Teachers' Professional Lives

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Chapter 7

Teacher Professionalism in Local School Contexts

Joan E. Talbert and Milbrey W. McLaughlin

Introduction

Teaching has long been portrayed as lacking both organizational and professional controls, conventionally conceived (Bidwell, 1965; Lortie, 1975; Weick, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Neither professional socialization nor organizational policy provides clear definition of teachers' roles and classroom practice; and neither schools nor collegial bodies have much capacity to meaningfully evaluate and sanction teachers. Yet, despite the effective absence of such formal controls, observers of teachers and teaching comment on the regularities in teaching practice (Cuban, 1984; Cohen, 1988) and the appearance of logic and rational management in 'real school' (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Metz, 1990). Institutional theorists argue that the constancies observed across schools arise largely from teachers' and schools' enactment of institutional rules enforced by public expectations and agencies in the periphery of primary-secondary teaching. In this view, conditions external to the school and ultimately to the education-policy system are responsible for the apparent sameness of America's schools.

Yet anyone who has visited schools or who has spent time observing classrooms knows that a school-is-not-a-school and that teachers' classrooms within the same school vary in significant ways — ways that matter enormously to students (and their parents). The differences manifest in such core aspects of classroom life as how much teachers respect and expect of their students and whether they portray subject-matter knowledge as static or dynamic, given or constructed. Such differences, we argue, derive to a significant extent from local norms and standards — the negotiated order of teachers' daily worklives in schools. In the absence of overarching professional, organizational, and institutional mandates and sanctions, teachers' worklives are heavily framed by local school traditions and norms.

This chapter addresses the problem of professionalism and 'standard setting' for teaching in the everyday contexts of schooling. We argue that teachers' professionalism, considered in terms of generic criteria for professional work and authority, is highly variable and contingent upon the strength and character of local teacher community. This claim rests, in part, on the assumption that colleagues are potentially important sources of work norms and sanctions when official or
internalized standards for practice are weak or inconsistent. The argument also builds upon prior research on teaching which suggests that privacy norms characteristic of the profession undermine capacity for teacher learning and sustained professional commitment (Little, 1982, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). Conversely, teacher communities which promote collegial discourse and collaboration set conditions for shared professional standards to emerge and be enforced.

Over recent decades, educational researchers and reformers have concentrated on technical, economic, and legal strategies for improving education and teachers’ claims to professional status, with little attention to the social-normative or moral-ethical dimensions of professional practice (though see Darling-Hammond, 1990; Metz, 1990; Noddings, 1984, 1992; Louis, 1990 for exception). Yet recent research in high schools points to considerable ambiguity and diversity in the norms and relationships that frame teachers’ daily worklives, and so the educational experiences of students. Researchers have observed, for example, considerable variation in teachers’ commitments to their students and sense of instructional efficacy (LeCompe and Dworkin, 1992; McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993a; Raudenbush et al., 1992). The problematic character of professional standards in schools and the factors that make a difference for the social-normative context of teaching are critical issues for educational research and policy formulation, particularly at a time when teachers face increasingly diverse and challenging student populations (Ward and Anthony, 1992).

This chapter addresses two empirical issues. First, to what extent do particular local contexts of the school system — sector, district, school, and subject-area departments — matter for teacher professionalism? Prior research suggests that each of these embedded school contexts can influence the development of teacher community; they may also play a role in promoting or inhibiting professional standards among teachers. Second, to what extent does teacher professionalism appear to be socially negotiated or constructed within school communities? Evidence consistent with our argument would show positive correlations between teacher community, or the level of collegial interaction and support in a school context, and professionalism indicators that persist after adjustments for teacher-background differences across settings.

We first enumerate generic standards for professional work and authority and consider conditions of teaching which inhibit professionalism so construed. Then we review literature on the school-organization contexts of teaching to suggest how strong, local teacher communities might promote professionalism. Data from a multi-year study of secondary-level teachers and schools are analysed to evaluate the argument and to frame issues for further research.

Problematic Bases of Professionalism in Teaching

The technical and moral bases for professional authority in modern society is the subject of a long line of sociological research (Weber, 1947; Parsons, 1954; Wilensky and Lebeaux, 1958; Wilensky, 1964; Scott, 1965; Vollmer and Mills, 1966; Hall,
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1968; Montagna, 1968; Etzioni, 1969; Freidson, 1970, 1986; Bendix, 1974; Larson, 1977; Collins, 1979; Abbott, 1988). In recent years, analysts and reformers of teaching have drawn upon this literature to specify standards of professionalism against which to evaluate and improve the profession (Lortie, 1975; Shulman, 1986, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 1990).

Primary among the conditions which distinguish a ‘profession’ from other occupations are:

- a specialized knowledge base and shared standards of practice
- a strong service ethic, or commitment to meeting clients’ needs
- strong personal identity with, and commitment to, the occupation
- collegial versus bureaucratic control over entry, performance evaluations, and retention in the profession.

Primary–secondary teaching is portrayed as relatively weak on each criterion for professional status (Etzioni, 1969; Larson, 1977). Academics have debated whether teaching is a profession or a semi-profession, whether it is an art, a craft or a science. Reformers have sought to engender teacher professionalism through various strategies to strengthen and amplify the specialized knowledge base for teaching, to enhance teachers’ economic status and professional commitment, and to increase professional control over performance sanctions.

