University of Alberta

An exploratory study comparing pre-service teachers' experiences and perceptions of e-professionalism

by

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Abstract

E-professionalism is a pressing issue in the digital age as internet and social networking become increasingly integrated into society's way of communicating and accessing information (Kaczmarczyk et al., 2013). Given their role in society, teachers, in particular, are faced with challenges as they attempt to balance their personal lives and professional obligations in the digital age (Garner & Sullivan, 2010). This study explored e-professionalism by comparing the perceptions and experiences of pre-service teachers who differed in their opinions related to whether maintaining professionalism online is possible. Four focus groups were conducted, and an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach identified five themes related to barriers and enablers of e-professionalism. Implications of the current study are discussed related to maintaining relevant and attainable professional standards for teachers within an evolving digital environment; and specifically for informing initial teacher education programs and developing technology-related policies.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This introductory chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the study's central phenomenon: e-professionalism. Next, the researcher's background and rationale for studying e-professionalism are discussed. Finally, the chapter presents the emergence and context of the current study, and concludes with the study's objectives.

Emerging Challenges for Professionals within the Digital Age

With over 845 million active users on Facebook (Facebook, 2012) and an even larger number of people who access the World Wide Web, a pressing need exists for researchers to investigate how people balance their personal lives and professional obligations in the digital age (Garner & Sullivan, 2010). The digital age refers to the end of the 20th century and duration of the 21st century in which a widespread proliferation of information and digital technology were introduced (Alberts & Papp, 1997). Yet, studies exploring a new form of professionalism, e-professionalism, are just beginning to emerge in the research (Kaczmarczyk et al., 2013). E-professionalism refers to "the attitudes and behaviors reflecting traditional professionalism paradigms but manifested through digital media" (Cain & Romanelli, 2009, p. 66). Studies on e-professionalism have appeared across various professions such as medicine (Baer & Schwartz, 2011), teaching (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007), and pharmacy (Cain, 2008).

Many of the current concerns highlighted by Greysen, Kind, and Chretien (2010) are related to the lack of knowledge about current policies and guidelines surrounding e-professionalism, as well as the lack of personal privacy for professionals. Additional concerns forwarded by these researchers relate to the potential implications of making personal disclosures in an online environment, maintaining confidentiality when online, and the influence of inappropriate internet use on the profession's reputation as a whole. These concerns, amongst others, have the strong potential for impacting the behaviours of those currently serving, as well as those entering, a profession in the digital age.

The recent influx of research on e-professionalism within medical education indicates a need for this type of research within other education-related fields. Specific to medical education, research suggests that balancing one's personal life and professional obligations seems to be a daunting, yet crucial, task for those in training programs and poised to enter into a professional environment (e.g., Baer & Schwartz, 2011; MacDonald, Sohn, & Ellis, 2010). For the purpose of this study, medical students are defined as those enrolled in a pre-licensure physician training program. The increase of research within the field of medical education provides the foundation for expanding e-professionalism research to additional education-related professions.

Teachers, for example, would benefit from research on e-professionalism. A need exists for teachers to be acutely aware of the standards that regulate professional conduct due to the important role they play in the lives of their students. For example, use of technology may lead to blurred personal and professional boundaries, which create problematic relationships between teachers and students, as well as decreased privacy and safety for teachers (Chesley, 2005). However, little research on e-professionalism has emerged within the field of teacher education. Given the immense popularity of the internet and social networking within the pre-service teacher population (i.e., those enrolled in undergraduate initial teacher education programs), it seemed logical to engage pre-service teachers in the current study.

Researcher's Background and Interests

This study exploring pre-service teachers' experiences and perceptions builds on my skills as a research assistant and qualitative researcher, my training as a school psychology student, and my exposure to emerging research within the field of medical education.

My previous research experiences have led to an interest in how teachers perceive and experience professionalism in an online context. My interest in this topic was piqued while working as a research assistant on a research project involving a review of publicly accessible teacher misconduct files from the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT) disciplinary committee. Teacher misconduct refers to any action or behaviour by those holding teaching certificates or letters of permission that violate the professional code of conduct (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013). In the BCCT teacher misconduct study we discovered a troubling trend that suggested that in the last decade, 95% of technology-related teacher misconduct cases involved internet, which was a 90% increase from the previous decade (McCallum, Zhang, Poth, & Klassen, 2012). The large increase in internet's role in teacher misconduct highlighted the importance of maintaining and enforcing current professional practices for teachers, as well as made me curious as to how, if at all, e-professionalism had been explored and addressed in the education literature. Furthermore, my qualitative research experiences led to me to be particularly interested in the second phase of our larger, mixed methods study, which used focus groups to explore e-professionalism.

Additionally, in my future role as a school psychologist I will be working closely with teachers. As a result, I felt that it was important to better understand their roles and responsibilities inside and outside the classroom, as well as in an online context.

Finally, at the beginning of the current study I became aware of a survey study examining e-professionalism in medical students. The majority of medical students in the study indicated that it is important to maintain professionalism online; yet, differing opinions emerged related to whether or not they thought maintaining professionalism was possible (Ross, 2013). These findings provided an impetus for the current study, which aimed to better understand how pre-service teachers perceive e-professionalism.

Rationale for Study Purpose and Objectives

The overall purpose of the current study is to compare pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences when considering whether maintaining professionalism is possible. It is notable that the current study encompasses the second, qualitative phase of a larger, sequential mixed methods study comparing the online behaviours and perceptions of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers were involved in focus groups following an initial quantitative-focused phase. These focus groups are of particular importance to the current study, as they begin to address the gaps in the education literature with respect to exploring the experiences and perceptions of e-professionalism for teachers. To that end, my objectives for the current study were three-fold: (1) explore pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences related to e-professionalism (2) document pre-service teachers' differing perceptions related to whether maintaining professionalism online is possible, and (3) contribute to the literature by informing how technological-related professional development opportunities might be integrated within initial teacher education.

The current study is outlined in the remaining six chapters. In the second chapter a review of the literature is presented, and in the third chapter the methodology is described. The fourth and fifth chapter report the study's findings, and the sixth chapter presents the discussion and implications. The seventh chapter concludes with the limitations and future directions, and a final word.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter includes four sections reviewing the literature for the current study on e-professionalism. The first section discusses definitions of professionalism across the fields, and the second section focuses on current definitions of professionalism within the field of education, and specifically within the province of Alberta. In the third section, e-professionalism is discussed through an integration of theory and literature on pre-service professionals. The final section summarizes the need for the current study and presents the research questions guiding the study.

Defining Professionalism Across the Fields

Defining and re-defining professionalism, developing professional expectations and guidelines, and preparing individuals for a professional role in the workplace has been, and continues to be, a complex issue for researchers all around the world (Neill & Bourke, 2010). The way in which professionalism is defined varies depending on the profession; however, whether it is a profession’s aim to nurse, teach, build, or defend, there is a general consensus that professionalism involves a specific set of skills, knowledge, values, and expectations relative to that profession or professional person (e.g., Baer & Schwartz, 2011; Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2000).

Within the medical field, the meaning of professionalism often focuses on the professional qualities and behaviours that are intended to maintain the public’s trust and a professional’s respected role in society (Baer & Schwartz, 2011). Among the key characteristics identified by these medical researchers as essential to professionalism are altruism, reliability and responsibility, compassion and empathy, honesty and integrity, respect for others, self-improvement, self-awareness and knowledge of limits, and communication and collaboration (Baer & Schwartz, 2011). Since the current study's scope is to discuss professionalism in the context of the teaching profession, it will further enhance the working definition of professionalism to present perspectives from professionals in the education field, and especially specific to the Alberta teaching context.

Professionalism Within the Education Field

For professionals who are held in high regard by the public, and particularly for those who work with vulnerable populations (i.e., children) such as teachers, the definitions of professionalism become even more important to researchers and society.

Teachers' definitions of professionalism within the field of education are complex and diverse. Swann, McIntyre, Pell, Hargreaves, and Cunningham (2010) conducted a large-scale survey of teachers in England at two different time points (2003 and 2006) to examine the meaning of teacher professionalism. Swann et al.'s findings suggested that the meaning of professionalism includes components that generate an inner core, intermediate level, and an outer layer of understanding and meaning. They found that the inner core consisted of strong, shared beliefs and commitments amongst participants. The factors that generated the inner core were teaching as a complicated job that requires expertise, and teaching as trusted profession. The intermediate level consisted of factors that were coherent yet contested components of the meaning of teacher professionalism, and involved factors such as teaching as constructive learning, giving teachers autonomy, and collaboration with others. Lastly, the outer layer consisted of the various factors that were not correlated with the factors in the inner core or the intermediate level. The findings indicated that participants' ideas about a teacher's roles and responsibilities led them to categorize the components they thought were most important to teacher professionalism. Swann et al. suggest, although some factors emerged as more important than others, there is not (and maybe should not be) one unitary definition of professionalism, as its meaning seems to change in light of a teacher's differing roles and responsibilities.

It is important to note that limitations did exist in Swann et al.'s (2010) study related to response rate and sampling. The survey has a low response rate, suggesting that the data may not be representative of the teacher population. In addition, at the second time point, the majority of participants were different than those who took part in the survey at the first time point, which is not ideal in a longitudinal study as it questions the reliability and validity of the longitudinal aspect of the data. The study does however still contribute teachers' notions of what it means to be professional.

Past research suggests that "teacher professionalism is what teachers and others experience it as being, not what policy makers and others assert it should become" (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p. 22); which is why teacher professionalism also warrants study through qualitative research. As such, an exploratory study of pre-school teachers' interpretations of the meaning of teacher professionalism in Sweden revealed four themes (a) conceptions of professionalism, (b) acting like a professional teacher, (c) professionalism in development, and (d) professionalism in relation to other professions. Through a survey of open-ended questions, Kuisma and Sandberg (2008) found that factors such as possession of knowledge, ability to deal with practical actions in a competent way, and ability to reflect on those actions were the most consistent across the four themes, suggesting that these factors were most widely identified by teachers as important components of teacher professionalism.

It is notable that both Swann et al. (2010) and Kuisma and Sandberg's (2008) studies took place in England and Sweden respectively, and due to the differences between different countries' education systems, generalizations from the findings in England and Sweden cannot be made with certainty to the teaching profession in Canada. Overall, these studies provide evidence that the meaning of professionalism is not straightforward for teachers; thus, it might further focus the current study's working definition of professionalism by exploring the meaning of professionalism in Alberta, Canada's teaching context.

The Alberta education context. In the province of Alberta, the minimum standards of professional conduct for teachers are outlined and enforced by The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). Some of these standards include statements such as a teacher must treat their students with dignity and respect, a teacher may not divulge information about a pupil received in confidence or in the course of their professional duties except as required by law or unless it is in the best interest of the pupil, a teacher must act in a manner which maintains the honour and dignity of the profession, and a teacher cannot engage in activities which adversely affect the quality of the teacher's professional service (ATA, 2012). The ATA's professional standards are used to order to regulate teacher professionalism in the province of Alberta. The question remains as to how teachers perceive and apply these standards in an online environment.

The meaning of teacher professionalism is complex, multi-faceted, and context-specific. The above literature on teacher professionalism establishes a beginning framework to help guide the working definition of teacher professionalism for the current study while we attempt to explore a more recent type of professionalism: e-professionalism.

E-professionalism as a Pressing Issue

As technology becomes integrated as a primary form of communication in the professional workplace, there may be differing opinions about what it means to be professional online. Although little research related to e-professionalism currently exists specifically within the teaching profession a growing literature within the medical field can serve as a guide for this study as to how to go about conducting such research.

Potential reasons as to why medical doctors might have difficulty being professional online (Greysen et al., 2010) can be applied to the teaching profession as well. The first challenge for professionals is that online content may be labelled or described as unprofessional by society, but may not clearly violate the formal standards of professional conduct. The second challenge is that when most people use the internet, there is a false perception of anonymity, as well as separation from the reality and consequences of inappropriate online behaviour.

The third challenge is that social media and internet involvement can reach a broader audience quicker than face-to-face interactions. For these reasons, e-professionalism is becoming a pressing issue in many professional occupations, and the need exists for it to be understood in order to raise awareness about its possible implications, especially given the emerging role of social media in society's interactions.

Social media has added a new dimension to the definition of professionalism because of its integration into millions of people's daily lives (Saunders, 2008). Baer and Schwartz (2011) suggested that online social media such as email, Facebook, and YouTube are greatly influencing how professionalism is defined, taught, and role modelled for medical doctors in and entering the profession. Baer and Schwartz investigated the benefits and limitations for medical doctors of being professional when using online social networks. The researchers illustrated some challenges of social media and professionalism such as protecting patient privacy, physician self-disclosure, threats to physician or institution reputation, implications for physician-patient relationship, maintaining respect for others, and commitment to quality improvement, and then go on to address a preliminary outline of how educators in medical programs could train doctors to be aware of these issues. The above challenges can be informally adapted the teaching profession as well. The challenges of online social networks and professionalism for a teacher, for example, may include: protecting student privacy, teacher self-disclosure, threats to teacher or school systems' reputation, and implications for teacher-student relationship. By exploring this topic with the teacher population, the current study will be informing an existing gap in the literature.

