

**SUSPENDED IN PERPETUITY? TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY
IN A TIME OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

by

Frederick Joseph MacDonald

A thesis in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-39983-5
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-39983-5

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2006
Frederick Joseph MacDonald
Graduate Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
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Abstract

Drawing upon Foucauldian poststructuralist theories of discourse, governmentality and identity, this study employs critical discourse analysis techniques to examine teacher professional identity within the context of educational reform between 1995 and 2004 in the province of Ontario. Problematizing notions of profession(al)(ism)(ization) in teaching and conceptions of teacher identity, the study examines the contextual production, sustenance and consequences of public, media, government, teacher organizations and collegial and administrative representations of teachers and teaching as they manifest as effects of power and as they are positioned and ascribed to and within particular normalizing discourses and practices. The data set for the study consists of the transcripts of 14 interviews and other textual data including newspaper columns, letters to the editor, government news releases and policy documents, internet web-sites and teacher-produced materials.

The study reveals that many of the discourses that constitute teaching construct particular subject positions for teachers to occupy that are frequently and highly incongruent with the perceptions that teachers have of themselves. The study reveals that the normalizing power of deeply-rooted and firmly-held assumptions about what it means to be a teacher continue to govern and sustain particular mentalities that effectively keep teachers under perpetual scrutiny and surveillance. Despite some teachers' efforts to

reject, resist and subvert these discourses, teachers' professional identities remain under perpetual negotiation and revision.

Theoretically, this study makes a specific contribution to the literature on teacher professional identity and more generally to the ways in which individuals make meaning. By destabilizing the notion of an essentialized professional identity in teaching, this study has begun an examination of the *apriori* assumptions that are taken as commonsense when referring to teachers as professionals and teaching as a profession. The study suggests it is important to continue exploration of the nature of and ways in which teachers (and others) respond to the discourses and their inherent power relations that construct teachers' work and the effects these have on teacher identity and the evolution of the teaching profession.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This inquiry would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many people. I would first like to extend my gratitude to the members of my committee: Dr. James Ryan, Dr. Nina Bascia and Dr. Reva Joshee.

To Jim, I would like to say thank you for being such a helpful guide and advisor, not only through this process but also throughout my doctoral program at OISE. From a personal and practical perspective, I knew from my first encounter with you that your sensitivity and humility would make you someone with whom I would want to seek guidance and direction. My intuition proved correct. I would also like to thank you for reintroducing me to Foucault's work and poststructuralist theory and for sharing your optimistic view that educational leadership can be constructed in more inclusive ways.

To Nina, I would like to say thank you for the many thought-provoking and challenging conversations we have had and for the invaluable lessons about scholarship you have taught me. Your detailed commentary, feedback and patience throughout the writing process have been very much appreciated. In addition, I would like to convey to you my gratitude for your academic advice and for providing me with the opportunity, however short-lived, to work with you on your SSHRC grant. The experience was immensely rewarding.

To Reva, I would like to say thank you for being both compassionate and honest with me from the moment of our first meeting. I have very much appreciated your frankness, your supportive words of encouragement and your challenges throughout the writing process. The commentary you forwarded at the end of the oral was very sensitively conveyed. Thank you and I very much look forward to future and continuing

discussions with you about conducting discourse analysis.

My gratitude is also extended to Dr. Ruth Rees, my external examiner, for the very thorough and detailed appraisal you gave of my work. The dissertation has been much improved thanks to your keen eye for conceptual congruence and for your attention to detail and to the techniques of scholarship.

My sincere thank you is also expressed to Dr. Joseph Flessa for your thought-provoking questions at my oral examination as well as your supportive and sensitive words of encouragement when the oral was over.

In addition to those who have been most directly involved in the production of this dissertation, I would also like to express my heartfelt thank you to the individuals with whom I have come into contact over the years of my study and who, in one way or another—through genuine expressions of interest in my progress, advice about the program or by engaging me in stimulating discussions—have influenced the shaping of this dissertation. For your encouragement in the early part of the process, thank you to Gianna, Linda, Fran, Carmen, Deirdre, Patricia and Sue. For your consistent support, unwavering interest in my trials and tribulations and your listening ear throughout this journey, a special thank you to Coleen. Finally, although our meeting and relationship has been the briefest and most recent of all of those who have influenced the writing of this dissertation, I would like to thank Vidya for your profound insight and deep conceptual and theoretical understanding of my work and its potential value for the teaching profession. Our conversations have been among the most significant of my academic life thus far.

I would also like to thank the participants of this study for being so open and

honest with your perceptions, understandings and experiences of what it means to be a teacher. Without your candid expressions of how you make sense of being a teacher, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner for being so understanding and supportive throughout the many years of this journey. This would not have come to fruition without your enduring optimism and steadfast words of encouragement.

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DEDICATION

For my mother and father

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Many would likely agree that the work a person does for a living has a strong influence on a person's identity. Indeed, as DuGay (1996) observes, "[work], as a fundamental human category, is represented not only as livelihood, but also as a stable, consistent source of self-identity"(p. 9). However, as Mercer (1991, p. 43 in DuGay, 1996) argues: "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something is assumed to be fixed, coherent, and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty."

In the province of Ontario, particularly between 1995 and 2004, during the reign of the Progressive Conservative party¹, the professional identities of teachers, individually and collectively, became significantly destabilized as the education system underwent changes that have been described as "remarkable in scope, in the sheer speed of [their] execution, and in the turmoil they engendered" (Gidney, 1999, p. 234). The introduction of new curriculum at both the elementary and secondary levels, the establishment of an independent testing agency called the Education Quality and Accountability Office, increased student standardized achievement testing initiatives, new standardized report cards for elementary and secondary levels, student codes of behaviour, the introduction of parent councils, revisions to legislation to exclude principals and vice-principals from the teachers' federations, changes to class size and teacher-pupil ratios, the establishment of a

¹ Elected on an platform titled "The Common Sense Revolution", Premier Mike Harris lead the Progressive Conservative government for two terms of office until his retirement from politics in the latter part of the second term of his government. Ernie Eves was elected his successor following a party leadership convention. During this government's reign, there were four Ministers of Education – John Snobelen, David

regulatory body for the teaching profession, a mandatory professional learning program for teachers, and myriad other initiatives have prompted a variety of educator and public responses over the years ranging from provincial walkouts and protests by teacher federations to the creation of new public advocacy groups such as the People for Education.

Although all of these changes, at both the policy and local levels, have had a significant impact upon students and the public in general, perhaps no group has experienced these changes as dramatically as the province's teachers who are positioned, by default, to play a significant part in the execution, monitoring and evaluation of these multiple and often conflicting initiatives. During the period of this particular government's rule, the province's teaching population struggled to make sense of and respond to the multiple discourses and practices articulated about them and their work as teachers and as professionals within the context of educational reform in Ontario.

Although this study is set within one provincial context, it would be misleading to suggest that attention and scrutiny to and the societal review of teachers and their work is unique to the province of Ontario. According to Smyth (1998, p. 1), "teachers worldwide are currently experiencing 'difficult times' as their work is assailed, prevailed upon, reformed and restructured by forces bent upon devolution, marketization, de-professionalization, and intensification" (see also Ball, 1999; Helsby, 1995, 2000; Whitty, 2000). The changes imposed on teachers have been forcing many of them to attend to and reflect upon images of themselves and their identities as teachers and professionals. From every corner and every direction—the government, their unions, their professional

regulatory body, the media, the public, and individual teacher colleagues—teachers are being confronted with particular constructions of themselves as professionals and their work as professional work.

Not surprisingly perhaps, teacher response to these constructions has varied. Some teachers have passively accepted these changes in public, media, and governmental perception of their work as just being part of the educational reform agenda and its concomitant social review of teaching generally. Other responses have been more difficult to identify because teachers have chosen instead to subvert the constructions of teaching that have been presented to them. Many other teachers have been and continue to be highly resistant to the imposed changes; however, this resistance has not been without great cost both within and outside the occupation of teaching. Disagreements and battles over what constitutes teachers' duties, the exact nature of those duties and how those duties are to be carried out occurred with increasing frequency within Ontario schools and school boards. In some boards during the early part of the reform agenda, secondary teachers had their preparation periods shortened or removed entirely and they were required to teach additional classes, assume new teacher-advisor roles, and simultaneously implement new curriculum policy and new report cards. There were marked divisions between teaching staff and administrative staff within schools and in some schools the division was so great that teachers retired, moved to other schools, or left teaching altogether. In addition to the diverse teacher responses that played themselves out in multiple ways within schools and school boards, a variety of responses also appeared in the public domain.

In the section that follows, three purposefully selected media pieces from the *Toronto Star*² are presented in chronological order to convey some of the sentiments that circulated among these public domain responses and to suggest that teacher professional identity has been a latent but central focus. The first of these descriptions is an editorial written by DiManno (November 13, 2000). The article, which presents a particularly vitriolic attack on teachers, garnered considerable teacher and public reaction including the lodging of a complaint with the Ontario Press Council against the author and the *Toronto Star*. The second media presentation is a satirical piece (Barclay, February 16, 2001) in which the columnist offers his analysis of the consequences of the government's education reform agenda. The third piece (Kalinowski, March 11, 2003) reports on a physical encounter between two members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) and the Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer at the association's annual general meeting.

“If Only Teachers Would Learn a Thing or Two”³

In 2000, five years into the mandate of the Progressive Conservative government, both teachers and the public had experienced the beginnings of many of the reforms initiated by the government. Marked by teachers' unions work-to-rule campaigns, this period saw mounting tensions develop between and among the unions, the government, and the public as the perception grew that teachers' job actions were having a detrimental effect on students' school experiences. While some of the general media coverage of

² This newspaper was selected because of convenience; I have a home delivery subscription.

³ For the complete text of the article, see Appendix D; for a critical discourse analysis of the article, see

these tensions and frustrations attempted to understand and explain the difficulties in this period of reform, other viewpoints expressed by particular reporters seemed to be little more than a calculated attempt to “fan the flames” of public opinion.

In her opinion piece titled “If Only Teachers Would Learn a Thing Or Two” (November 13, 2000), DiManno offered what many teachers came to perceive as an unfair characterization of teachers and teaching. The overall general tone of the piece was conveyed immediately in her opening lines:

I NEVER HAD (capitalized in original) a single teacher who made a difference in my life.

Not one educator who inspired or challenged or provoked.

No mentor, adviser, guide or friend.

A dozen years in the Ontario public education system and everything I know I taught myself.

Recounting some of her own school experiences to structure her argument, DiManno invites her readers to draw parallels between Ontario’s present-day teachers and those of her youth whom she characterizes as “lazy, bored, stupid beyond belief, rigid, disliked children, hated teenagers and seemed to resent every moment spent in the classroom.” The remainder of her article presents a public chastisement of teachers generally in which she conveys her opinion about the actions of teachers and their unions in response to the government’s education reform policies.

In making her case, DiManno perpetuates many commonly held public perceptions about teachers and teaching, which she articulates with the discourse of the teacher as a professional. Teachers, she writes, are “ostensibly,” “well-compensated

professionals” with “paid summers off, and a couple of weeks at Christmas and another in March” which are “rather nice perks.” Commenting about the tension between the province’s teachers and the Ontario government, DiManno assumes the position of an education critic whose expertise includes the authority to speak about the ways in which education policy is enacted by government and understood and responded to by individual teachers and by teacher unions. Framed by a professionalism/unionism dichotomy, DiManno criticizes teachers for wanting things both ways. On the one hand, they want “a vocation, some sort of altruistic calling as an educator,” and on the other, they “behave like a unionized widget-maker who lives by the punch of the clock.”

DiManno sustains her disdain for teachers throughout the article and concludes by stating she “never needed teachers.” She suggests further that “there must be lots of students just like [her], still out there. . . who’d come out okay in the end—indeed, in spite of [their] teachers—because [they] escaped the bonds of the classroom, gained our knowledge, and whatever wisdom, by other means.”

Public and teacher response to this article and the complaint with the Ontario Press Council against her and the newspaper prompted DiManno to write an another opinion piece. Entitled “My Thoughts on Teachers Spark Mail Galore,” this response article⁴ was published two days later (November 15, 2000) and opened with the following text:

Oh yes, it’s all coming back to me now—why I dislike most of those teachers I endured through 12 years of public school education in Toronto and North York.

If my memory had grown fuzzy—because, to be honest, I remembered very little about these men and women, none of whom made any

⁴ See Appendix F for the complete text of this article.

impression on me whilst growing up—I was provided with ample reminders while plowing through the e-mail Monday night into Tuesday morning.

In the remainder of this article, DiManno addresses some of the emails and letters she received in response to the first article. Unrelenting in her criticism of teachers, she invites her supportive readers to consider the letters and emails and she cautions them to remember “these are the men and women teaching your children.”

The letters to the editor, emails to the journalist directly and the official complaint with the Ontario Press Council suggest that DiManno played a significant role in the construction and perpetuation of some of the prevailing public discourses about teachers and teaching. These responses also suggested that DiManno’s words profoundly affected the professional identities of some of the province’s teachers. In contrast to this understanding and depiction of teachers and teaching during this period of education reform, Barclay’s (February 16, 2001) analysis and portrayal attempts to address the ways in which the government’s agenda has resulted in the construction of new identities for both students and teachers.

“We. Are. The. Proud. Students. Of. Mike. Harris.”⁵

With its increased attention on high quality, excellence, standards and standardization, the Ontario government’s Common Sense Revolution philosophy of education was not lost on members of the media who were more sympathetic to both the students and teachers who were directly implicated by the education reform agenda. Barclay’s (February 16, 2001) satire of the extent to which the government had embraced

the standards movement was particularly effective in conveying the new student and teacher identities produced through the discourse of excellence. Punctuated with periods at the end of each word to emphasize a de-personalized robotic and conforming student identity, Barclay's piece began:

GOOD. DAY. We. Are. The. Elementary. And. Secondary. Students. Of. Ontario. We. Would. Like. To. Take. A. Moment. Of. Your. Time. To. Tell. You. About. All. The. Improvements. That. Are. Being. Made. To. The. Ontario. Education. System. We. Think. You. Will. Be. Impressed.

The. System. Has. Undergone. Many. Changes. In. The. Last. Few. Years. A. Great. Deal. Of. Work. Has. Been. Done. By. The. Mike. Harris. Government. And. His. Education. Minister. Janet. Ecker. To. Ensure. That. All. Children. Are. Treated. Equally. This. Has. Made. The. System. Fairer. For. Everyone.

Now. All. Across. The. Province. Children. Take. The. Exact. Same. Courses. We. Are. All. Using. The. Same. Lesson. Plans. All. Of. Our. Courses. Have. Been. Drafted. At. Central. Command. So. That. They. Are. The. Same. Everywhere.

We. Are. Also. Being. Tested. On. Our. Subjects. On. A. Regular. Basis. Everybody. Gets. To. Write. The. Same. Test. Regardless. Of. Whether. We. Live. In. Downtown. Toronto. Or. Up. In. Thunder. Bay. And. All. Of. Our. Tests. Will. Be. Marked. The. Same. Way. Regardless. Of. Whether. We. Live. In. Downtown. Toronto. Or. Up. In. Thunder. Bay. And. The. Results. Will. Be. Assessed. The. Same. Regardless. Of. Whether. We. Live. In. Downtown. Toronto. Or. Up. In. Thunder. Bay. . . .

In. A. Few. Years. We. Will. All. Graduate. Knowing. The. Exact. Same. Things. We. Will. Be. Interchangeable. This. Will. Put. Us. At. A. Great. Advantage. In. The. Global. Marketplace. If. Our. Parents. Come. To. School. To. Pick. Us. Up. And. Grab. The. Wrong. Kid. By. Mistake. It. Will. Not. Really. Matter. . . .

In the article's conclusion, Barclay (2001) had his robotic students speculate on new identities for their teachers:

Fortunately. For. Our. Teachers. They. Are. About. To. Become. All. The. Same. As. Well. They. Are. All. Going. To. Be. Tested. Too. Soon. They.

⁵ See Appendix G for the complete text of the article.

Will. Know. All. The. Sections. And Sub-Sections. Of. All. Aspects. Of.
The. Curriculum. And. Be. Able. To. Recite. Them. Verbatim. These.
Will. Be. The. New. Great. Teachers. Even. If. They. Do. Not. Give. The.
Ass. Of. A Rat. About. Their. Students. As. Human. Beings.

Thank. You. For. Letting. Us. Share. All. Of. Our. Exciting. News. With.
You. We. Remain. The. Elementary. And. Secondary. School. Students.
Of. Ontario. Resistance. Is. Futile.

This excerpt reveals, in my view, Barclay's understanding that the government's adopted discourse of excellence is clearly related to the economy and "the global marketplace." In this discourse, a standardized curriculum is administered to students, which was then followed up with standardized testing. Viewed as an inherently good thing, the excellence discourse is seen as a natural equalizer between students in Thunder Bay and students in downtown Toronto. As the piece points out, however, the ironic cost is that with the pursuit of this form of excellence comes the loss of student individualism. Reminiscent of a production assembly-line, the student becomes nothing more than the means to success in the world economy. This excellence discourse is so powerful that it not only replaces the identities that might have emerged through heredity, it seems to be fully embraced and supported by their parents.

The excellence discourse produces new identities for teachers as well. In this commonsensical discursive formation, the teacher is the individual who will make the standards improve. He or she becomes the means by which excellence is achieved. In keeping with the understanding of the economic marketplace, teaching in this discourse is a technical and rational activity. Relatively easy and straight-forward, anyone can teach if given a standardized and resource-supported curriculum. In this "anyone can teach" discursive formation, a teacher is much like any other worker. While the teacher may have or need some knowledge, generally speaking, that knowledge is not of the same

quality as the highly specialized knowledge of other professions. Just as a unionized workforce is anathema to the excellence discourse as it articulates in the global marketplace, so too is the unionized teacher anathema to the excellence discourse in education. In an attempt to convey a glimpse into the nature of this union/excellence discourse incongruity, the next section of this chapter provides some details of a selected media coverage of confrontation between several members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and Elizabeth Witmer, the last Minister of Education of the Progressive Conservative government.

“Teachers Mob Witmer”⁶

With a front page headline reading, “Teachers Mob Witmer,” and an unflattering picture of the Minister of Education accompanying it, Kalinowski’s (2003) article in the *Toronto Star* provides details of the confrontation that unfolded between Elizabeth Witmer and several members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA) at their annual convention in March, 2003. The article describes how, after giving some opening remarks and answering questions, shouting protesters, some wearing paper bags over their heads with the slogan “A Once Proud Ontario Teacher” scribbled on them, rushed after the Minister, pushed her and threw a glass of water at her as aides tried to steer her through the crowd. Additional headlines interspersed throughout the article attempt to offer some degree of balance in coverage. One headline conveys a particular slant: “Education minister pushed, badgered at union convention.” Another

⁶ See Appendix H for the complete text of the article and an editorial that appeared in the same newspaper edition.

hints at the possible motivation behind the incident: “Tory government policies vilified by angry members.” Another seeks reaction: “Differences cannot be resolved successfully with disrespect, rudeness or violence.” The article reports that Witmer confirmed she was punched although she was uncertain it was deliberate. Referring to the incident as “unfortunate,” the Minister also indicated she did not consider it reflective of the behaviour of teachers she had met throughout the province during the past few months.

The remainder of the article is devoted to reporting solicited explanations and responses to the incident. The outgoing OETCA president called the incident “regrettable” and informed the media that the union would begin investigating what she considered “very serious allegations” about the protesters’ behaviour. The newly-elected president also commented by suggesting that the province’s teachers have been demonstrably angry with the government of Ontario and its policies. Some delegates interviewed by the reporter also provided commentary with one individual suggesting that the incident occurred because teachers “wanted answers, not political jargon, and [because] [the teachers] wouldn’t accept [the Minister’s] political jargon, she exited.” Another delegate noted that many of the union members in attendance were offended by Witmer’s comment that they must consider children. From this delegate’s perspective, it was the government who had failed to consider children in its childcare, housing and social welfare policies, not teachers.

For days following the reporting of this incident, the pages of the *Toronto Star* were filled with opinion and commentary. Included among these was a report of the Minister’s acceptance of an apology sent by OECTA and a series of highly critical letters

to the editor written by members of the public in which readers chastised the union and the teaching profession generally. Also included were equally emotional letters written by teachers expressing their disappointment, anger and disillusionment as members of the teaching profession. In addition to letters to the editor, there was further columnist commentary.

The various responses given to the OECTA/Witmer incident by the media, students, teacher union members, individual teachers, parents, and the general public highlighted multiple discourses about teachers and teaching. The most frequently referenced discourse was one that associated the teacher behaviour with that of school children. Beginning with the editorial that appeared in the *Toronto Star* the same day that the incident was reported, the comparison of the teachers' behaviour to children's was made frequently. Student and parent responses to the incident readily constructed a comparison with school children behaviour as well. A student response suggested that "if a student had done such a thing, he or she would have almost certainly been suspended and most definitely lectured on proper etiquette. . .". Parent responses expressed very similar sentiments: "If my son had hit, pushed and thrown water at a teacher, he would have been suspended, if not expelled. Will these teachers be subjected to the same punishment? I think not. Zero tolerance only applies to the children." Teachers also drew upon the child behaviour discourse. One teacher wondered what was the difference between this incident and a school-specific situation where parents told their children it would be appropriate to act up and disrupt the class if they didn't agree with their teacher. The writer says "Teachers can't be such blatant hypocrites. If they wouldn't tolerate it in the classroom, how can they endorse such tactics themselves?" The OECTA president,

Kathy McVean, also draws upon this comparison in condemning the behaviour saying that a student would not behave in this manner without facing discipline. Discourses employing comparisons to teaching children lessons about proper decorum in handling one's conduct by [self] discipline and restraint, about ways in which to resolve "civic" differences and about "comportment" generally were not the only discourses articulated in the responses to the incident.

Discourses about religion, race, and morality were also articulated. One respondent commented "I can't believe that people who call themselves Catholics and educators can behave like such thugs." One of the newspaper's regular columnists, Coyle (2003) observed, "you just sort of hoped that they (teachers) of all people, would know better." The editors of the newspaper also note the attribution of the discourse of a higher morality to teachers. They note in their conclusion that "teachers have gained the higher moral ground in recent years as the public learns more about what has been happening in our schools [but] bullying a minister only harms their cause." Though several respondents drew attention to the individuals who had paper bags over their heads referring to it variously as an appropriate action given the shameful and cowardly nature of the act, two of the respondents drew upon a discourse of race to read and interpret the symbolism. "After viewing the pictures of the teacher Klanspeople in the Star, I have lost what remaining respect I had for the teaching profession" one reader wrote. Coyle (2003), also drew upon two discourses to explain the behaviour of the paper-bagged head individuals stating that image evoked was "at best, [that of] meat-headed football fans sitting in besotted disapproval of the home side [and] at worst, the hooded cowards of the Ku Klux Klan, cloaked as they went about their hated work."

Among the letters, one response was particularly critical of both the teachers involved in the incident and teachers more generally. Similar to the sentiments expressed about teachers by DiManno (2000) above, this letter opened as follows:

I've had it with teachers. If they aren't perpetually on strike, they are picketing. If they aren't picketing, they are complaining of their poor lot in life and, if they aren't doing that, they are participating in fiasco's [sic] like Monday's shameful attack on Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer. Just who do these teachers think they are?

(p. 1)

In levelling her condemnation of the teachers' behaviour, the writer criticizes teachers and teaching on a number of fronts. According to the writer, not only do teachers believe they deserve extra-special treatment because they "teach our children and mould our future generations," they receive "astronomical benefits" and "the public seems to stand behind them no matter what they do."

