Nancy[1], Mark[1], Robert)	<u>Traditional Legitimacy</u> is formed when followers hold a long-standing belief in a	For charter school teachers, they believed in their legitimacy as professional teachers; they complied with standards of	**Adoption of a Code of Conduct** * The ATA code of conduct. So I'm observing it, I'm not talking about people that aren't in the room. Even though I don't have to. Because I want to. (Mark[1], Int 11, p. 29) * We review it [the ATA Code of Conduct] every once in a while, we do

	system or regime.	practice and conduct, they were certificated, and they believed that their work was substantially the same as public school teachers. Therefore, charter school teachers believed that they should be treated as equal to public school teachers, that they should have the high levels of autonomy accorded to professionals, and that respect should be accorded to them by their board and the public.	have one, we are bound by it. Everyone agrees to it, no-one real issue with that. As professional individuals, [it's] just something we expect to have. (John, Dissertation p. 102, Int 2, p. 9) * To me there's always the base of the professional, they have a role, they have a service, they are bound by certain rules to offer that service. (John, Int 2, p. 9) * I had some bad experience in a non-professional environment, like, kind of this non-ATA environment. (Mark[1], Int 11, p. 29) **Adoption of Standards of Practice** * To me they are teachers that are trained in a certain skill and or continually learning and honing that skill to deliver a service to the community. (John, Int 2, p. 5) *The professional teacher has to care enough about his or her work to ask hard questions. Kind of over and over. Like that fire in the belly needs to be there.(Mark[1], Dissertation p. 103, Int 11, p. 31) * It's the responsibility of the individual to say - to do a really honest analysis of their teaching and say, okay, so this is where I need some help growing (Mark[1], Int 11, p. 29) *It doesn't matter where you meet teachers, you have something in common. Well there's something about like if there's a nurturing aspect to teaching that is to you know to nurture a learner. There is a constant kind of searching for better ways to do things. (Nancy[1], Int 3, p. 7) **Recognition of professional status** ***Expert knowledge*** *And it took - it took the professional studies in education to allow me to do that. I now can - I would happily say that I'm a good educator because I took

			that training. Without it I was terrible. (Mark[1], Int 11, p. 14) * It's a publicly funded school, it's the same certification, it's the same job. (John, Int 2, p. 9) ***Parity and equivalent qualifications*** * I'm going to run off to [neighboring school jurisdiction] so I can get paid the same [as public-school teachers] (Robert, Int 7, p. 16) *I don't think I would if the salary weren't fixed, I'd go work elsewhere. (John, Int 2, p. 9) * I always saw my job as being a part of a profession so whether or just an associate member or not, I would still see it the same way. (John, Int 2, p. 13) *I would say that the differences aren't – commonalities are greater than the differences for the most part. [Charter school teachers compared to public school teachers] (Robert, Int 7, p. 29) ***Public Trust*** * There is, like, an element of trust that society would have to have in order to say that this group of people could govern themselves. (Mark[1], Int 11, p. 17) *I think we're really trusted. When parents bring their children in and we take them in to. Or when we're calling about their children or that we're going to see their children in their home. I think they know that we're trying. (Nancy[1], Int 3, p. 17) ***Autonomy*** * Oh yes, complete, really as far the only thing that's stopping me from exercising that as a teacher is my own creativity. (Nancy[1], Int 3, p. 6)
Employment Vulnerability (Participants Pam, Dave, Chris[1], Anne[1])		Participants shared that turn over within their schools caused them to be concerned	**Turn over** * The first month and a half of the charter school was really kind of stormy. And there was another teacher who didn't -- her and the principal weren't

		about their employment status.	getting along, and they fired her a month and a half into the school year (Dave, Int 8, p. 18) * In the last term they would hire two or three staff on just a temporary contract and then lay them off. I felt bad for the people that they were getting [laid off]. (Dave, Int 8, p. 38) * I know at [the charter school] there was a lot of, …discontentment and a lot of discord and figuring things out and a lot of people left. And I don't think it was a super smooth start. (Chris[1], Int 9, p. 8) *If they can tell that other people are unsafe, they feel unsafe. And so, when people feel unsafe, they want something to protect them. And I think that's - I don't think the teachers feel particularly safe. (Chris[1], Dissertation p. 109, Int 9, p. 19) * We ended up hiring a new teacher… that we really didn't need to hire, but as a result the FTE of all of our [type of contract] teachers took a hit which we were really, really offended by. (Anne[1], Int 6, p. 12) *When we first started there because we weren't under the ATA under a CBA, there was always a fear being let go for whatever reason and then if you wanted a recourse or wanted to you had to go through the court or legal system. (Pam, Dissertation p. 109, Int 4, p. 6) * [The charter school] hadn't [been] in existence for very long and they'd gone through two principals and these principals did not leave just because they were looking for some other job. (Pam, Int 4, p. 6) * So big huge exoduses occurred at that time. (Pam, Int 4, p. 7) * Did it create a sense a of vulnerability within the staff itself. Oh yes, it definitely affected the school. (Pam, Int 4, p. 6)