Challenges to Professionalism in Teaching

Nearly a quarter century ago Dan Lortie (1975) documented teachers’ uniform dissatisfaction with their professional socialization and their limited sense of a shared technical culture. These conditions still hold, for the most part. Susan Rozenholtz’s (1989) research with Tennessee elementary-school teachers provides recent evidence of the occupation’s inadequate professional socialization and weak technical culture. Many teachers in her sample felt uncertain about the technical and intellectual bases of their teaching. Available evidence suggests that teachers do not experience their work as employing knowledge and standards for judgment widely shared in the profession. Research on teaching yields divergent conclusions about the potential for a specialized knowledge base for primary–secondary school teachers. While analysts seem to agree that, currently, teachers do not widely share knowledge for practice, some see promise in the growing body of literature on pedagogical content knowledge for teaching (Shulman, 1987; see also Stodolsky, 1988; Stodolsky and Grossman, 1992 for discussion of subject difference in teachers’ knowledge and beliefs). Other educational researchers, however, see constraints on the development of specialized knowledge for teaching rooted in institutional traditions and routines (Cuban, 1984) or in the dominance of texts and bureaucratic controls in education (McNeil, 1986; Wise, 1979). Regardless of perspective and prognosis, these analysts tend to locate constraints and enablers of professionalization in temporal or organizational contexts far removed from the daily worklives of
teachers. Such macro views of teachers’ specialized knowledge base anticipates, at best, a slow and general process of professionalization.

The service ethic, a second dimension of professional standards, is highly variable among teachers (at least at the high school level). Teachers’ commitment to all students’ personal and academic growth cannot be taken for granted. For example, research on tracking and teachers’ perceptions of high-school students in their classes reveals that many teachers believe that their students are not capable of learning course material and so water down the curriculum or write off the students (Oakes, 1985; LeCompte and Dworkin, 1992; McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993b; Talbert, 1990). In the interviews that Oakes and colleagues conducted with high-school teachers in the early 1980s and in our interviews in the early 1990s, many teachers stated directly and without apology that their students could not or would not learn course material. The client orientation key to professionalism receives uneven application in schools, depending largely on teachers’ assessment of student interests, abilities and motivation. Teachers may subscribe generally to the service ethic, but this standard is transformed and interpreted differently when made explicit in the school or classroom.

The weak professional commitment and control in teaching, the remaining standards of professionalism, were also well-documented in Lortie’s work (1975). He analysed teachers’ limited professional identity and commitment as rooted in the occupation’s origins as a ‘temporary’ line of work and in its wide accessibility and limited socialization. Professional control, Lortie and others have argued, is constrained by the insular character of classroom teaching. Further, Judith Warren Little’s research (1982, 1990) revealed the operation of strong privacy norms that effectively prohibit teachers’ ‘intrusions’ into one another’s professional space and define as illegitimate a teacher’s attempt to promote or enforce collegial standards of any sort. In schools characterized by high norms of privacy, comment on another teacher’s classroom was permissible only when aspects of practice, most especially inadequate control or discipline, encroached on another’s classroom. ‘Bad’ teaching, or even harmful classroom practices, typically were noticed silently.

We suspect, further, that public authority and market influences in US education set external limits, or conditions for variability, on each criterion for teachers’ professionalism. The fact that conceptions of good teaching are highly permeated by public values and beliefs — parents’ and others’ opinions about education, child development, and different ‘kinds’ of students — constrains the development of strong professional standards. For one, the service ethic in teaching is vulnerable to negative judgments within the local community about the abilities, character and potential of some of today’s students. An atmosphere of distrust or hostility toward new immigrant groups, for example, can foster and legitimize many teachers’ negative stance toward the growing proportions of non-traditional students in their classrooms.

The development of a shared technical culture among teachers is also inhibited, or even defined as illegitimate, by our nation’s strong tradition of local control coupled with divergent definitions of valuable knowledge and good teaching practice among parent communities (Ayon, 1981). The premium placed on specialized
school programmes and choice within the current education reform movement furthers the frame of local, versus overarching professional, standards for teaching. The issue of teachers' professionalism, then, may increasingly hinge upon local values and beliefs about 'best practice'.

Such external constraints on educators' authority help to account for the generally weak levels of professionalism reported and observed among teachers. However, they also set conditions for local standard-setting within teaching. In this regard, we know that the extent to which teachers collaborate and experience ongoing professional growth varies dramatically from site to site; this variability may well translate into differential professionalism across local school contexts. Strong teacher communities are likely to engender the technical culture, shared commitment to student clients, and occupational commitment that characterize the prototypic profession.

*Multiple Contexts of Teacher Community*

A teacher's worklife is conducted within multiple organization settings, each of which influences aspects of the teaching job and delimits a professional community of particular character and strength (Little and McLaughlin, 1993). The contexts for teacher community include school sectors, districts, schools, departments, and, for many teachers, professional associations such as networks, collaboratives, and unions. The multiple communities are, further, embedded in one another and so can be mutually reinforcing or competing in the signals and conditions they set for teachers' professional lives and collegial relationships. In summarizing research on particular teaching contexts, we suggest how each can support or undermine teacher professionalism.

*Sector differences* in teacher community — the workplace differences associated with teaching in public or private schools — find expression primarily in terms of mission, values and autonomy (see for example, Bryk and Driscoll, 1988; Chubb and Moe, 1990). Independent schools generally have a more coherent and mutually understood sense of school purpose, common norms and values for both teachers and students than public schools do. Teachers working in the private sector say they have greater freedom than their public-school colleagues in terms of what and how they teach and choice of instructional materials. In fact, many independent school teachers give professional autonomy as the reason why they teach in the private sector. Analysts also point to the institutional freedom, or absence of bureaucratic controls, of schools in the private sector as central to teachers' roles — being able to 'act as a professional', free from the rules, regulations, and multiple authorities that operate in the public sector (Chubb and Moe, 1990).

*District differences* also figure importantly in how teachers think about and enact their professional roles and relations (Rosenholtz, 1989; Louis and Miles, 1990; McLaughlin, 1992). Districts differ in the type and amount of resources available to education, in the expectations of the community for its schools, and in
the organizational arrangements that support school administration and management. The messages conveyed to teachers about their professional status, purpose, and value by district activities and choices such as committee structures, professional-development support and opportunities, or governance play a prominent role in framing teachers’ worklives. Case comparisons of CRC districts, for example, showed that different levels of respect, trust, and value conveyed to teachers by district administrators generated significantly different district cultures which either bolstered or eroded teachers’ sense of professional efficacy (McLaughlin, 1993). The extent of loyalty to the district — the pride or hostility teachers feel about their district — translates to an important degree into their sense of professional worth and of belonging to a community of educators.