Communication privacy management theory. From a theoretical perspective, internet use, especially use of social networking sites, can create problems for professionals because of tensions between privacy and disclosure (e.g., Greysen et al., 2010). Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM) suggests that privacy is important because it allows individuals to have boundaries, and gives people control over personal information (Petronio, 2002). CPM theory posits that people often believe that private information is owned, and disclosures can cause vulnerability that lead people to make decisions about whether to reveal or conceal private information. It further suggests that self-disclosure of private information is based around a set of rules and determined by criteria such as culture, motivation, individual differences, contexts, and gender.

In the past, CPM theory has been useful in explaining issues around communication in interpersonal relationships, but has since been applied to online privacy management (Metzger, 2007). According to CPM theory, individuals have competing needs for both disclosure and privacy and, as a result, must develop regulatory abilities around how to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of disclosure of personal information when participating in online activities (Metzger, 2007). However, there are some situations in which private disclosures may be more costly than beneficial, especially in an online context. For example, if a teacher discloses personal information online to the “wrong people”, discloses too much information, or discloses in an inappropriate setting, it may create many problems inside and outside of the classroom (e.g., Metzger, 2007). CPM theory provides a strong framework for the current study, as it gives context as to why teachers may feel challenged when choosing how to regulate their private information online.

Potential impacts of teachers' online behaviours. The introduction of the internet and social media into society has consequently challenged many of the professional obligations of teachers, making it necessary to further explore e-professionalism for teachers. Teachers play an important role in the public eye, as they are extremely involved and influential in the lives of the children they teach. As a result, teachers' online behaviours may have an impact on their students (Schofield & Davidson, 2003), and so, as CPM theory suggests, teachers must decide what information to reveal to their students and what to conceal from their students in order to protect their credibility in the classroom, as well as in the profession a whole.

It has been suggested that teachers' levels of self-disclosure can both positively and negatively impact the students' motivation, as well as the teacher-student relationship. One study conducted by Mazer et al. (2007) examined post-secondary teacher self-disclosure on Facebook and its effects on college students' motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. The researchers randomly assigned college students to one of three experimental conditions (i.e., low, medium, and high self-disclosure on Facebook); and the participants were asked to log onto their Facebook accounts, view the Facebook account of a professor at the university, and give their impressions of what it would be like to be a student of that professor. The findings indicated that students who viewed teachers' Facebook pages that had high levels of disclosure were more motivated and more comfortable in their learning environments (Mazer et al., 2007). However, critical comments from the participants addressed issues related to teachers' professional identity on Facebook and, as one student said "the teacher loses her professional image with the Facebook profile" and "her website is not professional enough for a college-level professor" (Mazer et al., 2007, p. 11). It is important to note that Mazer et al.'s study examined post-secondary professors and students; which is not directly applicable to the current study. However, the findings provide insight into the benefits and challenges for teachers in an online context. To focus the current study even more, it is useful to explore how, if at all, e-professionalism and teachers' online behaviours are being addressed in Canada.

At a national level, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) handbook does not have a section specifically identifying issues related to e-professionalism for teachers. Since 2008, however, the handbook has addressed teacher professional conduct as it relates to cyber-bullying. In the cyber-bullying section within the teachers' clause, it is stated that teachers are encouraged to model appropriate cyber-conduct, familiarize themselves with actions and responses related to cyber-conduct through professional development and in-service opportunities, and assess and appropriately respond to incidents of cyber-misconduct and/or cyber-bullying among students or between student(s) and the teacher (CTF Handbook, 2013). Although it is beneficial that the CTF handbook does include standards for teachers related to cyber-bullying, the handbook does not provide guidance for teachers related to personal online behaviours, the implications of inappropriate online behaviours, or their professional roles and responsibilities as a teacher online.

Upon further exploration, a first attempt has been undertaken at the provincial level, however, to address the emerging issues related to e-professionalism within the teaching profession in the province of Ontario. The governing body for Ontario teachers, the Ontario College of Teachers, has recently released a professional advisory to their members providing explicit guidance related to the appropriate use of technology and social media for teachers. This professional advisory covers such practices as:

- Maintain a formal, courteous, and professional tone in all communications with students to ensure that professional boundaries with students are maintained
- Avoid exchanging private texts, phone number, personal email addresses, or photos of a personal nature with students
- Decline student-initiated “friend” requests and do not issue “friend” requests to students
- Assume that information you post can be accessed or altered
- Manage the privacy and security settings of your social media accounts. Check the settings frequently
- Avoid online criticisms about students, colleagues, your employer, or others within the school community (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011).

The discovery of the Ontario professional advisory makes one consider whether Alberta teachers might also benefit from similar guidance, and in what contexts this guidance should occur. Given the importance of internet and social media in the upcoming generation, the current study aimed to explore how pre-service teachers perceived the need for guidance related to e-professionalism.

Online behaviours of pre-service professionals. When studying online professionalism it may be valuable to begin by focusing on those being trained to enter the profession. Pre-service professionals are likely most savvy on the internet, involved with the most recent technological developments, and are also working to develop meaning and purpose about what it means to be a professional (Garner & Sullivan, 2010).

A survey study related to unprofessional behaviours and privacy settings on Facebook was conducted with medical students (Garner & Sullivan, 2010). Out of those respondents who had a Facebook account (96%), over half had pictures on their account that they found embarrassing. Further, they reported viewing unprofessional behaviours by colleagues on Facebook such as alcoholic binge drinking, provocative photos, and clinical experiences with patients. An open-ended section of the survey generated participant responses describing what they do on Facebook as their own personal business; others, however, reported that inappropriate behaviours and posts could potentially affect their career and perceived fitness to practice. Other respondents expressed that they were human, and what they post on Facebook does not make them any better (or worse) at their job. The findings of the study suggest that inappropriate behaviour on social networking sites like Facebook does frequently occur by young people entering the medical profession, and may have implications for the professional person, the profession, and the public. The findings of Garner and Sullivan's (2010) study support using pre-service teachers as the sample for the current study.

Need for the Current Study

As evidenced by the literature review, defining teacher professionalism is complex and continues to become increasingly so as new mediums (i.e., the internet and social networking sites) are included in its meanings. As such, there is an emerging body of research exploring how to define e-professionalism in various professions. Some studies have indicated that there are benefits to social networking and self-disclosure in an online context (e.g., Mazer et al., 2007); however, many studies have illustrated the concerns related to internet and social networking's effects on the future of professionalism, especially for professionals who are directly involved with vulnerable populations.

The current study emerged from a larger body of literature studying e-professionalism in the medical profession; however, teacher professionals also have a unique relationship with the public and play a crucial role in the lives of the children they teach. Scholars have not yet explored professionalism in an online context for teachers; and as such, studying pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences in order to better understand e- professionalism will fill a gap in the current research by providing valuable input for the future of teacher education and development of technology-related policy.

Research questions. The overall research question for the current study is: How do pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences compare when considering whether maintaining professionalism is possible? Based on the literature and objectives of the current study, the secondary research questions are as follows: 1) How do pre-service teachers' pre-conceptions about teachers' roles contribute to their notions about e-professionalism? 2) How do pre-service teachers' experiences contribute to their perceptions of e-professionalism? 3) What, if any, guidance do pre-service teachers' consider necessary related to e-professionalism?

The current study anticipates contributing to a larger body of educational research on professionalism by reporting the early insights into pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences of e-professionalism. This study may have important implications for changing the way professionalism is viewed, taught, and modelled in initial teacher education programs, as well as raise awareness of how online behaviours might influence a teacher's professional obligations, roles, and responsibilities both inside and outside of the classroom. The methods of the current study are outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Methods

This chapter outlines the methods used in the current study beginning with the guiding methodology and epistemology. Next, the data collection procedures are presented including a description of the rationale for the two data sources, criteria for participant selection and recruitment procedures, focus group procedures, field note procedures, and ethical considerations for the current study. Then, five stages of data analysis procedures are described. The chapter concludes with strategies that were used for enhancing trustworthiness and confidence throughout the study.

Methodology and Epistemology

A qualitative research methodology was used to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences of e-professionalism because of its usefulness to illuminate important aspects of one's individual process and to interpret phenomena based on the perceptions and experiences of that individual (Lester, 1999). This study was approached through a constructivist epistemological lens using a qualitative method known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a meaning-focused approach that taps into the inner experiences and perceptions of human beings through reflection, meaning making, and interpretation (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Derived from constructionism, IPA focuses on how people construct meaning around an event, topic, or object (Larkin, 2013). IPA can be used to construct meaning and better understand a first-person perspective from a third-person standpoint (Larkin, 2013), and as such, this approach is well suited for exploring pre-service teachers' experiences and perceptions in order to better conceptualize e-professionalism.

Data Collection Procedures

This study is part of a larger, two-phase mixed methods study that represents only the second phase whereby the participants had already completed an online survey. To that end, the following section has limited its description of the first phase (online survey) used to group participants in the focus groups (see Poth, McCallum, & Tang, 2013), and focuses on the procedures involved in the second phase of data collection (i.e., focus groups and field notes). There were several steps involved in data collection including selecting data sources, purposeful sampling and participant recruitment, participant demographic information, focus group procedures, field note procedures, and lastly, ethical considerations.

Data sources and rationale. There are two sources of data for this study involving pre-service teachers: focus groups and researcher field notes. Focus groups were chosen as a primary method of data collection because it allowed for a comparison of groups, as well as a large amount of qualitative data to be collected in a short amount of time (Creswell, 2007). Focus groups provided the opportunity for participants to interact, share ideas, and feel supported by other pre-service teachers. Because of the nature of the topic, the researcher felt that focus groups would be a safe environment in which to engage in the process of sharing.

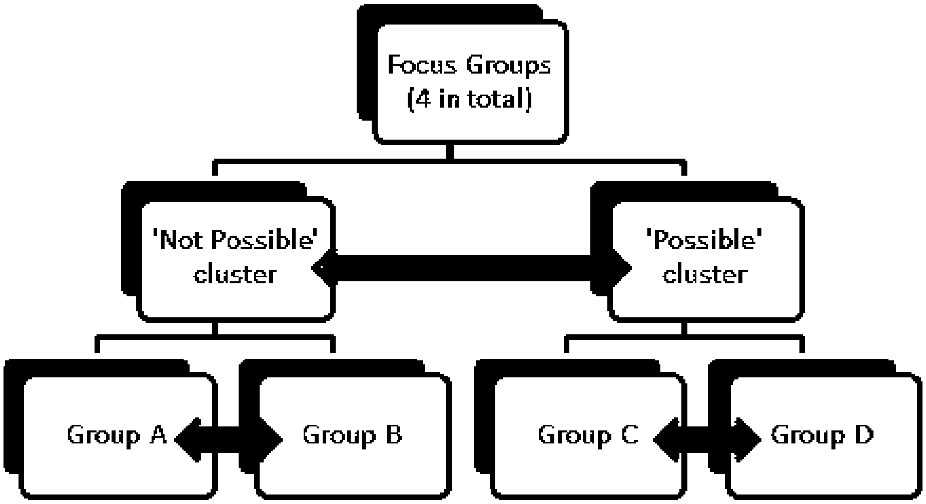
Field notes were used as a complementary data source to collect additional information about the focus groups in order to enhance trustworthiness and confidence of the researcher’s interpretations during the analysis. It has been suggested that field notes should be complementary to other sources of data collection in IPA because interpretations about the data likely cannot be made with the same depth or confidence as in a first-person account of experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2005). Thus, the researcher used field notes taken after each focus group to bracket her assumptions and biases about the data collected in each focus group.

Participants and recruitment procedures. One hundred participants from the Faculty of Education participant pool at the University of Alberta were recruited for the larger mixed-methods study. The participant pool is an optional course component in which participants sign up for a 2-credit research study worth 5% of their final course grade. Participants were undergraduate students drawn from multiple faculties, and access was facilitated through the courses Instructional Technology (EDIT 202) and Educational Psychology for Teachers (EDPY 200). In the current study, participants from the participant pool signed up at the Educational Psychology office to participate in an online survey followed by an on-campus focus group. They did not know the topic of the study at the time of sign up. The criteria for inclusion-included students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Alberta. Thus, a purposeful sampling was undertaken which aligns with the IPA methodology. It is important to choose a purposive sample when using IPA in order to tap into the true experiences of the participants, especially in a focus group setting (Smith & Osborne, 2003).

In the first phase of the larger mixed methods study, participants completed an online survey in September 2012 which had five parts, including: 1) Internet Use, 2) Online Professionalism, 3) Real Life Scenarios, 4) Social Networking Use (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), and 5) Open-ended Questions on Professionalism. At the end of the survey, they were asked to indicate their availability to participate in the second phase of the study, the focus group, from a list of proposed dates and times in November 2012. The researcher then assigned the participants to a focus group based on their availability and their responses on the survey. Participants were organized into one of three different categories (agree, disagree and neutral) of focus groups according to their response to the statement: “It is not entirely possible to maintain professionalism when online”.

