Conduct Unbecoming? Teacher Professionalism, Ethical Codes, and Shifting Social Expectations

Natasha Cochran and Lynn Lemisko

University of Saskatchewan

Author's Note

Natasha Cochran https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7437-8506

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Natasha Cochran, Educational Foundations, Room 3104, Education Building, University of Saskatchewan, 28 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1. Email: natasha.cochran@usask.ca

Abstract

In this paper we share findings from a historical investigation into changing expectations regarding teacher conduct as connected to the evolving Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Code of Ethics and the eventual proclamation of a Government-mandated teacher regulatory board. This study was based on the idea that views of appropriate conduct embedded in ethical codes evolve in relation to shifting societal norms and values. We demonstrate that the tone and content of ethical codes of conduct for Saskatchewan teachers transformed from explicit and concrete to abstract and ambiguous.

Keywords: conduct unbecoming; code of ethics; teacher regulation; teaching profession

Conduct Unbecoming? Teacher Professionalism, Ethical Codes, and Shifting Social Expectations

In the 21st century, teacher professionalism seems to interweave notions of ethical educator conduct with accountability to the public more deeply than ever. Breaches in ethical conduct, once often contained within the workplace and/or community in which they occurred, are now accessible by the public at large via a host of news and social media platforms. For example, in 2013, a particularly damaging investigative news story came out in a local newspaper in Saskatchewan suggesting that teachers were not being suitably disciplined by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) when accused of misconduct (French, 2013). This article posed questions about the appropriateness of current STF disciplinary structures. Other newspapers, blogs, and television reports sustained the circulation of questions about whether teachers accused of violating the STF Code of Ethics were being properly regulated. In response to the furor sparked by this reportage, the Government ordered a study of processes, policies, and structures for teacher regulation in Saskatchewan. In 2015, based on recommendations from the resulting report (Kendel, 2013), the Provincial Government mandated a separation of powers between the STF and a newly created organization, the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board (SPRTB). The SPRTB would henceforth, "establish and administer the professional certification and standards of professional conduct and competence of teachers for the purposes of serving and protecting the public" (Province of Saskatchewan, 2015, p. 4)—that is, the SPRTB became responsible for disciplining teachers found guilty of ethical misconduct and professional incompetence

While media, the public at large, and the Provincial Government appeared to be most focused on how teacher misconduct should be handled, the issues illuminated in the example outlined above raise questions about how proper conduct and conversely, misconduct, are defined by the teaching profession, both in the past and in the present. In particular, this paper addresses the development of the STF Code of Ethics and documents how the historical evolution of this Code informs present-day understandings of the term *conduct unbecoming* among teachers, the public, and the Government in Saskatchewan. The findings demonstrate that the tone and content of ethical codes of conduct for Saskatchewan teachers transformed from explicit, concrete, and regulatory to abstract, ambiguous, and aspirational. Understanding these changes from a historical perspective and contrasting past codes with present day SPTRB bylaws can enhance ethical awareness, helping educators to better grapple with and enact their professional obligations.

We posit that our study is of practical significance to both teachers and professions outside of the education sector. Situations involving ethical dilemmas consistently bombard both professionals and the public at large, surfacing in the news and developing in workplaces. As self-governing professions became increasingly challenged by questions regarding transparency and public accountability (Glaze, 2018; Kendel, 2013; Schultze, 2007), ethical conduct is more regularly questioned and scrutinized. We take the position that such questioning requires ethical awareness based on historical consciousness.

Understanding the roots of codes that guide ethical conduct allows professional collectives to create a climate of ethical awareness and consensus through healthy debate and lively discussion and can induce professionals to choose to behave in ways that honor professional, contractual, and societal expectations. Hence, in this paper we address this

question: In what ways have understandings of teacher professionalism and expectations around ethical conduct evolved over time in the province of Saskatchewan? Furthermore, to demonstrate the historical evolution of the STF Code of Ethics, we address these sub-questions:

- What was considered appropriate conduct or conduct unbecoming for teachers prior to establishment of the STF in 1935?

- As stipulated in the first 1935 STF Code of Ethics titled, "the Canon," what was considered appropriate conduct or conduct unbecoming?

- What were there significant changes regarding what was considered appropriate conduct or conduct unbecoming according the STF Code of Ethics between 1935 and 2017?

Our findings reveal that the STF Code of Ethics has evolved from explicit, highly regulatory, and concrete expectations for conduct to abstract, unstipulated and aspirational expectations. While it can be argued that a more abstract and aspirational code of ethics demonstrates a high degree of trust in teachers as professionals, it can also be claimed that such codes are less clear about what is expected, sometime leaving teachers uncertain as to what is and is not conduct unbecoming. Exploring the evolution of the STF Code from a historical perspective and contrasting past codes with present day codes and SPTRB bylaws has the potential to enhance ethical awareness, helping educators to better grapple with and enact their professionals obligations.

Literature Review

In this review we shed light on existing studies that explored the relationship between professions, codes of ethics, and teacher professionalism. Although the literature review includes a brief discussion of studies that have attempted to delineate the characteristics that denote professions, our main focus was on studies that attempted to better understand the connection between ethical codes of conduct and how these have helped to define teaching as a profession.

Historically, the term *profession* goes back to the Middle Ages, when it was connoted with the "learned professions" of Divinity, Law, and Medicine (Monteiro, 2015, p. 49). Officially, professions were not aggressively studied until the mid 1900s, "as the demand for professional status grew more and more, and the professions became a subject of varied research" (Monteiro, 2015, p. 49). Typically, the research conducted on professions occurred in the field of sociology and was "prominent from the 1950s through the 1970s, before being generally abandoned in the 1980s and 1990s because no single definition could fully capture the complexity of professional employment and its variations across time and space" (Adams, 2010, p. 50). In short, there exists a whole body of research, spanning many decades, that attempts to define what it means to be a profession. While there has not been a high degree of agreement about the characteristics of a profession, a consensus seems to have been reached about the characteristics that separate a profession from an occupation. This accord came about when sociologists declined to offer one concrete definition of a profession, but rather listed attributes thought to be characteristic of "professional" vocations and then offered judgements as to which occupations most closely matched those commonly agreed upon characteristics (Montagna, 1977).