School differences in strength of community are much remarked upon by those who have looked inside schools (see Mortimore et al., 1988; Newmann et al., 1989; Bryk and Driscoll, 1988; Little, 1982; Metz, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989). The extent to which teachers subscribe to norms of ongoing professional growth and development, collegiality and professional interaction contributes powerfully to school culture and community for teachers. Likewise, we found that a strong school mission, which characterizes the independent schools and special public schools in our CRC sample, can be an influential frame for teachers’ professional roles and relations (McLaughlin, 1993). Strong school-level community can sustain teachers’ sense of professional efficacy even under difficult teaching conditions (Talbert, 1993).

Important differences in the strength of teachers’ professional community also exist within the school, at the department level (Johnson, 1990; Talbert, 1991; Siskin, 1991). Departments, like schools, differ in the coherence of purpose or mission, norms of collegiality, and goals held for their students. Departments, even within the same school, vary in terms of expectations about teachers’ classroom activities, critical examination of practice, and involvement in curriculum development. Some departments comprise strong learning communities for teachers where faculty meet on a regular basis to reflect upon practice, review student accomplishments, or share information about new strategies, resources or ideas. At the other extreme are departments where faculty seldom meet on other than administrative matters, where there is little or no shared information about practice or students, where teachers are isolated from one another in both professional and personal terms. These department community differences lead to important differences in teachers’ sense of commitment to the school and their students, and in their willingness to take the risks associated with critical reflection and change.

Networks comprise yet another context for teacher community and one which can significantly influence teachers’ professional lives (Little and McLaughlin, 1991; Lichtenstein et al., 1992; Lieberman and McLaughlin, 1992). Subject-area teacher networks (the ‘Urban Math Collaboratives’, for example) can provide the occasion and support for innovation and change and opportunities for teacher leadership in areas of instructional development and curriculum. Networks engage teachers in discourse about the technology of teaching, exposing them to new content, conceptions of pedagogy, and providing the supportive context essential to serious change. Teacher networks outside the school context sometimes provide the only strong
professional community for teachers working in schools or departments with limited collegial interaction.

Research on the multiple contexts of teaching supports the proposition that communities of teachers — based in collegial networks, departments, whole schools, or districts — constitute the meaningful unit and potential for teacher professionalism in US education. Analyses of each level or kind of teaching context revealed substantial variation in the strength of teacher community and so in the potential for shared professional standards to develop. We expect that strong teacher communities foster a shared knowledge base or technical culture, shared commitment to meeting the needs of all students, and durable professional identities and commitments. Conversely, without opportunities to acquire new knowledge, to reflect on practice, and to share successes and failures with colleagues, teachers are not likely to develop a sense of professional control and responsibility. With Sarason (1990, p. 145), we believe that schools must be learning communities for teachers as well as students.

Our goal in this chapter is to demonstrate that teachers’ professional standards vary significantly across multiple, embedded work contexts and to suggest why that is the case. The analysis uses survey data for a large field sample of high-school teachers and draws upon extensive qualitative data to explicate the survey research findings.

Data and Analyses

The study is part of a multi-year research programme conducted by the Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching (CRC). Data analysed are from the 1991 survey of approximately 800 teachers in sixteen California and Michigan high schools. We also draw upon three years of interviews and two prior surveys conducted with these teachers to interpret this study’s findings (see McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993a for discussion of the CRC database).

We analyse survey measures developed for three of the criteria or dimensions of professionalism: technical culture (shared knowledge and standards), service ethic, and professional commitment. The criterion of professional/collegial controls over teachers’ performance evaluations and careers is invariant, since none of the schools in this sample has established formal sanctioning authority for teachers. While we have qualitative evidence that performance norms and informal sanctioning of colleagues evolved within some of the schools and departments in this study, we do not have survey measures of this process and regard it as highly dependent upon the presence of a strong technical culture and/or service ethic in a teacher community.

Our analysis has two stages. First, we examine variation in teacher professionalism and community at different levels of the education system: sector, district, school, and subject department. Here we consider which organizational contexts make a difference for teachers’ sense of shared knowledge, commitment to serving student clients, and engagement with the profession.
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The second stage of analysis concerns the relationship between an active teacher community — or high levels of collaboration and mutual support for innovation among colleagues — and teacher professionalism. We examine correlational data at the teacher level and at the subject-area department level to assess the general proposition that professionalism among teachers is a product of social interaction and negotiation of norms within collegial work groups or networks. Regression analyses including controls for job satisfaction and for personal characteristics and subject preparation help to rule out the possibilities that relationships are due to survey response bias or to teacher-selection effects. We conduct these analyses for teachers in academic departments (English, mathematics, science, and social studies) of sufficient size to warrant department-level analyses.

Sample and Units of Analysis

The CRC sample of sixteen private and public high schools was constructed within two different metropolitan areas in each of two states (CA and MI). The states were selected to represent different levels of system centralization and reform efforts. The metropolitan areas were chosen to provide contrasts for middle-sized urban districts on local economic conditions, demographics, and recent administrative leadership. For each of the four metro areas, we selected two or three high schools within the core urban district and one school from a nearby suburban district. In California, we also selected three independent schools serving distinctive student populations (one academic elite, one regular college preparatory school, and one for students unsuccessful in traditional school settings).