For the purpose of this study, only two categories were compared: participants who agreed with the statement “it is not entirely possible to maintain professionalism online at all times” (i.e., the ‘Not Possible’ cluster; n=14) and participants who disagreed with the statement “it is not entirely possible to maintain professionalism online at all times” (i.e., the ‘Possible’ cluster; n=19). Each cluster contained two focus groups (see Figure 1). The clusters and groups are labelled as follows: ‘Not Possible’ cluster (i.e., Group A and Group B), and the ‘Possible’ cluster (i.e., Group C and Group D). By comparing the clusters, the researcher’s aim was to explore the differing perceptions and experiences of each cluster based on whether or not they thought maintaining online was possible.

Figure 1. Visual representation of this study's two cluster comparison



Participant demographic information. Demographic information was collected to compare the two clusters in terms of gender, age, program type, program stream, and practicum experience. Participants across clusters were similar in gender and mean age, as the majority of participants were female (63% vs. 71%) with a mean age of 23 years old. Participants across clusters were also similar in program type and practicum experience; as the majority of participants were enrolled in the four-year Bachelor of Education program (89.5% vs. 92.9%), and had not yet completed their student teaching practicum (78.9% vs. 92.9%).

The clusters differed, however, in terms of program stream. Just over half of the participants (52.6%) in the Possible cluster were enrolled in the elementary education program stream; whereas the majority of participants (71.4%) in the Not Possible cluster were enrolled the secondary education program stream.

Given that the majority of the 3,000 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education take part in the four-year program (as opposed to the two-year post-graduate program) and that the majority of students enrol in these courses prior to completing their introductory professional term which involves their first practicum, these descriptives suggest that these participants are a representative sample of pre-service teachers at the beginning of their initial teacher education program.

Focus group procedures. There were two aspects of the focus group procedures. The first aspect was the development of a semi-structured protocol, and the second was the administration of the focus groups. A semi-structured style of protocol was developed for the focus group interviews (see Appendix A for protocol). Smith and Osborne (2003) suggest that in IPA a semi-structured protocol is favourable because it allows the protocol to guide the focus group, but not dictate the discussion. In addition, the semi-structured style of protocol gave the participants a chance to freely explore their subjective experiences and perceptions while still keeping in mind the aims of the current study (Smith & Osborne, 2003). The researcher's aim in developing the focus group protocol was to explore e-professionalism more deeply through participants' experiences and perceptions. The focus group protocol was developed using the items and responses from the online survey, as well as current literature on e-professionalism. The protocol included eight questions that were common to all groups, as well as time at the end for questions and comments in regards to the focus group discussion.

The focus group protocol began by exploring participants' perceptions about the importance and meaning of e-professionalism. The three questions of the protocol were developed from the responses on Part B (Online Professionalism) and Part C (Real Life Scenarios) of the online survey. Questions in this section included: 1) Is it important to be professional online? 2) What does it mean to be professional in an online environment?, and 3) Do you believe it is possible for a teacher to maintain professionalism at all times while online? The rationale for beginning the protocol with these questions was to allow participants to get a sense of the group and become comfortable with one another through the sharing of thoughts and opinions.

The protocol then moved into three questions exploring participants' perceptions of e-professionalism and what they thought were appropriate online behaviours. These questions were based on the responses from Part B (Online Professionalism) and Part D-G (Social Networking Use) of the online survey. Questions included: 4) What online activities would a teacher need to engage for you to consider them as unprofessional? 5) Do you think separation between personal life and professional obligations is possible in the current digital age?, and 6) What are the dangers for teachers in an online environment that is different from a face-to-face environment? By providing this section next, it was anticipated participants would feel more comfortable discussing their more personal perceptions, experiences, and opinions.

The researcher then explored to what extent they would like to be guided in their online behaviour, and asked the question, 7) Should teachers be guided in their online behavior? This question was asked at the end because time had been given for participants to consider their own and others' online behaviours, as well as the benefits and/or downfalls of guidance. The last question was, 8) In what ways can the internet and social networking be used in a productive/beneficial way for teachers? The researcher chose to conclude the protocol with this question because the general nature of the content was less personal and more strength-based than the previous discussion content. The aim was for participants to leave the focus group feeling at comfortable and at ease with their participation and experience. Due to the semi-structured nature of the protocol, the question order may have shifted slightly depending on the direction of participants' discussions. Smith and Osborne (2003) point out that this slight shift in protocol can be expected as the process of conducting a semi-structured interview is iterative rather than linear, meaning that each participant brings different experiences, perceptions, and meanings to the group, which in turn may affect their interpretations and the richness of the discussion within the focus group as a whole.

The next aspect of the focus group procedures was focus group administration. Thirteen focus groups were conducted by the researcher for the larger study, and four of those thirteen focus groups are reported in the current study. Each focus group lasted one hour in length and involved approximately 8-10 participants. They took place in a quiet seminar room at the University of Alberta. Participants were first sent an email assigning them to a focus group (see Appendix B). Twenty-four hours before the focus group, a subsequent reminder email (see Appendix C) and the focus group letter of information (see Appendix D) were sent to inform the participants of their focus group appointment.

At the beginning of a focus group, the participants were asked if they had read the letter of information from the reminder email. If they had, they were asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix E) in order to participate in the focus group. If they had not read the letter of information, they were given the letter of information to read and then asked to read and sign the consent form. Any time a participant did not show up for their focus group appointment, they were given the option of rescheduling to another appointment time as long as they contacted the researcher and provided a valid reason. After the focus groups were complete, participants were given credit for attending. Credit was based on attendance, not on level of participation. Two focus groups from the Not Possible cluster and two focus groups from the Possible cluster were chosen to transcribe and analyze in the current study.

Field note procedures. Field notes were used to provide supplemental information and bracket the researcher's assumptions and biases related to the data generated from the focus groups. The strategy used to write field notes was known as a salience hierarchy, which is described as a field note strategy in which the researcher records interesting, noteworthy, or memorable observations, as well as any tacit expectations or knowledge that may have influenced the observations (Wolfinger, 2002). Thus, for the current study the researcher used field notes to document noteworthy observations or assumptions about people or topics that were discussed during the focus group, tacit expectations or knowledge that may have influenced the observations made, and the overall feeling of each focus group (see Appendix F for an example field note). The field notes were taken by the focus group facilitator at the end of each focus group.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting this research, an ethics application was submitted for review to the Human Ethics Review Process (HERO) board at the University of Alberta, and was granted approval on July 20, 2012 (see Appendix G for approval letter). There were two ethical considerations to note in present study: potential for coercion in the use of the participant pool and issues related to confidentiality in focus groups.

The first ethical consideration involves the use of participant pool. The current study posed minimal risk to participants; however, it is important to consider potential for coercion when using a participant pool. The participants took part in the participant pool as part of a research credit in the Faculty of Education. The participants were informed that they would receive course credit upon completion of the research study, which included a survey and a focus group. To inform participants prior to participation, participations were sent a letter of information about what the study entailed and the potential implications. To further ensure participants did not feel coerced into participating, it was stated clearly in the consent form that participation in the study was completely voluntary and participants had the option to withdraw and/or opt out of answering any questions at any point in the study. Participants were also reminded that their participation was completely voluntary at the beginning of each focus group.

The second ethical consideration was related to confidentiality in focus groups. The focus group facilitator and the note-taker were both required to sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix H) to ensure the information shared by participants in the focus groups was kept confidential. However, participants' responses may or may not have been kept confidential by other participants, as the participants involved in the focus groups could potentially break confidentiality by discussing information outside of the focus group environment after the session concluded. Participants were strongly advised at the beginning of the focus group to keep any discussion information from the focus groups confidential; however, confidentiality could not be guaranteed. To ensure participants understood the risks around confidentiality and anonymity, they signed a consent letter that represented their written consent to participate in the research. The consent letter stated the length, purpose, and potential risks, if any, of the study so participants were informed about the potential risks of participating in the present study. The consent letter also outlined that the participants had the choice to withdraw or leave the focus group at any time, and if they felt uncomfortable with any of the questions they were not required to respond. At the end of the focus groups, the facilitator also debriefed the participants in order to address any questions or concerns. It was important to the researcher that everyone in the focus group felt informed and heard, and the facilitator treated that everyone's opinions and concerns equally and inclusively.

Data Analysis

In conventional methods of qualitative data analysis (e.g., content analysis), the scholar often strives to uncover key themes based on their frequency in the data (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2007); however, with IPA it is crucial to understand the richness and meaning of the central phenomenon in addition to the frequency of key themes that can be identified within the data set (Smith & Osborne, 2003). It is also important to consider that IPA is not a prescriptive analysis, and can be adjusted depending on the researcher, research questions, and type of study. The data analysis is described below in stages, and was guided by Smith and Osborne's (2003) book chapter on IPA. For the purpose of this study, the hierarchy of themes discussed in the following section is as follows: key theme→ subtheme→ category.

Preliminary stage: Transcribing. The preliminary analysis occurred in the transcription process as the researcher transcribed the four focus group discussions in order to become immersed in the data. After transcription was complete, the text of each focus group was carefully read and examined by the researcher in order for her to become familiarized with the remainder of the data.

First stage: Searching for themes. Once the researcher began to feel comfortable and immersed in the data, the first stage of analysis was similar to free textual analysis in that the researcher chose one of the focus group transcripts and provided commentary in the right margin of the text by summarizing, paraphrasing, and making connections or early interpretations based her first read-over. For example, phrases such as "teachers are placed on a pedestal, "teachers should not make mistakes”, and “being professional is a teacher’s job” were documented in the right margin of the text. In addition, the researcher commented on similarities, differences, exaggerations, and contradictions in the transcript (Smith & Osborne, 2003). For example, the researcher commented “some participants think teachers should be placed on a pedestal and others think it is unfair they are placed on a pedestal”. This process was done throughout the whole transcript. Next, the researcher used the left margin to record a draft of emerging theme titles in order to try and capture the meanings behind the text. For example, initial themes such as “Neutrality in Teaching”, “Teachers’ as Role-Models”, “Ideal versus Real”, and “Teachers as Humans” were written in the left margin of the text. Smith and Osborne (2003) suggest that by recording initial themes, the analysis shifts to a higher level of abstraction, yet still remains grounded in the participants’ expressions and dialogue. Once the researcher was able to identify an initial draft of themes, she engaged in the next stage by trying to make meaningful, rich connections between the initial theme titles.

Secondary stage: Connecting themes. In the second stage of analysis, the researcher sought to better understand if or how the themes related to one another through a process called clustering. The researcher wrote out an initial list of themes, and then created a new list that clustered together in a systematic way. For example, categories such as “Teachers are Human” and “Teachers as Role-Models” were clustered into the subtheme “Society’s Expectations of Teachers”. It is important in IPA that the researcher’s interpretations actually match up with the participants’ words (Smith and Osborne, 2003).

Tertiary stage: Creating a table. In the third stage of the analysis, a table of themes was produced in which each cluster of categories was given a name that broadly represents the key theme and subtheme for that cluster. The left margin of the table included the key theme; for example, Barriers to E-professionalism. The matching subthemes and categories were then listed underneath the key theme; for example, “Society’s Expectations of Teachers” was listed underneath the key theme (i.e., Barriers to E-professionalism), and “Teachers as Humans” and “Teachers as Role-Models” were listed as categories underneath the subtheme. The right margin included brief verbatim phrases that provided evidence for each category. During this time some subthemes or categories were dropped because they did not fit well within the emerging structure and/or were not very rich within the transcript (Smith & Osborne, 2003). For example, the category “Neutrality in Teaching” was dropped because it did not fit well within the emerging structure of themes. Completing the table took the researcher to the last stage of analysis.

Final stage: Analyzing across transcripts. In the final stage of analysis, the researcher analyzed the transcripts from the other focus groups using Atlas-ti ©. The researcher explored the other transcripts in the same way as described above; however, she used the table to inform the analysis of the other transcripts. In this stage, the key themes, subthemes, and categories evolved and shifted from their original form. For example, the category “Ideal versus Real” was merged into “Teachers are Human”. Once each transcript underwent the interpretative process, a new table of key themes, subthemes, and categories was constructed and used when coding the remainder of the transcripts. Before the findings are reported, it was important to review the strategies used to ensure the researcher's interpretations were trustworthy and accurately justified the participants' responses.

Strategies for Enhancing Trustworthiness and Confidence

When conducting qualitative research, it is important to discuss the trustworthiness and confidence of the data analysis to ensure the findings can be attributed to the participants' true experiences and perceptions (Creswell, 2012). In this study, strategies were used to enhance the trustworthiness and confidence of the data during data collection such as purposeful sampling and use of protocols. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure the data collected from the target population aligned with the current study's purpose and objectives (Creswell, 2007). Protocols were used to ensure reliability of the questions presented to participants across each focus group (Creswell, 2007).