Like many other responses, this writer also draws upon discourses of professionalism to frame her argument when she suggests that "[t]eachers are supposed to represent a certain quality set. . . teaching by example, instilling virtues in their students through the lives they lead." Referring to the incident as "an unprofessional and disgraceful act," the writer speculates "any other professional would be disciplined or even fired for being such a poor ambassador for his or her profession." At the end of the letter, the writer draws together discourses of professionalism and teacher identity when she sarcastically praises the fact that the protestors wore bags on their heads. Her concluding sentiment is that "[she], too would not want to be recognized in public after participating in such an event."

Taken together, the three media excerpts sketch some of the contextual background that underpins this study and they introduce the phenomenon explored in this study—teacher professional identity. In one way or another, all three pieces address this phenomenon. The DiManno (2000) piece employs many of the same discourses about teachers and teaching that circulate among members of the public. In her general chastisement of teachers, DiManno admits that one particular aspect about teachers that “rankles” her most is her feeling that “can’t pretend to have a vocation, some sort of altruistic calling as an educator, then behave like a unionized widget-maker who lives by the punch of the clock.” In her view,

. . . teachers aren’t widget-makers or textile factory workers—there’s not a victimized Norma Rae in the bunch—making \$6.85 an hour. They’re well-compensated professionals, ostensibly, with paid summers off, and a couple of weeks at Christmas and another in March—rather nice perks, but it makes teachers crazy whenever such details are mentioned, as if three-plus months vacation each year should not be considered part of the job package.

She writes further that

in the past several years, as teachers and their unions have gone to the mattresses with the Tories at Queen’s Park, these same “professionals” have disgraced themselves with the torrent of crocodile tears they’ve shed on behalf of their beleaguered students, kids whose education has been disrupted on an all too frequent basis by the disputes between their teachers and the government. God spare us all any more letters to the editor from high-handed educators who write about themselves as if they were nuns ministering to the poor in Guatemala or Canadian peacekeepers venturing into the Congo. Shall we pin a medal of valour to their breasts?

Honest, with the exception of newspaper columnists and professional basketball players, never [has she] met a group of people with such a high opinion of themselves.

DiManno’s argument is constructed using discourses of altruism, unionism and professionalism. While she accurately suggests that teachers play an active role in the

self-selection of subject positions created through these discourses, her argument ignores the ways in which these subject positions are created through the discourses that she and others, including teachers themselves perpetuate. The “unionized widget-maker” discourse, for example, is constructed by and through, among others, the *Education Act*, the *Labour Relations Act*, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and publicly held philosophies about the purposes of schooling. DiManno’s argument ignores the fact that teachers have little choice but to accept the particular identities constructed through such discourses. Her argument consistently positions teachers in ambiguous ways.

Barclay’s (2001) piece illustrates the power of the discursive formation of excellence and standards to produce essentialized student and teacher identities. By pursuing a particular notion of excellence, the Progressive Conservative government has made learning and teaching mechanistic activities—students become widgets, teachers become widget makers. Here, the “professional” teacher accepts teaching and learning as technical activities that can be measured using particular types of accountability tools. A powerfully “commonsensical” discourse, the understanding of teaching and education embedded within it becomes easily sustained through public and media perceptions.

Finally, the last media piece—the OECTA/Witmer incident—illustrates the extent to which some teachers will go in response to attempts by others to govern their identities. Again, framed primarily by discourses about unionism and professionalism, the incident can be understood as an emblematic representation of the professional identity struggle that beset Ontario’s teaching profession between 1995 and 2004. One of the central images appearing throughout the article—household paper bags inscribed with the phrase “A Once Proud Ontario Teacher”—conveys a powerful and evocative message

about the perceptions particular individuals had of themselves as members of Ontario's teaching profession. The altercation and the various responses and reactions expressed by the public, media, union, and individual teachers reveal many of the implicitly-held assumptions about what and who teachers are and ought to be.

Collectively, these three media "cases" present some of the ways in which teachers and teaching have been represented in the context of education of reform in Ontario during the latter part of the 1990s and into the early part of the 2000s. For the most part, these have been depictions *of* teachers and teaching; with one exception, they have not illustrated how teachers understand and respond to these representations. In the chapters that follow, both perceptions of teachers and teaching and the various ways in which individual teachers respond to these perceptions as they construct their professional identities will be explored.

Purpose of the Study

Employing Foucauldian notions of discourse, identity, and governmentality, this study seeks to isolate some of the discourses articulated about teachers and their work in and through Ontario education reform between 1995 and 2004 and to explore how various constituents take up these discourses. The study seeks to understand how one discourse gets articulated with another and how teachers address these frequently discordant discourses. It examines how teachers' identities, through their actions and responses, shape and are shaped by the various discourses being articulated about them and their work.

Specifically, the study is a critical discourse analysis of the theoretical construct of teacher professional identity. Although the study draws on several domains including public, government and media discourses, the primary data set is comprised of the interview texts of 14 secondary school teachers who teach or who have taught in a large district school board in the greater metropolitan Toronto region between 1995 and 2004.

The general research questions framing the study include:

1. How do others (e.g., government, media, teacher organizations) present teachers as professionals in the context of education reform in contemporary Ontario?
2. How do teachers understand and respond to these views (discourses)?
3. What discourses do teachers draw on and therefore accept about teaching and teachers' work?
4. What discourses do teachers resist and reject about teaching and teachers' work?
5. Is there a relationship between this acceptance/rejection and how these teachers see themselves? If so, what is the nature of this relationship?

Organization of the Study

This thesis reveals that teacher professional identity should not be understood as an essentialized phenomenon. Outside the boundaries of their population, teachers are engaged in constant negotiation with public, media, and governmental discourses about themselves and their work. Inside the boundaries of their population, teachers are engaged in constant negotiation about their professional identities with their federations—the

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation in this particular study, and their self-regulatory body, the Ontario College of Teachers. Within the immediate boundaries of their classrooms and schools, teachers negotiate their professional identities on a daily basis between and among themselves and the administrators who oversee their work. The data in this study suggest that the discourses and associated practices that articulate to construct teacher professional identity suspend teachers in a perpetual state of negotiation over what it means to be a teacher in the province of Ontario.

The study is important because it attempts to isolate and deconstruct some of the assumptions about teachers and teaching that have become a normalized part of the public's and the teaching profession's collective commonsense. For teachers, this study is important because it names, deconstructs and describes the intersecting, nested and complex relationships between and among some of the discourses that the public, media, government and teachers draw upon and sustain to construct particular versions about what it means to be professional and be a professional in teaching. The study is also important to teachers because it illustrates the ways in which teachers themselves can and do sometimes construct and sustain discourses about teaching, including the very discourses and practices that they rally against.

For the same reasons just identified, the study is important for organizations such as the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and the Ontario College of Teachers. In the case of the former, the data illustrate that the tensions between the dichotomous discourses of professionalism and unionism persist and in the particular instance of education reform, these discourses are perceived not only to be irreconcilable by several teachers, but the perception among some teachers is that teachers' federations

actually construct many discourses that perpetuate this dichotomy. In the latter instance, the data both challenge and contradict several of the assumptions that underpin the rationale for the College's creation and the work it purports to do on behalf of the teachers who populate its membership.

Chapter one of the study has provided a contextual background and basis for the study. Chapter two presents a literature review that problematizes the concepts of profession, professionalism, and professionalization in teaching and the relationship between these concepts and it presents various theoretical perspectives from which teacher identity has been explored. This chapter argues that any exploration of teacher identity must be understood within the problematized context presented through the literature. Chapter three provides both the theoretical orientation that underpins this study—Foucauldian poststructuralism and its notions of discourse, identity, and governmentality—and the methodology employed to conduct the study—critical discourse analysis. Chapter four of the dissertation provides a brief overview of the nature of the personal interest I bring to the research and suggests that my interest in these questions and the phenomenon of teacher professional identity is deeply rooted in my own identity as a teacher. This chapter concludes by introducing the participants in the study. In chapter five, participants express their own conceptions of who they are as teachers and their understandings of the discourses of “teacher professionalism” and “teacher as a professional.” Drawing on participants’ experiences, chapters six through nine examine the ways in which the participants in this study understand the negotiation of their professional identities within the broader public domain (chapter six), the broader boundaries of their own population through their union (chapter seven) and their self-

regulatory body, the Ontario College of Teachers (chapter eight), and finally, among themselves and their administrators within the immediate boundaries of their classrooms and school (chapter nine). Chapter ten provides some concluding comments and suggests implications of the findings in this study.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEMATIZING PROFESSION(AL)ISM, THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING AND TEACHER IDENTITY

Introduction

The status of teaching as a profession and teachers' work as professional work has been a pervasive preoccupation of policy-makers, legislators, educational administrators and teachers. Interest in whether or not teaching is or can ever be assigned the label "profession" and teachers the label "professional" does not appear to be waning. For example, in May, 2003, I was invited to participate in a partnership project between the government of Ontario and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) international forum on *Schooling for Tomorrow "Teaching as a Profession Project" Futures Workshop*. The purpose of the workshop was "to stimulate dialogue on the issue of teachers and the teaching profession" using modified OECD (2003) future world scenarios to begin to address several issues, including possible answers to the following questions a) how does the issue of teachers as professionals relate to the quality of teaching? b) in order to maximize student learning and achievement, what would the status of teaching as a profession be under the various scenarios? c) are all teachers the same and should they be treated the same as other professionals? Clearly, attributing the label professional to teachers and teaching is problematic.

The difficulty with the concept is well articulated by Coulter and Orme (2000)

who write:

“Professional” is one of those words that has puzzled me for much of my thirty year teaching career, beginning from a time when, as a teacher walking a picket line in Montreal, when I was told that “professionals” did not go on strike. It has been used by me and against me in many ways since. As a consultant I was responsible for “developing” people “professionally.” As a principal, I exhorted teachers to act as professionals. As a superintendent, I was informed that professionals do not supervise children at recess. Now, as a faculty member in a research university, I struggle to understand the tensions between and within academic and professional faculties. “Professional” seems to be a word with many meanings; indeed, it seems to be in danger of being what Gary Fenstermacher (1990) calls a “purr” word, that is, a word that feels good, but whose meaning is uncertain. It often seems to be a synonym for good (“She is a consummate professional”), with its antonym meaning bad (“That is unprofessional behaviour”). Clearly being a professional is seen as desirable, but it is unclear to me exactly why and what is at stake in achieving professional status.

(p. 4)

What does it mean to say that teaching is a profession, that a teacher is a professional, or that teachers exhibit professionalism? Why is there such public, legislator, educational administrator and teacher interest in and preoccupation with teacher professionalism? Why is there such interest in and preoccupation with the professionalization of teachers and teaching? The first portion of this chapter focuses on some of the literature that examines these questions and the multiple and often conflicting proposals that attempt to answer them. The second portion presents various ways in which teacher identity has been conceptualized. The chapter concludes by arguing that any exploration of teacher identity must be framed within the contested terrain of the constructs of profession, professional, professionalism, and professionalization.

Problematizing Profession, Professional, and Professionalism

A vast literature considers the relation among professionalism, professionalization, and the work of teachers. Researchers have reviewed and categorized theoretical and empirical analyses conducted in this area. In many ways, the literature tends to focus on what Helsby (1995) distinguishes between teacher professionalism—the quality of what they do and the conduct, demeanour, and standards which guide their work—and the professionalization of teaching—how they feel they are seen through other people’s eyes with respect to status, standing, regard, and level of professional reward accorded them. Among other areas, the literature focuses more specifically on historical analyses, distinctions between teacher professionalism versus teacher unionism, education reform and the professionalization of teaching, and the advocacy of particular kinds of professionalism. I have chosen to examine this literature in chapter two in my attempt to convey the contested nature of the field.

As Shacklock (1993) has observed, a great deal of the literature has concerned itself with questions about whether teaching is a profession and or about whether teachers are professionals. This question and variations on this question continue to occupy the interests of many in education (see for example, Englund, 1996; Hoyle, 2001). Some of the literature conducts historical analyses of what is frequently referred to as “the professionalization project” of teaching (for example, Gitlin, 1996; Hargreaves, 2000; Labaree, 1992; Popkewitz, 1994); some focuses on teacher professionalism and teacher unionism (for example, Bascia, 1994, 1998; Gitlin, 1996); some is concerned with teacher professionalism, professionalization and educational reform (for example, Ball, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1989, 1990; Helsby, 1995, 2000; Popkewitz, 1998; Smyth &

Shacklock, 1998b; Whitty, 2000); within the context of educational reform, some is concerned with advocating particular kinds of professionalism such as a new professionalism (D. Hargreaves, 1994; Quicke, 1998), directed professionalism (Bottery & Wright, 2000) and activist professionalism (Sachs, 2000). Not surprisingly, within each of these broad categorizations there are finer and more specific areas of inquiry such as the specific characteristics of professional autonomy (Pratte & Rury, 1988, 1991), gender and class (for example, Apple, 1986; Casey, 1993; Gitlin, 1996), teacher professionalization and teacher educators and teacher education (Labaree, 1992; Popkewtiz, 1994), and the relationship between professionalization, professionalism and bureaucracy, (for example, Burbules & Densmore, 1991; Derber, 1982; Hartley, 1985; Larson, 1977). Despite the varied foci of these many inquiries and despite the particular stance the research takes with regard to professionalism or professionalization, almost all of the research in this area attempts to address the fundamental difficulties associated with identifying teaching as a profession and teachers as professionals.

Formal and informal definitions of profession(al)(ism)(ization)

One of the central problems with thinking about professions is that the term “profession” itself can be defined and conceptualized in many different ways (Barker, 1992). An important first step in making sense of the contested terrain that underpins the ways in which the term is frequently employed in discussions about teachers and teaching is to attend to the concept as it is employed in both its formal sense(s) and contexts and informal sense(s) and contexts.

Our particular use of any word, term, or concept is dependent upon both the occasion and context of its use and the particular audience to which its use is directed. This is especially the case when referring to teachers, teaching, profession, professional, and the associated terms of professionalism, professionality, and professionalization. The occasion or context and audience are very important considerations when attempting to untangle the often conflicting and discordant meanings of the terms. Furthermore, it is equally important to recognize that both the formal *and* informal use of these words each have both denotations *and* connotations and frequently neither the speaker nor the audience makes clear the distinctions between or among the multiple meanings intended by the use of the term(s).

A word or term's denotation is its authoritative dictionary meaning or meanings which has (have) typically been legitimized through some official or formal recognition process such as the inclusion of these words in language dictionaries. Denotative meanings, as one might expect, are intended to restrict and limit the attributes or distinguishing characteristics that can be ascribed to a word, term or concept. A word, term or concept can and frequently does have multiple denotations; however, these multiple meanings may only be authoritatively recognized in varying degrees. Although a word, term, or concept's denotative meaning is, in essence, an authoritative attempt to fix and stabilize a particular reality, we cannot forget that denotations, however forcibly adhered to, are essentially arbitrary markers.

In contrast to denotation, a word, term, or concept's connotation(s) are the multiple and ever-shifting implied associations and meanings that become attached to particular words, terms or concepts. Connotations are those associated and often

emotionally-charged meanings that we attribute to words, terms or concepts in addition to their more restrictive and explicit denotation(s). The word “mother,” for example, is denotatively understood as the designation for female parent; however, the connotations of the word “mother” vary considerably. For some, the word may connote warmth, caring, security, and nurturing but for others, the same word may connote very negative images and associated feelings such as abandonment, neglect, and emotional or physical abuse. Although the word “mother” has several denotations such as the designation for the woman in authority over a religious community of women (as in Mother Superior), the word is illustrative of those words, terms or concepts whose primary denotation is more or less universally concrete and stable; this is not the case for numerous other, more abstract words, terms, or concepts such as “teacher” or “profession.”

Denotatively, the word “teacher” means one who instructs; it is a definition that is likely to be agreed upon by many. But like the word “mother,” the connotations of “teacher” are again variable with both positive and negative associations being suggested or implied by the word. Unlike “mother,” however, the word “teacher” has multiple denotations that make difficult or trouble universal agreement about its meaning. These denotations draw upon or are constructed by attending to the various synonyms of the word “teach.” For example, the word “teach” can mean to show, to instruct, to cause to know a subject, to cause to know how, to accustom to some action or attitude, to make to know the disagreeable consequences of some action, to guide the studies of, to impart the knowledge of, to instruct by precept, example or experience, to seek to make know and accepted, or to conduct instruction regularly in. Other synonyms for teach such as “educate,” “train,” “discipline,” or “school” further complicate the term’s meaning with

each of these also having multiple positive and negative connotations. It is here, within these highly variable and multiple denotations and connotations of abstract words, terms and concepts like “teach,” “teacher,” or “profession” that discrepancies, differences over meaning arise that can pose considerable challenge to those who attempt to fix or stabilize a word, term or concept’s meaning. The word “profession” is one such word that has caused considerable difficulty for those who are interested in stabilizing its attributes and defining characteristics.

Of the many ways of conceptualizing “profession,” Kritzer (1999) identifies three: the common parlance definition, the “historical” definition, and the sociological definition. In its common usage, profession is typically understood by reference to its antonym, “amateur.” When employed in everyday conversation as a synonym for “occupation,” Kritzer (1999) observes that a “professional” can refer to a firefighter, a plumber, an auto mechanic, a secretary, a teacher, a salesperson, a social worker, a doctor, a lawyer, or a member of the military as well as many other occupations (p. 2). In these instances, those who are members of these occupations refer to themselves as “professionals” (in other words, they perform a particular line of work as a means of livelihood) and they refer to their “professionalism”—that is, they are committed to what they view as a set of standards of performance. It is important to note that sometimes the term “professionalism” is also commonly used in reference to possessing the occupational status of a profession—what is understood as “professionalization” in some literatures.

The historical definition of profession is more restrictive than the common parlance definition (Kritzer, 1999). Profession in this sense refers to a broad class of occupations involving some sort of career hierarchy where an individual’s qualifications

and expertise are recognized as having been acquired through some formal training. Typically there are a variety of methods for gaining access to practice in a profession that include weak licensing rules, strict enforceable licensing rules, and other credentialing processes used to restrict access to the profession. Kritzer (1999) refers to profession in this sense as “general professions.”

The third definition of profession—the sociological definition—is even more restrictive (Friedson, 1983 in Kritzer, 1999). From a sociological perspective, at a minimum, professions are defined as “exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases” (Abbott, 1988, p. 8). Kritzer (1999) suggests that while many occupational groups enjoy exclusivity (through licensing or union structures) and that many technical occupations (e.g., computer programmers, electronic repair technicians) apply abstract knowledge, it is the combination of recognized exclusivity with the application of abstract knowledge that defines what sociologists label as professions (p. 2). Kritzer (1999) also explains that the sociological definition of profession is further distinguished by the addition of “notions of altruism, regulatory autonomy through peer review processes, and autonomy vis-à-vis the service recipient (i.e., the professional tends to control the relationship with and the service provided to the client/patient/customer)” (p. 2). For Kritzer (1999), this sociological definition more aptly applies to what he refers to as the “formal professions.”

Although these conceptualizations of the term profession—common parlance, historical and sociological—are helpful in making sense of the difficulties associated with discussions of the term, it is also important to note that these categories are themselves both historically and socially constructed. The sociological conceptualization of

profession, for example, is historically influenced by and subject to common parlance understandings and uses of the term. This said, these three conceptualizations of the term are helpful because they enable a distinction to be made between “formal” professions (for example, law, medicine or engineering) and “general” professions (for example, plumbers, secretaries, or auto mechanics) with the former being a subset of the latter—a distinction that is important when discussing occupations such as teaching and nursing.

As Kritzer (1999) has noted, discussions about professions have always been centrally concerned about issues of autonomy, control and expertise. These concerns have taken on varying degrees of importance within the general professions; however, within the formal professions, issues of autonomy, control and expertise have remained a consistently enduring concern. This concern is perhaps, unlike the general professions, due to the fact that formal professions tend to conflate the two different meanings of “professionalism”—that is, achieving the status of profession (more generally referred to as professionalization in the education literature) is equated with maintaining an ideology of professionalism as it is reflected in the definitional elements of formal professions (Kritzer, 1999). Historically and presently, teaching is an occupation that straddles the line between the general and formal professions and, consequently, it is an occupation that continues to struggle not only with the conflation of the formal sociological and historical meanings of profession and professionalism, but it also struggles with the conflation of the informal, common parlance meanings of the terms. These persistent struggles within and without the teaching occupation regarding the appellation of the terms “profession,” “professional,” “professionalism,” and “professionalization” to teachers and teaching must always be understood in common parlance, sociological and

historical senses; and any discussion or examination of teacher professional identity must be framed by and understood within this struggle.

The professionalization of teaching and teacher professionalism

As we have seen in the above discussion, the multiple conceptions of profession and the important distinctions between professionalism and professionalization pose considerable difficulty when attempts are made to understand it as a logical or universally agreed upon category. It should not be surprising then, that both the formal classification of teaching as a profession and the criteria that differentiate teaching from other occupations have also posed considerable difficulty to many educational researchers, policy-makers, legislators, teachers and others concerned with education. Among those educational researchers who have made significant commentary and analysis regarding the status of teaching as profession are Burbules and Densmore (1991) who argue the limits of making teaching a profession, Sykes (1991) who favours teacher professionalism as a policy choice, Soder (1991) who argues that debates about whether teaching is profession must acknowledge that teaching is fundamentally an ethical activity, Pratte and Rury (1991) who contend that there is more to be gained by viewing teaching as a craft rather than focusing on teacher professionalism, Labaree (1992) who argues that the path to professionalism for teachers is filled with “craters and quicksand,” Theissen (1993) who argues for the professional place of Canada’s teachers in future educational policy making, Popkewitz (1994) who argues that professionalization, when used with respect to teaching, cannot be understood without considering the social and political context within which teaching occurs, Englund (1996) who wonders whether

professional teachers are a good thing, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) who have identified and categorized at least five different and often overlapping discourses about teacher professionalism and teacher professionalization which carry different connotations of what it means for teachers to be professionals: “classical professionalism,” “flexible professionalism,” “practical professionalism,” “extended professionalism,” and “complex professionalism” and Hargreaves (2000) who has distinguished among four ages of professionalism: “the pre-professional age,” “the age of the autonomous professional,” “the age of the collegial professional” and what he refers to as “the fourth age: post-professional or postmodern.” For Hargreaves (2000), this latter age is the era we have now entered. It is a period that he contends is “marked by a struggle between forces and groups intent on de-professionalizing teaching and other forces and groups who are seeking to redefine teacher professionalism and professional learning in more positive and principled post-modern ways that are flexible, wide-ranging and more inclusive in nature” (p. 153).

Perhaps one of the most notable contributions made from among those interested in the questions of whether teaching is a profession and whether teachers are professionals is Hoyle (1974) who distinguishes between extended and restricted professionalism and, more recently (2001) among occupational prestige, occupation status and occupational esteem. Like the conceptualizations of profession identified above by Kritzer (1999) and the various and subtle distinctions made by researchers between professionalism and professionalization, Hoyle’s (2001) analysis is very helpful in making sense of the contested terrain that underpins discussions about teaching as a profession and teachers as professionals. As might be expected and as may be becoming

clear(er), attempts made to disentangle the areas of overlap between and among these concepts are exceedingly difficult. Hoyle's (2001) analysis is also helpful because it deals specifically with teaching as an occupation but, when placed alongside Kritzer's (1999) analysis of the difficulties associated with the term "profession" generally, an even murkier picture of the contested nature of teaching as a profession emerges.

Corresponding closely to historical definition of profession identified above by Kritzer (1999) in that the recognition of teaching by the public is dependent upon the allocation of teaching to some sort of occupational hierarchy, Hoyle (2001) defines "occupational prestige" as "the public perception of the relative position of an occupation in a hierarchy of occupations" (p. 139). The level of prestige accorded to teachers is shaped by the perceived image of the teacher which, according to Hoyle stems from the fact that teachers' immediate clients are children.