For example, Parsons (1968), a researcher who has had ongoing impact in the study of professions, felt that the characteristics most commonly held by professions included the following: (a) were formal, specialized training with an emphasis that the training be highly

intellectual; (b) demonstrated mastery of skills through practical applications of skill; and (c) had mechanisms inside of the profession that would ensure that those with specialized skills would use them responsibly. Later, Benveniste (1987) maintained the characteristics highlighted by Parsons (1968), but extended the definition to specifically include ethics and the importance of being accountable to the public.

Along with Parsons (1968) and Benveniste (1987), a large number of researchers (Bayles, 1989; Freidson, 1983; Greenwood, 1957; Larson, 1977; Lieberman, 1956; Moore, 1970; Pavalko, 1988), emphasized that a profession must also provide a definite and essential service to society, have the autonomy to self-regulate, and have an established code of ethics to ensure competent performance. Outside of the field of sociology, a more modern definition of what it means to be a profession is provided by the Professional Standards Council (2016): A profession is,

> a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards. This group positions itself as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognized body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and is recognized by the public as such. A profession is also prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others. (para. 6)

Freidson (1983) proposed, researchers should explore the social-historical contexts to "determine who is a professional and who is not, and how they 'make' or 'accomplish' professions by their activities" (p. 27). Using both Freidson's (1983) and Adams' (2010) arguments contextualizing the history surrounding any profession is important for understanding the profession as a whole. Some of that history can be seen in how occupations were characterized as professions as per Parsons (1968) and Benveniste (1987) and in the activities members engaged in, such as the creation and maintenance of a code of ethics

Historically, the establishment of a code of ethics has been seen as a significant characteristic of professions (Coady & Bloch, 1996; Montagna, 1977). Since 1935, teachers in Saskatchewan have practiced according to the STF Code of Ethics, which specifies teachers' obligations to the public to act in an ethical manner. Hence, it can be argued that teachers can be identified as professionals.

Monteiro (2015) stated that, in fact, "Every professional occupation, both humble and proud, holds an ethical dimension insofar as it implies some trustworthy relationship between persons and some kind of responsibility over what it does" (p. 69). Further, Monteiro (2015) argued that the ethical dimension for a profession grows infinitely more complex "in proportion to the extent to which the profession deals most directly and essentially with the human person … and broader its public exposure" (p. 69). For teachers, the ethical dimension existing between them and the public is immense. In 2008, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) stated, "The public trusts professional teachers because they have the qualifications, including specialized knowledge, skills, and judgement, to serve students' educational needs" (para. 5). Correspondingly, teachers have a responsibility to "act at all times in a manner that is worthy of this public trust and consistent with the teaching profession's expectations" (STF, 2008, para. 5).

The concept of public trust includes the belief that professions—teachers included—should hold the interests of society above their own. All professions must have a system of accountability to govern them, in turn "protecting the profession's client—the public—from

incompetent and dishonest practitioners" (Grimmett & Young, 2012, p. 2). One of the ways that teachers have tried to "foster a reputation of integrity, competence, and commitment to the public interest" is through their code of ethics (STF, 2013, p. 2). In other words, teachers procure increased public trust by upholding their professional code of ethics.

To understand codes of ethics, one must first know how they are defined and where they come from. Historically, the word "code" came from *codex* or *caudex*, a Latin word etymology, meaning "a special kind of book, namely a systemic written collection of laws or rules" (Siggins, 1996, p. 56). Likely the term *code of ethics* has its beginnings in "Hebrew law collections incorporated into the Old Testament scriptures" (Siggins, 1996, p. 56) and is more modernly codified in the French civil, commercial, and criminal laws enacted in 1804–10, which, though amended, are still in force today and have been imitated by other code-law countries (p. 56). In relating ethics to the concept of *profession*, "The word 'profession' in its Latin form meant a public declaration or vow" (Iacovino, 2002, p. 63). Ethical codes, then, should clearly be seen as the modern day vow made by professionals. Because ethical codes are a "formal and public proclaiming [of] core values, which are the source of professional responsibilities, laid down in principles and duties" (Monteiro, 2015, p. 70), they function as commitments on the part of a profession to itself and to the public.

Traditionally, codes of ethics had strong implications of oath-taking—the ritual of declaring oneself set apart to fulfill an extraordinary commitment or assume an exalted and authoritative calling (Siggins, 1996, p. 56). Jonsen and Butler (1975) paraphrasing Bourke (1968) wrote, "Thus from the time of the first Greek philosophers, ethics had but one meaning … It is the reflective study of what is good or bad in that part of human conduct for which man has some personal responsibility" (p. 22). To emphasize the relationship between ethics and responsibility, Siggins (1996) highlighted how and why professions such as medicine and law were set apart from the rest of society. Members of those professions bestowed with elite status (generally divinity, law, and medicine) took oaths to prove their virtuous character, their avowed duty to others, and their prudence of etiquette for their craft (Siggins, 1996, p. 58). Historically, ethical codes were the method through which religious and political stakeholders—those with the right to "supervise and regulate morality, family life, education, and even commerce and warfare" (Siggins, 1996, p. 64) assured the public that professions were fulfilling their "dut[ies] to society, law, and truth" (p. 62). In this way adherence to ethics was tantamount to public trust.

In both the past and the present, the argument over why professions need a code of ethics remains standard. Professions possess and use a particular knowledge and expertise to help people who are in need of their services. The public, utilizing the services of those employed in professions, need to be able to trust that the profession demonstrates sufficient expertise and will not abuse the user of their services (Banks, 1998). In general, most people do not possess all of the knowledge they need to tap into specialized knowledge and skills without utilizing the supplier of services expressly educated to fulfill such needs (Fullinwider, 1996). According to Larson (1977), professions are occupations with special autonomy and prestige, so codes of ethics serve as an essential part of protecting the public's potential exploitation of vulnerability (Fullinwider, 1996). In this light, codes of ethics can be defined as documented declarations of what professions should do (Strike & Soltis, 1998) and "enunciate what … their responsibilities and obligations are" (Campbell, 2000, p. 211). Codified ethics "describe duties professionals must perform, conduct they must forgo and situations they must avoid" (Fullinwider, 1996, p. 72). Codes of ethics are the tangible portrayal of quality practice.