During the analysis stage, making the audience aware of the researcher's personal biases enhanced the trustworthiness and confidence of the current study's findings. Unique to qualitative research, it is acceptable for the researcher's subjective experience to play a role in the interpretations of the data; however, it is important that his or her biases do not influence the findings to the point that they are no longer an accurate portrayal of the participant's experiences (Creswell, 2012).

One technique that is typically used in qualitative research is bracketing. The researcher used bracketing techniques in the current study by taking field notes after each focus group. Field notes helped the researcher set aside her experiences, as well as interpret the data with a fresh perspective (Creswell, 2007). Another technique that was used when trying to validate the findings is member checking (Creswell, 2007). Member checking is when the researcher asks one or more participants to check the accuracy of the report. The participants were sent a summary of the analysis, and were asked to check the description, themes, and interpretations made by the researcher and evaluate their accuracy based on their perceptions of the focus group's discussion (Creswell, 2012). Finally, external audit was used in which the primary researcher asked another graduate student to review the data and the findings and report back some strengths and weaknesses of the study (Creswell, 2012). By engaging in the process of bracketing, member checking, and external audit, the data collection and analysis will become more valid and trustworthy. The findings of the data analysis are outlined in the following two chapters.

Chapter Four: Findings- Barriers to E-professionalism

The following chapter outlines the key theme Barriers to E-professionalism using three sections. Each section is organized by the subthemes generated throughout the analysis: Society's Expectations of Teachers, Threats to Internet Users, and The Power of the Internet. Within each of these sections, results from a comparison across clusters (i.e., Not Possible cluster and Possible cluster) are presented followed by the findings that emerged from a comparison within clusters (e.g., Group A and B from the Not Possible cluster). A summary is provided at the end of each subsection.

Society's Expectations of Teachers

The first subtheme common across clusters was related to society's expectations of teacher professionals. Participants reported that teachers are held to a high professional standard both inside and outside the classroom, meaning that they are expected to behave professionally at all times. Specifically, one participant discussed the pressure society puts on teachers to maintain a professional image:

> As teachers we are always under, like, a microscope. Everyone is always looking at you, no matter where you are. If they know you're a teacher, they're always looking for you and you need to act perfectly all the time (Group C).

Participants across clusters and within clusters expressed conflicting views about whether the expectations placed on teachers are fair. Some participants suggested that being held to high professional standards is an inevitable part of being a teacher; whereas other participants argued that teachers are human and should not be held accountable for what they do outside of the classroom. When asked to elaborate *why* society had such high expectations of teachers, participants suggested that it was because teachers play a crucial role in shaping the future generations of children.

Teachers are human. Differences emerged within the clusters related to participants' perceptions of what is fair to expect of teachers and what is unfair to expect of teachers. Teachers are human, yet are often held to higher professional standards than others. Participants in the Possible cluster described that it is unfair for teachers to be held to higher standards because teachers are apt to make mistakes in a similar way to everyone else, as one participant stated:

> I said no, because as much as we want to try to stay professional at all times, we're humans and we're prone to mistakes, even the smallest slip-ups. And I've—I play games online and emotions are always coming into it. So, I feel that if emotions come into it, you're more prone to make those mistakes, and as humans as well, we have emotions going through us at all times… (Group C).

This participant's response suggests that it is acceptable for teachers to be make mistakes because they have emotions just like everyone else. Another participant expressed that teachers should be aware of society's expectations: "I think that's something that teachers accept when they go into the profession, to a certain level, is that they will be held to that level of scrutiny and that that's going to have to become part of your lifestyle" (Group C). This participant is suggesting that teachers need to accept that they may be held to a high standard upon entering the profession.

Within the Not Possible cluster participants suggested that society is justified in holding teachers to a higher professional standard because overlap between teachers' personal and professional lives is inevitable, as one participant stated: "…if your teacher face is on, it is on all the time. It is not one of those things that changes just because you're out of the classroom" (Group B). However, other participants within the same focus group disagreed, indicating that teachers should be allowed to let loose and live their lives without being judged by others, as one participant expressed: "Because I think it is really difficult to restrict someone fully on their personal life because we are still people. We go out. And sometimes, you know, you say things…." (Group B). In sum, differing perspectives emerged in some aspects related to society's expectations of teachers. Whereas some participants suggested that the nature of the job requires teachers to be held to high professional standards both inside and outside the classroom, others expressed that teachers are human and it is unfair for them to be held to such high professional standards.

Teachers as role-models. Teachers play an important and influential role in the lives of their students. Participants across clusters suggested that, regardless of whether or not it is fair, teachers are scrutinized for their behaviours more than others because of the role they play in shaping the future generations of children, as one participant expressed: "…with parents and the kids, there is just so much more pressure to act a certain way because you are helping raise the next generation" (Group A). A participant from the other cluster elaborated that teachers have the ability to influence a child's future, and can have as much influence as a parent:

> The judgement really, is because we have the ability to influence the future, a teacher can change a life, more so in some cases than a parent. Like, it's so hard to see that and to realize that is your greatest responsibility… is how you affect somebody else (Group C).

Further, some participants within the same focus group cautioned that students are impressionable and can easily be influenced by their teachers' behaviours and attitudes, as one participant expressed:

> I think the biggest thing is that the teachers, like, we—they do have influence, especially over children, and, like, children look up to their teachers, and so they kind of tend to mimic behaviour, like, it's just—it's a very influential position, and it has to be taken with a lot of responsibility (Group C).

In sum, participants across clusters expressed that, regardless of whether or not it is fair, society holds teachers to a high professional standard likely because of the influential role they play in their students' lives.

Threats for Internet Users

The second subtheme that was discussed across clusters was emerging threats for internet users. There exists an assumption that people will use the internet to communicate, learn, and access information, and the ever-increasing integration into society may make the internet an essential part of life, as one participant described: “we are in a digital era and a digital age now, and it’s becoming integrated more and more into classrooms” (Group C). Participants identified some possible consequences of this rapid integration of internet into society such as misinterpretation of information, blurring of boundaries, and limits to online security.

Misinterpretation of information. Teachers are faced with challenges in an online environment when others misinterpret information. Across clusters participants discussed that information is misinterpreted more frequently during online interactions than face-to-face interactions. Participants from the Possible cluster frequently attributed this to the lack of social cues (e.g., body language, facial expressions) and conversation tone that help others understand intentions. Alternatively, the Not Possible cluster participants discussed the consequences that emerge as a result of misinterpretation of information such as preconceived notions, judgements, and assumptions made about teachers.

Lack of social cues was emphasized by participants in the Possible cluster as an important distinction between online interactions and face-to-face interactions. Several participants explained that social cues, specifically body language and facial expressions, could affect the way in which others interpret information, as one participant explained:

> …when you’re talking to somebody or interacting with somebody, like, one-to-one, you can read off, like, several different levels of cues, like, body languages, and demeanour, and stuff like that. Whereas when it’s online, it’s usually, like, looking at one, you know, so what they’re typing.

> So, online you’re already, like, more prone to being, sort of misjudged (Group C).

In addition, participants in the same cluster suggested that people often have a greater understanding of the conversation’s content from the tone someone uses (e.g., laughing, sarcastic). A representative example provided was that people often misinterpret jokes online because they lack the intended tone. Participants suggested that this is concerning because what they intend to be funny may not be interpreted as such, as one participant expressed:

> … face-to-face you can generally be talking and having a fluid conversation where they know exactly what you’re talking about and how you’re talking about it, versus online, you can make a comment where…it is like an inside joke and your friend might get it but everyone else might be like ‘woah…what’s this’ (Group D).

This participant’s comment suggests that the tone during face-to-face interactions may help a person to interpret the content; and because online interactions lack this tone, the wider audience may more easily misinterpret a joke intended for a specific group of people.

Participants from the Not Possible cluster also discussed misinterpretation of information, and suggested that the teachers need to be thoughtful about what information they post, as one participant described: “…lots of people have difficulty interpreting things the way you want them to interpret them. So it is just kind of important to make sure that what you are saying to people cannot be misinterpreted” (Group B). Further, when others misinterpret information participants reported that it could have consequences for teachers, as one participant stated:

> …probably preconceived notions about you as a person. I mean, if they are just viewing you doing radical things, then they are going to get the assumption that maybe you are not exactly the person who should be teaching their students, or their kids (Group A).

This participant's comment suggests that misinterpreting online information may lead others to make incorrect assumptions about a teacher, which in turn could threaten their job.

In sum, participants across clusters perceived misinterpretation as a threat to e-professionalism, as those from the Possible cluster suggested that lack of social cues and lack of conversation tone can be problematic for teachers. Further, participants from the Not Possible cluster described that misinterpretation of information can lead to consequences for the teacher such as preconceived notions and judgements that may be inaccurate.

Blurring of boundaries. As email and social networking have become the dominant forms of communication for the younger generations, participants suggested that the blurring of boundaries in teacher and student relationships is a growing issue for teachers. Two ideas emerged across clusters related to blurring of boundaries: 1) students' curiosity and 2) teachers' lack of filter online. Participants across clusters suggested that students are curious about their teachers and will often seek out additional information about their teachers' personal lives beyond what they learn in the classroom. Second, different conversations emerged between clusters related to teachers' lack of filter online, as participants in the Not Possible cluster raised concerns related to teachers' amount of personal disclosure; whereas participants in the Possible cluster raised issues related to teacher-student confidentiality.

Participants described students from the current generation as avid Facebook users and as such, students are likely to be curious about their teachers. To do this, participants from the Not Possible cluster suggested that students often use Facebook to search for information, as one participant stated: "Especially this day in age, right. They all have Facebook. Like even in elementary I am sure there is going to be many kids who have Facebook accounts who are just like 'oh, let's look up Ms. BLANK online'" (Group A). Participants from the Possible cluster also suggested that students are curious about their teachers and will use Facebook to seek out information, as one participant explained: "If you're friends with someone [on Facebook], a student could maybe go through the connections to find the teacher, so it is kind of hard to hide anything …" (Group D). These comments may suggest that a teacher's privacy can be challenged in an online environment, as students intentionally search for information about their teachers on Facebook.

The second issue relates to how the internet can create a lack of a filter. Participants from the Not Possible cluster suggested that teachers are often challenged with making decisions related to personal disclosure, meaning how much information they should disclose about themselves both inside and outside the classroom. This can be especially pertinent when deciding what should be disclosed between a student and a teacher, as one participant expressed:

> Just about every Ed course here you take encourages you to make relationships with your students so it kind of helps them do better in class, I guess. But at the same time, you need to be careful as to what you say to them and reveal about your personal life (Group B).

This participant's comment describes that in general, teachers need to find a balance when disclosing personal information about themselves to their students, and the internet is just another medium in which this balance needs to be achieved.

Another issue participants highlighted related to teachers' lack of filter online was teacher-student confidentiality. Participants in the Possible cluster expressed that sometimes teachers post students' work online for others to see, as one participant expressed: "I think it should be confidential between the teacher and the student. Maybe they [students] don't want everyone seeing their work" (Group D). This participant's comment may suggest that it may be unprofessional for teachers to post information about students online because what teachers witness at work and in the classroom should remain confidential.

In sum, participants across clusters suggested that blurring of boundaries between a student and teacher can occur when students are curious about their teachers and use Facebook to seek out personal information. Further, participants suggested that teachers' lack of filter online can also blur boundaries between a student and teacher, as participants in the Not Possible discussed that teachers are at risk when disclosing too much information in an online environment; whereas participants in the Possible cluster suggested that violating confidentiality can pose a threat to maintaining professionalism online.

Limits to online security. A few participants discussed the limits of relying on one's privacy settings and internet security programs for protection. Examples of limits to online security provided by participants included a "Big Brother" mentality and hackers. Participants across clusters discussed that these limitations may threaten teachers' privacy in an online environment.

A participant from the Possible cluster discussed that teachers must be aware that there is always a possibility that someone is watching what they do online, which he/she described as Big Brother mentality:

> I feel that with the internet, there is kind of a Big Brother mentality, so somebody is always watching. No matter how much safety and concern you put into shielding your actions, somebody can always find a way to get to it (Group D).

This participant's comment indicates that regardless of one's privacy settings, people may still be able to find ways to access and view personal information and materials.

Another limitation to online security discussed across clusters was hackers (i.e., individuals who are able to bypass privacy settings and gain unauthorized access into other people's online accounts), as one participant from Group D described that his friends could easily find a way to access his account regardless of his privacy settings. A participant from the Possible cluster further elaborated by suggesting that students are savvy online, and may be able to find alternative ways to access into their teachers' profiles, as one participant cautioned: "… my page is professional, but this student went way out of their way to find this. So I did everything in my power to keep it private, but someone went way in depth" (Group B). This participant's comment may suggest that even though privacy settings exist, one must be careful to recognize that there are limitations to these settings.

In sum, limitations exist in an online environment that interfere with teachers' privacy and security, and having knowledge of these limitations may help teachers better understand potential threats when using the internet.