All teachers in the CRC field sites were surveyed each spring for three years (1989, 1990, 1991). The respondent N of 623 for the most recent, 1991 survey used for this analysis represents a response rate of 74 per cent for the pooled faculty population or 77 per cent average for the CRC schools. The samples appropriate for particular analyses differ as follows. For analyses of variance associated with school sector, the full teacher sample is used (N = 623). Analyses of district versus school variance include only public-school teachers in urban districts with two or three CRC schools (N = 538). Department-level analyses are conducted for the subsample of English, mathematics, science, and social-studies teachers in public high schools for which we have sufficient department-level data (at least four teacher respondents for all four academic departments); eight schools meet these criteria (department N = 32; teacher N = 253).

The sample partitioning required for this study does not affect the nature of variance analysed in different phases of the study and yields the maximum sample size appropriate for any given analysis. As shown in Table 7.1, the means and standard deviations for study variables are comparable for the total, public-school, and academic-department samples. Further, the separate correlation matrices for the three teacher samples show no significant differences in the structure of relationships among variables (available on request).
### Table 7.1: Means and Standard Deviations for Teacher Professionalism and Community Variables: Breakdown for Study Subsamples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>All Teachers (N = 623)</th>
<th>Subsamples</th>
<th>Subsamples (N = 90)</th>
<th>Subsamples (N = 538)</th>
<th>Subsamples (N = 253)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical culture (Z score)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service ethic:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for students</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>31.05</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>27.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for achievement</td>
<td>23.46</td>
<td>26.66</td>
<td>22.87</td>
<td>22.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional commitment</td>
<td>24.61</td>
<td>26.86</td>
<td>24.23</td>
<td>23.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher community (Z score)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
1. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses.
2. This subsample is used for analyses of departments: it includes teachers whose primary assignment is in English, mathematics, science, or social sciences.

### Measures

The four dependent variables for the study correspond to three dimensions of professionalism and are represented by multiple-item survey measures (see Appendix for scale reliabilities and wording of the component items). We developed two indicators of the 'service-ethic' dimension of professionalism to represent different facets of the concept which are important to teaching — the personal or affective and the academic or instrumental aspects of teachers' commitment to serving their student clients.

These variables and brief description of their measures are:

- **Technical culture:** shared standards for curriculum, subject instruction, relations with students, and school goals;
- **Service ethic:**
  - Caring for students: sense of responsibility and caring for all students as individuals;
  - Expectations for students' success: converse of belief that some students are not capable of learning the subject matter and lowered expectation.
- **Professional commitment:** commitment to teaching, the subject matter, and continued professional growth.
- **Teacher community,** the independent variable for the study, a measure of collaboration and ongoing learning among teachers in a school setting. This variable is an indirect indicator of the process we refer to as social negotiation, since interaction and discourse among teachers in a district.
school, department or network is a necessary condition for the construction of social norms.

Control variables used in the multivariate analyses include:

- Job satisfaction: satisfaction with the school;
- Personal characteristics, including:
  Gender (Male = 1; female = 0)
  Age (in years)
  Subject preparation: number of college and graduate school courses in subject of primary assignment
  enrolment in a degree programme (yes = 1; n = 0)

The survey measures of independent- and dependent-study variables tap teachers' perceptions of their work and work environment. Some are subjective reports of work conditions (technical culture and teacher community); others are attitudes and beliefs (caring, expectations, and professional commitment). Since these measures are commonly subject to bias from personality and affective factors, we include the global job-satisfaction measure as a control variable when assessing effects of teacher community on the professionalism variables. The job satisfaction measure is subject to the same personality effects as our study variables and so allows us to adjust for the common source of measurement bias. Controls for job satisfaction yield conservative estimates of teacher-community effects on professionalism variables, since both our independent and dependent variables should have substantively meaningful, positive relationships with teachers' job satisfaction.

Analyses

The first stage of analysis asks which local contexts matter for particular teacher professionalism and community variables of interest in this study. We analyse the total variance among CRC teachers on each variable in relation to embedded teaching contexts: sector, district, school, and subject-area department. While schools are the usual unit for research on teacher community, this analysis makes problematic the proper unit(s) for analysis of professional relations, norms and shared standards.

A series of dummy variable regression analyses are used to address the issue. Each level of school context is represented by a set of dummy variables: sector (private = 1, public = 0); district (a dummy variable for each of the four districts with more than one school in the CRC sample); school (a dummy variable for each of sixteen high schools); and department (dummy variables representing each of four academic departments in the eight CRC schools that meet our sampling criteria for departments (see above)). Another set of dummy variables representing the four academic subjects (English, math, science, and social sciences) is included in the analysis of department effects. The empirical question is whether or not a significant portion of variance in teachers' scores on a given professionalism variable is associated with between-unit differences at a given level of school context, beyond that accounted for by higher-level contexts.
Using a series of dummy variable regression analyses for each set of contexts, we examine and compare the $R^2$, or explained variance, for each study variable. To assess sector, district and school effects, we compare the $R^2$ for the three sets of dummy variables. To assess department effects, we compare the $R^2$ for the model with department dummy variables with that for a model including school and subject dummy variables. Since the set of department dummy variables takes up thirty-two degrees of freedom and may yield unstable estimates with a sample of 253, we also used a nested analysis of variance technique to corroborate regression estimates of department versus school effects.

The second stage of analysis addresses the question of teacher-community effects on professional standards. We first examine individual-level and department-level correlations among the community and professional-standards variables. We then analyse the professionalism variables as a function of teacher community with controls for job satisfaction and for individual background variables. Here we consider whether or not correlations of teacher community and professional standards at the individual level might be due to measurement biases and/or to differences in teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds.

**Embedded Contexts of Teacher Community and Professionalism**

The data reported in Table 7.2 reveal the levels of teaching context that matter for teacher community and specific dimensions of professionalism among teachers in the CRC field sample. Three sets of comparisons are presented, each using the school level as the point of reference. The first two columns of Table 7.2A juxtapose school and sector sources of variance; the second two columns consider school and district sources. Table 7.2B allows one to separate department sources of variance from school and subject differences.