Beyond a definition of ethics, Banks (1995, 1998) identified four distinct purposes of ethical codes that can be applied across professions. First, because an ethical code is a key feature of professions, "the adoption of a code of ethics is … about establishing the professional status of an occupational group" (Banks, 1998, p. 218). Second, an ethical code plays a role in the creation and maintenance of professional identity: "It affirms the fact that members of an occupational group belong to a community of people who share and are publicly committed to the same values" (Banks, 1998, p. 218). Third, ethical codes provide guidance to professionals about how to act, and finally, these codes serve as protection of users from malpractice or abuse (Banks, 1998). Not only can codes of ethics be defined as a framework that formally and publicly states professional responsibilities, principles, and overall values, they also have clear purpose and function.

Monteiro (2015) pointed out that the ethical dimension for teachers is more demanding than other professions because teachers constantly deal with the public (p. 69). Monteiro (2015) compares teachers to being like a "goldfish bowl" (p. 74) where teachers are constantly exposed to public scrutiny. This scrutiny is a result of being in day-to-day contact with students who echo the behavior of their teachers back to families and society. Teachers cannot afford to make decisions based on "moral subjectivity and relativity" because if their "competence and conduct are not professionally acceptable, the profession's public image is significantly and negatively affected" (p. 74).

In the fish bowl that is education (Monteiro, 2015), ethics and teaching cannot be seen as separate entities because teachers' "cognitive and ethical dimensions are, in practice, deeply intertwined" (Monteiro, 2015, p. 69). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in the United States sums this intertwining of complex job requirements and ethics perfectly:

> The ethical dimensions of teaching also distinguish it from other professions. Unique demands arise because the client's attendance is compulsory and, more importantly, because the clients are children. Thus, elementary, middle and high school teachers are obligated to meet a stringent ethical standard. Other ethical demands derive from the teacher's role as a model of an educated person … Teachers, consequently, must conduct themselves in a manner students might emulate. Their failure to practice what they preach does not long elude students, parents or peers (NBPTS, 2002, p. 6).

The NBPTS highlights the idea that teachers' codes of ethics and public trust in the teaching profession go hand in hand. The STF (2000) also considered the importance of ethics, teaching, and public trust:

> In teachers' evolution towards professional status, it has been decided that a high level of public respect and confidence is best achieved when teachers themselves establish and maintain a reputation for integrity, competence and commitment. The level of esteem within which the teaching profession is held by the society it serves will be determined by the collective will of teachers not to compromise the highest standards of professional ethics. (pp. 4–5)

In truth, teachers' ethical codes not only bolster public trust, but these codes function as a symbolic statement about the profession itself (Fischer & Zinke, 1989), encapsulating teachers' ethical activities, motives, and responsibilities to the larger society, stakeholders of education,

and even to themselves. In fact, Hostetler (1997) described teaching as a fundamentally ethical activity because "teachers are continually searching for, and being responsible to, what is ethically right and good" (pp. 195–196). It is within teachers' quests to demonstrate the highest degree of ethical conduct so that teaching can be considered an ethical profession.

Ethics are not laws. Indeed, there is often a gap between what is legal and what is ethical. Law is deficient as an ethical system because "codified law focuses on actions and outcomes rather than values" (Iacovino, 2002, p. 58). Laws imply a legislative process and ethics imply a professional process. Ethics and law can, like ethics and morals, overlap—they are not in opposition of one another. "They can and should complement each other as a system of control over human behavior" (Iacovino, 2002, p. 58). Laws, similar to rules, do not denote choice. They enforce minimum standards of what is right and wrong and administer consequences when the laws are breached (Iacovino, 2002). Conversely, as Annis (1989) stated, ethical codes "do not promote minimalism, the idea that one need only satisfy requirements of minimally acceptable behavior. Instead professionals are to be judged against high standards, standards that require more than the minimal" (p. 6). Looking beyond minimum/maximum standards, codes of ethics— unlike laws—denote choice in the behavior of the part of the professional. Though laws are breakable implying that some individuals choose not to follow them, they are intended to be non-negotiable. Ethics "cannot be imposed from without" (Lichtenberg, 1996) and are organizationally negotiated values that guide the ethical behavior of a profession.

However, Bourke (1968) pointed out that there is a relationship that exists between the law, society, and ethics when he traced the history of ethics from Greco-Roman times to the modern era, demonstrating that philosophers and social theorists began to study ethics as a way "to provide a foundation for their theories of society and law" (p. 221). Although Leys (1952) claimed that "connections between ethics and policy decisions are not very clearly understood" (p. 3), we consider ethics to be, in part, legislated policy.

Dye (1994) described policy as "anything a government chooses to do or not to do (p. 4) and Easton (1965) stated that public policy consists "of decision rules adopted by authorities as a guide to behavior" (p. 358). Extrapolating from this, it could be interpreted that anything that the government chooses to do in terms of directing behavior is ethical policy. In this way, codes of ethics can easily be seen as policies adopted by professions by way of legislation. Not only do ethics relate to policy, but professions relate to both in that "the characteristics of a profession are increasingly determined to a significant extent by the state, which is now a major stakeholder in defining professionalism in modern societies. Most professionals are employed, or at least regulated, by governments" (Whitty & Wisby, 2006, p. 44). The type of bargain that a profession and the government strike influences the professions' mandate (Whitty & Wisby, 2006). One integral piece of a professions' mandate is that of ethical codes. The relationships between ethics, policy, and legislation are inherent and this complex relationship can most certainly be applied to the teaching profession.

As Walker and Bergmann (2013) found in their analysis of teacher education policy in Canada, "very few articles or studies on Canadian teacher educational policy exist" (p. 68). Even fewer than the single article Walker and Bergmann (2013) found, are articles on *ethics as educational policy* or *professions as legislation*. As such, it is difficult to fully substantiate the teaching profession and its codes of ethics as policy inside of existing literature. That being said,

one is able to make connections between the teaching profession, ethics, and legislated policy through the fragmented resources that touch on this topic.

Education can be viewed in part as a political act. Robertson and Dale (2013) reinforced this notion, stating that "education is governed through policies, politics, and practices" (p. 433). In fact, research shows that teachers are "primarily understood as implementers of policy decisions made by their organizational superiors" (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011, p. 789). In this vein, ethics can be seen as legislative policy decisions which teachers implement. Furthering this thinking, ethical codes are one major characteristic of professions and, thus, are a critical component in professionalism. Hoyle (1980, as cited in Sockett, 1990), described how professionalism relates to professions, arguing that, "professionalism describes the quality of practice. It describes the manner of conduct within an occupation, how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality and of contractual and ethical relations with the client" (p. 9). We can infer from this definition that codes of ethics are a form of professionalism. We can further infer from what we know about policies overall that policy is a governmental tool used to regulate professions. Thus, ethics could reasonably be considered to be legislated policy regulating the behavior of teachers. As Ozga (1995) maintained, "Professionalism is best understood in context, and particularly in policy context" (p. 22). Codes of ethics then, can be viewed as Ozga (1995, p. 35) believed, as a form of occupational control.