This definition of prestige also seems to correspond to Kritzer's (1999) common parlance definition of profession where profession is understood as almost synonymous with occupation and is distinguished by means of its antonym "amateur." Hoyle's (2001) analysis seems to suggest that the prestige accorded to an occupation is given primarily (or only) by the public and in this sense, occupational prestige is commonly used only in lay parlance when categorizing occupations such as firefighters, plumbers, secretaries, auto mechanics, teachers, salespersons, doctors, lawyers, and members of the military as professions.

The second element or aspect of teaching as a profession that Hoyle (2001) identifies as important is "occupational status." Again, corresponding both to Kritzer's (1999) historical and sociological definitions of profession, occupational status refers to

“the category to which knowledgeable groups . . . such as civil servants, politicians, commentators, social scientists, the leaders of professional organizations and members of the professions, or the putative professions, themselves allocate a particular occupation” (p. 144). The definition of occupational status is further distinguished by what Hoyle (2001) calls the “formal status” of teaching which is authoritatively determined and the “semantic status” of teaching, which “is determined by the way in which groups refer to teaching as a *profession*—or seek to withhold this status—and in which contexts and with what intent” (p. 144). Hoyle elaborates further observing that although an occupation may receive *formal* designation and status as a profession, it does not necessarily follow that the general public or politicians, administrators, commentators, or members of other professions will draw upon this acknowledgment.

Related to prestige and status, the third element of teaching as a profession that Hoyle (2001) identifies is occupational esteem which he defines as “the regard in which an occupation is held by the general public by virtue of the personal qualities which members are perceived as bringing to their core task” (p.147). These personal qualities include such things as “dedication,” which Hoyle (2001) explains can include anything from viewing teaching as a vocation to an acceptance of the diffuse nature of a teacher’s role and the generosity of time he or she gives. Another personal quality that is related to esteem is “competence.” Not to be equated with specific “competencies” as performance indicators, Hoyle (2001) defines competence in the esteem sense as “a general notion of effective teaching, classroom management and control, ensuring that tasks are fulfilled and that emergencies are dealt with” (p. 147). The third personal quality Hoyle (2001)

identifies is “care” which he contends “entails a manifest, perhaps a priority, concern with pupil welfare” (p. 147).

This discussion of Kritzer’s (1999) common parlance, historical, and sociological conceptualizations of profession and Hoyle’s (2001) analysis of the occupational prestige, status and esteem associated with teaching has been presented not to criticize the understanding or conceptualization of either but rather, to illustrate the importance of attending to the multiple and overlapping complexities associated with attempting to make sense of the terrain. My own distinctions at the beginning of this chapter between the formal and informal use of words, terms and concepts and the contexts within which they are used, although similar to Hoyle’s (2001) distinction between the “formal” and “semantic” status of occupations, are also slightly different from Hoyle’s. Although Kritzer’s (1999) analysis does not directly refer to prestige, status or esteem in his analysis, the common parlance, historical and sociological definitions of profession seem to encompass both prestige and status. Hoyle’s (2001) analysis, on the other hand, though addressing occupational prestige, occupational status and occupational esteem, seems to acknowledge and incorporate elements of Kritzer’s common parlance, historical, and sociological conceptualizations of profession.

Other than for purposes of classification, Hoyle (2001) indicates that the word “profession” is rarely used formally among either the general public or those with a special interest in education. Leaders of teacher organizations and the general public, for example, routinely refer to “the teaching profession.” Teachers themselves invoke the term in certain contexts when measuring themselves and others in terms of the social significance of their work. In contrast to the informal uses of the word, the formal

deployment of “profession” has marked the relationship between teachers, through their organizations, and the state for over a century. “Profession,” Hoyle (2001) argues,

has been a symbolic counter in a fluctuating exchange relationship with governments and the public—which nonetheless entailed a real but unequal power struggle—whereby the status of *profession* has been ‘offered’ to teachers in exchange for the acceptance by teachers of political goals.

(p.145)

This fluctuating exchange relationship has been written about extensively by Barbules and Densmore (1991), Gitlin (1996), Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), Hargreaves (2000) and Labaree (1992), among others. Indeed, the pursuit of the professionalization of teaching has endured throughout the 1990s and into the year 2004 with educational researchers such as Ball (1994, 1999, 2000), Gale and Densmore (2000), Helsby (1999), Popkewtiz (1998), Smyth and Shacklock (1998b) and Whitty (2000) identifying, describing and elaborating upon the increased interest in and influences on the pursuit of the professionalization of teaching. Whether it has been initiated by teacher organizations themselves or by educational reformers and governments, the difficulties and challenges associated with the pursuit of professionalization have contributed to the contested terrain that underpins the discussion about teaching as a profession and teachers’ work as professional work.

As this review of literature makes clear then, discussions about what it means to be professional, to show professionalism, or to pursue professionalization in teaching must attend to both the formal and informal ways in which these concepts are employed, the distinctions which can be made among occupational prestige, status and esteem and the long-standing interest in the pursuit of the professionalization of teaching. Regardless

of the focus of the discussion with respect to being a professional (professionalization) or being professional (professionalism), there are many deeply-held but frequently unarticulated assumptions about teachers and teaching embedded in the discussion that position teachers in particular ways and with which they are expected to identify. The next section explores some of the ways in which those interested in studying teacher identity have conceptualized these assumptions.

Conceptions of Teacher Identity

The concepts of identity and self have figured prominently in psychological, philosophical, sociological, theological, and anthropological studies, and to a somewhat lesser degree perhaps, in the disciplines of biology and political science. Through multiple and diverse lines of research and theory, each of these discipline areas has recognized that identity and self are central to understanding human thought, feeling and action. The field of psychology, for example, examines identity and self from cognitive, developmental, pathological, and narrative perspectives. Distinctions are also made between and among embodiment, self, and personal identity. A biological approach to identity recognizes that the self is clearly a product of activity occurring in the nervous system, but it has yet to identify areas of the brain that are associated with the capacity for self-relevant thought and emotion. In the social sciences, theories of identity are concerned with the social formation of the person, the cultural interpretation of the body, and the creation and use of markers of membership such as rites of passage and social categories. They address issues of gender, class, ethnicity, age, and other forms of categorization, association, and differentiation in an attempt to understand the person as

formed through complex relations of mutual constitution between individuals and groups (Wenger, 1998, p. 282).

Given these multiple and diverse lines of research and theory, it should not be surprising then, that teacher identity has also been theorized and researched from a variety of perspectives including research that has examined the socialization process of becoming a teacher and/or learning to teach as with perhaps Waller's (1932) study of the sociology of teaching and Lortie's (1975) study of schoolteaching being the classic examples in this regard. Other research has been conducted within the area of teacher education research and practice; however, much of the theorizing in this area has been implicit rather than explicit. For example, researchers who have theorized conceptions of teaching and conceptions teacher knowledge typically make implicit connections between these areas of inquiry and teacher identity (Atkinson & Rosiek, 2003). More recently, research conducted on teacher identity, including the research undertaken in this study, has been examined within the context of education reform. The section that follows attempts to delineate the ways in which conceptions of teacher identity are embedded within more general conceptions of teaching and teacher knowledge.

Researchers have attempted to categorize conceptions of teaching in several ways. Focussing on teacher preparation, Feiman-Nemser (1990) identifies five conceptual orientations that include academic, practical, technological, personal, and critical/social. As noted above, focussing on teacher knowledge, Atkinson and Rosiek (2003) delineate four areas—the scholarship of teaching, action research and teacher research, narrative inquiry and critical cultural teacher research. Bascia and Hargreaves (2000), focussing on educational change, contend that reform efforts are always underpinned by particular

theories or assumptions about what teaching is like and what principles or activities comprise it. According to these researchers, there are four orientations about teaching that are often overlooked by those interested in educational change: the technical view of teaching, the intellectual view of teaching, the socioemotional view of teaching and the socio-political view. Framing their work around teacher professionalism, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) identify five discourses—classical professionalism, flexible professionalism, practical professionalism, extended professionalism, and complex professionalism. Embedded within each of these conceptualizations about teaching are particular assumptions about the identities of teachers. For the purposes of this literature review, I have opted to present McLean's (1999) analysis because it addresses teacher identity directly. While the other analyses present a more fulsome treatment of the various conceptualizations of teaching, teacher professionalism and teacher knowledge, McLean's (1999) three general groupings helpfully distinguish the ways in which teacher identity has been assumed.

The first of McLean's (1999) groupings is readily self-identified as "constructivist" in orientation. Claiming some connection to the classic theories of Jean Piaget on the development of knowledge, this conceptualization positions the teacher as a constructor of knowledge, a "theory builder," an "empowered thinker," and an "inquirer," "scientist," or "researcher" who has developed skills in observing children and methodically investigating and resolving problems in child learning. The second cluster of theorists includes those who are concerned with the "practical" perspectives on professional knowledge and reference the work of Schwab (1969, 1971), Schon (1983, 1987) and Connelly and Clandinin (for example, 1987, 1988, 1990), among others. In the

discourses of this theoretical orientation, the teacher is positioned as a highly intellectual being whose personal and professional understanding, self-image, and lived experience is understood holistically. The third cluster is the most wide-ranging one and includes those whose understandings and concerns are drawn more from the disciplines of sociology and philosophy, rather than from psychology. Describing themselves as critical pedagogists, poststructuralists, or feminists, this group of theorists includes, for example, Britzman (1991, 1994), Lather (1991), and Smyth (1987). In this orientation, the teacher is seen as a thinking being (O'Loughlin, 1991, p. 30) engaged in very demanding and often heavily conflicted work. Critical perspectives understand teaching as “grappling with contradictions,” “working out compromises,” “struggling with dilemmas,” “working through conflicts” (Britzman, 1991, 1994; O'Loughlin, 1991). But through all of the demands of the working environment, the teacher does not remain a “stable humanistic self” (Britzman, 1994). Rather, the teacher has an identity that can “embrace displacement,” that shifts as she encounters new challenges, new work environments, new social contexts, new questions, and new ideas (Britzman, 1994, p. 63 cited in McLean, 1999, p. 70). It is this last theoretical orientation—poststructuralism—that frames this study.

A poststructuralist view of identity

Drawing from poststructuralism and the work of Michel Foucault, this study adopts an understanding of identity that is seen as Kondo (1990, p. 24) puts it, “negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, (and) the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended power-laden enactment of those meanings in everyday situations.”

As Clegg (1998, p. 29) observes, a poststructuralist view of identity contends that we constitute, through language, “our sense of ourselves as distinct subjectivities through a myriad of ‘discursive practices’, practices of talk, text, writing, cognition, argumentation, representation generally.” The meanings of and membership within the categories of discursive practice are a constant site of struggle over power, where identities become “posited, resisted and fought-over in attachment to the subjectivity that constructs any particular individuality” (Clegg, 1998, p. 29). For poststructuralists, identity is never fixed in its expression nor given by nature and “no rational, unified human being, or class or gendered subject is the locus or source of the expression of identity” (Clegg, 1998, p. 29). Since membership in a category as a particular type of subject is the effect of devices of categorization, Clegg (1998) observes that “identity is always contingent, provisional, and achieved, not given” (p. 29). Viewed in this way, Clegg (1998) writes:

identity is always in process, always subject to reproduction or transformation through discursive practices that secure or refuse particular posited identities. Identities are not absolute but are always relational: one can only be something in relation to some other thing. Identity implies difference, rather than something intrinsic to a particular person or category of experience. It implies possible signifiers of self, carrying complex, shifting, frequently ambiguous, and contradictory meaning. All discursive practices have historical specificity, particularly as the work of Foucault (1977) interpreted them.

(p. 29)

A relatively new field of inquiry within educational research, poststructural exploration and analysis of teacher identity has been conducted in several areas including, among others, initial teacher education, in-service teaching, and within the context of education reform. In the area of initial teacher education, for example, Britzman (1991) has explored the role of identity in teacher development by examining what it means to

become a teacher and how the “self” of the teacher becomes defined in that process. Montecinos and Nielson (1997) have examined the experiences of and ways in which male elementary preservice teachers construct their professional identities as they begin their teaching careers. More recently, Zembylas (2003), using the work of Foucault, Butler and Rose on strategies of resistance and self-formation, has examined the political dimension of how emotions constitute identities and how these identities are assigned to teachers through discourses, practices and performances. In addition to this recent work, Youngblood Jackson (2001) has used feminist poststructural theory to deconstruct the ways in which a student teacher’s subjectivities shifted during her practice teaching experience.

With regard to in-service teachers, Biklen (1995) has examined the ways in which women elementary teachers constructed their identities as teachers and identified several discourses—professionalism, clinical, pedagogical, feminine, regulatory, service-related, and possibilities—that teachers drew from to explain their work. In another important study, Casey (1993) studied the experiences of Catholic nuns, Jewish women, and Black women as they worked and struggled for social change in response to the conservative agenda that has come to dominate the official American educational debate over the last decade. Within educational administration, Scott (1999) has explored the ways in which two exemplary female superintendents constructed their professional identities as they crossed the boundaries between public and private spheres.

In addition to research on teacher identity in terms of the socialization process of teaching and teacher education, other research has examined teacher identity within the context of educational reform. Of the most recently conducted research in this area, Dehli

and Fumia (2002) have used Foucault's notion of governmentality to understand "how teachers learn to negotiate the spaces between promises of improvement, effectiveness and accountability that are made in heterogeneous discourses of education reform and their experiences of deteriorating material conditions and social relations of schooling" (p. 1). As well, Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark and Warne (2002) have also explored "the ways in which 'discursive dynamics' come to re-write the professional teacher and nurse as split, plural and conflictual selves" as they are located "within a complicated nexus between policy, ideology and practice" (p. 109).

In Britain, Poulson (1998) has examined the ways in which accountability has functioned as a keyword in relation to teachers' professionalism and the ways in which teachers identified and articulated changing notions of accountability as a consequence of reforms in education in England in the 1990s. Also Woods and Jeffery (2002) have examined how the primary school teachers have had to reconstruct their identities in response to the reconstruction of the British educational system.

Also employing a Foucauldian theoretical perspective, Sanguinetti (1999) conducted a study in the area of Adult Literacy and Basic Education in Melbourne, Australia in the mid-nineties in which she attempted to map teachers' discursive practices and to test the usefulness of poststructuralism as a "theoretical resource that might enhance teachers' reflexivity and strategic awareness" (pp. 1-2). Smyth and Shacklock (1998b) examined how teachers "creatively and constructively accommodated and subjugated the changes" that occurred to them during the late 1980's as a new career category known as the Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) for classroom teachers was introduced. Smyth and Shacklock (1998b) also mapped the discourses of teachers' work

in order to analyse how these teachers resisted and reconstructed, on their own terms, as alternatives to these changes.

Chappell (1998) examined the impact of discourses and discursive practices on teachers and their work as well and has argued that dominant economic discourses of government are attempting to construct a new reality for teachers working in the vocational education and training sector and that the impact of these discourses on teachers' understanding of who they are in education have been inadequately examined by researchers. Chappell (1998) contends that calls for teachers to change their pedagogical practices and educational roles to meet the challenges presented by this new discursive reality can be seen as making an overly instrumental means-ends connection between teachers' knowledge and skills and the professional practice of teaching and fails to appreciate that when teachers are asked 'to do things differently' they are also being asked to become 'different' teachers; that is, to change their professional identity.

McWilliam, Hatcher, and Meadmore (1999) argue that the production of new forms of knowledge is creating new sites for struggle over who owns educational knowledge, and that this has profound implications for teachers' professional identity. These researchers worry that "as schools are re-shaped into corporations, school administrators and teachers are under increasing pressure to improve their productivity and to develop themselves as enterprising leaders and managers in a culture of performativity" (p. 2). In short, they argue, a new teacher identity is being created for and presented to teachers.

Summary

Sachs (1999) has pointed out that “in terms of its orthodox uses, the idea of professional identity is rarely taken as problematic” (p. 3). This chapter has attempted to problematize profession(al)(ism(ization) in and of teaching by providing a selected overview of the vast literature that has been amassed in these areas over the past number of years. By no means has this been an exhaustive review; however, it has presented the case, as others have done, that the teaching profession must be understood as a contested terrain. In addition, this chapter has argued that any exploration of teacher identity must be framed by this contest over meaning.

As the examples presented in chapter one have illustrated, the professional identities of teachers between 1995 and 2004 as they were proposed by the government, the public, the media, teacher federations, the regulatory body for the profession, school boards, schools, and teacher colleagues were frequently incongruent with the identities that individual teachers constructed for themselves. Underpinning all of these external constructions has been an implicit assumption that there is a shared understanding of what “professional” means with regards to teachers and their work; however, as the discussion in this chapter has suggested, there is no essentialized teacher professional identity. It is my contention that to think, speak, and act as though there is creates ideological, epistemological, and practical dilemmas for teachers as they construct their teacher identities. The next chapter of this study presents a theoretical perspective and methodology that I employ to understand and explore these dilemmas and the ways these influence the construction of teachers’ professional identities.

CHAPTER THREE

POSTSTRUCTURALISM, DISCOURSE, AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The theoretical perspectives framing this dissertation draw from poststructuralism and Foucauldian conceptualizations of discourse, power/knowledge, governmentality and identity. Methodologically, the study employs techniques drawn from both Foucauldian discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. The first section of this chapter provides an overview of these theoretical positions; the second portion addresses the research methodology discussing the relationship to the more general area of qualitative research and provides a description of the procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data.

Poststructuralism, Language, and Subjectivity/Identity¹

Poststructuralism is perhaps best described, not as a particular theory, but rather a set of theoretical positions which have at their core “a self-reflexive awareness and acknowledgment of the tentativeness, the slipperiness, the ambiguity and the complex interrelations of texts and meanings” (Lye, 1997, p. 1). According to Lye (1997), most poststructuralist perspectives are “marked by a rejection of totalizing, essentialist, foundationalist concepts that suggest or imply any one explanatory concept, any

¹ While some theorists and researchers make distinctions between subjectivity and identity, this study uses

independent reality or a stable and unproblematic signifying system of representation” (Lye, 1997, p. 1).

Weedon (1987, p. 21) observes that for poststructuralism, language is the common factor in the analysis of social organization, social meanings, power and individual consciousness. She writes that “language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed” (p. 21). The assumption embedded here is that subjectivity is constructed; that is, it is socially produced in a whole range of discursive practices (economic, social, and political) the meanings of which are in a constant struggle over power. From a poststructuralist perspective, language constructs the individual’s subjectivity/identity in ways that are socially specific. Moreover, an individual’s subjectivity/identity is neither unified nor fixed. For poststructuralists, subjectivity/identity is theorized “as a site of disunity and conflict, central to the process of political change and to preserving the status quo” (Weedon, 1987, p. 21).

Poststructuralists understand that identity is recursive, contextual, and resistant to phases. It can be altered by situations in the same way that identities and actions can alter situations. In addition, Talburt (2002) posits, identity is an active process. She writes

It is a ‘doing’ and not a “being,” or perhaps a combination of the two. Identity is not a preexisting thing or substance even though sometimes we imagine it to be (i.e. individuals form a sense of self-identity) in order to go about our daily lives.

(p. 4)

Identity is also understood as multiple, relational and comprised of multiple identifications which shift across time and space, keeping identity in play. According to Talburt (2002) “as identifying beings, subjects inhabit multiple locations, enact multiple practices, form multiple connections. Identity, then, becomes practice, entailing responses to individuals, collectives, and the social and institutional cultures in which we find ourselves” (p. 5). Talburt (2002) also contends that because identities are called upon to behave and believe in certain ways and because they often answer unpredictably, attention must be given to the ways in which discourse constructs positions for subjects to occupy.

According to Weedon (1987), all forms of poststructuralism assume that meaning is constituted within language and that this meaning is not guaranteed by the subject which speaks it. However, she observes, different forms of poststructuralism theorize the production of meaning in different ways. For example, psychoanalytic forms of poststructuralism look to a fixed psycho-sexual order; deconstruction looks to the relationship between different texts; and Foucauldian theory looks to historically specific discursive relations and social practices. It is this latter approach that underpins this study and which is detailed in the next section of this chapter.

Foucault’s Theory of Discourse, Power/Knowledge, Identity, and Governmentality

This study of teacher professional identity employs theoretical perspectives drawn from the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault. Specifically the study is framed by his theories of power/knowledge and the ways in which this relationship works through discourse to produce subjectivities/identities and to regulate or govern them.

Kearins (1996, p. 9) notes that while Foucault had considerable interest in power, he never clearly or concisely elaborated his conception of power. Furthermore, she observes, it was only in his later works that he explicitly acknowledged the importance and centrality of this concept to his theorizing. Although this is the case, Kearins (1996) claims that it is possible to identify features of a Foucauldian conception of power through a distillation of statements he has made about power in his works and from other commentators' interpretations of them. The discussion that follows is limited only to those statements about power/knowledge and discourse that I have found to be the most relevant to this study.

For Foucault, power is socially constructed and inextricably bound up with knowledge. In this relationship, Foucault (1977a, p. 27) argues that "power produces knowledge [and they] directly imply one another." He writes further that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations." Hoy (1981) remarks that in Foucault, power and knowledge become so indistinguishable that he labels and represents the relationship as "power/knowledge, *pouvoir/savoir*." According to Hoy (1981, p. 48), Foucault's "construction of the concept of power/knowledge is a device for studying the social and scientific practices that underlie and condition the formation of beliefs." In this view that sees power and knowledge as two sides of the same social relations, Townley (1994) observes that power mechanisms become instruments for the simultaneous formation and accumulation of knowledge.

According to Foucault, power/knowledge functions through discourse. He writes that relations of power

cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association.

(Foucault, 1980a, p. 93)

Discourse, as understood by Foucault, refers to a

group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But . . . since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do—our conduct—all practices have a discursive aspect.

(Hall, 2001, p. 72)

For Foucault, discourse is about language and practice—it is concerned not only with the construction of knowledge but also with how that knowledge is put into practice in ways that regulate the conduct of others. Hall (2001) writes

just as a discourse ‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, it ‘rules out,’ limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it.

(p. 73)

Discourse, Foucault argued, never consists of one statement, one text, one action or one source. The same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time (what Foucault called the *episteme*), will appear across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society. However, whenever these discursive events “refer to the same object, share the same style and . . . support a strategy . . . a common institutional, administrative or

political drift and pattern” (Cousins & Hussain, 1984, pp. 84-85), then they are said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation (Hall, 2001, p. 73).

In Foucault’s later work, he became even more concerned with how knowledge was put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of others. He focused on the relationship between knowledge and power, and how power operated within what he called the *dispositif*, an institutional apparatus and its technologies (techniques). According to Foucault (1977b, quoted in Rabinow & Rose, 1994), the *dispositif*, or apparatus was “a resolutely heterogeneous grouping composing discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, policy decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic, moral, philanthropic propositions; in sum, the said and the not-said” (p. xvi). This diverse set of linguistic and non-linguistic elements comprising the apparatus is, for Foucault, always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also linked to certain co-ordinates of knowledge (Foucault, 1980b, pp. 194, 196 quoted in Hall, 2001, p. 75).

Foucault was particularly interested in the concept of disciplinary power that he saw occurring through systematic surveillance, monitoring, intervention, reform and training. A much more malevolent form of power whose micro-techniques “inscribe and normalise not only individuals but also collective organized bodies” (Clegg, 1989, p. 100), Foucault saw disciplinary power as the replacement for the sovereign power of the church and monarchy.

Foucault’s (1983b) theorizing led him to describe what he considered the ultimate form of disciplinary power, what he referred to as “pastoral” power where people discipline themselves. He writes

... this form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects.