Consistent with our own and others’ prior research, the data indicate that each level of school context matters for teacher community. Teacher-reported levels of community vary significantly and independently by sector, district, school, and department. Together these contexts account for about one-third of the variance among CRC teachers on the ‘Teacher community’ index (this estimate combines the public school department $R^2$ (.28) and the sector $R^2$ (.06)).

Levels of school context appear to differ, however, in their importance for specific dimensions of professional standards. Sector differences account for a small but significant portion of variance on each indicator of professionalism, as was the case for ‘Teacher community’. School differences, on the other hand, account for no teacher variance on the professionalism variables that are independent of estimated sector- or district-context effects. School-related variance on ‘Technical culture’ and ‘Caring for students’ shown in the first column of Table 7.2A can be accounted for by sector differences. Public-school differences on ‘Expectations’ and on ‘Professional commitment’ shown in the third column of Table 7.2A can be explained by district differences.

High-school departments appear to matter, independently of their school/
Table 7.2: Embedded Contexts of Teacher Professionalism and Community: Estimated Variance at Sector, District, School, and Department Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Sector and District vs. School Sources of Variance</th>
<th>All Teachers (N = 623)</th>
<th>Public School Teachers (N = 538)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical culture</td>
<td>.06***</td>
<td>.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service ethic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for students</td>
<td>.07***</td>
<td>.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for achievement</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td>.06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional commitment</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher community</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>.06***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Department vs. School and Subject Sources of Variance</th>
<th>Public School Academic Teachers (N = 253)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical culture</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service ethic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for students</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations for achievement</td>
<td>.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional commitment</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher community</td>
<td>.13***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
Estimates are based on regression models including dummy variables for all units at each level, e.g., the set of dummy variables representing CRC schools is used to estimate variance associated with the school level. The table reports the R², or percent variance explained, for each model.

*** p < .001  
**  p < .01  
*   p < .05

district contexts and of their subject-matter contexts, for three dimensions of teacher professionalism — 'Technical culture', 'Expectations for achievement' and, to a lesser extent, 'Professional commitment'. As shown in Table 7.2B, the between-department variance in teacher scores on these measures substantially exceeds that of the school and subject combined.⁵

This analysis says nothing about why sector, district, or department contexts matter for the teacher-professionalism variables of interest in this study nor whether or not they covary with teacher community. It does illustrate, however, the importance of attending to the multiple, embedded contexts of teaching in educational research. While school effects show up in the CRC sample (per Table 7.2), they can all be accounted for by apparent conditions in higher levels of the system; and conditions at lower levels of high-school organization matter in ways that do not show up at the school (or higher) levels.

We next explore the issue of teacher-community effects on professionalism at both department and individual levels of analysis. Our data indicate that the
Table 7.3: Correlations of Teacher Community with Professionalism Variables: Academic Teachers in Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher Community</th>
<th>Technical Culture</th>
<th>Caring</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Professional Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.53***</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.52***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical culture</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service ethic:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service ethic:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional commitment</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.41***</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Individual-level correlations are reported below the diagonal (N = 253); Department-level correlations are shown above the diagonal (N = 36).

*** p < .01
**  p < .05
*   p < .10

department is an important context for understanding differences in both teacher community and professional standards. However, considerable individual variation in reported participation in teacher community and in professional standards exists within departments, and part of this variation is due to the existence of teacher networks within subject departments, across departments in a school, and beyond the school.6

Teacher Community Effects on Professional Standards

The correlational data reported in Table 7.3 are mostly consistent with the proposition that professional standards evolve within the context of strong teacher communities. At both the individual level (shown below the diagonal) and department level (shown above the diagonal), teacher community is strongly related to shared conceptions of teaching practices (Technical culture) and to teachers' professional commitment. On the other hand, expected relationships of community to the service ethic indicators appear only at the individual level.

The pattern of correlations among professionalism variables helps to account for the weak association of department community with the caring and expectations dimensions of a strong service ethic. Specifically, the department's technical culture appears to mediate this weak relationship. While teacher community is strongly related to technical culture, the latter variable is essentially uncorrelated with caring and expectations for students. In fact, the technical culture variable is least coherent within the set of professionalism variables. Additional survey and interview data provide interpretation of this pattern and, especially, the lack of a positive association between the technical culture and service-ethic indicators.

It appears that qualitative differences between academic departments' technical cultures make problematic teachers' commitment to all of their students. In
Table 7.4: Regression Effects of Teacher Community on Professionalism Variables: Academic Teachers in Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Community and Control Variables</th>
<th>Technical Culture</th>
<th>Professionalism Variables</th>
<th>Professional Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher community</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>.51***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control variables:</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Job satisfaction (Affect)</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Personal characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (M = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject preparation (#courses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in degree programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-1.01*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Model II controls for Job Satisfaction; Model III controls for teachers' personal characteristics. Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients are reported. *p values vary for the models due to missing values for control variables.

*** p < .001
**  p < .01
*   p < .05
some cases, teacher communities develop strong commitments to 'upholding traditional standards' in the face of widespread student failure; a strong service ethic is inconsistent with the beliefs and commitments of these teachers' technical culture. In other cases, teacher communities embrace the service ethic and collaborate to forge new conceptions of subject matter and approaches to teaching adaptive to their non-traditional students.

Our data suggest that strong teacher communities promote shared norms of practice, or a technical culture, and enhance teachers' professional commitments — two conditions identified with professionalism. However, the substance of the culture and commitments, the normative character of the department or school workplace, vary significantly in ways that matter for students' learning opportunities and educational equity. Shared beliefs and norms among teachers in a high-school department may promote or actively undermine a strong service ethic. A case of the latter in our sample of schools was a math department united in the belief that the majority of their students were neither very bright nor motivated. In this department context, the failure of more than half of the students enrolled in mathematics courses was both expected and approved. In contrast to this department-specific client orientation was the ethic of the social-studies department in the same school, where standards of practice were defined in terms of 'success for all students'. (See McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993b for further discussion of teachers' alternative adaptations to challenging students; see also Davidson, 1992; Phelan, Cao and Davidson, 1992.)