Beyond research regarding the definition and characteristics of professions, recent research has been conducted on professionalism and professionalization of occupations. More current research investigating teacher professionalism encompasses the increasingly bureaucratic tendencies of education overall, such as standardized testing, curriculum policy, school improvement plans, and teacher workload, as well as topics related to the ethical implications that come from teaching ethics as a school subject, teacher interaction with students, grading procedures, confidentiality, supervision, interprofessional relations, conflicts of interest, and other topics relating to in-school happenstances and relationships (Boylan, 2006; Keith-Spiegal et al., 2002; Popkewitz, 1994; Strike & Egan, 1978;). When specifically targeting ethics, investigations primarily examine how ethical codes are a mandatory characteristic of professions overall. Little research has been completed that examine how ethical codes relate to teachers as professionals. Research conducted on the historical evolution and interpretation of codes of ethics of the teaching profession internationally, nationally, or in the province of Saskatchewan, is virtually non-existent.

Methodology

The perspective of time is essential when attempting to conduct historical research. As Tosh (1991) wrote, "In all spheres of life, from personal relationships to political judgements, we constantly interpret our experience in time perspective, whether we are conscious of it or not" (p. 1). It is impossible to grasp the full picture of an event and represent the past "without some perception of where it fits into a continuing process" (Tosh, 1991, p. 1). Grasping the full picture of an event involves utilizing history as "collective memory" and as a "storehouse of experience through which people develop a sense of their social identity and future prospects" (Tosh, 1991, p. 1). Historical methodology relies on the interpretation of the past, drawing on available sources, and it is the historian, as researcher, who does the interpretation. As Rousmaniere

(2004) proclaimed, "There is not one true historical story out there waiting to be told if only the correct facts are pulled together" (p. 33).

Instead, historians rely heavily on primary sources as written evidence. It is the work of the historian to examine this written evidence, make sense of it, and tell a story based on the reconstruction of their findings. This reconstruction of the past through source documents is known as historiography. Reconstruction of past events can be difficult for the historian because there is an immense amount of diversity within the sources found to reconstruct the past, available evidence can be limited or vast, and historians can only analyze those sources that are obtainable. In short, a historian's "main methodological concerns [has] to do with sources, or the different types of historical data available to them, and the way in which they might interpret them" (Rousmaniere, 2004, p. 45). In trying to understand and reconstruct the past, a historian must have some process for locating and evaluating the particular sources that are most relevant to the research.

What Sources Were Utilized?

To uncover the understandings about conduct as stipulated in the evolving STF Codes of Ethics over time, this study made use of both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include books and articles, usually based on primary sources, that are written by historians and other scholars, after the fact—that is, put together later than the time period under study. Primary sources include written document and/or artifacts "generated at the time of the event or by the subject in question" (Rousmaniere, 2004, p. 46). Hence, primary sources can include letters, speeches, contemporary newspaper articles, photographs, meeting minutes, academic journals written, and surveys recorded during the time period(s) under study.

In this particular case, the primary sources employed as "data" for our study included meeting minutes of the STF executive, the STF Bulletin, pamphlets, other newsletters and news articles, legislative acts issued or enacted over the time periods we studied, and the STF Codes themselves. Academic journals and books, providing context and background, made up the bulk of secondary sources we consulted.

Analytical Approach

Fact checking and analysis of sources as Tosh (1991) explained, is an important regular routine employed by historians. This involves corroboration of details revealed in one source with details reported in other sources. This is similar to the approach used when witness statements are corroborated in a court of law. It is the fact checking of subjective sources that helps historians create a story based on evidence that matches as closely as possible with what actually happened in the past.

In particular, the historical document analysis that was performed in this study was in alignment with Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) interpretation and suggestions of this method of analysis wherein the researcher/historian behaves like a "quilter [who] stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together" to represent complex situations (pp. 5–7). Relevant sources of historical information were specifically located in archives, digital and special collections, and libraries, with primary sources sought based upon their relevance to our questions about teacher conduct/misconduct as delineated in teachers' Codes of Ethics in Saskatchewan. Data from these sources were summarized and evaluated using a document analysis approach, which included

skimming, thorough reading, interrogating, interpolating, assessing, interpreting, and selecting of excerpts and quotations that addressed our research questions and represent any potential emerging themes (Bowen, 2009; Collingwood, 1946/1993). As Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2005) noted:

> Qualitative researchers who use written texts as their materials do not try to follow any predefined protocol in executing their analysis. By reading and rereading their empirical materials, they try to pin down their key themes and, thereby, to draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen. (p. 870)

However, the document analysis approach employed by historians does rely on primary source authenticity, which can be both external and internal (Tosh, 1991). External criticism of sources asks questions about a source's veracity. Author, place, and date of writing should be corroborated. Sources must be able to be traced back to people and places that produced it. The content of the sources must be fact checked. That is, the source must substantiate facts found in other unimpeachable documents from the time. The corroboration between sources creates authenticity. Internal criticism examines interpretation of sources. Once a source has passed the external criticism test, it is important to question overall meaning and reliability.

Constant analysis of sources does not begin after sources are located. Rather, source analysis transpires simultaneously and continuously (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Miles and Huberman (1994) described this consistent analysis of sources as "anticipatory data reduction": "Even before the [sources] are actually collected, anticipatory data reduction is occurring as the researcher decides (often without full awareness) which conceptual framework, which research questions, and which data collection approaches to choose" (p. 10). Once an appropriate body of sources is found and analyzed, the historian can display their findings and draw conclusions. Because historiography often begins from a particular conceptual framework or an idea that is then refined through conducting research, finding sources and redefining the research question, it is possible to argue that the historian never stops analyzing sources through the entire research process.