(p. 212)

The subjects produced through power do not merely conform; indeed, as Kearins (1996, p. 10) observes, one of the prime effects of power was to produce, precisely, individuality. In a system of controls concerned to seek them out, differences, peculiarities and deviances are in fact ever more highlighted. According to Foucault (1980a), "[t]he individual ... is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is I believe one of its prime effects" (p. 98).

Hall (2001) proposes that Foucault's "subject" seems to be produced through discourse in two different senses or places. First, the discourse itself produces "subjects"—figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge that the discourse produces. Second, the discourse also produces a place for the subject (i.e., the reader or viewer, who is also "subjected to" discourse) from which its particular knowledge and meaning most makes sense. Hall (2001) submits further that not all individuals will become the subjects of a particular discourse and become bearers of its power/knowledge. He argues that, in order for this to occur, individuals must locate themselves/ourselves in the position from which the discourse makes most sense, and thus become its "subjects" by "subjecting" ourselves to its meanings, power, and regulation. In this way, Hall maintains, all discourses construct subject-positions from which they alone make sense (Hall, 2001, p. 80).

Davies and Harre (1990) also note the constitutive force of discourse, and in particular, of discursive practices. For these authors, the constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions. According to Davies and Harre (1990)

a subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in. Among the products of discursive practices are the very persons who engage in them.

(p. 46)

For Davies and Harre (1990), an individual emerges "as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate" (p. 46). Consequently, they note, one's identity is always in flux and dependent upon the "[subject] positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives" (p. 46).

Hall (2001, p. 80) observes that discourses themselves construct the subject-positions from which they become meaningful and have effects. He writes that while individuals may differ in a variety of ways, meaning-making will not occur until the individuals have "identified with those positions which the discourse constructs, subjected themselves to its rules, and hence become the subjects of its power/knowledge" (Hall, 2001, p. 80).

Although subjecting oneself or being subjected to the rules of discourse necessarily involves being governed by the discourses and the practices associated with them, Foucault was quick to point out the importance of being resistant to the disciplinary power of discourses and their associated practices. His theorizing about power in the later stages of his life focused on “micro power” with an emphasis on the resistance of power at the local level with a view to making changes within institutions that could lead ultimately to changes in the effect of the multiplicity of institutions. Foucault (1980b) argued that this resistance be performed by

“specific intellectuals”—ordinary people who have knowledge of their circumstances and are able to act within specific sectors at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations).

(p. 126)

Kearins (1996) points out that just prior to Foucault’s death, he began to link his notions of power with those of “governmentality.” Fitzsimons (2002, p. 1) observes that for Foucault, governmentality referred to a way or system of thinking about the nature or practice of government; it was both the governance of self and others. Foucault’s research interests in the later stages of his life focused on questions such as “who can govern? what is governing? and who is governed?”

Although Foucault (1991a) defined governmentality in several ways, Fitzsimons (2002) argues that it was primarily about “critique, problematisation, invention, imagination, and changing the shape of the thinkable” (p. 1). Governmentality is the relation between self and itself, interpersonal relationships involving some control and guidance, relations within social institutions, and community. It is concerned with the

exercise of political sovereignty relations (Foucault, 1989, p. 296). According to Foucault (1991b),

The target of the analysis of governmentality is not, “institutions,” “theories,” or “ideology,” but “practices”—with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment; the hypotheses being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances—but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and “reason.” It is a question of analysing a regime of practices—practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect.

(pp. 73-86)

For Dean (1999), governmentality is concerned with “how we think about governing with the different mentalities of government” (p. 16). He writes that

a mentality is a collective, relatively bounded unity, and is not readily examined by those who inhabit it. A mentality might be described as a condition of forms of thought and is thus not readily amenable to be comprehended from within its own perspective. The idea of mentalities of government, then emphasizes the way in which the thought involved in practices of government is collective and relatively taken for granted, i.e., not usually open to questioning by its practitioners. To say that these mentalities are collective is not necessarily to identify them with specific groups or classes, although it might also be possible to examine the relation between the different mentalities of specific ruling or subordinate groups. It is to say that the way we think about exercising authority draws upon the theories, ideas, philosophies and forms of knowledge that are a part of our social and cultural products.

(p. 16)

Dean (1999) observes that for Foucault (1991a), studies of governmentality are concerned with how “thought operates within our organized ways of doing things, our regimes of practices, and with its ambitions and effects” (pp. 17-18). An analysis of government is concerned with

thought as it is embedded within programmes for the direction and reform of conduct and with the ways that thought becomes linked to and embedded in technical means for the shaping and reshaping of conduct and in practices and institutions.

(p. 18)

Consequently, Dean (1999) contends, an analysis of the mentalities of government is an analysis of “thought made practical and technical” (pp. 17-18). Dean (1999) writes:

An analysis of government, then, is concerned with the means of calculation, both qualitative and quantitative, the type of governing authority or agency, the forms of knowledge, techniques and other means employed, the entity to be governed and how it is conceived, the ends sought and the outcomes and consequences.

(p. 11)

In Dean’s (1999) understanding, government necessarily involves “some sort of attempt to deliberate on and to direct *human* conduct” (p.11) where such conduct is conceived by those who wish to govern it as something that can be rationally regulated, controlled, shaped and turned to specific ends (p. 11). He states further that the rational attempt to shape conduct is inherently linked with moral questions because government policies and practices “presume to know, with varying degrees of explicitness and using specific forms of knowledge, what constitutes good, virtuous, appropriate, responsible conduct of individuals and collectives” (p. 11). At another level, Dean (1999) explains, government is intensely moral in that it seeks to engage with how both the “governed” and “governors” regulate themselves (p. 11).

In his analysis, Dean (1999) argues that notions of morality and ethics generally rest on an idea of self-government and presume some conception of an autonomous person capable of monitoring and regulating various aspects of their own conduct. Dean (1999) also suggests that to define government as Foucault (1983b) does as the managing

of the “conduct of conduct of others” (pp. 220-21) means opening up the examination of self-government or cases where governed and governor are two aspects of the one actor, whether the actor is a human individual, a collective or a corporation. The notion of government therefore extends to cover the way in which an individual questions his or her own conduct (or *problematizes* it) so that he or she may be better able to govern it. To paraphrase, government does not only involve how authority is exercised over others or how abstract entities such as states and populations are governed, but it also involves how we govern ourselves (Dean, 1999, p. 12).

For Dean (1999)

Government entails an attempt to affect and shape in some way who and what we are and should be. It is crucially concerned to modify a certain space marked out by entities such as the individual, its selfhood or personage, or the personality, character, capacities, levels of self-esteem and motivation the individual possesses. Government concerns not only the practices of government but also practices of the self. To analyse government is to analyse those practices that try to shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups. This is a perspective, then, that seeks to connect questions of government, politics and administration to the space of bodies, lives, selves and persons.

(p. 12)

Foucault’s conceptions of discourse, power/knowledge, subjectivity/identity, and governmentality then provide a powerful theoretical perspective from which to understand teacher professional identity. Both his earlier theorizing about the constitutive force of discourse in the production of subject positions and his later work on government and governmentality provide as Dean (1999) has also noted “a language and a framework for thinking about the linkages between questions of government, authority and politics and questions of identity, self and person” (p. 12).

In the next section of this chapter, I present the research methodology—a mixing of Foucauldian discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis—that ensues from my having adopted the theoretical perspective I have for this study. The discussion suggests that while discourse analysis can be situated within the broader field of qualitative inquiry, it is arguably better positioned as its own distinctive type of research. As the discussion reveals, debates about what constitutes “discourse” and “discourse analysis” occur even when situated within the field of qualitative research. It is my contention that its resistance to stabilization is perhaps an important aspect of its strength as a research methodology.

Critical Discourse Analysis as Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) point out that as a field of inquiry in its own right, qualitative research cuts across disciplines, fields, and subject matters (p. 2). The multifaceted nature of the field is mirrored in the complex array of interconnected terms, concepts, assumptions and theoretical traditions that surround the term “qualitative research” itself. While they argue that the open-ended nature of the field “leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrellalike paradigm [over it]” (p. xv), Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that it is possible to identify a number of “interpretive projects” that comprise it. These include, among many others, “performance ethnographies,” “critical race theory,” “grounded theories of several varieties,” “multiple strands of ethnomethodology,” and “projects connected to British cultural studies and Frankfurt schools” (p. xv).

Both theoretically and methodologically, discourse analysis seems equally resistant to placing it within a single and/or overarching frame. Having emerged most strongly during the 1980s, its relatively recent history may contribute to this resistance.

Wetherell (2001) explains:

[d]istinctive styles for doing discourse analysis are emerging from within particular discourse traditions, with each tradition typically including some epistemological claims, a set of concepts and procedures for substantive work and a clearly marked out theoretical domain. These traditions also typically include a distinctive understanding of “discourse.” Discussion is beginning to occur around the boundaries of these different approaches, their merits and de-merits, the points of similarity and difference and the choices at stake, as advocates attempt to build research communities while critics from other perspectives attempt to weaken their claims for intellectual hegemony. Boundaries will shift as a consequence and new approaches will emerge.

(p. 382)

These theoretical and methodological debates and boundary shifting may also account for the somewhat ambiguous relationship that discourse analysis appears to have with the field of qualitative inquiry more generally with some researchers such as Palmquist (1999), who finds it unnecessary to classify discourse analysis as a qualitative methodology. Rather than providing a particular method, discourse analysis is more accurately characterized as a way of approaching and thinking about a problem. In this sense, Palmquist (1999) writes, “it is neither a qualitative nor a quantitative research method, but a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research methods” (p. 1).

Certainly, recent attention² given to both discourse theory and the techniques employed for conducting its analysis suggests that it is already established as its own

² For example, the publication of “readers” in discourse theory and methodology by Wetherell, Taylor and

separate form of inquiry. Ranging from studies of the counselling process in psychology to studies of international relations in business, Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates (2001) have identified, in the social sciences alone, six areas of discourse analysis research that are typically conducted: conversational analysis, discursive psychology, Foucauldian research, critical discourse analysis, and critical linguistics, interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking, and Bakhtinian research. It could easily be argued that there is little difference between these distinctive approaches to discourse analysis and the “interpretive projects” above which comprise the field qualitative inquiry. This said, it is important to acknowledge that some researchers such as Gubrium and Holstein (2000) find it helpful to situate discourse analysis within the field of qualitative inquiry. On the other hand, as the discussion that follows makes clear, other researchers do not draw relationships between the two. Some of the same debates that occur within the boundaries of discourse analysis as a field of inquiry also find expression when discourse analysis is positioned within a qualitative research framework.

Ethnomethodology and Foucauldian discourse analysis

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), “[q]ualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 3). This type of research is comprised of a “set of interpretive, material practices” that not only make the world visible, but also transform it by turning it into “a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self” (p. 3). At this

Yates (2001), university programs established for the study of critical discourse analysis, international conferences devoted to critical discourse analysis and most recently, the publication of a review of the literature on the use of critical discourse analysis in educational research (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui and O’Garro Joseph, 2005).

level, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) contend, “qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” (p. 3) whereby researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). With its central focus concerned with “the way people make sense of the world and display their understandings of it” (*Wikipedia*, 2005), ethnomethodology fits very comfortably within Denzin and Lincoln’s definition. Literally meaning “the study of peoples’ methods,” (*Wikipedia*, 2005) ethnomethodology is a recognized form of qualitative research that examines “the ways in which people already understand the world and how they use that understanding” (p. 1).

In their overview of the field, Gubrium and Holstein (2000) point out that ethnomethodology had its origins in the work of Garfinkel (1952, 1967) who based his work on Shultz’s (1962, 1964, 1967, 1970) social phenomenological reworkings of Weber’s sociology. In its original form, the goal of ethnomethodology was to understand “how members [of the social world] actually ‘do’ social life” (p. 490). According to Gubrium and Holstein (2000), this attempt to document how individuals “concretely construct and sustain social entities such as gender, self and family” (p. 490) was highly complementary with Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Despite drawing from “different intellectual traditions and work in different empirical registers” (p. 494), Gubrium and Holstein (2000) suggest the similarities between ethnomethodologists and Foucauldians are derived from parallel notions of discourse. They contend that Foucault’s concern with social locations or institutional sites that specify the practical operation of discourses, linking the discourse of particular subjectivities with the construction of lived experience is highly similar to

ethnomethodology's interest in the constitutive quality of systems of discourse. The orientation to practice in ethnomethodology views social worlds and their subjectivities as always already embedded and embodied in its discursive conventions.

In addition to this similarity, Gubruim and Holstein (2000) note that others have drawn parallels between Foucault's interest in the power/knowledge (of discourse) and ethnomethodology's "formulation of the constitutive power of language use" (p. 494). In this comparison, Foucault's "discourses-in-practice" is equated with what ethnomethodology refers to as "discursive practices" in varied forms of social interaction. Both of these are taken to be the "working mechanism of social life itself, as actually known or performed in time and place" (p. 494). Power, for both Foucauldians and ethnomethodologists, lies in the articulation of distinctive forms of social life as such, not in the application of particular resources by some to affect the lives of others. Although discourses-in-practice are represented by "regimens/regimes" or lived patterns of action that broadly (historically and institutionally) "discipline" or encompass adherents' lives and discursive practice is manifest in particular patterns of talk and interaction that constitute everyday life, the practices refer in common to the lived "doing," or ongoing accomplishment of social worlds" (p. 494).

Ethnomethodology and Foucauldian discourse analysis approach empirical material in similar ways as well, according to Gubruim and Holstein (2000). The authors contend that both approaches are "analytics," as opposed to traditional theoretical frameworks. While conventional notions of theory hold that its purpose is "to explain the state of matters in question through providing answers to *why* concerns" (p. 495), the goal of ethnomethodology and Foucauldian discourse analysis is to answer how it is that

individual experience comes to be understood in the particular terms that it does (p. 495). In this sense, these approaches are “pretheoretical” (p. 495), respectively seeking to arrive at an understanding of how the subject matter of theory comes into existence in the first place and of what the subject of theory might possibly become. Underpinning the similarity in approach is the common goal of documenting the social bases of such realities (p. 495).

Gubruim and Holstein’s (2000) overview explains that the similarities between ethnomethodology and Foucauldian discourse analysis began to dissolve as the field of ethnomethodology moved along further in the direction of conversational analysis. With the focus on the structure of talk itself being examined in an attempt to understand how meaning emerges, conversational analysis explored “the sequential, utterance-by-utterance, socially structuring features of talk or “talk-in-interaction” (Gubruim & Holstein, 2000, p. 492). Texts produced from this form of ethnomethodological study were highly descriptive accounts of everyday life; however, critics such as Lynch (1993) began to mount challenges to this work on the grounds that the “in situ details of everyday life [were] ignored at the risk of reducing social life to recorded talk and conversational sequencing” (Gubruim & Holstein, 2000, p. 492). As an alternative to what was perceived to be highly reductionist ethnomethodology, Garfinkel, Lynch and others (see Garfinkel, 1988; Lynch, 1993; Lynch & Bogen, 1996) elaborated what they referred to as a “postanalytic” ethnomethodology, a research approach that is “less inclined to universalistic generalizations regarding the enduring structures or machinery of social interaction” (Gubruim & Holstein, p. 493).

In Gubrium and Holstein's (2000) estimation, such divisions and singular approaches have "short-circuited" the original promise of ethnomethodology where researchers combined

attention to how social order is built up in everyday communication with detailed descriptions of place settings as those place settings and their local understandings and perspectives mediate the meaning of what is said in the course of social interaction.

(p. 492)

They argue that it would be profitable to formulate "a new project that retains ethnomethodology's interactional sensibilities while extending its scope to both the constitutive and constituted *whats* of everyday life" and they suggest that Foucault's work is a "valuable resource for such a project" (p. 493).

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

Like Gubrium and Holstein (2000) above, Wetherell (2001) sees merit in using a combination of approaches; however, her overview of the field of discourse analysis differs noticeably from Gubrium and Holstein's. In the first place, Wetherell's (2001) presentation does not locate her discussion of discourse analysis within a qualitative research paradigm. Another difference is that, in Wetherell's presentation, the comparisons between ethnomethodology and Foucauldian discourse analysis that Gubrium and Holstein (2000) draw are absent. In fact, while Wetherell (2001) does refer to a relationship between ethnomethodology and conversational analysis, she does not include ethnomethodology in her list of the six types of discourse analysis that are conducted in the social sciences. The distinction between these two is further complicated

by her distinction among conversational analysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. Whereas Gubruim and Holstein (2000) maintain that a profitable relationship could exist between traditional ethnomethodology and Foucauldian discourse analysis, Wetherell's (2001) analysis points to the relationship between Foucauldian discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. The next part of this discussion examines this relationship.

In Foucauldian discourse, Wetherell (2001) contends that "discourse" is understood as a general human meaning-making process where "no ontological distinctions can be made between different kinds of social practices" (p. 390). She observes further that in his studies of the development of medicine and the emergence of the clinic, Foucault's (1976) task was "to explain how a whole apparatus, including machines, clothes, systems of authority, techniques for manipulating bodies, forms of architecture and record keeping developed" (p. 390). For Foucault, it was "the notion of the 'discursive formation' [that] in capsulated the broad social strategies and their institutional and administrative manifestations" (Wetherell, 2001, p. 390).

In contrast to Foucauldian discourse analysis where no distinctions are made between practices, critical discourse analysts see such distinctions as significant. For example, researchers such as Hodge and Kress (1988) and VanDijk (1993) view discourse (language in use) as only one element in the social relations that produce power and dominance. Theoretically and analytically, these researchers find it helpful to distinguish more clearly and strongly between the discursive and the extra-discursive. In a similar way, Fairclough (2001), while arguing that every social practice has linguistic or discursive elements, maintains it is important to distinguish between and among the

various elements that make up a practice. Furthermore, for Fairclough (2001) these elements are in a dialectical relationship with each other and the task of analysis is to describe these elements and their inter-relationship (Wetherell, 2001, p. 391).

According to Fairclough (1992), critical discourse analysis refers to the use of an ensemble of techniques for the study of textual practice and language use as social and cultural practices and it builds from three broad theoretical orientations. Summarized by Luke (1997), the first of these is taken from poststructuralism—the view that discourse operates laterally across local institutional sites and that texts have a constructive function in forming up and shaping human identities and actions. Second, the techniques borrow from Bourdieu's sociology the assumption that actual textual practices and interactions with texts become “embodied” forms of “cultural capital” with exchange value in particular social fields. Third, Luke (1997) notes that critical discourse analysis techniques adopt from neomarxist cultural theory the assumption that these discourses are produced and used within political economies, and therefore produce and articulate broader ideological interests, social formations, and movements within those fields (Hall, 1996 in Luke, 1997). He adds further that in addition to these theoretical orientations, the practical techniques of critical discourse analysis are derived from various disciplinary fields including from work in pragmatics, narratology and speech act theory.

A fundamental assumption underpinning critical discourse analysis is the contention that “systematic asymmetries of power and resources between speakers and listeners, readers and writers can be linked to their unequal access to linguistic and social resources” (Luke, 1997, p. 4). This assumption holds that institutions such as schools, for example, “act as gatekeepers of mastery of discursive resources: the discourses, texts,

genres, lexical and grammatical structures of everyday language use” (Luke, 1997, p. 4). Luke claims that “[because] discourse and language in everyday life may function ideologically. . . [t]hey may be used to make asymmetrical relations of power and particular textual portrayals of social and biological worlds appear given, commonsensical and ‘natural’” (p. 4).

Accordingly, Luke (1997) maintains, the task of critical discourse analysis is both deconstructive—aiming to disrupt and render problematic the themes and power relations of everyday talk and writing—and constructive—aiming to teach capacities to critique and analyse discourse and social relations so that a more equitable distribution of discourse resources can occur (Fairclough 1992 in Luke, 1997).

The principal unit of analysis for critical discourse analysis is the text where texts are understood to be social actions—meaningful and coherent instances of spoken and written language use. The shape and form of these texts are not random or arbitrary however. Specific text types or “genres” have particular conventional social uses and functions. In other words, Luke (1997) states particular types of texts “attempt to ‘do things’ in social institutions with predictable ideational and material effects” (p. 4). Such texts include functional written texts (e.g., business letters, forms, policies, textbooks), spoken face-to-face interactions (e.g., clinical exchanges, service exchanges, classroom lessons), and multimodal visual, electronic and gestural texts (e.g., internet home pages). As historically and culturally specific social actions, these genres, while dynamic and continually subject to innovation and reinvention, remain affiliated nonetheless with particular conventionalized discourses. As an example, Luke (1997) points out that the genre of the business letter is likely to feature discourses of finance and business.

Similarly, the genre of the tabloid news report would likely draw on discourses of romance and sexuality. Luke (1997) writes “as conventional forms, then, genres and sub-genres thus both constrain and enable meanings and social relations between speakers and listeners, writers and readers” (p. 4).

Luke (1997) claims that furthermore, every genre can be analysed in terms of its sequenced structure of propositions—its textual macrostructures. These structures of spoken and written narratives have identifiable segments, movements or “chunks” which are comprised of a sequence of actions and portrayals that follow an identifiable order. Luke (1997) explains further that these “tend to operate as large scale ‘grammars’ of actions and events chained together, as expressions of a “cultural logic” and taken for granted assumptions about historical and human agency, social and natural causality” (p. 4).

In addition to genre analysis, critical discourse analysis draws on analytic methods from systemic functional linguistics to conduct analysis at the sentence and word-level. Halliday (1985), for example, argues that lexical and grammatical features of texts function as a representation and portrayal of the social and natural world, that they construct and effect social relations and that they develop conventions as coherent, identifiable texts in particular media. Kress (1989) holds that written and spoken texts represent particular selective views of the world or “subject positions” and they set out social relations of “reading positions.” By establishing reading positions, Kress (1989) argues texts can interpellate readers, situating and positioning them in identifiable relations of power and agency in relation to texts (Luke, 1997).

To summarize, as a method of inquiry, discourse analysis is a field that continues to evolve. Debates about discourse theory and the most appropriate methods for conducting discourse analysis continue to occur in a variety of ways. While there is some debate about its location within a qualitative research framework, the more “robust” debates occur within ethnomethodology and the field of discourse analysis itself. While in the former, the debates coalesce around the original purposes of ethnomethodology and the place of Foucauldian discourse analysis within this field of inquiry, in the latter, the debates coalesce around the value of sustaining distinctions between and among the multiple types of discourse analysis and the theoretical and methodological traditions with which they are associated. Further, as this discussion has shown, what is deemed a salient feature in one debate appears, on the surface at least, to be irrelevant in another.

This study combines Foucauldian discourse analysis with methodological techniques borrowed from critical discourse analysis. While I can appreciate those who would describe or classify the approach taken in this study as ethnomethodology given its focus on how individuals understand and respond to the world in which they live, I would argue that it is more appropriately labelled a critical discourse analysis. The methodological approach I am employing is commensurate with observations made by several educational researchers. Among these researchers is Reed (1998) who comments that discourses “cannot be reduced to their linguistic and symbolic elements alone; rather they must be seen as configurations of statements, techniques, instruments and interventions and norms held loosely together by a body of anonymous historical rules” (p. 194). More recently, Haughey (2002) adopts a similar position arguing that discourses cannot be discussed in only linguistic or communicative terms but must be treated in

terms of their entire effects. As evidence that the approach I am employing is becoming more commonplace in education, I draw the reader's attention to the review of the use of critical discourse analysis among educational researchers conducted by Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui and O'Garro Joseph (2005). Echoing Wetherell's (2001) observation above that new approaches will emerge as the boundaries of what constitutes discourse analysis shift, these researchers contend that as educational researchers bring critical discourse analysis frameworks into educational contexts, the boundaries of critical discourse analysis are being reshaped.