The Power of the Internet

The third subtheme common across clusters was related to the powers associated with internet and how they may affect teachers' ability to maintain professionalism online. Participants perceived the high speeds at which online information can be transmitted and accessed on a global scale as an unavoidable barrier for teachers. Participants across clusters expressed that the power of the internet is evident when people lose control over their own information or when they post materials that may remain online permanently.

Lack of control of information. Participants across clusters discussed that teachers may be vulnerable to others' actions because of a lack of ability to control what others say or do on the internet. Further, a common perspective emerged between clusters questioning whether a teacher should be responsible for things they cannot control, as participants expressed that teachers should not be held responsible for others' actions.

Participants across clusters discussed that teachers are vulnerable in an online environment because they may not have control over others' actions. Specifically, the difficulty to maintain professionalism when pictures are taken of them and posted by others without their permission was given as an example by a Possible cluster participant:

> …the one thing that impedes a lot of professionalism and…makes it really hard, is that you can't control other people, you can control only what you do...and, I mean, so many instances I've had people post pictures of me online, and I'm like, 'I don't even remember that picture being taken, like, that was, like, three years ago, and you're posting it now'… (Group C).

Similarly, a participant from the Not Possible suggested that it is challenging to know what pictures their friends are posting of them, especially if they are not tagged in them:

> …it is kind of missing an element of control there. So, like, um your students could still potentially find a picture of you doing something that one of your friends posted before you could stop them. They might not have you tagged, but it could still be you and it could still be out there (Group A).

Participants' comments across clusters seem to be suggesting that teachers are challenged by others' online behaviours, as photos can be taken of them and posted online years later without their knowledge.

Further, each cluster expressed that teachers should not be held accountable for others' actions when control of information is lost. Participants from the Not Possible cluster expressed that teachers cannot control what others post of them:

> With party photos there is only so much you can do… so if you take the steps to the best of your ability that you're not the one posting and you're in control of it as much as you can, then there's not much else you can do. And I don't think they should be punished for that (Group B).

Participants from the Possible cluster agreed, suggesting that a teacher can only control their own online behaviours, and not others, as one participant stated: "I think personally it is possible to keep your personal and professional life separate, but other people are hard to control" (Group D). In sum, there was a general consensus across clusters that teachers ultimately lack control of information in an online environment. As such, the question remains as to whether teachers should be held accountable when control of information is lost, as participants between clusters expressed that it is not fair for a teacher to be held responsible for others' actions online.

Permanency of material. Participants discussed that with the internet there is always the risk that personal information, comments, and/or photos may exist indefinitely online. Across clusters participants commonly viewed permanency of material online as a danger for teachers because of the potential consequences, such as the inability to delete posted information and stop information transmission.

Participants across clusters expressed that it may be impossible to retrieve information that has been posted in an online environment. One participant from the Not Possible cluster described that once materials are posted, it may be impossible to get that information back:

> …it is important that people know that if you put yourself in certain situations and that information is available online, you might not be able to get that information back. And it will just be out there all the time for people to see (Group B).

Further, transmission of materials from computer to computer poses the risk that essentially anyone can gain access to the materials teachers post, as one participant from the Possible cluster stated: "…anything you do online, like, never goes away. Like, despite how hard you try to take it off, like, someone has already seen it, you know?" (Group C). Another participant provided the example of screen shots, which is a computer feature that allows others to save any image that appears on the monitor into the computer's hard drive: "Also if there is anything that someone could take a screen shot of or anything, they can show it to others even if you try to delete it" (Group D). In sum, permanency of material online was perceived as a powerful consequence of using the internet, as the ability to transmit information rapidly from computer to computer using features such as screen shots may lead to information existing permanently online. As such, the second key theme outlining enablers to e-professionalism is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: Findings - Enablers to E-professionalism

The following chapter outlines the second key theme Enablers of E-professionalism using two sections. Each section is organized by the subthemes generated through the analysis: Safeguards for Internet Users and Guiding Teachers to be Professional Online. Within each of these sections, results from a comparison across clusters (i.e., Not Possible cluster and Possible cluster) are presented followed by the findings that emerged from a comparison within clusters (e.g., Group A and B from the Not Possible cluster). A summary is provided at the end of each subsection.

Safeguards for Internet Users

Common across clusters was the subtheme related to using safeguards to protect oneself from the possible threats of internet use. As a result of the internet's rapid expansion into daily life, there exists a need for teachers to increase their knowledge and comfort around its use in order to integrate it into their classrooms, as one participant described: "…if online activity is something that will help the students because they are becoming more inclined to use it, then I think it's important for teachers to know how to use it and to know how to act online" (Group C). Participants across clusters discussed ways teachers can protect themselves in an online environment such as regulating materials posted online, considering intended target audience, creating a separate online profile, monitoring online privacy settings, and restricting social networking use.

Regulating materials posted online. The need for teachers to regulate what material they post online, as well as be mindful of others' online actions was identified across clusters. Both clusters discussed that teachers can regulate their own behaviours by being conscious of the tone and content of the materials they post. In addition, participants from the Not Possible cluster stressed that they have learned how to be mindful of others' actions from their own or others' experiences.

It is within a teacher's role to regulate their own behaviours online, as one participant expressed "I think that you can, yourself, individually, as a teacher, try your hardest to maintain your professionalism. I think it's something that's individual and that it's something that needs to be done" (Group C). One participant in the Possible cluster described that teachers can regulate their own behaviours by being conscious of the tone of their materials:

> …it's [being professional] just a choice that you can do, and just to proofread things, like, on your blog or on your emails that you're sending, and see how it would sound in another tone, not your own tone, and I think, just in that, you can be professional at all times (Group C).

This participant is suggesting that a teacher may be capable of maintaining professionalism by regulating the tone of a message prior to posting. Participants from the Not Possible cluster discussed that teachers can also regulate their own behaviours by choosing the content of the materials they post, as one participant outlined "…if you don't put it online, no one else can find it. It boils down to common sense. Don't put it up there if you don't want people to know about it" (Group B). This comment suggests that self-regulation involves teachers selectively posting content that they want everyone to see.

Further, participants in the Not Possible cluster shared how their own, or somebody else's, experiences have helped them regulate their online behaviours. A participant described her experience of how she made a conscious effort to stay out of photos from the bar that might end of up on Facebook later on:

> I went to a bachelorette a few months ago and I actually didn't let them take pictures of me. Like, I didn't want to be in pictures because I knew they were going to be posting stuff online. I was like…ugh ya know, I am staring my IPT and maybe I shouldn't have this type of content out there (Group B).

This participant's comment suggests the teaching practicum was a motivating factor for her when making an effort to maintain professionalism. Experiences such as this made participants aware of the importance of teachers self-regulating their behaviours at all times, especially in social activities outside of school (e.g., going out to the bar). For example, one participant outlined that sometimes friends take pictures during a social outing and post them online:

> …actively look at what people are posting. Like say you go out with a group of friends and one person is like taking pictures the whole night through. You sort of go like, okay, you can't post this one, this one, this one, this one because it shows me doing "this". You actively just sort of have to say I have this going on…don't do anything that could damage my reputation (Group A).

This participant's comment suggests that teachers may need to be mindful of others' actions during social activities so unprofessional content does not end up online without their knowledge.

In sum, participants across clusters considered regulating the tone and content of materials posted as an important step in maintaining professionalism online. Participants in the Not Possible cluster further discussed how their own experiences have impacted how they regulate their own behaviour as well as others' behaviours during social activities outside the classroom.

Considering intended target audience. Participants from the Possible cluster expressed that it is easier to maintain professionalism when teachers consider who will be viewing the materials they post online, as one participant expressed: "…you wouldn't do anything online that you wouldn't do in front of your boss, or, like, your colleagues or stuff like that (Group C). Differences emerged within this cluster in regards to *who* was the audience, as Group C participants suggested parents and Group D participants suggested the general public.

The focus on considering parents' interpretations prior to posting materials was discussed by participants from Group C. As one participant stated, teachers should only post materials online that they would feel comfortable showing to their parents: "I put nothing on Facebook that I wouldn't want my parents to see" (Group C). Another participant agreed that he/she always gauges how his/her parents would react before posting a picture or comment:

> When I was a kid, my mom used to tell me, like, 'don't ever do anything that you wouldn't do if I was standing, like, right next to you,' and I think

> it kind of applies to, like, what you put online… just the face you want to present to the world and how that kind of sticks with you (Group C).

This group perceived their parents' perspectives as contributing to their decisions about what to post online.

In contrast, participants from Group D suggested that it is important to consider how online materials might be widely interpreted by the general public. One participant simply stated: "if you think you could offend someone, you probably shouldn't be posting it" (Group D). Another participant elaborated that a teacher should not post things online that could be offensive to a general audience:

> [E-professionalism means] making sure everything you say would not offend a certain race or people or anything like that. Like everything you say has to be to the general audience and anybody can read it and if won't offend anyone (Group D).

This participant's comment suggests that in order to be professional online, it is important to only post material that could be considered appropriate by any person in the general public.

In sum, both groups within the Possible cluster discussed the need to consider the audience as a potential safeguard when maintain e-professionalism, yet groups differed on who this audience should be. Participants from Group C suggested gauging the reactions of one's parents; whereas those from Group D suggested considering the general public's interpretation before posting materials online.

Creating a separate online profile. Intentionally creating a separate, professional online profile was an idea presented by one group of participants in the Possible cluster. Participants in Group D discussed that making a separate, professional Facebook account would allow teachers a secure way to establish a boundary between their professional life and their personal life while still using the internet. One participant discussed his experience of creating a professional Facebook page after completing his teaching practicum:

> Yeah, I keep a separate account because after I did my IPT, I had grade 6 and these kids were the Facebook generation. This is all they do. They were hunting me down, and of course they couldn't find me. So, after I was finished teaching, I was like…okay, you know what? I will give you my professional Facebook account. If you have questions about homework or anything like that…I keep them up to date on any teaching I am doing, any tutoring I am doing, so if they want to stop by that's cool. Um, I get questions about all their homework assignments…and it gives a personal connection to your students. They learn better from you because they know you. At least they know the professional you. The "you" they should know (Group D).

This participant first described that, because students are likely going to try and access information about their teacher online, allowing students to access a professional profile (as opposed to a personal profile) may protect a teacher's personal information. Further, he expressed that having a professional Facebook account gave his students an outlet in which to maintain contact using a medium that they are comfortable with. Other participants agreed that creating a professional Facebook page could be beneficial to students, as one participant expressed:

> I like his idea that the professional account thing… because I can see it being very helpful to students. That professional account would have to be tied down pretty hard, but I actually…that’s a pretty way. I had never thought about it before (Group D).

Both participants’ comments suggest that students in today’s generation may be better able to relate to their teachers through mediums such as Facebook. In sum, a separate, online professional profile may be a way for teachers to create a boundary between personal and professional profiles. In so doing these teachers are allowing students access to professional information.

Monitoring online privacy settings. The need to monitor privacy settings was discussed as an important way to protect one’s personal profile on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter. Participants across clusters expressed that privacy settings are helpful in limiting access to a teacher’s social networking profile. Discussion also emerged in the Not Possible cluster related to whether a teacher should be punished for the things they post online when they have taken steps to monitor their privacy settings.

Privacy settings can be used to prevent people from accessing a teacher’s personal profile. Across clusters participants expressed that if a teacher is going to use Facebook they need to take measures to protect their account. One participant described: “If you are going to have a personal account, keep it private, keep it hidden, use a different name if you have to…just keep that section of your life on its own" (Group D), suggesting that it may be possible to keep a teacher's personal and professional life separate by using privacy settings. Another participant elaborated that a person can adjust their privacy settings to limit what type of information friends are able to view, as one participant explained:

> … there's a separate group of people that are on my Facebook friends list who are on limited profile, and they are only allowed to see what I allow them to see. So, it is not like I put it up there with the intent for everyone to see it… I put it up there with the intent for certain people to see what I want them to see in a controlled environment (Group B).

This participant described that teachers post personal materials with the intent that only a chosen group of people will be able to access them, which in turn suggests they may be depending on privacy settings to protect them from the dangers that exist in an online environment.

Another issue raised by participants in the Not Possible cluster was related to whether teachers should be held accountable for what they post online when they have strict privacy settings. One participant questioned:

> Because if no one can access it, like say you have no co-workers or nobody who really knows you have a Facebook account and you post some of this stuff online…should you still be held accountable for the stuff you post? (Group B).

The question this participant seems to be posing is whether a teacher should still be responsible for the information they post on their Facebook page when they have taken the steps to limit who can see their profile.

In sum, participants across clusters expressed that if teachers are going to have a personal profile, they need to ensure their account is highly secure by monitoring their privacy settings. Further, when teachers use privacy settings to protect their profile, participants from the Not Possible cluster questioned whether it is fair for them to still be held accountable for the information they post.