The fact that individual-level data show substantial positive correlations between teacher community and service ethic (though not between the latter and technical culture) could be interpreted in various ways. One possibility which follows from our general argument, is that a teacher's participation in a strong professional community outside the department engenders or sustains a service ethic among teachers. Another possibility is that the relationship is an artifact of personality or professional-background differences. For example, teachers with a relatively positive and caring nature are likely to see and report more support and collaboration from colleagues, i.e., to have inflated scores on the 'Teacher community', and to score high on the 'Service ethic' scales. Another possibility is that teachers relatively well-prepared in their subject matter are over-represented in strong teacher communities and are better able to sustain students' success — in which case their participation in a strong community is coincidental with their high levels of professionalism.

Analyses reported in Table 7.4 shed light on this issue. For each professionalism variable, we examine the regression effect of teacher community with controls for a global measure of job satisfaction (Model II) and for personal characteristics of gender, age, subject preparation, and programme enrolment (Model III). Results do not support the claim that the community effects are artifactual due to either personality bias or background variables. Effects of community are essentially unaffected by controls for the background variables; indeed, a teacher's subject preparation appears unrelated to the professionalism indicators. Controls for job satisfaction reduce the estimated regression effects of teacher community on
service ethic and commitment variables, but the adjusted coefficients remain significant. Also, the community and professionalism variables are likely to promote job satisfaction, so this strategy which assumes that correlations among them are due to personality factors yields conservative estimates of the community effect.

Conclusion

This study supports the proposition that teacher professionalism depends, to a significant degree, on the extent and character of local teacher community. Consistent with this claim are data showing systematic variation in high-school teachers' adherence to particular professional standards between the multiple, embedded local contexts of teaching: subject-area departments, schools (private versus public), and public-school districts. Were standards among teachers largely a matter of bureaucratic controls over requirements for professional credentials and licenses, for example, then we might see sector differences (favouring public schools) but no systematic variation across lower levels of the system. Or, were standards among teachers largely a matter of individuals' professional socialization and values, then we might see district and school differences associated with their differential ability to attract highly 'professional' teachers, but random variation in teaching standards within schools. Our finding that high-school departments vary substantially on professionalism indicators, after school and subject effects are taken into account, supports the argument that norms of teaching practice are socially negotiated within the everyday contexts of schooling.8

Further, our data reveal that teachers who participate in strong professional communities within their subject-area departments or other teacher networks have higher levels of professionalism, as measured in this study, than teachers in less collegial settings. On average, they report higher levels of shared standards for curriculum and instruction, evidence a stronger service ethic in their relations with students, and show stronger commitment to the teaching profession.

We find, however, that teacher professionalism is somewhat contingent upon the substance of the department's technical culture. Specifically, we observe some tension between strong community and technical culture and the service ethic across the academic departments in our field sample. We suspect that qualitative differences in the beliefs teachers hold about subject matter, instruction, and students underlie the ambiguous relationship between department community and service ethic. In other words, the substance of teachers' shared technical standards can either promote or undermine their adherence to a service ethic. The math department mentioned earlier held strong standards of practice: flunk the students.9 In such cases, the department community embraces traditional conceptions of teaching and learning — emphasizing text-and-lecture-based instruction and absolute, grade-level academic standards for student evaluation — which compete with teachers' commitment to meeting the needs of growing proportions of non-traditional students who often are unprepared to learn, or even to survive academically, under these circumstances.
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Issues for Further Research

Our survey data for a large field sample illustrate local variation in professionalism among US high-school teachers that is related to collegial relations. Given limitations of the sample, however, further research should be designed to replicate and extend these findings. Specifically, both our district sample and school-within-district samples are small; and variance estimates are therefore imprecise. A much larger nested sample of teachers, schools, and districts would yield better estimates of variance in professionalism associated with different levels of the public-school system. The sampling design we call for is costly — population samples of teachers at the school level (needed to estimate department versus school variance) and multiple school samples within a large number of districts (needed to estimate school versus district variance). The state level would be a valuable addition to such a design. Unfortunately, none of the national survey programmes uses such a nested sampling design, and the survey we envision would require a major investment.

Despite its crude statistical estimates, this study calls for further research on the development of teacher communities and on the negotiation of professional standards within them. Our survey data do not shed light on key issues of how teacher community develops in the local contexts of teaching nor the nature of technical cultures that promote all standards of professionalism simultaneously. Such lines of research would require in-depth longitudinal studies, or retrospective analyses, of the development of teacher communities and their technical cultures.

Research on teacher-community building would extend the social-system perspective on teaching standards and professionalization and inform educational reform policy. At least two core problems frame this line of analysis. First, through what stages do teacher communities evolve? Or, what is the process by which a high-school department or a subject network, for example, moves from teacher isolation and norms of privacy to dialogue about teaching and collaboration? Are the stages common across kinds of settings? Do they begin with new beliefs and principles, as often assumed in current reform models, or do they begin with discussions of practice and evolve toward new, shared beliefs?

Second, what division of functions and roles is played in building teacher communities by the different levels of the system analysed in this chapter? How does department leadership work to promote collegial trust and collective problem solving, for example; what essential support is provided by district versus school administrators and staff? Further, can state policy and programmes set the stage for, or facilitate, the development of local professional communities? What about outside organizations and networks? Answers to such questions will provide substance to this study’s observation that each level of the embedded school context helps to account for variation among teachers’ community and professional standards.