Data Collection

This qualitative study is a critical discourse analysis of the theoretical construct of teacher professional identity. Although the primary data set is comprised of the texts of interviews conducted with 14 teachers, data analysis was conducted on several documents including, among others, materials such as government policy documents, speeches from the throne and government news releases, webpages from websites such as the Ontario College of Teachers and newspaper columns, editorials and letters to the editor.

In most cases, decisions concerning which documents to include for analysis were made as a result of my familiarity with and understanding of the ways in which those documents significantly related to this study. For example, as part of my daily work at the Ontario Ministry of Education during the first term of the Progressive Conservative government, I was expected to become and remain familiar with emerging policy and other issues within the education sector. This familiarization was accomplished by my regular reading of news articles and press releases included in the Ministry's daily

“clipping service” collection of all of the articles about education that appeared in the previous day’s provincial and national newspapers and Canada newswire, among others. As I read these documents, I began to compile my own collection of clippings that I perceived to relate to my academic research interests. Similarly, when I worked at the Ontario College of Teachers, I developed a heightened sensitivity to the language employed in the documents produced in my area and those produced by others in other areas of the College. When I returned to teaching, this sensitivity prompted me to begin collecting documents produced by my teachers’ federation, OSSTF as well as those produced by the Ontario Teachers’ Federation. Acquaintances within the Catholic system who knew of my interest in such documents often provided me with documents produced by the Catholic teachers’ federation. Both of my former roles also involved the daily monitoring of websites of educational organizations such as teachers’ federations and principals’ associations.

In addition to those documents I selected, other documents were examined because participants in the study referred to them as being significant. For example, one participant identified *Today’s Parent* magazine as a media publication that perpetuated particular images of teachers and teaching and she suggested that I examine it in more detail. Another participant suggested that the article written by DiManno (2000) played a significant role in the shaping of public perception about teachers and teaching. Because I concurred, I chose to include that article and conduct a critical discourse analysis on it. Other documents like *The Sediton*, which will be referred to briefly in the next chapter,

played an important communication role among teachers during ‘The Troubles’³ as they struggled to make sense of education reform.

After the study was approved by the ethical review committee in August, 2001, oral invitations were extended to 17 teachers using the telephone script that is included in Appendix A. The ways in which participants were selected for the study varied with some being chosen because I was familiar with their perspectives and opinions on teaching while others were invited to participate because other participants recommended them. The initial participants for the sample—Aerlyn, Tina, Barbara, Belinda, Aaron, Diane, Denise, and Coleen—were selected based upon my personal experience of having taught with them and with the prior knowledge that these individuals had expressed or exhibited strong emotional and or intellectual responses to teachers and teaching during the period of time in which I had known them. These responses manifested themselves in various places and at various times throughout this period. For example, because I shared a workroom space with Aerlyn, Tina, Barbara, Aaron, Denise, Diane, Michael, Maureen, and Darlene we had the opportunity to engage frequently in conversations about the nature of the work of teaching and the ways in which we understood what we had hoped

³ I am grateful to my thesis committee member, Dr. Reva Joshee, for pointing out to me during my oral defence that the term “The Troubles” is an obvious reference to the intractable and long-standing conflict between two very different views of the past and future of the peoples of Northern Ireland. Upon subsequent exploration I have learned that “The Troubles” is actually a generic term used to describe two periods of violence in Ireland during the 20th century: the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War in the earlier part of the century and the period of sporadic communal violence involving paramilitary organisations, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the British Army and others in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998-2000. During this latter period, more than 3,000 people were killed, most of them civilians. The term is also sometimes used to describe a many-sided conflict, a guerrilla war or even a civil war (Wikipedia, 2005). While not even remotely resembling the tragic loss of life that occurred during this period, the struggle to claim authority over the disputed territory in Northern Ireland is, as Dr. Joshee has astutely pointed out to me, not dissimilar to the struggle Ontario’s teachers had with the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government in their attempt to claim and retain authority over their work.

to accomplish as teachers was both supported and constrained by the broader education system. Such discussions continued throughout the time I worked at the school and my interest in exploring their (and my) thinking about our understanding of teaching was piqued as a result of what many would consider to be mundane and banal events such as staff meetings where I noticed that these teachers (and others) conveyed what I would characterize as strong intellectual responses to issues that were addressed (or not) through such meetings.

My interest in exploring these teachers' (and others') understandings about teachers and teaching was greatly enhanced as I listened to and thought about the ways in which they spoke about their work as we walked along the picket line during a three-week strike in school's district board in the fall of 1998.

When I obtained agreement to interview⁴ this core group of teachers (2001), I began to consider the ways in which the data sample could be diversified and enriched. For example, I knew that it would be important to vary the sample so that I would be able to hear from teachers new to the profession. When I began the interview process, I asked the initial participants for the names of teachers whom they thought would be willing to participate in the study. To this end, Belinda suggested that I interview Natasha because she was in her second year of teaching and she suggested that I interview Tom because he had been teaching for some time and had just begun at Metro East. Maureen and Michael were selected because I recalled the ways in which they expressed to me the difficulty they had as new teachers beginning their careers at a time that coincided with the considerable upheaval and turmoil associated with the legislated return of Metro East's

teaching staff back to their classrooms. My decision to ask Darlene to participate was very much based upon my perception of her as a central figure in the general staff relationship of the school. As the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation local branch president, Darlene had a significant influence on the working lives of the teachers at Metro East and several of the participants suggested that Darlene would be an important person to interview. As the interviews progressed, the sample became more or less defined by the participants' suggestions about who else I might ask to participate. While all of the participants have some connection to Metro East, one of participants selected has never taught at the school. I asked this participant, Pauline, to be interviewed because I felt that her background experience in her role as the district local union president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation during the beginning of 'The Troubles' might be able to offer a broader perspective on the ways in which teachers' unions contribute to the discursive construction of professional identity in teaching. I also asked the district local president subsequent to Pauline if she would agree to an interview but she had to decline because of other commitments. Two other possible participants also declined to be interviewed because of time commitments. As the above presentation makes clear then, the central rationale or driving force behind the selection of the participants for this study was one predominantly of convenience, familiarity, and availability. The various dramas that unfold in the lives of these participants as they are conveyed in the interview data are, in many ways then, a fortuitous coincidence.

It is important to note that while efforts were made to vary the sample by gender, this was not a central or driving influence in determining the interview sample.

⁴ I was not working as a teacher when the interviews for this study were conducted; I was employed at the

Furthermore, although the sample selection process did not select individuals because of their racial origin, discourses concerning race do figure in varying degrees of prominence in the interview data of some of the participants. It is also important to note that no attempt was made to select participants based upon subject matter taught and both consequently and coincidentally, the majority of the participants have backgrounds that tend toward the arts, humanities, and social sciences. This may be an important consideration to make when drawing conclusions about the data; it is highly probable that participants with other subject matter interests and or backgrounds might respond very differently.

Another important consideration to make about the data presented in the study concerns my influence as a researcher/interviewer. It is highly probable that because I have known and/or have taught with several of the participants, the interview data collected reflects that prior relationship. Despite my attempts to establish a formality to the interview process, there was a discernible degree of comfort that I sensed emanating from several of the participants. To illustrate, in one interview, the participant alluded to the role that I may or may not have played in sending her the Ontario College of Teachers publication *Professionally Speaking/Pour parler profession* by imploring me “*Fred, you need to stop sending me the magazine.*” It is also important to note that while participants may have been more open than they otherwise might have been, it is equally possible that some may have used me and the interview process as a vehicle for conveying particular viewpoints about colleagues and situations in the hope that my past relationship with them might present their view in a favourable way.

Upon receiving their verbal agreement, location and time arrangements were made to conduct the interviews. The interviews took place in a variety of locations including my own home, the homes of the participants and in a few cases, they were conducted at the school(s) at mutually convenient times (after or before school, for example) where the participants taught or currently teach. Since participation in this study was not contingent on their employer's time or resources, I deemed it unnecessary to obtain permission from the school board to interview the participants. Once interview times and locations were determined, I informed the participants that the study's ethical review required that they agree in writing by signing a letter of consent⁵. I requested that if they were in agreement with the terms of the study, they sign the letter of consent and bring it with them to the interview.

Of the 17 teachers I invited to be interviewed, only 14 consented to interviews. Of these 14, nine continue to teach at Metro East Secondary School⁶ in a large district school board in the greater metropolitan Toronto area. Four of the participants left Metro East to teach at various schools in other district school boards within the greater metropolitan Toronto area. One of the participants is no longer teaching as a result of a medical condition and one of the teachers teaches at another school within the same district school board. Eleven of the participants were female and four were male.

The interview protocol⁷ used in this study was developed based upon the feedback given during the proposal hearing in which the general research questions framing this study were presented. Although the protocol was not field-tested, it was reviewed with

⁵ See Appendix B.

⁶ This name and all other names and locations referred to the participant data are pseudonyms.

⁷ See Appendix C.

my dissertation supervisor prior to its inclusion in the submission for an ethical review approval. When I began to conduct the interviews, modifications were made to the protocol so that background information about the participants could be obtained. Participant interviews occurred between August, 2001 and June, 2003 and lasted approximately one and one half hours each. All interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed by me verbatim⁸. Transcripts were then sent to participants for their review. They were asked to consider the content and whether or not it was an accurate depiction of the interview. They were also encouraged to make any additions or deletions that they felt were needed. With the exception of one participant who returned the transcript with grammar corrections⁹, no changes were made. No subsequent interviews were conducted with the participants. At no time was any portion of the interview transcripts shared among participants; however, participants may have held conversations among themselves about their preparation for and/or participation in this study. In fact, one participant, Natasha admitted that she and several of her colleagues engaged in what she referred to as "*a very interesting conversation about professionalism and being a professional in teaching*" just prior to our interview. As a researcher, I neither encouraged nor discouraged such conversations because not only were they beyond my control, I did not see them as problematic.

This study draws on individual teachers' experiences at a particular school during a particular time period. However, it is important to point out that the analysis does not

⁸ In presenting the data, "uh's," and "uhm's" have been removed to facilitate easier reading of the text; however, it is important to point out that I am aware that their removal necessarily changes the text and the extent to which it accurately reflects the conversation.

⁹ In this instance, the participant was concerned that the verbatim transcript contained too many idiosyncratic expressions.

view the teachers or the school as a collective case or as individual cases. As mentioned above several of the participants were selected because of my perception that they exhibited strong responses and/opinions about themselves as teachers and the teaching profession more generally. There is little question in my mind that the perceptions of these participants was influenced by their experiences while teaching at Metro East Secondary School, particularly during the latter part of the 1990s as the education reform initiatives of the Progressive Conservative government unfolded. Because all of the participants, with one exception, have some direct connection to Metro East Secondary School by either having taught there or are currently teaching there, references to the school and particular incidents that occurred there ebb and flow throughout the dissertation. For this reason it is important to provide some description of Metro East Secondary School's history and a general characterization of its student and teacher populations. In addition to providing this contextual background, this section also provides an overview here of some of the decisions made concerning the research methodology used in the data collection for this study.

Touted as the 'school of the future,' Metro East Secondary School opened its doors in September, 1992 with the promise to offer innovative and technologically-rich experiences for its diverse student body. In its inaugural year, the school was staffed with a principal, two vice principals and an initial group of teachers who had been hired by the administration for their innovative teaching methodologies and programs and risk-taking potential to offer a full high school program for grades nine to OAC¹⁰. Shortly after opening, the enrollment grew much more quickly than was anticipated and by the second

week of September, the administration was scrambling to hire more teachers to alleviate overcrowded classrooms. In their pressing need to have teachers in front of students, the administration hired many teachers who were either new or recently admitted to the profession. Consequently, in the school's first year, the overwhelming majority of teachers had less than six years of teaching experience.

Over the years, as the community surrounding the school grew in both its size and its ethnic diversity, the school's student population grew as well such that the number of students attending Metro East has consistently averaged approximately 1900 and included individuals whose family origins could be traced to Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and South Asia, among other geographic areas. With the growth in student population, additional teachers and vice-principals were required as well. In some years there were four vice-principals. On average, a teaching staff of 130, the majority of which are of European heritage, have worked at Metro East since the school opened.

Since its inception, the school has had four principals and a number of vice-principals who have been rotated into and out of the school. After the retirement of the school's first principal, a male, and coinciding with the implementation of the Progressive Conservative government educational reform agenda, a female principal was appointed. It is this principal to whom the participants in this study refer in the interview data when they comment on 'The Troubles.' After approximately two and one half years in this leadership role at Metro East, this principal was promoted to the position of superintendent of education. A male who had been a vice-principal at the school during this period replaced her as principal of the school. In some parts of the interview data, it is

¹⁰ See Appendix L for a definition of this acronym.

this principal who is referenced; approximately one year after this principal's appointment at Metro East, he, too, was promoted to the position of superintendent of education.

As the years progressed, the school prospered and for the most part, students, teachers and administrators worked well together to create positive learning opportunities. However, as the participants in this study reveal, the period referred to as 'The Troubles' brought a significant change to the staffing at Metro East Secondary School. During this two-year period, approximately 85 teachers left the school to relocate to another school in the same district school board, relocate to another district school board, or in some cases leave teaching for another career.

Data Analysis

As mentioned above, the data set for this study consists of interviews, government policy documents, speeches from the throne, government news releases, webpages, newspaper columns, editorials and letters to the editor. Following a technique similar to that employed by Sanguinetti (1999) in her study that examined teachers' discursive practices during a period of significant change in the field of Adult Literacy and Basic Education in Melbourne, Australia in the mid-nineteen nineties, the method of discourse analysis used in this study seeks to isolate, identify and explore the relationships between and among the discourses and the practices associated with them that teachers draw upon as they speak about how they understand themselves as teachers and as professionals during and after recent education reform in the province of Ontario.

Generally, the analytic approach employed in this study for the participant interview data involved reading and re-reading the interview texts to familiarize myself with the ways the teachers were representing their understandings of themselves as teachers, their pedagogical practices, their understanding of the political and social contexts of their work, their understanding of the institutional environment in which they work, and their daily practices with students, colleagues and administrators. Hand-written notations were made on the interview transcripts while they were being read and re-read.

When I was satisfied I had a strong familiarity with the interview data, I imported the transcripts into a software program called *FolioViews*. Although not specifically designed for qualitative research, *FolioViews* is an extremely versatile textbase manager that indexes every word in a document. The program has many powerful features including multi-level query functions and comment and other notation tools that make it ideally suited to qualitative data analysis. Once imported into this program, I used the coding features of the program to electronically tag the interview text so that it corresponded to my handwritten notations. To prevent the possibility of losing data, I segmented the data set into three groups (participants one to five, six to ten, etc.) although this segmentation did not hinder queries on the whole data set. After all of the interview transcripts were imported and coded, I began to query the data according to the codes I had developed. Queries were printed according to the coded discourses and further analysis was conducted with handwritten notations being made on these queries¹¹.

¹¹ Like most software programs designed for handling textual data, *FolioViews* does not actually do the analysis; it simply enables the researcher to manage and/or manipulate the data in convenient ways for his/her analysis.

For document data analysis, a similar approach was employed. In this case, I read and re-read such documents as government reports, media releases, policy documents, ministerial speeches, and media coverage of and educator responses to these announcements and I examined and conducted analyses of websites such as the Ontario College of Teachers to familiarize myself with the ways in which teachers and the teaching occupation were represented. Like Sanguinetti (1999), I iterated between and among the interview texts and the other discourse analyses of selected and particular aspects of the former Progressive Conservative government education reform policies, teachers' union, and the Ontario College of Teachers policies, regulations and publications, media publications, and academic analyses of movements and contestations within the teaching profession including conceptions of teacher identity.

The analysis involved looking for traces, anywhere in the texts (in the themes, value statements, anecdotes, metaphors, arguments and lexical items) of the ways in which the participants understood how teaching generally and their identities as teachers particularly have been influenced by the larger culture of which teaching is a part. These traces were coded and then used to develop a web chart or map where I attempted to identify patterns that could potentially be identified as discourses. These were then examined further to determine any interrelationships (interdiscursivities). The process used to determine whether a pattern of speaking could be termed a "discourse" involved considering whether the pattern:

1. recurred across the texts (but not necessarily be in each text),
2. was identifiably associated with a particular institutional sector, tradition, theory and set of practices, and

3. reflected a set of power relations and a world view or mentality.

Acceptance, Resistance and Subversion of Discourses and Discursive Practices

Once a particular pattern of speaking was deemed to be a discourse, I re-read the texts looking specifically for instances of and the ways in which participants identified and responded to particular discourses and practices. Participant responses to the various discourses emerged very quickly and directly in the interview data and included responses of acceptance, resistance and/or subversion. In making the determination of whether these responses could be construed as acceptance, resistance or subversion, I constructed a rough framework to determine whether a participant's response could be deemed to illustrate the acceptance or partial acceptance of a discourse or set of discourses. In addition, I employed and expected to find Sanguinetti's (1999) six generic categories of resistance including rational critique, objectification, subversion, refusal, humor and the affirmation of desire. All of her categorizations are expanded upon below; all are present in the data. I agree with Sanguinetti that other ways and types of categorization are possible and further, more finely detailed discourse analysis involving the examination of silences, gaps, and long and short pauses could be construed as significant and important; however, such fine conversational analysis is beyond the scope of this study. An explanation of the acceptance of a discourse or set of discourses and Sanguinetti's (1999) explanation of the categories of resistance used to understand participant responses are outlined below.

Acceptance or partial acceptance

In this study, participants' comments suggested both full and partial acceptance of discourses and sets of discourses about themselves and their work as teachers. Full acceptance of a discourse or set of discourses often involves seeing particular practices as unproblematic or identifying positively with the subject positions created for teachers that are constructed through both the general and particular discourses about teaching as an occupation. Partial acceptance occurs when participants acknowledge that portions of a discourse or set of discourses correspond to their understandings of what it means to be a teacher. At times, participants may indicate full or partial acceptance of a discourse or set of discourses and then in later comments suggest that they see the same as problematic. In accepting discourses and their associated practices as unproblematic, participants legitimize, reproduce and perpetuate the existing practices that frame their work and that contribute to the construction of teacher professional identities as an essentialized phenomenon.

Rational critique

Rational critique refers to the participants' engagement with the logic, for example, of a particular reform agenda such as new assessment and evaluation practices being advocated or implemented within and on the terms in which it is presented. Sanguinetti (1999) proposes that a participant's rational critique can be understood in a variety of ways: as a contribution to dialogue and the production of a revised and more acceptable discourse or alternatively, as a means of de-legitimizing the broader discourse

within which the particular discourse is embedded. She writes “a system-wide delegitimation of a discourse is the cumulative effect of critiques of this kind being made at all different levels” (Sanguinetti, 1999, pp. 11-12).

Objectification

Objectification involves naming a discourse thereby creating distance from the discourse and associated practices. Naming a discourse enables a participant to explicitly contest the meanings and values embedded in a discourse; to name and objectify a discourse is to challenge it more directly and on a deeper level than to offer a rational critique within its own terms. In Sanguinetti’s (1999) view, “naming the discourse is a short-hand way of highlighting the inscriptions of power embedded and naturalized as common sense in every day discourse” (p.16). According to MacDonnell (1986), naming a discourse is a way of “disidentifying” from the dominant discourse. Rather than merely “countering” the dominant discourse, MacDonnell (1986) argues that the subject works “on and against the dominant forms of ideological subjection” (p. 113). The subject thus disidentifies herself or himself from the dominant discourse and in so doing helps to change the discursive terrain, rather than taking up antagonist positions which nevertheless remain within that discourse (Sanguinetti, 1999, p. 12). The discursive effect of naming and objectifying a discourse and connecting it with broader social and economic contexts is to demystify and to weaken its truth claims. As a form of “ideology critique,” it creates the spaces for different meanings and different belief systems.

Subverting the discourse

“Subverting the discourse” refers to a deliberate strategy of taking up the language of a discourse and changing it from the inside; colonizing it and investing it with a different set of meanings (Sanguinetti, 1999). Sanguinetti (1999, p. 13) writes that Usher and Edwards (1994, p. 117) refer to the appropriation of discourse as a strategy of “subversion,” of “harnessing that which the dominant discourse seeks to exclude or repress.”

Referring to Foucault’s (1972) writing about the discursive “authority,” of the bourgeoisie in which they have access to “the rules and processes of appropriation of discourse” (p. 68), Sanguinetti (1999), points out that a deliberate subversion of the discourse requires a high level of self-consciousness. Her findings suggested that because teachers located on the margins may not have the resources or opportunities to deploy this form of discourse politics, many subvert the discourse in practice, rather than in their linguistic meaning-making. This kind of subversion is part of the culture of institutional resistance that is deeply embedded in teachers’ work. In my study, participant subversion and redirection of the discourse often means the assertion of his or her agency as a professional teacher by refusing or transgressing the requirements whenever and wherever he or she deems this to be necessary.

Refusal

“Refusal” refers to the ways in which the participants often consciously hold onto reference points which had guided their past practice decide to transgress, ignore, avoid,

or modify the discourses that they judge to be personally and or pedagogically inappropriate, unnecessary, or simply undoable. Refusals can be understood as statements of the limits to which participants are willing to go in accepting part or all of a particular discourse or set of discourses.

Refusal is a “material” practice that can be understood as an exertion of agency. It is significant in this study in so far as the participants give words to their refusals and articulate why and what it means for them to refuse. As in Sanguinetti’s (1999) study, many of the participants in my study speak about how they transgress or selectively apply the “rules” in their struggles to reconcile these with their notions of “good teaching practice” and what it means to be a professional. Refusal can also be understood as an assertion of professional agency as teachers struggle in their daily teaching practice to implement the government’s education reform agenda. As this study will show, participants carry out countless small practical refusals and modifications and talk to colleagues about what they will and will not do.

Humour

Another way that participants respond to the discourses that position them in particular ways is through humour and play, in particular by laughing at and pointing out absurdities in the public, governmental and media portrayals of teaching. In her explanation of humour as a response to the construction of discourses and associated practices, Sanguinetti (1999) cites Bakhtin’s writing about the “carnival of laughter,” which “celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and

prohibitions... the feast of becoming, change” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 21 in Sanguinetti, 1999, p. 15). For Bakhtin (1968, p. 10) the carnival is “at the same time cheerful and annihilating,” directed at those in power and those subjected to it (Sanguinetti, 1999, p. 15). Humour is the dimension of transgressive or “lucid” resistance (Lemke, 1995, pp. 183-184; Usher & Edwards 1994, p. 22; Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997, p. 8 in Sanguinetti, 1999, p. 15). When the participants in the study laugh at and point out absurdities in the public, governmental, and media portrayals of teaching, the provincial government’s education reform initiatives, the policies and practices of the teachers’ union, the perceived role and utility of the Ontario College of Teachers, and the practices of colleagues and administrators, they powerfully de-legitimate discourses and simultaneously strengthen the collective oppositional teacher subject.

The affirmation of desire

According to Sanguinetti (1999), humour is also sometimes used to express a desire that things could be otherwise. In many instances throughout the interview data, participants’ comments reveal a sense of vibrancy and spontaneity that can be understood as an attempt to pursue an “affirmation of desire.” For Foucault (1980b), the “affirmation of desire” is an “incitement to discourse;” that is, the resistance to a discourse by responding with an alternative discourse means challenging one “truth” with the production of another “truth.” In acknowledging the ways in which teachers are silenced by the dominant discourses, the participants in this study respond by reconstituting themselves within resistant discourses that legitimate and celebrate connection, relationship and desire. As it will be shown, Tom, for example, refers to teachers as

dreamers and visionaries. He suggests that teachers desire nothing more than to be able to do what they know is right, just and should be valued.