Restricting social networking use. The focus on maintaining e-professionalism may lead to restricting use of social networking sites. Participants from the Possible cluster expressed that teachers may have to protect themselves by restricting social networking use, or even withdrawing from internet activities altogether. Notably, this idea was missing from the other focus groups.

Participants suggested that staying away from social networking sites may be the only way to achieve professionalism at all times online. One participant stated: “I think the best course is to just stay the heck away because you don’t really want to get involved” (Group C). Other participants elaborated that withholding information alone does not ensure complete protection, as one participant outlined: “If you are trying to really limit what you’re saying to not be offensive, then you’d almost have to say nothing” (Group D). In sum, participants from only the Possible cluster expressed that the only way to guarantee professionalism online may be to restrict their social networking use.

Guiding Teachers to be Professional Online

A need to provide guidance for teachers related to e-professionalism was discussed across clusters. Specifically, participants discussed that setting professional standards related to e-professionalism may increase awareness of the dangers that exist in an online environment, as well as any potential professional implications that might occur as a result of inappropriate online behaviours, as one participant expressed:

> …I just think it would be helpful if I had an orientation on day one, ‘ok, so this is kind of our expectation, just so you are aware. … We don’t want you to be friends with your students on Facebook,’ for example, or we do, or we don’t care, or whatever… (Group C).

Participants raised various issues when discussing how to guide teachers such as allocating responsibility, developing efficacious guidelines, and self-regulating professionalism online.

Allocating responsibility. Differences emerged across and within clusters related to who should be guiding teachers in their online behaviours. Participants from the Possible cluster discussed whose responsibility it is develop and enforce professional online standards and expectations for teachers, and suggested options such as individual schools, school boards, professional development and conferences, or the ATA. Participants in the Not Possible cluster directed their conversation towards the possible costs and benefits related to building awareness about e-professionalism in pre-service teachers’ initial teacher education programs.

Within the Possible cluster, participants held different perspectives about whose responsibility it is to guide teachers. One participant suggested that guidelines should be developed and enforced within schools: “I think it’s important for schools…just because what you're going do in a public school is going to be different from, like, a Catholic school also, or, like, I don't know…or a private school or something like that" (Group C). Other participants within the cluster, however, attributed responsibility to either the ATA or the school board. One participant expressed: "… the ATA has to work within each school board, because those two powers have the ability to change your career… the ATA creates the guideline, and school board implements the guideline and adapts it to what their needs are (Group C), suggesting that collaboration between the two may be an effective method for developing and enforcing guidelines.

Further, participants discussed the option of guiding teachers through conferences and professional development days. One participant stated: "When we talk about being guided, like, it's something that needs to be brought up, whether it's through teachers' conferences or part of a [professional development] day, like, it needs to be on a consistent basis…" (Group C), suggesting that being informed about e-professionalism through professional development days and teacher conferences would provide a consistent place to be educated about e-professionalism every year.

Educating teachers about how to be professional online in their initial teacher education programs was identified as another possible way to guide teachers by participants in the Not Possible cluster. Participants discussed the benefits of being proactive when educating teachers about e-professionalism, as one participant expressed: "I am in third year and I feel like it would have been more helpful in first year. Because I turned 18 in first year and I had already done things that cannot necessarily be removed" (Group B). This suggests that becoming aware of the dangers and professional implications earlier on in his initial teacher education program would have helped him/her to avoid the threats that exist online.

In contrast, another participant within this cluster expressed that sometimes professors in initial teacher education programs are not up-to-date on current online practices, which may be an issue when educating pre-service teachers:

> I think that the university does its best with what its got, but most of the professors don't understand because they are 40 or 50 years old and that kind of thing, so even teaching 'you have to be careful online', well my mom can barely can turn a computer on and she's the age of most of my professors. So she doesn't understand the extent of what can be done. So…they can communicate it all they want. "It's bad, don't post it…" It is what our parents have been telling us our entire lives. Don't go online, don't post personal information, don't do this, don't do that, but just because they say it doesn't mean people listen (Group B).

Learning from people who are uneducated about the current online practices and the dangers that exist online may be an ineffective way of educating teachers, as this participant's comment describes. In addition, his/her comment suggests that even though pre-service teachers can be taught what is and is not appropriate, it is ultimately still up to them to choose how they are going to behave online.

In sum, although there was no consensus about whose responsibility it is to develop and enforce guidelines for teacher professionals, participants indicated the need for a conversation to occur about who should be guiding teachers in their online behaviours.

Developing effective guidelines. Differences emerged within clusters related to the type of guidelines that would best guide teachers' behaviour. Participants within each cluster discussed that guidelines should have the following characteristics: specific in content, adaptable to the context, and relevant to current technology.

To what extent guidelines should be specific in content and adaptable to the context was discussed by participants from the Not Possible cluster. One participant expressed that guidelines would be more effective if they were "black and white": "I think they would have to make them either very specific, so that people are following them to a tee" (Group A), suggesting that guidelines that list explicitly what teachers can and cannot do in an online environment would be beneficial. Other participants, however, pointed to the importance of guidelines being adaptable to certain contexts and situational factors. As one participant expressed: "…but if the guidelines were very black and white … that doesn't leave any sort of wiggle room for human error" (Group B*)* and another participant elaborated: "…it is all about the context, right. It would obviously have to be a case-by-case basis" (Group A). Both comments suggest the need to take into account the context surrounding each specific situation when enforcing disciplinary procedures.

Participants from the Possible cluster discussed the need to develop guidelines relevant to current technology. More specifically, they described that it is challenging to develop effective guidelines when technology is always rapidly evolving and advancing. An example provided was that social networking sites such as Facebook are always being updated and it is difficult to keep up, as one participant described:

> These websites are changing probably weekly. In terms of, like, the actual mechanics of the websites and the privacy controls and so on and so forth… but Edmonton Public or any of the other school boards, like, would probably have a hard time keeping up with it (Group C).

Further, another participant suggested that in a few years, other popular sites will probably emerge, which again leads to problems with keeping guidelines relevant, as he/she explained: “Probably in a few years it’s going to look vastly different, so creating, like, some sort of framework probably wouldn’t be altogether that helpful because it’s going to change” (Group C). This comment is suggesting that guidelines related to e-professionalism may not be effective for teachers unless the developers are willing to maintain their relevancy associated with current online advancements.

In sum, participants from the Not Possible cluster perceived the need for guidelines to be specific in content and adaptable to context in order to provide clarity and flexibility to teachers; whereas participants in the Possible cluster discussed that, because the internet is always evolving, there is a need to maintain guidelines relevant to current technology.

Self-regulating professionalism online. Finally, the ability for teachers to self-regulate their behaviours online was discussed as an alternative method of guidance. Participants across clusters suggested that teachers should, for the most part, be capable of using common sense to regulate their own behaviours. Further, participants in the Possible cluster expressed the need for teachers to be a part of the conversation when making decisions related to the development and enforcement of guidelines.

Participants from the Not Possible cluster expressed that teachers should have a degree of common sense about what materials they post in an online environment, as one participant stated:

> ...as a general rule, I feel like teachers are pretty good at self-regulating, right, because we understand that we are in an important position and that we have the power to influence these children, right, so I feel that as a general thing we are…people tend to regulate themselves (Group A).

The participant's comment aligns with the subtheme Society's Expectations of Teachers, as he/she suggests that teachers know they are role-models for their students, and as a result, should be able to regulate themselves online accordingly.

The importance of teachers partaking in the decision making related to setting standards for e-professionalism was discussed by participants from the Possible cluster. One participant stated: "…essentially teachers need to decide how this is [e-professionalism] going to be controlled, because they're the ones affected by it" (Group C), suggesting that teachers are ultimately the ones who are affected by guidelines, and should play an active role in their development. In sum, participants across clusters suggested that, for the most part, teachers should be able to use common sense to regulate their own behaviours online. They further suggested the need for teachers to be a part of the decision making process when settings standards for e-professionalism. A discussion of the findings and literature, as well as the current study’s implications is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Implications

The following chapter presents four sections outlining the discussion and implications for the current study. The first section responds to this study's overall research question: How do pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences compare when considering whether maintaining professionalism is possible? The subsequent three sections begin by addressing the important considerations related to the three secondary research questions, and conclude by outlining important implications for practice and policy (see Table 1 for a summary).

Table 1

Alignment of Considerations, Research Questions, and Implications

Important Consideration	Research Question	Implications
Evolving Expectations: Challenges for Teachers in the Digital Age	How do pre-service teachers' pre-conceptions about teachers' roles contribute to their notions about e-professionalism?	Defining e-professionalism for teachers through technology-related policy
Learning from Experience: Understanding Online Threats and Safeguards	How do pre-service teachers' experiences contribute to their perceptions of e-professionalism?	Informing professional learning and development opportunities within student teaching practicums
Developing Standards: Guiding Teachers in E-professionalism	What, if any, guidance do pre-service teachers' consider necessary related to e-professionalism?	Increasing the presence of technology-related guidelines and curriculum within initial teacher education

Comparing Pre-service Teachers’ Perceptions Across Clusters

The overall research question, *How do pre-service teachers’ perceptions and experiences compare when considering whether maintaining professionalism is possible?*, is addressed by discussing both the differences and commonalities between pre-service teachers’ perceptions when comparing the two clusters (Possible and Not Possible). There were commonalties across clusters related to society’s expectations of teachers and the power of the internet; yet differences between clusters emerged related to threats to internet users, safeguards to internet users, and guiding teachers in e-professionalism (see Table 2 for a summary).

Table 2

Summary of the Differences between Clusters

	Not Possible Cluster	Possible Cluster
Society’s Expectations of Teachers	- Within clusters *common* disagreement emerged related to whether or not the standards for teachers are fair. - Agreement across clusters that teachers play a crucial role in shaping the future generations of children.	
Threats to Internet Users	- More frequently discussed experiences with threats, and the negative consequences that may occur when information is misinterpreted or privacy settings fail.	- Discussed threats, but did not focus on their experiences or consequences. -Were more likely to provided hypothetical examples of situations in which these threats *could* occur.
The Power of the Internet	- Lack of control of information and permanency of material was identified as an issue that impedes one’s ability to be professional online, and can have implications for teachers.	- Power of internet can impede professionalism, and it is a threat beyond a teacher’s control.

Safeguards to Internet Users	- A teacher has to be extremely cautious about what they post, and a teacher is taking a known risk by using social networking sites, - More often questioned whether teachers should be held accountable for what they post when they safeguard themselves.	- Discussed their experiences and ideas related to safeguards more thoroughly. - Expressed that maintaining professionalism may be possible by creating a professional profile online or considering their intended target audience.
Guiding Teachers	-Guidance through initial teacher education programs -Specific and adaptable to context	-Guidance through ATA, professional development, and at a school level -Relevant to current technology -Teachers need to be part of conversation

Pre-service teachers within each cluster had differing perceptions about society's expectations of teachers, as pre-service teachers from each cluster expressed conflicting views about whether or not the professional standards for teachers are fair. Across clusters pre-service teachers also agreed that teachers are held to a high standard by society because of the modelling role they have with their students.

Differing perceptions emerged between clusters related to threats and safeguards for internet users. Those who indicated it is not possible to maintain professionalism online more frequently discussed their own or others' experiences with online threats, as well as potential negative consequences that emerge as a result of unprofessional online behaviour. In addition, they suggested that despite the protection safeguards provide, a teacher is still taking a risk by participating in an online environment. Contrarily, those who indicated that it is possible to maintain professionalism online more frequently discussed their experiences with online safeguards, and suggested additional safeguards (e.g., considering target audience and creating a professional profile online) that the other cluster did not address.

Further, pre-service teachers across clusters agreed that powers of the internet such as lack of control of information and permanency of material may impede a teacher's ability to be professional online. Participants who indicated that it is possible to be professional online, however, perceived these powers as risks that are beyond a teacher's control.

Lastly, differences emerged between clusters related to how teachers should be guided. Pre-service teachers who indicated that it is not possible to maintain professionalism online discussed that teachers should be guided about e-professionalism in initial education programs, and that guidance should be specific and adaptable to the context. Whereas those who indicated that professionalism is possible suggested that guidance should come from the ATA, and should be relevant to current technology. Finally, pre-service teachers who perceived professionalism as possible expressed that teachers need to be part of the discussion if guidelines are to be developed and enforced.

It is important to note that the clusters differed demographically related to program stream (i.e., elementary and secondary), yet did not differ on any other demographic characteristics (e.g., practicum, mean age). Just over half of the pre-service teachers in the Possible cluster were enrolled in the elementary education program; whereas, the majority of pre-service teachers in the Not Possible cluster were enrolled in the secondary education program. Thus, program stream may have been a contributing factor for pre-service teachers who perceived e-professionalism as not possible. More specifically, pre-service teachers in the secondary education stream may have perceived professionalism as not possible because they are prepared to work with adolescent students who are increasingly involved in internet and social networking use. In addition, in secondary education, students are more likely to develop working relationships with their teachers where boundaries may need to be set and enforced across various mediums.