			* Yes, it was growing pains for a charter school. Those of us who were left, and in the fall voted to join the ATA. (Pam, Int 4 p. 7)
		Charter school teachers referenced how changes in senior leadership and the board level changed the social environment of their charter schools. This led to a desire on the part of the teachers to renegotiate their social context so their professional judgement and voices would be heard.	**Senior leadership changes** * When it did seem like they wanted to run the school, that's …when the backlash kind of came. (Dave, Dissertation p. 111, Int 8, pp. 72-73) * [Things] shifted about [number of] years ago and a new superintendent came on and kind of changed the roles for different people. (Chris[1], Int 9, p. 2) * We were not having a lot of faith in this board. We found that since …. they've been there …. there's been an awful lot of changes and not all of them really positive. (Anne[1], Int 6, p. 9) *We said look, we're nervous about this. We would like some of these policies to be more entrenched I guess and make it difficult to change a lot of these things, and we didn't get a very good reception. (Anne[1], Int 6, pp. 9-10) * So I think it's really important for people's psychological wellbeing to feel that they're being listened to. (Anne[1], Dissertation p. 110, Int 6, p. 30)
		Charter schools are required to have their charter renewed periodically. In order to have their charters renewed, schools must establish that they meet the requirements of the charter. This created a sense of instability for charter school	**Charter Renewal** * We give feedback and stuff like that, but it seems like it's happening all the time [charter review]. (Dave, Int 8, p. 26) * I mean, certainly there's always kind of in the back of your mind [Alberta Education could] shut it down anytime. And there has been even stuff from the paper about that lately. (Dave, Int 8, p. 31) * I guess I just know that we're a good school and that we're needed and so I think we'll be around in one way or another. (Dave, Int 8, p. 32) * There was a strict vision enforced. And that's where we still continue to

		teachers in terms of their employment and caused them to question a long term commitment to their charter schools.	have difficulties. And our charter renewal evaluation, that came up again, the government wants to see how we're changing, what we're doing differently, how we're being innovative. (Chris[1], Int 9, p. 11) * Some teachers worry about that [not being renewed]. I think that's a personal thing too. (Chris[1], Int 9, p. 13) * I think early, in the first couple of years of being in a chartered school [there is worry about charter renewal], but once you're established my thinking is the government isn't going to want to rock the boat. We're not making enough waves to really upset the public's schools, although there is a call to have us reabsorbed [into the public system]. (Chris[1], Int 9, p. 13) * I really think Alberta Education never saw charters schools as permanent. (Chris[1], Int 9, p. 14) * We have a new teacher on staff who has all these ideas about projects and finally a couple of us sat her down and said "So your ideas are awesome, but we want to keep our jobs." So if you're going off and doing 8000 projects on your own and my class – and I'm supposed to be with you, and my class is not, that's a problem, because you're not meeting – And she, you know, I don't think she kind of realized just how big of a deal it actually is. (Anne[1], Dissertation p. 113, Int 6, p. 8) * Absolutely. We all buy into it [the charter]. (Anne[1], Int 6, p. 8) * So we had to prove [what] we were doing. It upsets me a little bit, once again why are we the only ones that have to do that? (Pam, Dissertation p. 113, Int 4, p. 1) *We do a charter goal that we have to fulfill. (Pam, Int 4, p. 2)

			* I think that we're innovative but its always about proving those things. (Pam, Int 4, p. 19)
		Charter school teachers discussed the need to have compensation packages that were comparable to teachers in other school boards. The lack of parity caused uncertainty for the teachers in terms of their employment.	**Compensation** * Our wages were already 20 percent less than [the public-school board]. So we kind of wondered, well -- I think it kind of caused us to take a look at what things were like. (Dave, Int 8, p. 51) * I thought we -- we had to be fairly compensated. You know, especially since we hadn't been for years and years. (Dave, Int 8, p. 63) *I should be treated like any other teacher in the province. (Dave, Int 8, p. 64) * Our teachers have less [professional development] than other schools. (Chris[1], Int 9, p. 22) * I think for us the ATA was more just a from my standpoint its more just a way for us to have collectively come together as a group to be financially sound and have a comparison for them to look at. (Pam, Dissertation p. 114, Int 4, p. 8) * I believe that [teachers should have fair compensation], yes I do, I think that especially for us in our situation we're are expected to do more right? (Pam, Int 4, p. 13)
Re-Forming Social Order (Participants Barb, Nicole[1], Bev[1], Jason)	Negotiations Between Teachers	As charter school teachers progressed through the process of collective bargaining, they noted they created interdependency and closeness between each other because they had to work out the	* So, there were a number of people who were really quietly supportive of the people taking their time and effort and putting themselves out there to do it. And the teacher that lead it was a teacher who was retiring. And he was very clear about saying I have nothing to lose, but you should all be afraid to do this. So, this will be how I'm going to go out as making sure that you're all safe. It's very honourable and noble. (Bev[1], Dissertation p. 136, Int 10, p. 18) * So the more permanent staff really took on a mentorship role there.