Summary

In addition to providing an overview of the theoretical framework underpinning this study, this chapter has presented a description of the methodology used to conduct the analysis of both the interview transcripts and other documents that comprise the data set for this investigation. In the first portion of the chapter, the discussion attempted to position Foucault's conceptions of discourse, power/knowledge, governmentality and identity within the broader theoretical field of poststructuralism. It is my contention that this theoretical lens provides a powerful perspective from which to understand teacher professional identity.

In the second part of the chapter, I attempted to elaborate the methodology used to conduct the data analysis in the study. I argued that while my combination approach of using Foucauldian discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis could be classified as a type of qualitative research—ethnomethodology—a case can be made that critical discourse analysis is a distinctive type of research in its own right. The latter part of this chapter presented details of the methods I used to collect the data for this study and it explained how, using techniques and procedures borrowed from Sanguinetti (1999) I conducted the analysis.

The next chapter of this study attempts to provide a context within which my own interests in the phenomenon of teacher professional identity can be situated. The chapter

provides an overview of the nature of the personal interest I bring to the research and it concludes by introducing the participants selected for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMING TO THE RESEARCH

Introduction

I begin this chapter by attempting to locate myself in relation to the study. The first section presents a brief overview of my own experiences both inside and outside the classroom. In this regard, it is important to point out that I make no claims of objectivity in my role as the researcher in this study; indeed, my interest in the phenomenon of teacher professional identity is deeply rooted in my own identity as a teacher. The chapter concludes by providing a brief description of the participants who were interviewed for this study. These descriptions identify some of the reasons these individuals entered the teaching profession and in some instances, they provide an initial glimpse into some of the influences these teachers perceive to affect their professional identities as teachers.

Inside and Outside the Classroom

After graduating in 1985 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a Bachelor of Education degree the following year, I was fortunate to obtain what I considered my “dream” teaching position when I was hired to replace my former high school English teacher as he assumed a new coordinator position within my local school board. After four years of teaching, I was appointed the department head of English in my small school. But at the same time, I was beginning to become interested in returning to my own schooling once again and so I decided to take a leave of absence from my teaching

position in Nova Scotia and relocate to Toronto to pursue a graduate degree in curriculum at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

In 1990, I relocated to Ontario and enrolled in a graduate program and obtained a teaching position at a large suburban high school just east of metropolitan Toronto. I taught secondary English at that school for two years and then accepted another teaching position at a new school, Metro East Secondary School (a pseudonym) that had just been built in the same area. I taught at this school for one year and then applied for and was offered a three-year secondment from teaching to a facilitator position with the school board with whom I was employed. My title was Regional Services Facilitator. In the first year of the secondment, I had responsibilities in three rather disparate areas: outdoor education, computer education and research and assessment. In the second year of my secondment, the title of my role changed to Research and Assessment Facilitator to more accurately reflect my responsibilities, and I worked specifically in this area until the last year of the secondment, when I was promoted to the position of Information Management Project Leader. I was "loaned" along with another colleague to the Plant Services Department of the board to design and implement a facilities management information system for managing, among other things, information, processes and procedures relating to the board's physical plant facilities. The position, created by me and a colleague with whom I had been working, was to have lasted 18 months, but I decided after six months to resume my duties as a classroom teacher.

The knowledge, experiences, and professional growth opportunities I gained in the facilitator role were as varied as they were numerous. For example, I received training

in the ISO 9000¹ quality registration process, training that, although at the time I deemed to have great potential for examining how to improve schools, I now understand to be aligned with the whole standards, quality and excellence movement as it has taken hold in education. This role also enabled me to see and begin to understand the roles that boards of education play in facilitating educational change. While I did not acknowledge its titular significance then, the role I occupied as “facilitator” assisted the district school board to play a significant role in the management, monitoring and evaluation of various implementation initiatives, many of which I now understand to have contributed to the devaluation of the role and importance of the classroom teacher. For example, I recall being quite distressed about my observation that things were done *to* teachers, not *with* or *by* teachers. I also recall noting that teachers were constantly to be “inserviced” in a wide array of activities and initiatives such as computer technology, the correct administration of the provincial writing test, holistic marking, co-operative learning, conflict resolution and any number of other such activities. I observed that little or no credit was given the classroom teachers in determining his or her own growth and development and I remember thinking and feeling that educational slogans such as “life long learning” and “professional development” were meaningless if such things were imposed or mandated from someone or groups outside the classroom.

Not all of the experiences in this role were positive however. During the three years in my role as facilitator, I also watched many teachers, like myself, and administrators arrive at the board office only to use their new roles to aspire to other roles—teachers striving to become vice-principals, vice-principals striving to become

¹ See Appendix L for a definition of this term.

principals and principals to become superintendents. At one point in the latter part of my secondment, my superintendent even asked me to assess his candidacy as he pursued the director position vacated by my former director as she assumed an appointment as the director of the Curriculum, Learning and Teaching branch of the Ministry of Education and Training.

Although I felt fortunate to have had the experiences that I did, the transition back to teaching, although smooth, was also one of adjustment. The resumption of my teacher identity forced me to examine my general disillusionment with education and my perception of the devaluation of teachers and teaching. Occupying this board-level position enabled me to realize how powerful and firmly entrenched the bureaucratic structures of education are. I recall mentioning to my superintendent one day how amazed I was to observe the strong similarities between the hierarchical organization of a secondary school with the hierarchical organization of the school board: the organization of subject areas by departments who were headed by assistant heads of departments, who were headed by heads of departments, who reported to vice-principals with responsibilities for some departments and not others, who, in turn reported to the principal.

The two and one half years in the role of facilitator and the half year in the role of information management project leader provided me with the opportunity to seriously question my own aspirations to a large extent and to question what value I placed and saw placed on the role of the teacher in education. My return to teaching after this opportunity reinforced my interest in pursuing these questions in greater depth and when another

opportunity presented itself to gain a broader and deeper understanding of this value, I hastily embraced it.

Ministry of Education and Training

Shortly after my return to the classroom, I received an invitation by the former director of my district school board, who now was the director of the Curriculum, Learning and Teaching branch of the Ministry of Education and Training, to assist some of the staff working on the secondary school curriculum reform in acquiring examples of curriculum from other provincial and international jurisdictions to examine for their possible use and or applicability to the Ontario context. I readily agreed to accept this invitation because I saw it as another opportunity to begin to get an experiential understanding of how the education system in Ontario was structured and how it “worked.” The initial work in which I was involved consisted mainly of locating and acquiring various curricula for examination and consideration of its use or adaptability for the Ontario context. But shortly after beginning this work, I was asked to prepare an option paper that explored various ways in which the Ontario secondary school curriculum could be developed; these options ranged from using the traditional means of using expert writing teams to write the curriculum to having large publishing companies or other private sector companies submit request for proposals (RFPs) to produce the curriculum. While I was preparing this option paper, I did not fully grasp the significance of what curriculum acquisition via the private sector might mean; I certainly gained an appreciation as I began to read critical response to this Ministry direction as it appeared in the media. In many ways, I now understand and regard the experiences and opportunities

afforded me while I was working at the Ministry as both serendipitous and fortuitous since they have provided me with multiple windows of opportunity for examining how government discursively positions the teacher and teaching.

Since the initial invitation to the Ministry was only for a short term of three to four months, I was fully expecting to resume my teaching duties in the fall of 1997; however, in late June of that year I was offered and accepted another position as an education officer with the Operations and Field Services branch of the Ministry. Little did I know that accepting this role would provide yet another very illuminating opportunity to witness, first hand, some of the emotionally charged responses by Ontario's teachers, union leaders and the public as they expressed their passion and anger toward the government's reform agenda.

Operations and Field Services Branch

The work in the Operations and Field Services branch was very different from the focus of the work undertaken in the curriculum branch. While this work provided a much broader perspective on day to day activities of school boards, it did not hold the same interest for me as the conceptual focus of the work in the curriculum branch. Much of the work in which I was engaged in the Operations and Field Services branch involved the monitoring of the school boards I had been assigned for their compliance in areas such as their special education annual plans and their submission of proposed school calendar days, among others. The work also involved the monitoring of my assigned school boards for contentious "issues" that might have arisen and that would potentially require the attention of the minister of education and so in this regard, the daily work also involved

preparing responses to letters addressed to the minister by members of the public. These letters, written by me, would be later reviewed by the Communications branch and then forwarded for the minister's signature. Learning about the particularities of how such things as ministerial letters were produced was a valuable insight; however, the work in this branch seemed unstimulating and dissatisfying to me and even moreso as I came to understand the role that this branch would play in the implementation of the government's agenda to restructure the governance of education in the province through its enactment of Bill 160, the *Education Quality and Improvement Act*.

My role in the Operations and Field Services branch began in the fall of 1997, a fortuitous but tumultuous period during which I gained unique perspectives on some of the events that unfolded that fall. For example, in October I was directed to attend the government's Toronto region public hearing on Bill 160 since the hearing scheduled was located within my department's jurisdictional responsibilities. My role was to attend the hearing and be prepared to facilitate the acquisition of answers or other pertinent information that may be requested from the hearing's government participants. On the day I attended, presentations were given by many of the province's major union leaders—the president of the Ontario Secondary Teachers' Federation, Earl Manners, the president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, Ruth Bauman—and other significantly influential groups such as Ontario Coalition for Education Reform and members of the Organization for Quality Education. The presentations ranged from impassioned pleas and emotional outbreaks from some of the union presenters to pointed exchanges involving oppositional education critic for the New Democratic Party (NDP), Frances Lankin questioning both the authorship of the Ontario Coalition for Education Reform's presentation and its

claims of the reported the number of people among its membership. The experience of sitting in on these hearings was one that has greatly influenced my understanding of and appreciation for the complexity of educational governance issues; the experience also made me realize how little insight the public and teachers are able to acquire about such processes given the ways in which they constructed and conducted.

Shortly after the lunch break and as presentations were about to resume, Frances Lankin hastily entered the hearing room to announce that Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, had just revealed in the legislature, details of the employment contract of then Deputy Minister of Education, Veronica Lacey, which stipulated a condition that she would receive a \$40,000 bonus to her salary if she cut \$667 million out of the education system. Lankin insinuated that, as a result of such shady dealings like this one uncovered by the opposition parties, perhaps the very public hearings that were about to resume were also being conducted under questionable circumstances and she suggested that the majority of those presenting their briefs during the hearings were stacked in favour of government supporters.

The remainder of my time spent in the Operations and Field Services branch, in addition to the previously mentioned daily duties, involved my becoming familiar with the specific content changes to the Education Act and Regulations that were being proposed by the revised education act, Bill 160, so that its "roll out" (implementation) as it was referred to in our branch meetings could be carried out smoothly throughout the province. As we were becoming familiar with the proposed changes to the education act, tensions were increasingly mounting within the province among teachers, school boards and the public with respect to the implications of the passing of Bill 160 into law. These

tensions were evident in the comments I would read in media coverage about educational issues that a daily clipping service compiled for Ministry staff and politicians. With many of these comments alleging that the public hearings into the bill were little more than a charade and expressing fear that the bill would be rammed through without meaningful public dialogue, teachers and members of the public began, among other things, a green ribbon campaign to protest the passing of the bill that would restructure the province's public education system.

With the inevitability of the government's passing of the bill, the teachers of Ontario stood poised to stage a provincial walkout. That eventually came to fruition in October of 1997. For two weeks, the teachers of Ontario picketed daily at their schools, at district school board offices and at the Ministry of Education and Training buildings and at the provincial legislative buildings. As a teacher seconded to the position of education officer, I was faced with a dilemma. I was contractually bound by my school board; I was paying federation fees, but I was also contractually bound to the Ministry of Education and Training. I had agreed upon acceptance of the position at the Ministry to relinquish my affiliation with the teachers' federation for the duration of my secondment. This meant that during the work stoppage, I was expected and informed that I was to report to work at the provincial level as I had been prior to the teachers' job action. Being on secondment meant that although I still received my paycheque from the board, I was, for the duration of the secondment, a provincial government employee (although I did not receive any government benefits or union protection). The dilemma that I faced was whether I was to honour my school board contract with my teachers' federation or to honour my signed agreement with the province of Ontario.

The dilemma was exacerbated by my internal support for what the teachers of the province were doing. For the most part, I was in favour of the strike and when I drove by picketing teachers I honked my horn in support. Yet, I had decided to honour my contractual obligations with the Ministry, knowing full well that I would have colleagues from my school and board who would think me a traitor of sorts. I suppose, in retrospect, I rationalized my decision to remain at work with the Ministry in many ways; however, I realize now that what I spent a considerable amount of time doing was *managing* the dilemma in which I found myself. There were many others who, like me, had to confront themselves and examine their core values during the fall of 1997.

As mentioned, the weeks leading up to and all during the work stoppage found me carrying out my responsibilities in my provincial district office. Daily throughout the strike, I was expected to contact the director of each of my three assigned boards and ask them to give me an update on the conditions within his/her board. I was expected to ask such questions as “how many teachers have reported to work? are the schools open or closed? are principals out with the teachers?” and numerous similar questions. This much needed information was then compiled at the provincial level to obtain a broader picture of the scope of the work stoppage.

When the job action eventually ceased, teachers and parents began a green ribbon campaign. Still expected to be in daily contact with my boards, several new questions were added to the list of daily queries including such things as “how many teachers in your board are wearing green ribbons? are they wearing them in class? how many parents were seen with the ribbons on?” Dutifully, I called my directors and asked my questions. But one director’s responses in particular startled me and gave me reason to pause. As I

came to the questions about green ribbon wearing that were among my daily ritual of questions and asked “how many teachers in your board are wearing green ribbons?” this director’s response was “Fred, I am wearing one now.” I did not get the impression that the director’s matter-of-fact statement was said to intimidate me. There was no subtext that implied “so what are you going to do about it?” It was merely a firm statement of fact. Slightly embarrassed, I indicated that I would pass that information along and then thanked the director and hung up the phone. After completing my calls, I sat in my office and contemplated the words of that director which continued to reverberate in my ear.

The director’s comments and his resistance to the government’s education reforms illustrated perfectly the difficult position in which the government’s direction was placing educational administrators. It was my view at the time (and remains to be the case now) that the government’s decision to remove principals and vice principals from teachers’ collective bargaining units would create a host of new problems for both teachers and administration generally. As will be seen later in the dissertation, the data in this research confirm this hypothesis.

For the most part, I very much disliked the responsibility of this role and I recall feeling very much like a “public servant” with more of the emphasis on the “servant” part of the expression. The implementer role that was expected of me did not appeal to me in the least since I felt strongly positioned as the government’s accountability mechanism. When another opportunity to return to the curriculum area, I welcomed the change in role.

Back to the Curriculum, Learning and Teaching Branch

Shortly after these events, I received an invitation to return to the Curriculum, Learning and Teaching branch to begin the initial background and conceptual work to develop a new Ontario report card to accompany the soon-to-be-revised secondary school curriculum. It was an invitation that I accepted without hesitation.

The assignment to develop a new report card for Ontario secondary schools enabled me, again, the opportunity to further lengthen and broaden my understanding of the education system. I soon discovered that the reporting of student achievement was an area that, in one way or another, connected to almost every aspect of education, including among others, curriculum, instruction, assessment and evaluation, special education, computer technology used to assess achievement of learning expectations, district board computer systems used to generate report cards, the production of the Ontario Student Transcript, as well as a whole host of other secondary school structural issues like whether a secondary school was semestered or non-semestered. Given the focus of my task and its connection to so many other initiatives that were occurring simultaneously within the agenda to reform the education system, my participation and involvement in the reform of the secondary school curriculum project soon mushroomed and I eventually became a member of the “core team” responsible for the conceptual design and development of the reform of the Ontario secondary school curriculum. My involvement also included assisting in the development of the criteria and process used to evaluate the request for proposals (RFPs) for acquiring the secondary school curriculum and in the design of materials used to train the evaluators who, including myself, would be evaluating the proposal bids to produce the curriculum for Ontario secondary schools. As

June of that year approached, so too did the end of my secondment to the Ministry of Education and Training. Though an employment opportunity arose to continue the work on the secondary report card in the assessment and evaluation unit of the same branch, I declined to make an application and decided instead to return to my teaching position in September, 1998. This time, my return to teaching was not a smooth one.

Back to the Classroom and ‘The Troubles’²

In the spring of the year when I was working on the provincial report card, the secondary teachers and the district school board in which I was employed were undergoing contract negotiations to secure a new collective agreement. Negotiations had soured over the summer and so the resumption of my teaching duties coincided with a mandate to strike given to its teachers by the district’s union. On September 4, 1998, I joined my former teacher colleagues and we began what ended up being a three-week duration picket duty in front of our school and, on some occasions, in front of our district school board office, a place where I worked for three of my eighteen years in education. The picketing ended when we were legislated back to work by the provincial government and the passing of its *Back to Work* legislation which effectively redefined instructional time just stopping short of mandating teachers to engage in voluntary extra-curricular duties.

Frequently referred to as ‘The Troubles’ by the participants in this study, this period of time played itself out at the school level in a variety of ways in the daily lives of the teachers who worked there. Battles over what constituted teachers’ duties, the exact

nature of those duties and how those duties were to be carried out were a frequent source of the tension. On the one hand was the board's position that claimed teachers were engaging in an illegal "work to rule" campaign; on the other hand, teachers' decisions to engage in this or that aspect of school outside of their regular classroom duties were heavily influenced by the union's stance and also by the conscience of individual teachers. The tensions among teachers, between teachers and administrators, and even between teachers and a few custodians who had felt compelled to coach school sports teams where teachers would not, continued to mount.

I watched as the majority of the school's department heads resigned *enmasse* when it was learned that the district school board was dissolving the role as it was traditionally defined and replacing it with a "curriculum chair" type role where subject matter expertise was deemed to be of secondary importance. I watched as newly-hired novice teachers, much to the dismay of those veteran teachers who remained, assumed these vacated leadership positions. I witnessed administrator manipulation of teacher timetables and blatant attempts to pit teachers against one another to dismantle any remaining union solidarity in an effort to ensure compliance and support with school and district school board directions.

The tensions and conflicts that arose during the troubles, if not the primary cause, were certainly exacerbated by the fact that the school board had won an arbitration hearing after the three week strike, the results of which several of the participants in this study contend and which I personally believe as well, had devastating consequences for teachers within the board. The preparation (planning) period for many teachers was

² See Footnote 3, p. 71 in Chapter 3 for an explanation of the significance of this term.

removed and an additional class was added to their teaching load while colleagues down the hall were able to continue with their preparation period remaining intact. Dissention became the norm between colleagues with regard to who did not receive this extra class and those who did. The dissention carried over into other areas of school life: some teachers sought ways to “carry on as usual” with secret meetings to plan and carry out extra-curricular activities while other teachers engaged in what could be deemed subversive activities which attempted to thwart both curricular and extra-curricular activities. The incidents during this time and the period that followed continued to raise questions about the nature of teachers’ duties: were extra-curricular duties voluntary or involuntary activities? To what extent could principals and vice-principals be considered colleagues? Given the removal of official department head positions within the board and school should those who retained the role be treated as leaders by the teachers within the department?

In addition to the questions raised about the nature of teachers’ duties, the dissention felt by teachers began to surface in other ways. Some teachers viewed the situation as an opportunity for career advancement, a sort of political game to “feather their own nest.” Teachers who felt so inclined began to play both sides of the fence by saying they supported colleagues only to be seen later assisting the administration in carrying out its mandate. Many teachers expressed strong feelings that what these teachers were doing was fundamentally wrong and self-serving (regardless of the teachers’ union direction or stance on the issue); they expressed fear for the future of the school and the board when they realized that would-be leaders among the teaching

population who were not playing political games would not be the ones who received promotions later on.

Amidst this labour instability and unrest, teachers were coping with curriculum changes and the implementation of other secondary school reform initiatives. Teachers were consciously resisting these changes in light of their perceived treatment by the board and provincial government, even creating a bi-weekly newsletter called *The Sedition* in which they identified what they deemed unlawful practices and morally corrupt tactics used by school and board administrators. Subtitled “An unpretentious rag designed to explore teacher issues and (hopefully) add a little humour to your life” with its motto “if we’ve offended you - too bad!!!,” the newsletter provided, among other things, satirical “Editorial Musings” on incidents occurring at the local level in schools as well as announcements made and actions taken by the government with the implementation of its education reform policy, a regular editorial cartoon series called “SKROOD” which highlighted and poked fun at many of the same incidents and announcements, and an “In the News (No Comment Necessary)” section that provided quotations from newspaper articles or individuals who were perceived to support or enable the board and/or government’s agenda. Several of the editions of the newsletter contained regular commentary on the particular situation at Metro East Secondary School.

Simultaneously, and as many noted, including the editors of *The Sedition* who devoted a whole issue of their newsletter to satirizing it, ironically, the board produced its own “Wellness News” brochure as part of a healthy workplace initiative it embarked on prior to the labour difficulties. The regular newsletter was distributed to all employees in the board and encouraged them to participate in such things as the “Healthy You”

program which asked potential participants to respond by checking off “yes” or “no” to such questions as “does stress negatively affect your professional and or personal life?” Again ironically, as many of the teachers at Metro East Secondary School in particular pointed out, the chair of the board’s wellness committee was the principal of the school where many of the labour difficulties were occurring.

Playing itself out in the school setting, teachers were grappling with their unions’ position on issues, their board’s position on issues, their administration’s practices and their colleagues actions. The occasional optimistic teacher felt that things would get better eventually, but the overwhelming feeling among teachers was one of cynicism and low morale. The local community newspaper did not help the situation; instead its editors chose to adopt and perpetuate classic schooling metaphors with headlines like “Teachers and Board Acting Like School Yard Bullies.” Against this backdrop and despite everything that happened and continues to happen, teachers continue to teach. Classroom teachers continue to greet the students who face them each day; they plan and organize activities to engage their students; they dutifully meet the institutional demands of reporting student achievement, attending district mandated professional development activities, after-school staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences and myriad other taken-for-granted actions that are commonly associated with the role. The daily work of teaching becomes so naturalized and commonsensical that teachers themselves become unaware of the taken-for-grantedness of their work.

The emotional, intellectual and physical toll exacted on the teachers with whom I worked resulted in some teachers taking leaves of absence because of their inability to cope with the turmoil, others deciding to pursue other teaching positions in other boards

and still others leaving teaching altogether. Although it is difficult to convey in words the impact on teachers' emotional, intellectual and physical well-being, it is my contention that grappling with the multiple and often conflicting emotional and intellectual experiences that were manifest in teachers' work as they continued to teach profoundly influenced their teacher professional identities. In my particular case, given the richness of the experiences I had had to that point of my career in education, my sense of self as a teacher in Ontario was profoundly challenged and changed. I felt that I had learned and understood a great deal about education given my experiences. In the spring of the year 2000 when I saw an employment opportunity to work as a program officer within the Standards of Practice and Education unit of the Ontario College of Teachers arose, I applied. At the time, I felt that this, of all places, would provide an excellent opportunity for me to examine seriously my own teacher professional identity while at the same time work toward helping construct and advocate for a stronger voice for the teachers in Ontario's teaching profession.

The Ontario College of Teachers

Given the several positions I had occupied in short succession over the duration of my career, the adjustment period between leaving one role and assuming a new one was something to which I had grown quite accustomed; however, the new role I began to occupy in September, 2000 was one that, from very early on, prompted in me feelings of tension and conflict which I now understand to be the very same tensions and conflicts that have plagued me throughout my teaching life. My contention in this research study is that teachers in the province of Ontario are undergoing a professional identity crisis; I

would also argue that, by extension, the Ontario College of Teachers is undergoing its own professional identity crisis, an organizational identity crisis—conflicted over its desire to be increasingly bureaucratic in its quest to be self-governing and self-regulatory and its inability to articulate and understand what that might mean in a [professional] context. This conflict is exacerbated by tensions inside the institution itself between educator and non-educator staff and the control of the work in which the college is engaged. Much of this tension and conflict stems from and is grounded in and framed by the work of the Standards of Practice and Education unit, the area of the college which housed the position I occupied.