Evolving Expectations: Challenges for Teachers in the Digital Age

The first research question, *How do pre-service teachers' pre-conceptions about teachers' roles contribute to their notions of e-professionalism?*, is addressed by initially discussing society's expectations of teachers and two challenges associated with the evolving expectations in the digital age. In this study, participants described teachers as being held to a high standard of professionalism, meaning that teachers are expected to uphold the standards of the teaching profession at all times. Participants often attributed this high standard to the influential role teachers are thought to play in their students' lives. These findings align with previous literature that describes the component 'teaching as a trusted profession' at the inner core of teacher professionalism (see Literature Review for Swann et al., 2010). Thus, because teachers are inherently trusted by society in in their role as a professional, a pressure exists for them to meet this high standard of professionalism at all times, including in an online environment.

One challenge with evolving expectations highlighted by participants was to what extent teachers should be held accountable for their behaviours in an online environment. A recent article published in a popular magazine, Psychology Today, expresses that teachers should unquestionably be responsible for upholding professional standards in an online environment (Meyer, 2011). Meyer (2011) explained that the internet is often perceived as a public space where people are free to interact, disclose information, and express themselves. Despite this, she argues that it is still a teacher’s responsibility to consider how their online behaviours might affect their students’ perceptions of them as professionals. In contrast, other literature suggests that standards for teachers are too idealistic. In a court case with the Toronto Board of Education versus Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (as cited by Berryman, 1998), the Supreme Court of Canada stated:

> The requirements it [the Ontario Education Act] sets for teachers reflect the ideal and not the minimal standard. They are so idealistically high that even the most conscientious, earnest and diligent teacher could not meet all of them at all times. Angels might comply but not mere mortals.

Thus, evidence from the findings and the literature suggest that a need exists for teachers to be accountable, to some degree, for their online behaviours; however, there may be a need to review the current standards for teachers to assess relevance with the realities they are facing due to evolving expectations in the digital age.

The second challenge highlighted by pre-service teachers in the current study was unclear expectations for teachers related to e-professionalism. Standards of e-professionalism are just beginning to emerge for teachers, as the Ontario College of Teachers was the first Canadian province to release a professional advisory for use of electronic communication tools and social media (Ontario College of Teachers, 2011). The question remains then as to why other provinces have not followed Ontario's lead. Literature indicated that the definitions of teacher professionalism in general are multi-faceted and evolving (Swann et al., 2010; Kuisma & Sandberg, 2008); thus, the complexity of defining what is and is not appropriate in an online environment may explain why standards for e-professionalism have been slow to emerge.

It is notable that unclear expectations related to e-professionalism also exist within other professions (Aylott, 2011; Greysen et al., 2010). As such, an article for nurses expressed a need to make expectations related to e-professionalism clear if regulatory bodies want professionals to use good judgement online (Aylott, 2011). Thus, building awareness about the evolving expectations that exist in the digital age is essential for teachers and other professionals if society expects them to behave professionally online.

These findings have implications for defining e-professionalism for teachers, as well as advising teachers as to what extent they are accountable for their online behaviours. Specifically, this study points to the development of realistic and attainable standards through technology-related policy. Thus, policymakers and administrators involved with the various provincial and territorial accreditation bodies may consider the study's findings during the development of teacher professional standards related to e-professionalism.

Learning from Experience: Understanding Online Threats and Safeguards

The second research question, *How do pre-service teachers' experiences contribute to their perceptions of e-professionalism?,* is addressed by discussing how pre-service teachers' differing experiences influenced their perceptions of the threats and safeguards that exist online. Pre-service teachers from both clusters expressed that the power of the internet in general is a threat to teacher professionalism, as teachers stated that their online behaviours are always in danger of being accessed or monitored by others. As such, the findings suggest that experiences such as student teaching practicums may help teachers better understand the potential and real professional implications, as well as the dangers that accompany internet and social networking use.

Pre-service teachers expressed that the power of the internet may make them vulnerable to surveillance by others, especially when private information is made accessible to the public. A participant compared this vulnerability online to a "Big Brother mentality", where a person is always at risk of being watched by others. The quote "Big Brother is watching you" is a popular reference from George Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-Four describing a world where every person's actions are watched, scrutinized, and controlled by members of authority (Orwell, 1949). The current study's findings suggest that participants perceive the internet as a vessel for which a Big Brother way of life may become a potential reality. With the rapid evolution of technology's role in society, there has in fact been recent concern and even controversy over the public's lack of privacy. For example, controversies have emerged related to inappropriate use of security cameras, phone tapping, online banking and shopping, and the ability for workplaces to monitor employee internet use. Thus, issues related to privacy pose personal and professional risks for teachers and others as they attempt to live a private life in an online public space.

Pre-service teachers who perceived e-professionalism as not possible more often shared their experiences with online threats, and alluded to how experiences such as a student teaching practicum might lead to a better understanding of professional consequences online for teachers. Evidence from the literature also suggests that experiences such as teaching practicums can provide insight into the threats that exist in an online environment, and even motivate change in pre-service teachers' perceptions and online behaviours (Saunders, 2008). When beginning their student teaching practicums, female pre-service teachers reported being more aware of their online behaviours as they reported "tightening up" their privacy settings, removing unprofessional (e.g., smoking and alcohol) pictures from their profiles, and changing their names on Facebook (Saunders, 2008). Evidence from the current findings as well as past studies, then, suggest that pre-service teachers' practicum experiences may help them consider the professional consequences of their online behaviours, as well as make an effort to change them as a result.

Differences in perceptions emerged with pre-service teachers who perceived e-professionalism as possible, as they more often shared their experiences with online safeguards, and discussed how making an effort to regulate their own behaviours, consider their target audience, and create a professional profile makes maintaining e-professionalism seem possible. These findings align with CPM theory, which indicates that individuals have competing needs for both disclosure and privacy in public spaces, as a result, need to develop regulatory abilities around how to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of their online activities (Metzger, 2007). Further, one participant in the current study described regulating his online behaviours after completing his student teaching practicum by creating a separate professional profile online to act as a boundary separating his personal and professional space. Similar conceptions have emerged in the literature, as pre-service teachers in Saunders' (2008) study discussed making an effort to negotiate their personal and professional lives on Facebook during their student teaching practicum by making their Facebook content reflect them as a teacher, instead of reflect them as a person. Saunders argues that Facebook, if used appropriately, can actually serve as a beneficial space where different identities (e.g., teacher identity, university student identity, daughter identity…etc) converge, and allow for the exploration and critique of diverse values, styles, and discourses. In sum, student teaching practicum experiences may motivate pre-service teachers to better regulate their online behaviours; however, questions still remain as to whether using safeguards in an online environment is sufficient to protect teachers from the barriers that threaten their professional image.

The findings and literature indicate that experiences may build awareness and understanding about e-professionalism; and as such, the current study’s findings have implications for providing pre-service teachers with professional learning and development opportunities within their student teaching practicums. One such opportunity might be observing and discussing technology-related classroom policies and practices with their mentors during their student teaching practicums. In doing so, it is hoped that pre-service teachers would be able to learn how to protect themselves online, avoid the consequences of problematic online behaviour both in and out of the workplace, and capitalize on the benefits of internet and social networking use.

Developing Standards: Guiding Teachers in E-professionalism

The third research question, *What guidance, if any, do pre-service teachers consider necessary related to e-professionalism?,* is addressed by discussing the differing perceptions related to whose responsibility it is to guide teachers: teacher accreditation bodies or educators in initial teacher education programs. Overall it is important to note that the pre-service teachers in the current study agreed that some degree of guidance was necessary, yet they indicated that, with enough guidance, they should be able to self-regulate their own behaviours.

Pre-service teachers who indicated e-professionalism as not possible suggested the need for guidance within initial teacher education programs. E-professionalism is becoming increasingly important for teachers as internet and social networking are integrated into the classroom as a learning tool. Literature on teacher professionalism has discussed the importance of guiding teachers as this integration of technology into the classroom takes place (Townsend & Bates, 2007). Townsend and Bates (2007) suggested that the expectations placed on teachers are inconsistent with what they are being taught, and teachers are beginning to require skills that have not yet been incorporated into their initial teacher education programs. As such, in order for initial teacher education curriculum to remain relevant to the twenty-first century, there is a need for introduction of topics such as access to online resources, online pedagogical practices (Townsend & Bates, 2007), and as the current study's findings suggest, e-professionalism. Further, the current study's findings suggest that if teachers are expected to be competent in using the internet and social networking as a learning tool in the classroom, they must also be aware of what it means to use it in a professional way.

Different perceptions emerged from pre-service teachers who indicated e-professionalism was possible, as they suggested the need for guidance by teacher accreditation bodies. Literature on e-professionalism in medical education also indicated a need for curriculum to be informed by standards set out by regulatory bodies; for example, the American Medical Association (Kaczmarczyk et al., 2013). Guidelines that inform curriculum are presently problematic for teachers, as teacher accreditation bodies such as the ATA and CTF have yet to create standards related to e-professionalism for teachers. Kaczmarczyk et al. (2013)

suggest that by using professional standards to inform curriculum, medical education programs will have the ability to provide medical students with explicit guidance about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in an online environment, as well as provide applied opportunities for medical students to be critical of the materials they and others post online. Thus, a need exists for curriculum in professional training programs to be informed by standards set out by accreditation bodies.

These findings have implications for an increased presence of technology-related guidelines and curriculum within initial teacher education. More specifically, there is a need for teacher educators to collaborate with teacher accreditation bodies to develop standards, and then use those standards to capitalize on opportunities to translate knowledge across coursework within initial teacher education programs. Providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect upon their current online behaviours within technology-related or ethics classes may better equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to proactively be professional online. The current study’s limitations and future directions, and the final word are outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

The final chapter of this study begins by addressing the limitations and future directions for e-professionalism research. The chapter concludes with a final word summarizing the main points of this study and discussing its implications for other professional contexts.

Limitations and Future Directions

Two major limitations existed in this study involving 1) focus groups, and 2) the sample population. Potential limitations of using focus groups were challenges with self-disclosure and influence of other participants. Further, limitations existed within the sample population as pre-service teachers' lack of teaching experience may have impacted how representative the data is to the general teaching population.

Focus groups may lead to challenges with participants' levels of self-disclosure. In focus groups, there is a potential for participants to feel intimidated, threatened, or uncomfortable when disclosing their honest opinions in front of a group of people, especially if their perceptions and/or experiences are negative, contradictory, hypocritical, or deeply personal in nature (Creswell, 2012). Because the findings are based on the self-disclosure of participants, the researcher must also consider plausibility, accuracy, and truthfulness of participants' responses (Creswell, 2012). Another limitation of using focus groups is the chance that participants' perceptions may be influenced by other people in the group. One of the aims of the present study was to compare those who indicated it was possible to maintain professionalism online to those who indicated it was not possible to maintain professionalism online. Smithson (2000) suggests that people's opinions are often influenced by other participants in the focus group. As such, only tentative conclusions can be made in the current study about the clusters' differences.

This is one of the first studies conducted on e-professionalism for teachers, and as such, future directions for the current study may involve the examination and exploration of e-professionalism using additional data sources (e.g., interviews, observational protocols, questionnaires). By using additional data sources, the limitations related to use of focus groups may be addressed. Further, future studies may consider examining the impact of e-professional focused education. For example, a pre-post design may be used to measure pre-service teachers' online behaviours before and after educating them about e-professionalism in order to see whether e-professional focused education positively influenced their choices online.

Potential limitations also exist within the sample population. Participants were pre-service teachers, which means their practical and applied teaching experiences are likely limited. As a result, the sample cannot be viewed as representative of the broadened teacher population. Future studies may consider including other types of teachers to gather more expansive information (e.g., in-service teachers, mentoring teachers). Further, collecting and comparing perspectives from parents and students may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers should be behaving online. Lastly, future studies may be conducted with other human service professionals such as psychologists, social workers, or lawyers to broaden the scope of e-professionalism to other professions.

Final Word

The current study begins to address important issues related to the emerging field of e-professionalism for teachers. This work is important to build upon given that internet and social networking will no doubt continue to increase its integration as a means of sharing information and communicating into the classroom and beyond. This study was focused on exploring the differences in pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences related to e-professionalism. The findings suggest that challenges exist for teachers as professional expectations evolve in the digital age; as such, there is a perceived need for some degree of guidance for teacher professionals. Differences emerged between clusters, as pre-service teachers who perceived e-professionalism as not possible were more likely to discuss how threats can lead to professional consequences for teachers; whereas pre-service teachers who perceived e-professionalism as possible were more likely to discuss how safeguards can help teachers regulate their own behaviours to maintain professionalism online. The findings of the current study have implications for informing initial teacher education programs and technology-related policy as standards are developed related to e-professionalism for teachers. Further, on a larger scale the standards of practice in the digital age also continue to evolve for other professions. As such, this study can serve as an example to other fields such as business, law, psychology, and social work as they strive to better understand and develop standards related to e-professionalism.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator's Role

The facilitator's role is to moderate the discussion, to keep the conversation on track, to help participants to talk with one another, rather than engaging in question and answer, and to ensure that all topics are covered in the available time.