Findings

Precursor to Teacher Codes of Ethics

In the years preceding the creation of the STF and its first official Code of Ethics, teachers' work was dictated by a set of conduct rules that stipulated everything from skirt length and hair color, to where, what, and with whom teachers could spend their leisure time. One such document is available for viewing at the Evolution of Education Museum in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The 1872 and 1915 "Rules for Teachers" is prominently posted in the preserved one-room historic schoolhouse. Although one set of these rules is reported to have been taken from the records of a British Columbia school district and another from an unnamed teacher's magazine, the existence of such rules proves that documents intended to guide teacher conduct were important enough to be published, dispatched to teachers, and worked into teachers' contracts. These rules were explicit in expectation, highly regulatory, and difficult to misinterpret. For example, teachers,

after ten hours in the school, may spend the remaining time reading the Bible. … Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his work, intention, integrity, and honesty … You may not dress in bright colours. … You may not under any circumstances dye your hair. … Your dress must not be any shorter than two inches above the ankle. … Sweep the floor at least once daily; scrub the floor at least once a week with hot, soapy water; clean the blackboards at least once a day; start the fire at 7:00 a.m. so the room will be warm by 8:00 a.m. (Evolution of Education Museum, 1872 & 1915, p. 1)

To our 21st century eyes, these rules seem archaic and intrusive. However, these rules of conduct reflected the values that society held and the expectations society had for teachers at that time. The high degree of specification made these rules next to impossible to misunderstand, thus providing teachers with an excellent understanding of what was and was not expected of them in terms of professional conduct. These rules functioned as a precursor to codes and fully "describe[d] duties professionals must perform, conduct they must forgo and situations they must avoid" (Fullinwider, 1996, p. 72). Their degree of specificity was echoed in Saskatchewan teachers' first official code of ethics entitled Canons of Teaching Ethics (STF, 1935b).

1935—The STF's First Official Code of Ethics

Saskatchewan teachers obtained professional status soon after the 1935 provincial election. The re-elected Liberal government requested that the STF become "unified to such an extent that they have a professional consciousness that [would] support an ethical code" (STF, 1935a, p. 2). In order to comply with Government wishes as well as fulfilling the obligations of their new professional status, a motion was made at the January 1935 STF Executive Meeting that "A committee of one, Mr. J.H. Sturdy, be appointed to formulate a code of ethics" (STF, 1935c, p. 1). Sturdy's report on ethics was subsequently written and published in the June 1935 edition of the STF newsletter, *The Bulletin,* and distributed to teachers across the province. As in 1915, the 1935 Canon was exclusively regulatory in tone, and referred to itself as a "set of rules which particularize all the duties of the teacher" (STF, 1935b, p. 7). Indeed, the five-page Canon included 45 highly detailed duties to the following entities: The State, The Board of Trustees, The Department of Education, The Pupils, Fellow Teachers, The Professional Organization, and Himself.

Each section of the Canon began with the following variations emphasizing duty: "He owes a duty to…", "It is the duty of the teacher…", or "It shall be the duty of the teacher…" (STF, 1935b, pp. 7–11). Strong verbs typically followed these statements. For example, teachers were to cooperate, avoid, seek, submit, send, exercise vigilance over, report, deliver up, familiarize, accept, teach, maintain, organize, provide, secure, refrain from, and so on (STF, 1935b). The entirety of the Canon specified detailed chores, comprehensive duties, and precise behaviours expected of teachers. Though it could be argued that the entire document concerned conduct, there are several examples that specifically related to teachers' professional behavior. For example, the Canon specifically ties teacher conduct to competence and stated that it was the duty of the teacher to familiarize themselves "with the terms of the School Act, Superannuation Act, the Act respecting the Teaching Profession, the Curricula, and the rules and regulations set by the department … [as well as] … accept any task, rule or regulation imposed by the department and conscientiously execute the terms of the same (STF, 1935b, pp. 8–9). Teachers were also duty bound to cooperate with inspectors of schools, diligently teach all required

subjects as prescribed by the department, maintain order and discipline, manage the school, organize a time table, keep an accurate register, promote students to another class or grade as the teacher deemed expedient, provide to department officials any information they requested about the school, and to give permission for new teachers to practice in their classroom and be observed in their practice teaching (STF, 1935b).

Not only were teachers to competently perform all classroom-related functions, their behaviour towards students was also stipulated in the Canon. It was the duty of teachers to "secure the respect and confidence of the pupils by being proficient, just, honorable, tolerant and sympathetic (STF, 1935b, p. 9). Further elaboration was often included to elucidate the reasoning behind a listed expectation throughout the Canon. For example, teachers' conduct was to at "all times [be] exemplary" because they were "at all times under the observation of the pupils" (STF, 1935b, p. 9). "Nothing so readily and completely destroys the respect and confidence of the pupil as to observe blameworthy conduct on the part of the teacher; nor must the teacher forget the adverse effect his misconduct has on the character of the pupil (STF, 1935b, p. 9).

The 1935 Canon also included expectations regarding how teachers should conduct themselves towards others and which habits they should seek to emulate for themselves. For example, it was the duty of the teacher "to maintain an attitude of helpfulness, courtesy and consideration to his fellow teacher" (STF, 1935b, p. 9) and to never "speak disparagingly of the ability, character, or conduct of a fellow teacher, but rather to defend his good name as he would his own" (STF, 1935b, p. 10). The teacher was also expected "to cultivate habits of neatness, cleanliness, sobriety, courtesy, toleration, industry and all other desirable qualities of character" (STF, 1935b, p. 11). Demonstrating the importance of Anglo-Protestant values during this time period, the Canon's list of personal character traits, read strikingly similarly to the moral characteristics described in Scripture such as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (*Holy Bible*, *New Living Translation*, 2007, Galatians 5:22-23), to "do unto others whatever you would like them to do to you" (*Holy Bible*, *New Living Translation*, 2007, Matthew 7:12) and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (*Holy Bible*, *New Living Translation*, 2007, Mark 12:11) and resembled those characteristics that were also included in the Rules for Teachers (Evolution of Education Museum, 1872 & 1915). All of these examples demonstrate that the explicitness of the Canon's delineation of professional conduct left little doubt for teachers as to how to behave themselves.