Eventually, after two years of working at the College of Teachers, I remained unable to reconcile the competing tensions and conflicts between the images of the teacher and teaching profession that I and a minority of my colleagues shared and the images of teachers and teaching that the majority of others in the College shared, an idea to which I will return later in this dissertation. Consequently, I resigned from my position at the College of Teachers and, as before, once again, resumed my position as a teacher of English at Metro East Secondary School.

While others frequently and commonly referred to the forays I have taken into the various areas of the education system—the district school board, the Ministry of Education, the College of Teachers—as promotions, I have always viewed, understood and maintained that these career moves have been lateral. While I concede that, at one time, I may have embraced the notion that the role changes could contribute to the possibility of promotions up the educational hierarchy, the formative experiences while in my district school board role quickly diminished any lingering interest I may have had. In

retrospect, I now realize that indeed, the role changes I sought were my subconscious attempts to understand how teaching gets constructed from outside the classroom. My lived experience inside the classroom suggested to me that it was important to make an attempt to identify, locate and understand how that experience was influenced and shaped by what I have come to understand as discourses about teachers and teaching that sometimes get constructed outside the classroom in places such as those I have been fortunate to have spent time working in. It has been important to me to experience these places first-hand so that I could speak with some degree of authority, however limited that particular view may be. It has been equally as important to me to study the construction of the teaching profession from an academic perspective, hence the purpose of this research and the writing of this dissertation. My return to teaching this time has coincided with yet another realization. I have concluded that I am not a bureaucrat; I am a teacher. The difference this time is that, although at ease with this conclusion, I remain even more skeptical and cynical about the fate of teachers and teaching.

It is from the perspectives outlined above that I situate myself in relation to the phenomenon explored in this dissertation and it is within the context described above from which the participants for this study have been selected.

The Participants

The next section of this chapter presents a biographical overview of the participants selected for the study. While the open ended nature of the question "*tell a bit about your biographical and academic history as a teacher,*" resulted in responses that were highly variable with some of the participants sharing great detail about their

personal lives and others presenting very brief and succinct biographies, the descriptions are suggestive of several of the themes that will emerge throughout the study. For example, in many ways but for somewhat different reasons almost all of the participants can be seen to represent teachers who are clearly disappointed with the profession and they express frustration at the realization that the idealism they brought to teaching has been significantly altered and challenged by the realities of teaching. For some of the participants—Darlene, Denise, Diane, Tina and Belinda, most notably perhaps—the involvement that teachers have (or do not have) with their union plays a significant influence in their lives as teachers. For example, while Darlene’s interview reveals the strong influence one’s upbringing in a family of unionized workers can have on a teacher’s identity, Denise’s interview reveals the significant consequences to teacher identity that can result from participating in union activity at the local school level. For a few teachers, most notably Coleen and Aaron, it is race that emerges as a central theme in their experiences as teachers. For others such as Michael, Maureen and Natasha, it is the daily challenges of being new to teaching that figure most prominently in their understanding of what it means to be a teacher. While all of the participants reveal multiple responses to the discourses that they understand to construct teaching—partial to full acceptance, subversion, rejection and others—it is Belinda whose self characterization as a rebellious teenager that emerges most strongly as the resistant teacher. Finally, although descriptions of the events and experiences they have as teachers are at times poignant, almost all of the participants are able to find humour in what teaching means to them. In the section that follows where the participants in this study are

introduced, traces of some of the themes and aspects that will be elaborated upon in this study can be found.

Aerlyn

Aerlyn has been teaching for ten years, the last five of which have been as a high school English and English as a Second Language teacher at Metro East Secondary School. Her decision to become a teacher was influenced greatly by her father's adamant objection that none of his children should become teachers. Her father, who had taught in 1970s when wage and price control and teacher strikes were occurring and bad media press about teachers was pervasive, viewed teaching as a "horrible profession." Consequently, Aerlyn resisted becoming a teacher at first, despite being drawn to the idea. To appease her father, Aerlyn went to university to become a physiotherapist. Soon after enrolling, however, she dropped out of the program to manage her family's business. As she saw it, she was the "*child to take on the business*" because "*that was the way it was supposed to be.*"

After about two years of managing the business, she realized she would never be happy as a business manager, and so she encouraged her family to sell. Following a short period in which she assisted the new owners in their takeover of the business, Aerlyn married and had a child. Soon after, she revisited her desire to be a teacher, putting it this way: "*when you have children, teaching looks like a good profession once again.*" For this reason, and because her father "*couldn't control [her] anymore,*" she applied to 'teachers' college' and eventually 'got in' after spending some time as a volunteer in

English as a Second Language classes for adults. Aerlyn reports that from the initial moment, she loved teaching and knew that was what she was meant to do:

There is an energy to teaching when you are doing it that, it just, you know that's the thing that you are meant to do. Like you can do it and that is great! And that is what happened. From then on I haven't looked back. I have always enjoyed that classroom, stuff. In fact I actually did some teaching when I was working, when I was managing the lab, I actually worked. I ended up working some training into what I was doing. But it wasn't quite the same but . . . I guess that's always been there, in, in me.

Coleen

Coleen has been teaching secondary school English for the last ten years. Until recently when she relocated to a new school north of Toronto, Coleen's teaching experience in Canada, with the exception of her practicum placements, has been at Metro East Secondary School. Prior to this teaching position, Coleen acquired her teaching experience in the country of her birth Guyana, South America.

Coleen reveals that, in Guyana, she became a "pupil teacher" at the age of 17 or 18. She did not choose teaching initially; she entered because it was one of the only two options available to young Black women in Guyana. She says "*banks at that time would only hire Portuguese or the more light-coloured mulatto people.*" Consequently, she says, "*most East Indians and Blacks were relegated to either being a nurse or a teacher.*"

After two years as a 'pupil teacher' teaching dance to elementary students, the vice-principal of the school encouraged her to pursue teacher education because she perceived Coleen "*had the qualities of a teacher.*" Coleen says that she doubted her 'teacher qualities' at the time and she divulges that her real desire was to be a lawyer.

Although law was a profession in which she thought she could excel, Coleen reveals that her family's economic inability to support this career choice left her unable to pursue this option.

After some consistent encouragement, Coleen followed her vice-principal's advice to become a "*full-fledged teacher*" and the school sent her for professional dance training so that she could continue to teach there. She entered Guyana's three-year teacher training college where, according to Coleen, she did very well. Upon returning home from her teacher education, Coleen began teaching elementary school. She reasoned at the time that "*the elementary school was the place where [she] could make the most difference.*"

In 1988, Coleen left Guyana and immigrated to Canada. Once here, she applied to the University of Toronto where she completed an honours Bachelor of Arts degree which she followed with a Bachelor of Education degree. Her decision to enrol in the faculty of education was prompted by her discovery of "*some glitches with getting into teaching in Canada.*" Elaborating, Coleen recounts that despite being told by the Ontario Ministry of Education her teaching qualifications from Guyana were equivalent to those in Canada, the schools where she applied to teach would tell her that they required her to have Canadian teaching experience. Coleen says that because of this "*I found myself between a rock and a hard place.*" After several months of frustration, Coleen applied to the faculty of education because she reasoned teaching was all she knew: "*I had never done any other job—it is the only thing I knew how. . . that is how I became a teacher in Canada.*"

Tina

Tina has taught with the same district school board for 14 years. During that time, she has taught at two different high schools with the vast majority of that time spent in her current teaching position as a senior level English teacher at Metro East Secondary School. Teaching, for Tina, was always an option but not necessarily her main choice; rather, it was something she fell into. She says:

[Teaching] was one of the options. And then having studied physical education, things get very narrow. You can either work in a fitness place, or you teach, or you are a professional athlete. So I guess I fell into it.

Tina adds that teaching was not something she just wanted as a result of counting out the other things. Despite taking a year off to sort of “knock about” to see what she wanted to before entering into teacher’s college, Tina remained uncertain teaching was what she wanted. Consequently, she reveals she “had to go to Mexico and do an experimental teaching thing there” to really decide if she was interested in it. The experience suggested teaching was enjoyable enough to sustain her interest.

After having taught for 13 years, however, Tina left teaching. Initially, she divulges that her decision to leave was prompted because she was having daycare issues with her son. She says she “couldn’t stand” leaving him with anybody who, “wasn’t 100% working.” Upon reflection, however, she thinks this reason for leaving teaching was probably an excuse for the real reason she left. She became dissatisfied with teaching:

I wasn’t enjoying it anymore. And I don’t know, I still don’t know, to this day, how much of that was because of all of the political nonsense. I think, a lot because I still feel bitter and I would rather not feel bitter about it but I obviously do. And I hate admitting that I feel bitter about it. But it, it’s deep, it really does run deep. So it was a convenient time to just get out because I couldn’t stand myself being there if I didn’t like it. And I just

see myself in the cafeteria asking some, you know, schmuck to put his garbage away and feeling like this is not meaningful. I, I, should be beyond this. This is what I felt and, when I came to the point of looking forward to weekends so much, like all these signs were pointing in the same direction, I don't want to be a total burn out, you know, in front of the classroom just because it is a job and I have the summers off and, and, for the money, so I had to do something that I was happier at.

When Tina left teaching, she founded a dog walking business. Tina observes that the contrast between teaching and the business is remarkable:

I just love the mental holiday. I absolutely do and I know that I need the type of outdoor stimulus. I need the exercise and I always have. I just, you know. There's nothing to think about except the concentration of positive things when you are out there. I just tune out and you're, you know, obviously I love dogs. It's time well spent. And that's why I appreciate that.

Tina's decision to leave teaching to spend time on the business was not without its critics, especially her mother and her son's teachers. Tina herself acknowledges that she will likely return to her teaching position.

Barbara

Unlike many of the participants who have fallen into teaching, Barbara has always wanted to be a teacher. Ever since kindergarten, her desire to teach was sustained every year of her schooling:

I was one of those people that always wanted to be a teacher. Grade one, I was going to be a grade one teacher, in grade two, a grade two, got into high school, I was going to be a high school teacher, it's just, that's it, that's what I wanted to do and that's what I did. There's no other. . . . It wasn't the summers, it wasn't the money. . . . [laughs] No and that's. . . just wanted to be a teacher.

Barbara has been a teacher for 14 years. While four of these years have resulted in Barbara being out of the classroom due to pregnancy, she has taught at three schools—Metro East Secondary School, another school in the same district school board, and her

current position with the Toronto District School Board. She reports that moving between boards has been an *“incredibly wild experience.”*

A graduate of York University’s concurrent degree program in “Man in Society,” as it was called then, and English, Barbara *“fell into”* her first teaching position as a Media Studies English teacher by accident. She says, *“I was given it in my first year of teaching as a subject that nobody wanted to teach and fell absolutely in love with it and took it on as my passion.”* This passion for Barbara means making it her mission to *“create as many media sections as possible”* and to *“look through the world from a media point of view, a constructive point of view.”* Barbara reveals that her passion has been frustrated by her attempts to obtain additional qualifications in media studies. She recounts that unfortunately every time these were offered in the past, she was either pregnant or with a baby and she was unable to do it. Now when she is ready to take these courses, she is unable to find them offered anywhere.

Darlene

Now in her 20th year of teaching, Darlene characterizes herself *“as your usual middle class teacher.”* For Darlene, two things have *“demarcated her completely”* as this usual middle class teacher. The first is her history as a student, which she perceives as being *“really unusual”* and the second is the neighbourhood in which she grew up and the strong role the union played in the lives of the families she knew. She claims that *“there was no question that [the families] were positive about unions”* and that they made worker’s lives, like the fathers of Darlene’s friends, better.

Darlene reports that she was adopted when she was three and raised in an environment that she describes as “*an increasingly working class neighbourhood just north of Mimico, in Toronto’s west end.*” The area and time, Darlene reports, meant that most of the girls, even if they finished high school, got married and got pregnant immediately out of high school. For Darlene and many of her classmates, school was as a sort of refuge. Identified as gifted and enrolled in a gifted program Darlene characterizes her schooling as being enriched by innovative programming and having “*the best teachers.*” She says that her whole experience with school was uniformly positive.

Darlene graduated from high school at the age of 16 and while she received offers of full scholarship to a many places, she decided to go to the University of Western Ontario. She obtained her first degree when she was 20 years old and then she enrolled in a creative writing program at the University of British Columbia. She became pregnant a year into the program and then, after giving birth to her son, she decided to go into teachers’ college.

Darlene describes her year and a half teacher education program at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia as “*extraordinary.*” She speaks proudly of the fact that she was in the multicultural education module, a module that was “*a reflection of all of the boat people that Vancouver had [occurred] in the early eighties.*” In her view, the program emphasized an important distinction between anti-racist work and multicultural work, a distinction continues to feel very strongly about maintaining.

Darlene’s first teaching job was in a small Mennonite community along the border of the Northwest Territories. Generally, Darlene reports that his experience was positive with the notable exception of the way in which she responded to “*the terrible restrictions*

on the girls." She discloses that she found it difficult not to impose her own values on what she saw as *"just total sexist discrimination of them."*

After the Mennonite experience, when she was about 23 years old, she worked in an Alberta vocational centre attached to the penitentiary. She recalls that all of her students, many of them in handcuffs, would come across with guards who would handcuff one of the students' arms to the desk and leave the other arm free so the student could write. In addition to this job, Darlene worked in a behaviour adaptation program in Calgary for what she describes as *"really sad, sad kids [where one kid's] father was a professional car parts thief,"* who used to boost the son over the fence to get stuff for him.

Eventually, Darlene relocated to Ontario. She began teaching in a large district school board east of metropolitan Toronto but she was declared redundant after teaching about six weeks at her new school. She went to work at another school as an elementary teacher and about a year later, she reports, she *"clued in"* that she had to move to high school. She was successful in obtaining a teaching position in what she describes as *"a wonderful community school at that time"* that had *"one of the finest principals [she] ever had the pleasure of working with."* She characterizes the principal as *"a really thoughtful man, [who] even if he didn't agree with you, you always felt like you had your say,"* something she feels strongly about. Darlene recalls with fond and nostalgic memories that in the smaller community in those days parents actually came on parents' night, the *"kind of experience that in, in the modern world you don't get."*

Although Darlene was very happy at this school, she accepted another teaching position in the performing arts program at the school in the east end of the board when a

principal whom she had admired offered it to her. While Darlene very much enjoyed this teaching experience, several factors including her principal's retirement and the dissolution of her marriage prompted her to seek another teaching position at a new school in a further western part of the school board.

Without prompting, Darlene discloses that her marriage broke down because she was spending so much time at school. The performing arts program, she felt was "way, way too demanding:"

All of the other teachers were single and gave enormous amounts of time, weekends, till eight o'clock at night, I mean and you'd feel guilty if you didn't do that and in retrospect I was a fucking idiot to do it and would never do it again but if, on, on the other hand, I had grade ten kids doing two full act musicals. It was wonderful, you know, it was really rewarding as a drama teacher to see. . . grade tens in a regular high school don't get to do any of that, it's only senior students, you know, so some of it was wonderful and some of it was really damaging in the long run.

Darlene claims that she was happy for the first couple of years at her new school and with particular colleagues she had a fondness for in her work room. At that time, Darlene suggests that her identity as a teacher could be characterized as

someone who could contribute and who was actually called upon at that point, with ten years [experience], because a lot of the people in this school at that point had less than that, to actually give some leadership in different courses and things.

She recalls that "that felt good" and then, she recounts, "we had 'the troubles'."

Laughing and emphasizing the troubles, Darlene recalls a period during which time she saw her "personal identity reduced, in [the principal of the school's] eyes, to union thug." Noting that the school principal "went after [her] in ways [she] won't even go into," this period made it really hard for Darlene to see herself "as a good person, let alone a good teacher."

Michael

Thirty-eight years old at the time of the interview, Michael came to teaching as he put it, “*relatively late compared to a lot of people. . .unlike some colleagues [at Metro East] who have known since they were ten they wanted to be teachers and went through university and right into teachers’ college and right into teaching.*” Only two years into teaching, Michael reveals that, among other things, prior to becoming an English teacher he spent a lot of time in and out of various post-secondary educational institutions. Michael indicates that his career trajectory has been “*a case of not being driven to any one thing*” which for the longest time Michael saw as a flaw that was reinforced by his family and friends, the idea that he didn’t have the ambition to be one thing. Consequently, he would “*try different things and float around.*” For example, he spent a couple of years as a TV production assistant, went to Ryerson and obtained a radio and television degree, tried a couple of years at TV and concluded he didn’t like it, and played in a band for a year full time and toured across Canada and the United States. It was this latter experience that actually lead Michael to go back to university and finish his Bachelor of Arts degree in English. Michael recalls that it was this touring that actually lead him to where he is now as a teacher:

that experience of being on tour when I was 31, I guess. 30? 31? Because I read voraciously on tour, all of a sudden they started calling me professor, my band mates and, it was that combined with having lots of time to read and to think and to see the country and a lot of our shows were played to student audiences at universities and colleges and I, you know, had these great conversations with students and I realized I enjoyed being in that kind of environment so I went back to finish my unfinished English degree from ten years before and had very, very clear focus and drive at that time so I ended up doing extremely well during my last few years of completing my B.A.

Because of Michael's focus and drive during this time, his professors encouraged him to apply and do master's degree. He justified his decision for going back to school by saying that since he had to take a large student loan, he would go into teaching but he acknowledges that this was just an excuse:

If I were to be completely honest with myself, I would, I had no idea what that entailed. It was just something I used to get people off my back. How could I justify going back to finish my English degree? Well I could be a teacher. Just leave me alone.

Although Michael didn't complete the master's degree, he notes that he came close to doing so.

After withdrawing from the program, Michael returned to his original idea of going on to become a teacher but, he recalls, this idea did not feel completely right to him. Michael discloses that initially he felt that he was settling for teaching instead of doing a PhD and becoming a professor. Once Michael "*dealt with this issue of settling for teaching*" he came into "*a bit of money*" the following year. Consequently, he did not have to work full time so he began to volunteer at schools because he had begun the process of applying for entry into the teacher education program at OISE/UT.

After being accepted into the program, Michael did a lot of volunteering, some ESL tutoring, some private individual tutoring, and he volunteered at several different schools. Michael characterizes his teacher education program year as a "*very ambivalent one*" for him. He remarks that he was, like many others, disillusioned and disappointed with his faculty of education experience. He found that there was a lot of wasted time and although he did enjoy the practicum component, he did not like the overall structure of program because, in his view, the program didn't really give him "*anywhere near the*

tools [he] needed to be able to do the job” and he cites the often heard notion that “*you learn when you are on the job.*”

Michael reveals that he continues to question his decision to become a teacher. He also divulges that he sometimes finds himself comparing himself to others who have known since they were ten that teaching was what they wanted to do. To Michael, these people seem “*to be driven and fired up by the passion of teaching*” and he is not entirely sure he fits that mould. As a result, Michael reports his feeling that there continues to be “*an element of sort of being funnelled into the job just because it seemed like a natural affinity.*” Although Michael’s interest in language and the fact that his volunteer and tutoring experiences were positive made him think he was on the right track with regards to becoming a teacher, he continues to have “*tremendous doubts about it. . . on a weekly basis*” even now in his third year of teaching.

Natasha

Like Michael, Natasha is relatively new to the teaching profession. Characterizing her current position as her “*first real teaching job,*” Natasha has been an English teacher for two and one half years. Natasha graduated from OISE in 1996 after having already completed a master’s degree in English literature. She reveals that because there were few teaching positions jobs available at the time, she “*sort of bounced around*” working as a private tutor, managing a bookstore for awhile and for a short time, working on a cruise ship. In addition to these jobs, Natasha also taught general survey English courses to night school students at the college level.

Natasha grew up and attended elementary and secondary schools in the area east of Toronto where she is currently teaching. She recalls that as she was growing up, she worked at summer camps as a counsellor and that she has always worked in some kind of capacity where she was instructing people; however, she didn't originally plan to become a teacher. She reasoned at the time that teaching someone to play tennis or volleyball was one thing but to actually teach something that someone would need was quite something else. Consequently, Natasha had no plans to become a teacher until she went to graduate school where she began to consider teaching more from "*the point of view that it's the whole idea of learning.*" As she explains, her decision to enter teaching:

wasn't so much that I wanted to teach people other things but I wanted to continue to be in that environment and I couldn't afford to be a perpetual student at university so I decided the next best thing was to maybe a teacher because then I could still, am in that context where I'm, I'm learning myself everyday and hopefully I am imparting some knowledge to other people and it's sort of a mutual thing. That's kind of how I decided.

Tom

Tom frames his biography as a teacher by pointing out "*a lot of chunking and awareness goes along*" with the recounting of his background. He reveals that he has a degree in history and a degree in theology and that he began his teaching career in 1982. At that time, Tom recalls, "*there was a bit of a recession in the economy and teaching jobs were evaporating before my eyes.*" He remembers that some people had been hired half way through the semester of his teacher education year. While they thought that things were going to go very well for them, by the time they graduated there were no jobs. In his case, he had been looking forward to obtaining a position with the Toronto Board

but teachers with ten years experience were being laid off. Given the poor job prospects, Tom began to wonder if he had made a mistake in pursuing teaching.

Tom persevered and “*went through supply teaching*” for four years with the Toronto board. During this time, Tom says he “*learned a lot about the profession from the supply teacher’s point of view.*” Tom admits that his first full time teaching position in special education with a board just north of Toronto was not his first preference by any means. Tom recalls it was in this first job that he learned about coaching and he became involved in extracurricular activities. Eventually, Tom transferred over to another school and after two years, he was declared a redundant teacher. He recounts how he felt:

I was declared a redundant teacher in my first teaching experience which is not a nice way to start and it’s everybody’s thing to get the contract, get stability. Well I didn’t know what that was coming from four years of supply teaching to what I thought was a full time job and being declared redundant and looking for another school, another placement and feeling insecure and all that stuff.

After this experience, Tom spent about ten years in special education at another high school in the same board. During this time he reports that he became interested in “*behaviour as opposed to learning disabilities.*” Gradually, after being given teaching assignments in ESL and history and Canadian citizenship/ESL, Tom switched from teaching special education to teaching history, his “*major interest and passion.*” In recounting his background in teaching, Tom adds, somewhat abruptly:

and finally had enough of Mike Harris and decided teaching was not for me after several years of labour disputes and striking. I left teaching, quit three years ago and went into business. Had enough of that within a few short months and the situation demanded another return to teaching. That brought me to this school and to the subject of philosophy and that’s where I am at now, for two years.

Belinda

Characterized as “*nothing out of the ordinary*” Belinda begins the description of her background by stating that she “*didn’t ever consciously choose to become a teacher.*” Rather, she “*fell into teaching*” when she didn’t get into law school. As she admits, “*Teaching was plan B. What else do you do with a language degree, really?*”

With a language degree in French and German from the University of Toronto, one year of study at Laval in Quebec city and summer work terms in Europe, Belinda has been teaching for 11 years. In her first year, she taught grade seven and eight and then came to her current teaching position at Metro East Secondary School where she has taught French and German, and more recently, guidance and co-operative education ever since. Born in Germany, and five years old when she came to Canada, Belinda spent her summers in Germany every year until she was a teenager. Noting that this “*was cheaper than babysitting,*” it was also how she came to the study of languages.