Each key question has been written as a probe to spark discussion. **Some key questions have two or three questions within them. Read the whole of each key question. Then repeat the first part if there are two or more parts. The second and third parts may be repeated or used as a probe**.

Try to obtain as many different points of view as possible on each topic. And try to foster interaction that explores participants' reactions in some depth.

Direct discussion toward concrete and specific accounts of participants' experiences so that the conversations elaborate on the detail and are not too general.

FACILITATOR'S INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT—READ, PLEASE OR "AD LIB" THE IDEAS

Opening

[Facilitator introduces self and note-taker.]

Please sign a consent form.

Our research is aimed to inform our understandings of pre-service teachers' experiences, perceptions, and meaning making of online behavior and how it impacts professionalism. In this case, we want to hear from people like yourself.

Before we get underway, I just want to review with you the ground rules for our conversation:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- No side conversations—these obscure the taping and interrupt the speaker.
- It is important that we hear from each of you, and that no one dominates the time.
- Either you or I will steer the discussion to another topic if conversation becomes unproductive.
- The note-taker will note who is speaking, but will not participate in the discussion.
- There are ***five main or key questions***, so we will allow approximately 8 minutes for each question.

- Just a quick reminder about confidentiality. As you know from the information letters that your name will not be recorded in the write up. As well, in order to maintain the privacy of participants, please speak in general terms about colleagues including avoiding to refer to any students, principals, fellow colleagues by name, instead just refer to them as "my colleague" or "my student". In addition, the discussion from this focus group interview is considered confidential among the participants.

Transition:
Let's begin by asking each of you to introduce yourself by your first name and then using your cards, please indicate: is it important to be professional online? YES/NO/NEUTRAL

Key questions

1. What does it mean to be professional in an online environment?
    a. Using your cards, would your answer change if I said the profession was a teacher?
    PROBE: Why or why not

2. Using your cards, do you believe it is possible for a teacher to maintain professionalism at all times while online?
    PROBE: Why or why not?

3. We received many written comments on the survey saying that teachers should keep their personal lives separate from their professional lives. Using your cards, do you think this separation is possible in the current digital age?
    a. What are the dangers for teachers in an online environment that is different from a face-to-face environment?

4. What online activities would a teacher need to engage for you to consider them as "unprofessional?" (MAKE LIST)
    a. Which of the following should be considered worthy of reprimand, why?
    b. Which of the following would not, why?

5. How should teachers be guided in their online behavior?
    PROBE: ATA, guides, teacher ed.

6. In what ways can the internet and social networking be used in a productive/beneficial way for teachers?
    a. In what ways do you think the internet hinders professionalism for a teacher?

Summary of Key Points

3, 5

Facilitator's Closing Script:
Our time is over, so I must ask that we end this conversation. Thank you for participating.

Appendix B

Focus Group Email

Dear Participants,

This email is to inform you of the date and time of your focus group which is the second (and final) part of the participant pool for study KM1213. Please be reminded that in order to receive 2 credits you must complete **both parts.** Remember that in assigning you a date and time I have tried my best to consider the availability you noted on the survey.

The date, time and location for YOUR focus group is as follows:

Date:	**Thursday, November 8**
Time:	**11:30am - 12:30pm**
Location:	**Education North 6-121**

Please note:
a) You must be **10-15 minutes early** to sign in (late arrivals will not be permitted to participate and will need to rebook if space is available- this is not guaranteed). There will be a sign on the door if the focus group is *in progress.*
b) You will be provided with light refreshments
c) You don’t need to prepare anything for the focus group.

It is your responsibility to attend, and re-booking is only possible with extenuating circumstances. You are not permitted to show up without registration.

Thank you again for participating in this study and I look forward to seeing you soon!
Kendra McCallum

Appendix C

Focus Group Reminder Email

Hi Study Participants,

Just sending out a quick reminder that your focus group (and last research credit) takes place **tomorrow**, Wednesday, Nov. 7 at 4:00pm, in **Room 6-121.**

Attached is a letter that provides you with information about the study's content. If you are interested, please take a look.

Please note:

a) You must be **10-15 minutes early** to sign in (late arrivals will not be permitted to participate and will need to rebook if space is available-this is not guaranteed). There will be a sign on the door if the focus group is *in progress.*

It is your responsibility to attend, and re-booking is only possible with extenuating circumstances. You are not permitted to show up without registration.

Thank you again for participating in this study and I look forward to seeing you soon!

Kendra McCallum
Research Assistant to Dr. Cheryl Poth
M.Ed. Student, School Psychology

Appendix D

Letter of Information

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
Department of Educational Psychology

www.ualberta.ca
6 – 102 Education North
Tel: 780: 492-5245
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5
Fax: 780: 492-1318

Focus Group Letter of Information

“Investigating online behaviour and its effects on professionalism for pre-service teachers”

Dear Undergraduate Student,

As part of the study, we invited you to participate in follow-up focus groups. Our intention is to continue developing our understanding of your experiences and perceptions of online behaviour and its impact on professionalism. We anticipate the focus group taking 45-60 minutes. To ascertain whether what is reported is aligned by this group of participants with what is publically available, a researcher will search using your name the three social media sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter). Only aggregate data will be reported, at no time will individual data be reported to anyone.

The specific project objectives are: (1) to document current online behaviours; (2) to examine attitudes towards professionalism and knowledge of current technology-related policies; and (3) to contribute to the literature approaches for technological-related professional development opportunities within initial teacher education. This project is an important step towards informing research, policies, and practices around professionalism and will begin to reflect the effects that online behaviour has on professionalism in the field of education. The results from this project will be presented to various audiences (e.g., in the undergraduate classroom, conferences, and articles), however, it is important to note that your responses will not be used for evaluating your performance as a pre-service teacher. We will take all measures to ensure the confidentiality of your responses.

Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary: You may withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. Any information collected through surveys and interviews will be kept confidential and all research assistants will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research participants and sign a confidentiality agreement. Afterwards, the data will be stored on a password protected computer in a secured location for the 5 year duration required. If you should have any concerns at any time about the project you are urged to contact Dr. Cheryl Poth (phone (780) 492 -1144 or email cpoth@ualberta.ca).

For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. Thank you in advance for supporting research on how online behaviour impacts professionalism in the field of education.

Sincerely,
Dr. Cheryl Poth
Assistant Professor, Measurement, Evaluation & Cognition

Appendix E

Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Focus Group Consent Form

"Investigating online behaviour and its effects on professionalism for pre-service teachers"

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information concerning the study *"Investigating online behaviour and its effects on professionalism for pre-service teachers"* and agree to participate in the study. All questions have been explained to my satisfaction. I am aware of the purpose and procedures of this study.

I understand that my participation will involve a focus group. I have been informed that the focus group will last between 45 and 60 minutes and the interviews will be recorded with a digital recorder. I understand that I will have the opportunity to review the summary of the data and make additions and deletions.

I have been notified that my participation in this project does not affect my teaching evaluations.

I have been notified that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point during the study without any consequences to myself. I understand that all measures to protect confidentiality will be taken with appropriate storage, access of data, and the use of pseudonyms.

I understand that, upon request, I may have a full description of the results of the study after its completion by indicating below. I understand that the researchers intend to present the findings of this study at a conference, publish, and to inform classroom teaching.

I am aware that I can contact the researcher, Cheryl Poth by telephone at 780 492-1144 or by email cpoth@ualberta.ca if I have any questions about this project.

For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Please sign this copy of the consent form and return to Cheryl Poth

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Participant's Name: ________________________________

Signature: ______________________________________

Date: ______________________________________

I would like to receive a copy of the completed study ___ (give email address or full address)

Appendix F

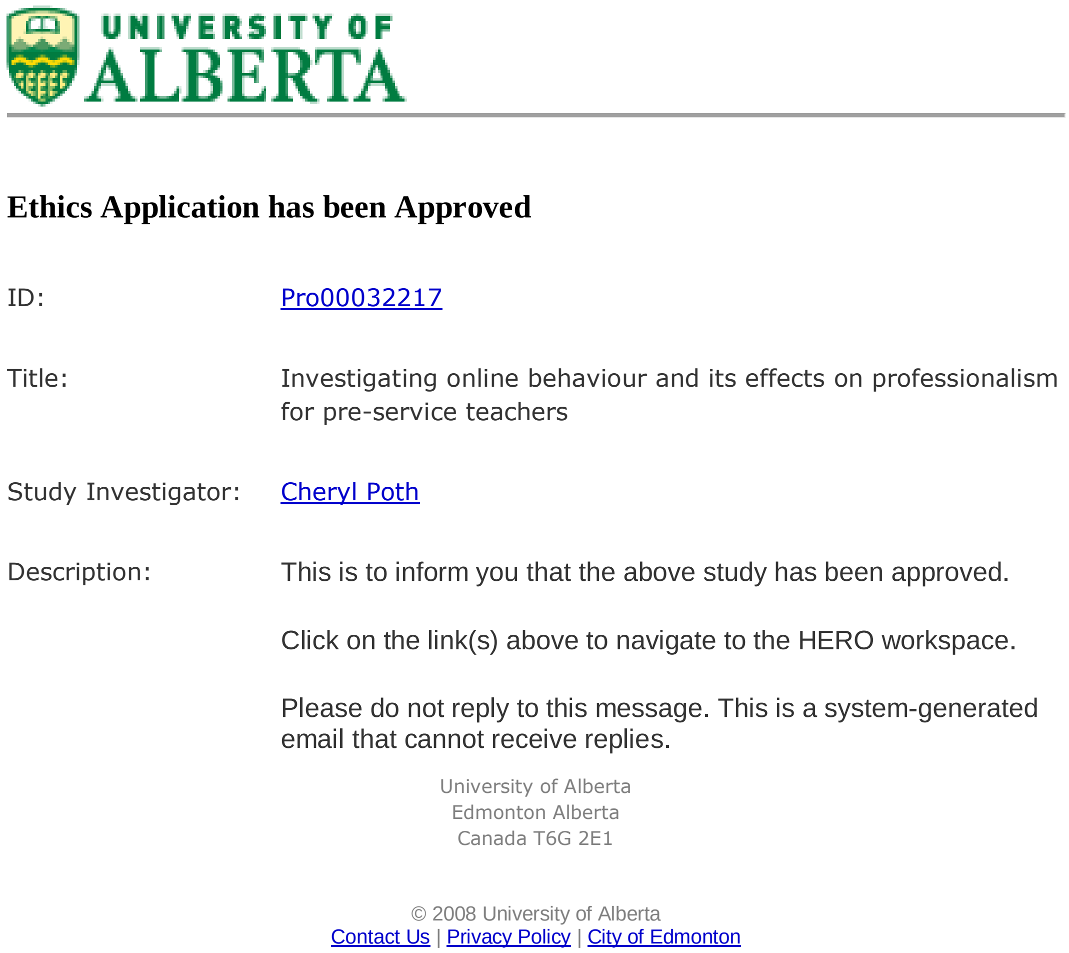
Example Field Note

Focus Group 2: October 31, 2013

In this group I heard from everyone at least 2-3 times. Everyone seemed comfortable and it was surprising how easily people were willing to disagree with each other. When the two quieter people talked they had well-thought out comments. As the facilitator I had some difficulties flowing from one subject to another with this group. I assumed that participants would be able to discuss definitions of online professionalism with ease; however, it was notable that the participants had difficulty responding to questions about how to define e-professionalism at a deeper level when prompted by the researcher to do so, as they would often answer “it is really subjective” or “I don’t really know…isn’t it just common sense?”. I was interested by some of the comments related to expectations for teachers, as participants often contradicted themselves. For example, some participants reported that expectations for teachers are too ideal, but then would comment that teachers should expect people to be hard on them when they enter the teaching profession otherwise they should not be teachers.

Appendix G

Ethics Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Ethics Application has been Approved

ID: Pro00032217

Title: Investigating online behaviour and its effects on professionalism for pre-service teachers

Study Investigator: Cheryl Poth

Description: This is to inform you that the above study has been approved.

Click on the link(s) above to navigate to the HERO workspace.

Please do not reply to this message. This is a system-generated email that cannot receive replies.

University of Alberta
Edmonton Alberta
Canada T6G 2E1

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Appendix H

Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Confidentiality Agreement

This form may be used for individuals hired to conduct specific research tasks, e.g., recording or editing image or sound data, transcribing, interpreting, analyzing, translating, entering data, destroying data.

For the study entitled, Examining professionalism related to teachers' online behaviours: A sequential explanatory mixed methods study to inform initial teacher education

I, ______________________________, the ______________________________
have been hired to
____.

Within this capacity I agree to the following:

- keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
- keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
- return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
- after consulting with the *Researcher(s),* erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).
- use my utmost discretion to ensure the confidentiality of the data and the participants in all aspects of the research process.

______________________	______________________	______________________
(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Researcher (Principle Investigator)

______________________	______________________	__________
(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)