It would be remiss to not point out the patriarchy of the Canon. Its last expectation stated that a teacher was "to bear in mind that he can only maintain the high traditions of his profession by being by fact as well as in a name a gentleman" (STF, 1935b, pp. 10–11). Given that a large percentage of teachers in the province were women at the time—in fact, an official from the Department of Education in 1938 was reported to have said that unemployment problems could be solved if only "the 55, 000 lady teachers in Canada were eliminated from their positions, making way for men" (STF, 1988, p. 4)—it is interesting to note that Sturdy, author of the Canon, penned the importance of being a gentleman (STF, 1935b). The use of this descriptor and the many instances where the male pronoun was used was problematic for several reasons. First, the Canon (STF, 1935b) does not make clear what being a "gentleman" involves. Secondly, if all teachers did know what the statement meant, it would have been difficult for the many women teachers in the province to enact it. This statement speaks to the probable bias of the writer who was a man, and of societal biases. It also represents a time period in history where teaching was

seen as an extension of mothers' work where females could hold primary teaching positions, but not secondary or administrative ones or be paid the same as their male counterparts (Hallman, 1997).

Bridging to the Present

No matter the particular section of the Canon, it is important to recognize that teachers' ethical responsibilities were described overall as "duties." Teachers' ethical responsibilities prior to the Canon were called "rules." The use of the terms rules and duties is significant because these word choices implied strict obligation and binding adherence. The Rules for Teachers (Evolution of Education Museum, 1872 & 1915) and the Canon (STF, 1935b) explicitly defined the ethical responsibilities of teachers, leaving little to individual interpretation. In the most literal sense, the Canon (1935b) was an enunciation of teacher responsibilities (Campbell, 2000) describing "duties professionals must perform, conduct they must forgo and situations they must avoid" (Fullinwider, 1996, p. 72). The duties that were explicitly included were not simply a list of professional values and ideals that should guide behaviour, but rather were identified as obligations that must be strictly adhered to. Even though the majority of these duties have been removed from inclusion in the present-day Code, teachers are still largely responsible for conducting themselves in alignment with, at least in some ways, the 1935 expectations. However, between 1935 and the present, the specificity of expectations regarding appropriate conduct embedded in the STF codes has diminished over time.

The 1957 Code of Ethics

In 1954, the minutes of the STF Executive indicate that a committee was formed to create a new ethical code. The committee accomplished this by holding ethics workshops across the province over a 3-year period, and by working with teachers "to define the ethical issues [they faced] and articulate the profession's standards for ethical conduct" (STF, 1999, p. 1). This process resulted in a new four-page Code of Ethics in 1957.

No longer called rules or duties, the 1957 version emphasized five key *principles* regarding appropriate conduct in relation to students, then parents, then the public, then the employer, and finally the profession. It is interesting to note the shift in the ordering of those to whom teachers were responsible. While government, stakeholders, policies and contractual matters had been listed first in earlier versions of the Code, in 1957, students were listed first. Additionally, upon examination of principles specifically referring to conduct, the 1957 version of the STF ethical code was decidedly less prescriptive than it had been in 1935.

The 1957 Code sprinkled several items relating to conduct into numerous sections of the document. The 1957 Code preamble recognized "that the quality of education reflects the ideals, motives, preparation, and conduct of the members of the teaching profession [and] that whosoever chooses teaching as a career assumes the obligation to conduct himself in accordance with the ideals of the profession" (STF, 1957, p. 1). However, in contrast to previous codes, specifics were now tempered in detail and other STF codes (e.g., the Standards of Practice and the Code of Collective Interests) that eventually did address such specifics were not published until 2013 to 2015. The 1957 STF Code of Ethics excluded, for example, explicit information about "the ideals of the profession," so teachers were left to decide what conduct was acceptable—or not—based on their own understandings of what such ideals entailed. Teachers were also expected to "adhere to any reasonable pattern of behaviour accepted by the profession"

(STF, 1957, p. 2), but once again, no description of reasonable patterns of behavior were included, leaving uncertainty about what exactly "reasonable patterns of behavior" were. Other word choices throughout the document referred to conduct such as "acting fairly," "cooperating," and even mention "working towards strengthening the community's moral, spiritual and intellectual life" (STF, 1957, p. 2), but unlike the Rules for Teachers and the 1935 Canon, teachers were no longer explicitly told how to behave, which specific characteristics to emulate, or what exact chores/duties were necessary to complete.

The 1973 Code of Ethics

The 1957 Code of Ethics was utilized until March 1973 when the STF archives show that teachers new to the profession asserted that the Code was "cumbersome, unnecessarily moralistic, characterized by trite expressions, and inflexibility." They pointed out that the 1957 Code "interfered" in many ways "with their individuality" (STF, 1972, p. 1). A new committee was struck to create a new code which employed new language and a new structure. For example, the term *Principles* was replaced with *Commitments*, a section dedicated to teachers' obligations to parents was eliminated, and with all conduct addressed on a single page, the 1973 Code was decidedly brief in comparison to previous codes.

In the 1973 Code teachers' ethical commitments are reordered once again, listing them in the following order: (a) the student; (b) the employer; (c) the profession; and (d) the community. When examining the 1973 Code for commitments that spoke specifically to conduct, it is difficult to locate detailed information relating to what exact behaviours were required of teachers. Any mention of morals or spirituality was eliminated and the word "conduct" only appears once in the whole document. Under the section, Commitments to the Profession, a teacher was instructed "to conduct himself at all times, so that no dishonour befalls him, or through him, his profession" (STF, 1973, p.1). There was no information regarding what dishonorable conduct was, or conversely, what was considered to be honorable conduct that a teacher should display. This document was used to guide the conduct of teachers in Saskatchewan, with only minor language changes, until the year 2000.

The 2000 Code of Ethics

In December of 1997, a committee was asked to "examine the professional ethics of teachers, review the Code of Ethics, examine teacher competency and standards of practice, and consider the structure of the teachers' professional organization" (STF, 2013, p. 9). In the resulting Code, category headings that had been included in previous STF Codes, including Duties in 1935, Principles in 1957, and Commitments in 1973, were eliminated. The term *conduct* is excluded completely from the 2000 STF Code of Ethics. In fact, all moralistic language regarding the cultivation of qualities of good character, or stipulations about how teachers should conduct themselves, was almost completely omitted. The only article that addressed notions of conduct indicated that teachers were expected "to act at all times in a manner that brings no dishonour to the individual or the teaching profession" (STF, 2000, p. 7). However, no details were provided about the conduct that could bring honour or dishonour, leaving judgements about appropriate conduct up to individual teachers.