A second line of research concerns the norms and beliefs around which teacher community develops. Our research points to tension between some teaching cultures and the service ethic. It calls for in-depth qualitative studies of different communities of teachers in, say, mathematics to determine the substance of this
tension. What elements of teaching in a content area are most negotiable; what norms for teaching compete with commitment to the learner?

Especially, this work would aim to identify technical cultures that embrace both strong subject standards and the service ethic. How do teachers in such communities construe their subject matter and student learners in ways that avoid conflict between the two professional standards? Answers to such questions promise to inform theory on teaching and professionalism — specifically, as suggested below, to extend the analysis from social processes in organizational settings to the broader institutional environment. We suspect that such research can, further, help to promote teacher professionalism by contributing models of strong professional communities of teachers effective with all students.

Implications for Theory on Schools and Teaching

This chapter's social-system perspective on the problem and potential of teacher professionalism seems well-suited to current conditions in US education. Conventional conceptions of professionalism as rooted in codified knowledge and legal controls over entry and careers point to constraints on teacher professionalism in the US context. Among the constraints are: a highly diverse and shifting knowledge base for teaching, wide recruitment and minimal preparation of teachers, the strong tradition of local control, and the movement toward school specialization and parental choice. The prospects for wide consensus and centralized authority among American educators are slim for practical and political reasons.

The challenge of enhancing teacher professionalism is, then, significantly a local matter. The prospects can be framed in social-system terms — as colleagues coming to share standards for educational practice, including strong commitments to students and the profession. In this view, local communities of teachers are the vehicles for enhanced professionalism in teaching. Dan Lortie entertained this notion of teacher professionalization, suggesting that collegiality would be a possible, albeit unlikely, route to teachers’ enhanced professional authority (1975, pp. 235–40).

Nevertheless, we believe that organizational and institutional perspectives on US education provide critical complement to our social-system view of teacher professionalism. They explicate the contexts and substance of teachers’ professional communities. Our research shows, for example, that district administrations can promote or undermine teacher community and, in turn, professional commitments and expectations for students. It appears, too, that the different technical cultures which emerge within teacher communities derive from the institutional environment: the various local cultures appear to be rooted in alternative, legitimate goals for education and prescriptions for teaching practice. To understand teacher professionalism in the everyday context of schooling requires the multiple lenses of organizational, institutional, and social-system theory.

An organizational perspective highlights the diversity among US schools, particularly in student composition, which has important implications for differences
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in the work of teachers and in the substance of their local professional communities. For example, the educational challenges for teachers in poor inner-city schools differ from those for teachers in private schools or suburban public schools and so present different problems for teacher collaboration. Both the local-community context and the technical challenges of teacher communities are delimited by school-organization boundaries. School organizations also establish varying capacities for building teacher community, by virtue of resources and leadership. School administrators and staff can enable or constrain teacher community in ways such as providing more or less space and time for collegial interaction, signalling and authorizing more or less teacher responsibility for good professional practice, establishing more or less meaningful opportunities for teachers to continue learning.

Institutional theory also sheds light on the diversity of educational cultures we have seen among academic departments in our field sample of high schools. The theory's principle of isomorphism is pivotal. Accordingly, classroom teachers and schools obtain legitimacy for their practices and support by conforming to the norms of 'real school'. Generally the case is made with regard to structural regularities of school organization (Meyer and Rowan, 1977); but the principle can also apply to technical rationality and modal teaching practices.

Given a wide variety of 'theories' about effective education and good teaching in US education, teachers and schools can obtain legitimacy by embracing any one of the alternatives. In this view, the various educational theories, programmes, values, and norms expressed in the broad arena of American education find local markets or niches. The problem posed by institutional theory regarding the character of teachers' technical cultures and the problem of professionalism is: 'isomorphic with what?' Which public values for education, notions of effective practice, conceptions of students and their differences, educational tastes does a community of teachers embrace to make sense of — and gain legitimacy for — their professional decisions?

Institutional theory can help interpret the tensions we detect in our research between the service ethic and technical-culture dimensions of professionalism. In most general terms, the tension is rooted in competing priorities in American education of promoting equal opportunity versus sorting students according to academic performance, of developing the 'whole person' versus promulgating subject-matter knowledge. These competing priorities can become sources of deep conflict among teachers and of differences between strong teacher communities.

A recent analysis of teacher beliefs (Prawat, 1992) reveals how institutionalized tension between commitment to students and enforcement of subject-matter standards manifests in individual teachers' beliefs and internal conflicts. Prawat and others have found that most (traditional) teachers compartmentalize these core components of teaching and so experience an ongoing struggle between the priorities of the curriculum and learners' needs (1992, p. 361). It is not surprising, then, that teacher communities often develop norms favouring one or the other priority.

We suggest that an integrative theoretical framework — combining social system, organizational, and institutional perspectives on American education and
the teaching occupation — is essential for understanding the problems and potentials of enhanced teacher professionalism. Any one framework, alone, cannot explain the variability, boundaries, and substance of teachers’ professional communities and standards. The prospect and process of teacher professionalism appear to be in the dialectic of local and institutional constructions of education standards within teacher communities.10

Appendix: Teacher Community, Professionalism, and Job Satisfaction Scales11

I. Teacher Community (Independent variable)

*Teacher Community Index* (8 items; Alpha = .85)

CRC 18. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your current feelings about teaching in general and your present job.

a. I feel that I have many opportunities to learn new things in my present job.

b. I feel supported by colleagues to try out new ideas.

c. In this school we solve problems, we don’t just talk about them.

d. My job provides me continuing professional stimulation and growth.

e. The staff seldom evaluates its programmes and activities. (Reverse coded)

f. In this school, I am encouraged to experiment with my teaching.

I. Teachers in this school are constantly learning and seeking new ideas.

ee. The principal is interested in innovations and new ideas.