		division of labour to engage with collective bargaining process..	(Nicole[1], Dissertation p. 136, Int 5, p. 13) * So when we started the process again while there were questions there was very much a feeling of we are unified now, this is what we want we're going forward and we became very, very close through the whole process. (Nicole[1], Int 5, p. 13) * Yeah. So emails went back and forth on our private emails. We talked all the time, the staff is really close so we would go out for dinner and we would have conversations, we would have coffee. The staff is also really small so what's happening to me is probably happening to you. (Nicole[1], Dissertation p. 137, Int 5, p. 14) * Oh yeah definitely, we've grown together. (Barb, Int 1, p. 11) * We're getting together to try and set a date to go over our CBA with our staff so that new staff can read and just to see what they know or don't know about it and develop our survey questions and what the needs are. (Barb, Int 1, p. 12)
	Re-forming the Negotiations Context	Participants shared that unionization and collective bargaining had a mixed result in terms re-ordering their relationships with their school boards and senior leadership. In some instances, a closer relationship arose between teachers and their boards, but	* I think it was a consequence, it was you want this? Then anything you were getting we don't have to give you, we're not giving you anymore. (Bev[1], Int 10, p. 11) * Just a very different feeling, like it was sad, there were teachers almost in tears and, you know, afraid to cross a Board member in the hallway. (Bev[1], Dissertation p. 142, Int 10, p. 25) * I know that there's some board stuff involved with that too and I know somebody else who worked in a private school and the choice to unionise resulted in law suits and stuff like that or the desire to unionise went fairly poorly. (Jason, Int 12, p. 18) * And the argument was sort of, do we ask for everything and then negotiate

		in other cases, the result was a fractured relationship with their school boards. Overall, participants were very aware that deciding to unionize could cause a change to the social order previously experienced with their board and they took steps to mitigate the impact of unionization	back – cause we wanted to be really fair to the board. We love our school so we didn't want to bankrupt our own school. (Nicole[1], Int 5, p.15) * We didn't want to cause any controversy between ourselves and the board. So, we were trying to be really, really fair. (Nicole[1], Int 5, p. 15) * We are pushing for this – they tried to stop us, like they tried a couple of appeasement things which was great, which was so kind of them. (Nicole[1], Int 5, p. 16)
	Re-forming and the Structural Context	By joining the ATA, charter school teachers reported they felt like they were more accepted as members of the teaching profession. In addition, by adopting aspects of other collective agreements into their own negotiations, charter school teachers adopted the norms of the public school teachers into their negotiating contexts.	* So, I think being able to say oh well we have a collective agreement in the eyes of bigger groupings, like teachers and Boards, I think that makes us a little bit closer to everybody else. (Bev[1], Int 10, p. 13) * So, it would be nice to see some opportunities for rolling things over a couple of years or those things that could appear in a collective agreement or even leave time, you know, those kinds of things you see for a bigger board. (Bev[1], Int 10, pp. 5-6) * There's a sense of camaraderie when you're in a bigger setting and you have a safer space to kind of express how you're feeling and stuff like that. (Jason, Int 12, p. 8) * I think that that's something that's really important to the collective agreement and …that knowing other teachers and knowing staff and knowing what's outside of the collective agreement for other teachers [is important]. (Jason, Int 12, p. 12)

			* They [the ATA] took information from all of us and then they were looking at [another charter school's] collective bargaining and they were looking at someone else's and took information from that, took information from us and put it all together. (Nicole[1], Int 5, p. 14) * But at the same time, I feel like being part of the ATA not only holds everyone else accountable around us but being part of the ATA holds me accountable. If I'm not, if I'm punished for something that I did, I deserve that. And I think that the ATA would agree and tell me "Well, no, you're wrong, don't be silly." (Nicole[1], Int 5, p. 19) * I also feel that being part of the ATA sort of forces others to recognize this is a professional as well. (Nicole[1], Int 5, p. 19) * [belonging to an organization that is formal for is for all teachers in the province is important]. I think we all learn from each other. It's important to stay task and stay on top of education as it changes so fast. It's important for everyone. (Barb, Int 1, p. 14)