In the Present (2021)

SPTRB is Mandated

As noted in our introduction, the media debate questioning the appropriateness of STF disciplinary structures (e.g., French, 2013) and the public release of recommendations arising from the Kendel (2013) report, eventually resulted in the establishment of the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board (SPTRB) by the Government of Saskatchewan. The Registered Teachers Act (Province of Saskatchewan, 2015) proclaimed on July 1st, 2015, enabled the SPTRB—a single, independent authority responsible for regulating teachers—to begin operations including teacher certification and registration, as well as receiving, investigating, and hearing of complaints regarding teacher conduct and competence (SPTRB, 2015a). The Registered Teachers Act (Province of Saskatchewan, 2015) effectively rescinded the STF's power to discipline members accused of professional incompetence and professional misconduct.

Shortly after its establishment, the SPTRB (2015a) published a document entitled, Standards of Professional Conduct, which laid out how teacher professional conduct would be regulated and investigated by the Board. This brochure sets out five standards of conduct that delineated principles for behaviour expected of Saskatchewan teachers. The SPTRB (2015b) standards state that registered teachers:

1. base their relationships with learners on mutual trust and respect,

2. have regard for the safety and academic, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of learners,

3. act with honesty and integrity,

4. take responsibility for maintaining the quality of their practice, and

5. uphold public trust and confidence in the education profession.

Included along with each of the five standards, are several indicators (or examples) of how teachers could demonstrate each standard. For instance, should teachers wonder how best to demonstrate standard number two—that is, that they "have regard for the safety and academic, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of learners," they can consult indicators described along with that standard—for example, teachers could "demonstrate this standard when they implement appropriate, consistent, and clearly articulated rules and expectations" (SPTRB, 2015b). With the provision of such guiding information for each standard, teachers have access to defined parameters of conduct which, though not as prescriptive as the rules of 1915 and Canon of 1935, afford more structure than offered in the present-day STF Code of Ethics.

The 2017 STF Code of Ethics

Given the legislation passed in 2015, it is apparent that the Saskatchewan Government believed that public trust in teacher professionalism had eroded to such an extent that the separation of STF advocacy and disciplinary functions was necessary. This legislation directly impacted the most recent version of the STF Code of Ethics.

With implementation of the new regulatory measures, the STF Executive established the Teacher Success and Professionalism Working Committee in August 2015 to review changes to teacher regulation in Saskatchewan as well as to review current STF codes and standards. The Committee's work, among other items, resulted in revisions to the Code of Ethics—last changed in 2000—and now contained in STF Bylaw 6 (STF, 2017). The majority of the proposed

revisions concerned minor changes in wording, especially when a more positive framing of a statement was possible (STF, 2016).

As in 1973 and 2000, the 2017 STF Code does not include the word "conduct." Teachers are still expected, "To act at all times in a way that maintains the honour and dignity of the individual teacher and the teaching profession," (STF, 2017, p. 40) but no information about how to demonstrate honour and dignity was included. While individual teacher's sense of acting honorably and with dignity is reflected in choices they make regarding their professional conduct, without more specificity about particular behaviours that demonstrate acting honorably and with integrity, teachers are left to rely on their personal beliefs, which may or may not meet ethical standards expected by the profession.

Other ambiguous commitments can be found in this document such as: "To strive to make the teaching profession attractive and respected in ideals and practices," and "To act in a manner that respects the collective interests of the profession" (STF, 2017, p. 40). Once again, each individual teacher must decide and enact for themselves the degree to which they will "strive," and each individual teacher must define what "attractive" and "respected" ideals and practices are. Based on their interpretation of what these terms mean, individual teachers must then delineate which actions would be considered respectful to the collective. There may be as many interpretations of the language of the Code as there are teachers, further diluting specificity.

This pattern of ambiguity intersperses the entirety of the document. For example, in the Commitments to Teaching and Learning section teachers are to commit "To provid[ing] professional service to the best of [their] ability" (STF, 2017, p. 40). However, the professional services expected are not defined and one teacher's best ability may be significantly different from another's ability If required services and providing one's best are not clearly articulated, teachers are at risk of not meeting appropriate professional standards of conduct and facing disciplinary action if reported, investigated, and found guilty of misconduct.

Indistinctness is evident in the last section of Commitments to the Community as well. For example, teachers are "to maintain an awareness of the need for changes in the public education system and advocate appropriately for such changes through individual or collective action" (STF, 2017, p. 40). As in other sections, more clarity is needed so that teachers have unambiguous guidance in pondering questions such as: To what level should teachers be aware? What changes are required? What is appropriate advocacy? If the advocacy actions they undertake are deemed professionally inappropriate, can they be punished for trying to enact this commitment to the best of their individual interpretation?

If statements regarding expected commitments by teachers cannot be written using clear and coherent language, it begs the question whether such statements should be included in the professional code of ethics in the first place. Monteiro (2015) wrote that teachers cannot afford to make decisions based on "moral subjectivity and relativity [because if their] competence and conduct are not professionally acceptable, the profession's public image is significantly and negatively affected." (p. 74). Martin (2000) stated that ethical codes must "(a) [identify] the duties that are or should be standardized within professional codes of ethics applicable to all members of a profession, and (b) [grapple] with how to apply the duties to particular situations where they conflict of have unclear implications" (pp. 3–4). When codes of ethics include only the collectively agreed upon fundamental duties and explicit standards of conduct expected of

registered teachers (The Teaching Council in Ireland, 2012), teachers are less confused and more accountable. When ethical codes are free from morals and values that differ from individual to individual, they "enable us to appreciate professional ethics as a source of meaning in work, rather than merely a set of onerous requirements" (Martin, 2000, p. 7) and become complementary to legislation.

Discussion

The STF Code of Ethics evolved in the context of a changing society, which is made clear in the findings of this historical analysis. It is apparent that what was considered appropriate conduct and embedded in the evolving Code was, at least in part, a response to shifting societal norms, values, and expectations.

In the years preceding the creation of the STF, teachers' work was dictated by a set of rules stipulating everything from skirt length and hair colour, to where, what, and with whom teachers could spend their leisure time. These rules, which left little room for individual interpretation, made clear that professional conduct was considered to be synonymous with moral uprightness based on Christian principles. Rather than looking to personal understandings of professionalism, the rules insisted that teachers should look to the authority of church and government to understand appropriate conduct. Teachers of unquestionable moral standards were to "instill in the next generation a sense of obedience to a rigid moral and religious code" (Schwimmer & Maxwell, 2017, p. 149).