II. Professionalism Variables (Dependent variables)

A. Technical Culture (6-items; Alpha = .73)

CRC 14. To what extent does each of the following statements describe relationships among the teachers in your primary subject area in this school?

b. We have very different ideas about what we should emphasize in the curriculum. (Reverse coded)

h. We have little idea of each other’s teaching goals and classroom practices. (Reverse coded)
i. There is little disagreement about what should be taught in our subject area.
m. There is a lot of disagreement among us about how to teach the subject.
   (Reverse coded)
n. We share views of students and how to relate to them CRC 29 (ATS 19). Using the scale provided, please indicate the extent to which you agree to disagree with each of the following statements:
b(e). Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.

B. Service Ethic

1. Caring for Students (6 items; Alpha = .74)
CRC 6. The statements below concern goals for educational outcomes and for relationships with students. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement as it applies to your own teaching philosophy and practice.

f. I try very hard to show my students that I care about them.
i. I feel that I should be accessible to students even if it means meeting with them before or after school, during my prep or free period, etc.
m. It is important for me that my students enjoy learning and become independent learners.

CRC 7 (NELS: 88 First Followup Item IV.5). On the scale below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

a. If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.
b. I feel that it's part of my responsibility to keep students from dropping out of school.
f. I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of my students.

2. High Expectations for Student Achievement (6 items; Alpha = .60)
CRC 5. Now consider each of the statements below concerning instruction in your subject area. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

j. No matter how hard they try, some students will not be able to learn aspects of my subject matter. (Reverse coded)

CRC 6. The statements below concern goals for educational outcomes and for relationships with students. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement as it applies to your own teaching philosophy and practice.
c. My expectations about how much students should learn are not as high as they used to be. (Reverse coded)
g. Students who work hard and do well deserve more of my time than those who do not. (Reverse coded)

CRC 7 (NELS: 88 item IV.5). On the scale below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

e. There is really very little I can do to insure that most of my students achieve at a high level. (Reverse coded)

CRC 27. (ATS 19) Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements about students in your classes this year.

d. The attitudes and habits students bring to my classes greatly reduce their chances for academic success. (Reverse coded)
f. Most of the students I teach are not capable of learning the material I should be teaching them. (Reverse coded)

C. Professional Commitment (6 items; Alpha = .71)

CRC 18. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your current feelings about teaching in general and your present job.

d. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that usually expected of teachers.
g. I feel that I am improving each year as a teacher.
h. I don’t seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching. (Reverse coded)
i. I really love the subject I teach most frequently.
j. I am always eager to hear about ways to improve my teaching.
k. I feel little loyalty to the teaching profession. (Reverse coded)

III. Job Satisfaction (Control variable)

Job Satisfaction Index (2-items; Alpha = .73)

CRC 30 (ATS 32). How much of the time do you feel satisfied with your job in this school?

1. Almost never
2. Some of the time
3. Most of the time
4. All the time
CRC 29 (ATS 19). Using the scale provided, please indicate the extent to which you agree to disagree with each of the following statements:

aa (ff)  I usually look forward to each working day at this school.

Notes

1 Sociological research on work in a variety of occupational and organizational settings demonstrates the power of work groups to set standards for occupational roles and productivity (most notably, Homans, 1950; Gouldner, 1954; Whyte, 1959; see Scott, 1988, for review of more recent research).

2 While in some cases the norms which emerge in a strong teacher community may actively undermine one or another professional standard, we will take up the issue of qualitative differences among teacher communities after evaluating the general proposition.

3 One school in our sample, for example, established by faculty vote a committee of five elected teachers to serve as a jury and sanctioning body for colleagues alleged to have complained about students — thus formalizing the strong service ethic that characterizes this school community.

4 This analysis treats school as the top level and subjects (English, math, science, and social studies) as the lower level; given uneven numbers of cases within the subject cells across schools, statistical tests of significance are not computed. Results of this corroborating analysis are not reported but may be obtained upon request.

5 These results are replicated by a nested analysis of variance (separating school and department variance) for the professionalism variables. For our sample of public comprehensive high schools, variance in 'Technical culture' and 'Professional commitment' is associated with departments but not schools; 'Expectations' and 'Teacher community' vary at both department and school levels; and neither level accounts for variation in the 'Caring' variable.

6 We currently are investigating networks as contexts for professional community and standards among CRC mathematics and science teachers. Clearly, some of variance unexplained by formal school-organization contexts in this study can be accounted for by informal networks of teachers. The individual-level analysis of teacher-community effects on professionalism assumes such informal or out-of-school contexts of teachers' worklives.

7 CRC survey data show that, on average, teachers' technical cultures tend toward the traditional side of this dichotomy. This is illustrated by the positive, though weak, correlation between 'Technical culture' and indicators of static conceptions of subject matter and routine views of the teaching job (both of which are negatively related to the service ethic and professional-commitment variables).

8 We note, however, that substantial variation among individuals within departments remains. In particular, the standards of caring for students and overall professional commitment are not well explained by context differences represented in this field sample. Neither are these dimensions of professionalism accounted for by individual preparation and personal variables; even a likely relationship between teacher gender and caring for students is not shown by these data. Of course, it may still be the case that unmeasured background variables are important, such as different emphases in teacher-preparation programmes on normative standards for the profession.

9 This department scored relatively high on our measures of teacher community and technical culture but low on the service ethic indicators.

10 Principal components factor analyses of CRC survey data for approximately 650
teachers were used to define the scales; alpha coefficients indicate the internal consistency of scale items.

Some of the CRC teacher-questionnaire items replicate items from the ‘High School and Beyond programme’s 1984 Administrator and Teacher Survey (ATS)’ or from the NELS:88 First Follow-up Teacher Survey. In these cases, the questionnaire item number from the relevant national teacher survey is reported (in parentheses) along with the item number from the CRC 1991 Teacher Survey.

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References

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