To a large degree the 1935 Canon articulated professional expectations that also represented the thinking of the dominant Anglo-Protestant elite and emphasized the need for "British" citizens of good character as a sign of Canadian nationalism. The Canon (STF, 1935b) emphasized the idea that the school was the training ground meant to teach British norms and values where teachers would break children of their family traditions (read "foreign" cultural/spiritual traditions) and encourage their students in "Anglo-Saxon ideals, traits, and historic traditions" (Foght, 1918, p. 18). The Canon's (STF, 1935b) list of expected personal character traits for teachers reads strikingly similarly to the moral characteristics rooted in Anglo-Protestant values and described in scripture. Hence, appropriate conduct for teachers, as indicated in the Canon, extolled the requirement that teachers both obey and collaborate with the church, government, school boards, and Department of Education (STF, 1935b) in order to reach "comprehensive understanding" (STF, 1935b, p. 8) of appropriate conduct.

While the 1957 STF Code of Ethics remained anchored in expectations of conduct based on the authority of church and state, the one-page 1973 STF Code represents a clear break with former expectations. The idea of explicitly following the rules without complaint in subservience to those in authority was usurped by an increasing demand for flexibility based on the rise of individualism, especially as connected to judgements about appropriate professional conduct. As the 1960s unfolded, Saskatchewan society was increasingly influenced by emerging popular culture and "liberalization" introduced sweeping ideological change. Exemplifying this movement, the Canadian Bill of Rights (Government of Canada, 1960), considered groundbreaking at the time, demonstrated the liberal ideological shift impacting citizens across the entire country. By the early 1970s, teachers expressed their wishes that the Code become more flexible and less moralistic (STF, 1972) since the old Code had "interfered with their individuality" (STF, 1972, p. 1). No longer as didactic or duty-driven, the 1973 Code's content mirrored a shifting society that allowed for individual

interpretations regarding appropriate conduct. By 2000, the STF Code appears to reflect how Saskatchewan society was grappling with understandings of acceptable norms of behaviour, as was Canadian society in general. Even though there seemed to be a shared "accepting attitude towards the country's ethnic diversity" (Parkin & Mendelsohn, 2003, p. 4), there appears to have been an undermining of trust in authority, including government, as well as an undermining of appreciation for collective action (Vail, 2000) that once seemed to be the backbone of Saskatchewan political and societal values. In addition, by the late 20th century, it was generally understood across Canada that questions about appropriate conduct differed according to varying cultural traditions. How to determine agreed upon standards of behavior was complicated given the understanding that values and morals were perceived to be "relative." Perhaps it should not be surprising, therefore, that the 2000 STF Code of Ethics completely excluded any references to teacher conduct based on religious principles and that specificity regarding expected behaviour was missing. By 2017 following establishment of the SPTRB, the STF, stripped of its disciplinary functions, produced a revised Code of Ethics that was, fundamentally, a replica of the 2000 Code of Ethics. Neither version provided clarity with respect to how teacher should demonstrate behaviour in line with the expectations outlined in the code documents.

However, as we highlighted above, the SPTRB's regulatory bylaws do serve to provide teachers with more detailed information about expected conduct than that which they have access to by way of the STF's Code of Ethics. Not only do the SPTRB (2015b) regulatory bylaws describe both standards and examples related to conduct, the bylaws also provide specificity regarding what is to be considered misconduct. The document specifically indicates that "the following conduct on the part of a registered teacher is misconduct:

- conduct which is harmful to the best interest of pupils or affects the ability of a registered teacher to teach;

- any intentional act or omission designed to humiliate or cause distress or loss of dignity to any person in school or out of school which may include verbal or non-verbal behaviour;

- physically abusive conduct which involves the application of physical force which is excessive or inappropriate in the circumstances to any person;

- sexually abusive conduct that violates a person's sexual integrity, whether consensual or not which includes sexual exploitation;

- an act or omission that, in the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by the profession as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional;

- being in violation of a law if the violation is relevant to the registered teacher's suitability to hold a certificate of qualification or if the violation would reasonably be regarded as placing one or more pupils in danger;

- signing or issuing a document in the registered teacher's professional capacity that the registered teacher knows or ought to know contains a false, improper or misleading statement;

- falsifying a record relating to the registered teacher's professional responsibilities; or

- providing false information or documents to the registrar or to any other person with respect to the registered teacher's professional qualifications. (SPTRB, 2015c, pp.10–11)

Clearly, both the SPTRB and government legislation provide teachers with unambiguous information about expected conduct as well as insight into what is to be considered conduct unbecoming. Unfortunately, the 2017 STF Code of Ethics does not.

Conclusion

Recently issued versions of the STF Code of Ethics are distinctly aspirational rather than regulatory, and appear to reflect current societal views regarding authority, individual rights and freedoms, along with, perhaps, a dose of "me-centeredness" (Wishlow, 2001). Though faith in individualism and the right to self-expression may shed a positive light on human abilities, suggesting that we should be confident that individuals have the capacity to decide how to conduct themselves professionally, such freedom can also lead to confusion when clear expectations are not provided. As Campbell (2000) stated, codes framed in a positive perspective are "fundamentally optimistic and uplifting [but also] may be easier, clearer and thus more useful in an application sense to be specific from the negative perspective" (p. 212). If ethical guidelines are not generally understood by all teachers in Saskatchewan, then each teacher must act on their own understandings, which may or may not lead to professionally appropriate behaviour. As Schwimmer and Maxwell (2017) stated, "The more open and flexible [code] has the advantage of enlarging the range of possible situations and ethical concerns. … Of course, what is gained in terms of openness is lost in terms of precision" (p. 146).

When comparing the 1935 and 2017 STF ethical codes, it is immediately apparent that the present-day version is decidedly more aspirational than regulatory and no longer provides the explicit guidelines of the past. While this diminished explicitness in the STF Code of Ethics certainly meshes with current ways of thinking about freedom of expression and anti-authoritarianism, it could be argued that the lack of specificity leaves teachers uncertain as to what is and is not appropriate conduct. Because teaching professionals are given an enormous amount of trust, we posit that development of a collective and concrete understanding of professional behaviour and conduct unbecoming, is essential.

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