Aaron

Aaron was born and brought up in Nigeria. After a brief stay in Canada in 1983, he went back to Nigeria only to return to Canada in 1985 to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in history and political science at Memorial University in Newfoundland. After realizing that language and sponsorship would pose a problem for him if he opted to pursue a graduate degree, Aaron decided to obtain a Bachelor of Education degree with a focus on the intermediate-secondary levels. Aaron was not particularly satisfied with the bachelor of education degree and so he decided “*to augment it*” by doing a master’s degree in

educational administration. Aaron comments on his decision to pursue the master's degree:

I guess for some odd reason, it was not the challenge that I was looking for that I got in the Bachelor's of Education and somewhere down the line I also kind of felt that I was really preparing myself for the school system, not in this country but in Nigeria because my expressed intention was really to finish my studies and go back to Nigeria and I just kind of looked at the B. Ed. and said, comparatively speaking I will not fair well if I have to go back to Nigeria, so I need something that will give me a leverage or an edge over the, my would-be counterparts, you know, in Nigeria.

Aaron recalls feeling isolated and frustrated because he lacked the practical school-based experiences many of his classmates had:

Now I mean [laughs] I am not going to really lie to you, the other side of it is that even the B.Ed., sorry the master's degree, by so doing, I find myself in a class of professionals, professionals in the sense that over ninety-eight percent, if not ninety-nine point nine percent of the people I was in that class with were all seasoned teachers. I was actually the only person who had no work experience so I would see that they would come to class and bring experiences and in their discussion I would see myself theorizing all the time and I actually got frustrated.

After completing his bachelor's and master's degrees, Aaron began looking for jobs in Newfoundland, working at one point as a student interviewer for a professor. Aaron recounts that he eventually realized he needed a full time job and began to seek out teaching positions. With few full time or supply teaching opportunities in Newfoundland, and unable to pay his bills, Aaron risked a relocation to Ontario.

Shortly after relocating, Aaron obtained his Ontario certification to teach and he began supply teaching while looking for permanent teaching positions. After some time, in 1992, Aaron obtained a full time position teaching history at Metro East Secondary School where he has been for the last 10 years.

Maureen

At the time of the interview, Maureen had been teaching at Metro East Secondary School for three and one half years. Maureen attended a specialized program in arts and the community in education at Queen's university in 1999 to get her Bachelor of Education degree for the intermediate and senior levels. Because Maureen has a minor in history she is able to teach both visual arts and history, something that is very important to her. *"I do enjoy teaching both,"* she says, *"I don't think I would rather teach just one or the other; I think it has to be both, for me."* Although Maureen has only been teaching for a short time, she is not sure how long she will remain in it. She still enjoys teaching despite the fact that she finds it sometimes gets really tiring. She says, *"I don't think I would give it up just yet"* and admits that she is open to other avenues although she is not quite sure what else she would want to do. She is confident, however, that whatever it may be it will still be

in the education sphere. . . somewhere with kids, somewhere in that avenue to make sure that their future has some sort of, I don't know, hope to it because right now it just seems like it they are going through motions.

Despite this revelation, Maureen says that she always wanted to be a teacher ever since she was four years old. Initially she wanted to be a kindergarten teacher but the older she got she began to realize that being a kindergarten teacher involved *"a lot of work"* which, for her, was *"too much energy"* because *"you have to be nice all the time and you can't be real, you have to be fake."* Maureen clarifies her meaning of fake:

Fred: *What, what do you mean?*

Maureen: *Fake, you have to smile all the time. . . .*

Fred: *Oh, I see.*

Maureen: *like with my classes I can actually say 'I am not having a good day today' or 'I am really sick,' you know, 'guys can you give me a break?' and they do but with kindergartens they don't understand that. . . concept and I think it is a kind of give and take with my class that they can tell me if they are having a bad day and I'll leave them alone but with kindergartens they don't understand that concept.*

Maureen's decision to reject being a kindergarten teacher in favour of becoming an art teacher was made in high school when she discovered in grade ten that she did very well in it as a subject and thought "*this could be an avenue.*" Although Maureen would like to pursue her personal interest in art, she has little time since she started teaching.

Diane

Diane obtained an honours Bachelor of Arts degree in history at the University of Guelph and in the following fall, she enrolled in a two year teaching program at the University of Alberta. After completing this teacher education program, Diane returned to Ontario. She obtained a teaching position with in a large secondary school east of metropolitan Toronto teaching history and drama before she joined the staff at Metro East Secondary School where she remained for ten years. In addition to her full time teaching, Diane taught summer school for nine years.

Recently, Diane resigned from her teaching position at Metro East Secondary School and moved to another school board just north of Toronto. She recounts the reason for her decision to relocate:

Well now I am at [a new board]. . . . I just needed a break finally from, for me it was really the change in how I saw teaching at [my former board]. It just, wasn't for me anymore and I wanted to see what it was like elsewhere and I am happy to say that the [new] board is very, very positive and very supportive of the teachers. The union has an incredibly good relationship

with the board, even has committees together to work on strategies to help teachers. So it is very different. It was a good switch. . . .

Diane discloses that she had to make compromises with her teaching preferences with the school's administration and that it took six or seven years before she finally received teaching assignments in her area of expertise and interest—history. She adds, with considerable laughter, *“when I left I was acting head of history there, for all of a month.”*

At the time of the interview, Diane was on pregnancy leave and she was hoping when she returned to teaching in the fall she would be assigned history and drama, or at least an “all history” assignment. Despite her optimism, Diane remains realistic by noting that obtaining such a position is remote. As she expresses it, *“it’s a dog eat dog world . . . I never realized just how much a dime a dozen we history teachers are.”* Diane recounts her application process:

You know what I mean? Because when I was putting out my resumes at other schools because in [my new board], you have to really apply like you are applying to new jobs. You put yourself on a transfer list and you get out there and you try to sell yourself and they won’t even look at my qualifications. They would say things like “gosh, they sure are putting a lot of you guys out this year” and I am going like “what do you mean, out this year?” [laughter] I’ve been out for a while.

She continues:

Yeah, there’s a lot of us so that’s a little scary to realize that . . . It is very empowering to know your area is so in need, like I have a friend who is a math teacher and anyone who is in special ed right now can get pretty much any school, any job. I am now finding I’m pretty darn lucky I got in at all considering I am a history/drama teacher so. . . .

Although Diane says she feels lucky to have gotten a position, she is not necessarily satisfied with the school where she is currently teaching. In some ways, changing schools has highlighted what she had taken for granted at Metro East Secondary School. She says:

I was so busy concentrating on the things I wanted to get away from at [my previous board] that I didn't and found the things that I wanted to get away from in [my new board] that I didn't concentrate on the things that I had and I didn't realize how much that I love being at a large school because I don't, I, I like to feel a sense of cooperation with my co-workers and not competition for courses and I find smaller schools you tend to get pegged—you're a junior teacher, you're a senior teacher. . . , this one gets these courses. [The school's] incredibly [pauses] small and very, all white. There's, I feel very uncomfortable having now only taught at multicultural schools to be at a school that has no diversity and it's like being back to square one on trying to create racial harmony. I mean how do you create racial harmony when they don't have to put the money where their mouth is and practice it by being harmonious with others so I'd like to go back to a big school, eh, you know?

In addition to missing a diverse student population, Diane also misses the semester system and the technology-rich environment of Metro East Secondary School:

That's another thing. I didn't, these are the things I didn't look at: large school, the reasons why, a new school, you know you have your computer stuff, you know we got spoiled at Metro East and semestered because the school I was at was half and half and having five preps in a semester and none of them in your area of expertise with behaviour modified children was a nightmare and it made me do a step back and evaluate teaching and what I want and . . . , wow, it was hard, it was really hard [laughs] it was the hardest couple of months of my life.

Denise

Denise begins her description of her background by noting that other than summer jobs she had, she has been continuously in school, never doing anything other than being a teacher. From her perspective, with the exception of a short time in grade 11 when she was still thinking about doing nursing until her chemistry teacher “*begged [her] never to please, don't ever go anywhere where you have to like measure things and give it to people,*” Denise knew “*quite early on . . . before [she] left high school that [she] was going to teach.*”

After Denise graduated from high school, she went straight into a fine arts program at York University and in her second year started the concurrent Bachelor of Education program deciding on a teaching career. She recalls that doing so *“was like a huge risk”* given the fact that *“there was still a glut of teachers and there were very few jobs.”*

Prior to deciding on teaching as a career, Denise did think about pursuing a career in art conservation, art administration and gallery work; but after her first year practicum which was with junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten she became *“just absolutely fascinated with how [she] could take that act of creation, creativity of an art work and make a lesson plan [for it].”* She states, *“it was like the equal of a painting and I found that whole process of curriculum development like creating a work of art so it was a neat way of combining . . .”*

The first teaching job that Denise held was a long term occasional (LTO) position teaching English and art at a school board just west of Toronto that she obtained before she even graduated. She recalls, *“I went straight from the faculty into the job pretty quickly and was hired on by [another board just east of Toronto] at the end of that LTO.”* The school at which Denise obtained a position was the board’s vocational school at that time. She reports that because she hadn’t been told it was a vocational school, *“it was a little bit of a shock to end up in that situation”* but, she adds, *“it was a great place to be because there was a really interesting variety of teachers at different [levels of] teaching years in that school.”*

After teaching at this school for four or five years Denise was encouraged to apply for and was successful in obtaining the headship of the art department at Metro East

Secondary School. Denise taught at Metro East for 12 years before, as she phrases it, *"trying to escape from that labour situation."* After leaving Metro East, Denise was hired on at another high school a bit further west in the same board, but she never taught there because she was diagnosed with an acute medical condition shortly after she was offered the new position.

Pauline

Pauline's decision to become a teacher was very much influenced by her mother, recalling that when she was in grade five or six her mother informed her *"you are going to be an English teacher."* In response to this suggestion, Pauline discloses that she told her mother she was *"out of her mind"* but she hastens to add, *"and of course, she was right, as mothers always are."*

Pauline attended the University of Toronto where she completed a four years honours English degree followed up with a consecutive Bachelor of Education at what she refers to as *"FEUT"* (Faculty of Education of the University of Toronto). Shortly after graduating, Pauline became a full time teacher of secondary school English in 1980. Her education continued as she *"picked up"* her drama qualifications and special education qualifications. She taught at the same school until the 1993-94 school year when she taught half time and spent the other half-time as the chief negotiator for the local teacher bargaining unit.

In 1994, Pauline became the full time local district president of OSSTF and remained in that position until 1998-99. When she returned to teaching, she changed schools and taught English until the current school year, 2002-2003, where she now has a

mixed timetable of English and Library. Elaborating on her interest and involvement in the teachers' union, Pauline says both began to develop very early in her career:

It started very early. I don't know; I was probably in my first or second year when someone at [my first school] said why don't you become a rep on a communications committee, I believe it was and so I always found it interesting, intellectually interesting, to hear people from other schools describing their experiences, what was new, what was different, what was happening in other places and I enjoyed that other perspective that you gained on your own job.

After her initiation into the union's activities, her involvement "became a logical progression somehow." Pauline comments, "it was never that I intended to do it or intended to become out of the classroom through it. Never my, my intention." She recounts the circumstances under which she became the chief negotiator:

it was really only because [the original chief negotiator] had unexpectedly, I don't know if you recall or not but in our district in OSSTF we used to have a fairly predictable progression and it was very rare that someone was elected by the membership who had not done an appropriate apprenticeship within the federation roles at the branch levels—that you were a committee rep, then you would become a branch vice-president and then a branch president and then you would probably become a district vp next, etc. And [the original chief negotiator] would have been in line to have been the next chief negotiator and president and then she, for personal reasons, chose not to continue and so I stepped in, again, as I said, unexpectedly, but it seemed the will of the people, the will of the executive at the time. And then I became chief negotiator and then after only one year of that [the branch president at the time] returned to her teaching role and became department head at her school at that point and the presidency was vacant and so I ran for it. It, it just seemed a logical step. I have always said in my own personal career that I never really opened doors; I merely walked through them.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been twofold. First, it has presented an overview of my personal interest in the phenomena of teacher professional identity vis-à-vis the

various roles and opportunities I have had in education for the past 18 years. Second, through the introduction to the participants in this study, the chapter has enabled a glimpse into some of the influences these teachers perceive affect their professional identities as teachers. Several of the biographies—Coleen’s, Tina’s, Michael’s, Belinda’s, Natasha’s and Aaron’s—are noteworthy because of these participants’ admissions that they either resisted becoming a teacher, “fell into/settled for teaching,” or that teaching was certainly not their first choice of career. In contrast, others such as Barbara, Maureen and Denise indicate that becoming a teacher was something that they had always aspired to. For Aerlyn and Pauline, the decision to become a teacher was heavily influenced by their parental views on teaching; for Darlene, the decision was heavily influenced by her social upbringing. As the remaining chapters in this study will reveal, some of the reasons identified by these participants for why they became teachers contribute significantly to the construction, maintenance and perpetuation of discursive formations that govern the teaching population. For example, the interview data in will reveal that the “fell into/settling for teaching” discourse articulates with other public, governmental, media, union and school-based discourses about teachers and teaching such as the “just a teacher” discourse.

The next chapter of this study begins to examine some of these discursive formations by exploring how the participants in this study understand their own identities as teachers, their conceptions of themselves as professionals, and their expression of awareness of the influences they perceive to have an effect on their identities.

CHAPTER FIVE

SELF-CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHER IDENTITY, TEACHER AS PROFESSIONAL, AND TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the multiple ways in which the participants convey their understanding of themselves as teachers and their conceptions of what it means to be [a] professional in teaching. The data presented are derived from the first set of questions posed to the participants in the study—“*how do you see yourself as a teacher?*” and “*how do you see yourself as a professional in Ontario today? Are you a professional?*” The intent of the first question was to solicit participants’ perceptions of the nature of teaching (i.e., what teaching is) and the ways in which they understood their identities as teachers (i.e., what it means to be a teacher). The second question was posed to solicit both their perceptions of teaching as a profession (i.e., the professionalization of teaching) as well as their sense of themselves as professionals (i.e., their professionalism). The rationale for posing these particular questions at the start of the interview process was to see which discourses about teaching might emerge first without recourse to interview probes. These questions were also posed to see the ways in which discourses about teaching might or might not merge with discourses of teaching as a profession and teacher professionalism.

The first part of the chapter presents data that reveal teachers construct their identities by drawing upon discourses that present the work of teaching in *relational* ways—in relation to other occupations, in relation to teachers’ ongoing professional

learning, and in relation to teaching itself, particularly with respect to the isolation of teaching. The data presented in the second part of the chapter suggest that even among teachers in a bounded time and place, there is no essentialized teacher identity. The data suggest that teachers perceive their identities must be negotiated with the public and the government, their own families, the nature of teaching itself through its construction and perpetuation of feelings of guilt, and through colleagues. The findings that will be presented echo Hargreaves' (2000) contention that "the fate of teacher professionalism. . . is by no means fixed, but is being and will be argued about, struggled over and pulled in different directions in different places at different times" (p. 167). In the last part of this chapter, data are presented that suggest teachers frequently conflate their understanding of the discourse of "teacher professionalism" with their understanding of the "teacher as a professional" discourse and this conflation frequently articulates with other discourses about teachers and teaching.

It is important to note that while the discourses emerging most strongly in this chapter are those associated with the government, the public, and the nature of teaching itself, particularly with regard to teachers' daily interactions with colleagues and others in schools, only a limited discussion of these discourses is presented in this chapter. A more considered discussion of the ways in which teachers negotiate their identities with government, media and public discourses occurs in chapter six. Chapter seven examines this negotiation with regard to one teachers' federation, chapter eight focuses on the Ontario College of Teachers, and chapter nine focuses on discourses that articulate in the school setting.

Teaching as Relational

Teaching in relation to other occupations

The data presented in this section will reveal that while there are some variances, the participants in this study understand teaching in highly similar ways. Primarily, the participants depict teaching by drawing comparisons with other types of work. The presentation of these images vary from teaching being described as a sobering job, a job that involves managing barriers that mitigate against student learning, and a craft to depictions of teaching as public servant work, construction crew work and trench warfare work. For example, Aerlyn characterized teaching as being different from public servant work and she suggests that, in her view, the way teachers are treated by school administrators is analogous to that of a member of a construction crew, a shop foreman.

She says:

You might as well be on a construction crew and having them giving us orders as to how we are going to arrange the, you know, blocks of wood or whatever. We just do it. We just, "yes, boss" and just do it. So there is no, there is no input.

Although Michael, like Aerlyn, refers to teaching as "*slugging it out, working in the trenches*" where teachers more closely resemble workmen or journeymen, he also maintains that teaching is unlike many other jobs where "*one is in a cubicle.*" He observes that whereas a cubicle worker can "*sort of slink by and get by and be half conscious,*" a teacher cannot go to work hungover or really tired because teaching can really affect a lot of people. He says:

You've got seventy or eighty kids during the day, who are all depending on you to be there and be relatively organized, and have some idea of what you are doing and what you are trying to get from them. If they are, you know, going to learn something, how you are going to work while experiencing the class, so that part of it, it's sobering.

In a similar vein, Pauline notes that a positive aspect of teaching is that it is not as intrusive as many other jobs; teaching allows a person to have the intellectual and emotional rewards of a profession without having the problems of overtime, weekend work or the travel often associated with a *"mere 9-5 job."* Tina claims that others see teaching as being preferable to other types of work such as the dogwalking business she began when she took a leave from teaching. From Coleen's perspective, teaching is a craft. Aaron believes that teaching is one of the few occupations where employment equity worked and Natasha proposes that teaching is no different than any other occupation.

Teaching in relation to ongoing professional learning

In addition to being understood in relation to other occupations, some of the participants see teaching as being inextricably related to their own learning. Michael describes teaching as *"being in the thick of ideas"* and Pauline suggests that teaching has both intellectual and emotional rewards. For Natasha, who sees herself as a student, teaching means being on *"a mutual tandem journey with her students."* Teaching is not only about giving her students *"the next step of encouragement to see the bigger picture,"* it is also an opportunity for her to learn from her own students. As both Natasha and Belinda note, teaching is also about learning *"how to play the game,"* about learning to do what one has to do before moving on and about *"going through the hoops."* Although she suggests that more experienced teachers may not have to do as much learning as new teachers because they have been teaching for 15 or 20 years, Maureen conveys her feeling that new teachers should be continually trying to improve and learn from their teaching. She also reports, however, that many of the new teachers with whom

she works at Metro East Secondary School view teaching as an easy job that has a considerable amount of free time. These teachers, Maureen opines, are also the same teachers who are “*buddy buddy with students*,” something she rejects as being an appropriate relationship. Michael reveals that, as a new teacher, he receives little support while trying to learn about ways to manage the timing and organizational aspects of his teaching. Diane observes that “[*teachers*] are students of teaching as much as our students are students of learning” and that “*that’s been a challenge*” for her as a teacher.

Teaching in relation to teaching

Several participants expressed an understanding of teaching or particular aspects of teaching with regard to its inherent nature as well as teaching as a career choice. For almost all of the participants in this study including Aerlyn, Tina, Natasha, Tom, Belinda, Aaron and Maureen, teaching is inherently about relationships with students. Teaching, for these participants is about building a rapport with students, about “*being on the same team*” and about treating students with compassion while simultaneously helping them to shape their lives in ways which will encourage them to become productive citizens. For Belinda, understanding teaching in a relational way means that the priorities and decisions she makes are always done with a view toward what most benefits her students. For Aaron, this relationship means creating an environment that encourages respect and making the classroom safe and non-threatening.

In addition to being inherently about students, Natasha points out that she understands teaching as being relatively fixed—teaching is what teaching is. She says that when she became a teacher she did not know what to expect; however, she acknowledges that teaching is like any other job one signs on for—there are rules,

expectations and parameters that must be adhered to and followed. She has discovered as well, however, that within these parameters and rules, her notions of teaching are under constant revision. Tom indicates that he was undecided about remaining as a classroom teacher or pursuing opportunities *"beyond the classroom"* to management.

A number of participants, including Aerlyn, Michael and Diane commented on the isolationist aspect of teaching. Diane says that she sees herself as being *"far more alone than she would like to be in the profession."* She recalls thinking that there would more of a sense of teamwork than what she has discovered noting how she was told and encouraged in her teacher preparation program to *"watch your other friend's classes, observe and all these suggestions"* and that there would be time to do that. But soon, she says,

you realize you know, eleven years, holy smokes the time has gone by and when did I ever sit in anyone's class and observe? When did anyone come and observe my class? When was the last time anyone asked to see my units? my lesson plans?

Diane acknowledges that in some ways this can be a very positive thing about teaching because *"you have time to spread your wings"* but, she also acknowledges its limitations, that without feedback it is difficult to *"check yourself."* As noted by Diane earlier, she sees herself very much as a student of teaching. She says she has found that *"since a lot of the changes in the attitude of the government and the public toward teachers, there is a fear of admitting if you don't understand something or know how to do something,"* and *"there is an impatience to explain or to show you the ropes."* Diane states that in her first year of teaching, she *"had an amazing support system from the elderly teachers wanting to help [her] through"* but she has found that over the years no one has time to do that and she says it is her feeling that she is *"really sorry for that part."* Diane has found that

the only thing that has kept her going in teaching has been to “*shut out a lot of the outside hindrances and go forward on [her] own,*” but, as she says, “*I am really a social person so I find it hard.*”

Caught between the isolation of teaching and fact that she is so social, Diane finds that if she does shut something off, she is also shutting something of herself off as well. Recently, she has found most of the teachers that she admires and who had done well in teaching have begun to shut themselves off and she suggests that it is a shame “*because they are, they are great teachers of teachers as well.*”

Diane reports that although there are positive and negative aspects of teacher isolation, teaching, for her, inherently means being alone but wishing it were otherwise. She, along with Aerlyn and Natasha, suggest that there is something in teaching that prevents collegiality. Diane also maintains that teacher strikes can be critical incidents for teachers whereby they are forced to realize that they cannot be this mythical “*Mr. Holland’s Opus*” teacher and that teaching is and can be very damaging to one’s personal life. Such realizations, Diane and Tom note, mean that they are very guarded about the time they contribute to extra-curricular activities as teachers. Denise claims that teaching needs to be understood in terms of inside and outside the classroom. While both Denise and Belinda indicate that they strive to maintain their commitment to their students and their teaching inside the classroom, Denise comments that outside the classroom things have changed considerably with both her colleagues and administrators.

This discussion has revealed that for almost all of the participants, teaching is understood as relational. Teachers’ work involves making decisions that enable students’ learning to flourish and it involves working to minimize challenges to this learning. In

addition to students' learning, many teachers understand teaching to be about their own learning. Some teachers view their own learning as just as important as students' learning. As Diane reminds us, "*teachers are students of teaching as much as our students are students of learning.*" Ironically, however, the data also suggest that the isolated nature of teaching hinders both student and teacher learning and the highly important relational aspect of teaching.

The data presented in this section reveal that teachers respond to the discourses about teaching in a variety of ways. As pointed out above, Natasha accepts teaching for what it is; she adjusts her understanding of teaching as she learns more about teaching. Others such as Pauline and Michael seem to rationalize teaching by pointing out that its negative aspects are balanced by its positive aspects such as its having "*intellectual and emotional rewards*" and enabling one to be "*in the thick of ideas.*" Still others such as Diane continue to have difficulty with aspects of teaching that conflict with their notions of the way teaching should be. Indeed, as Aerlyn and Natasha also note, there is something inherent to teaching that thwarts collegiality and its relational nature. The ironies inherent in teaching are not lost on these teachers and they struggle in sometimes highly personal ways with how the discourses of teaching position them in ambiguous ways. As the next section of this chapter reveals, the nature of these struggles is also conveyed through the participants' understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

Multiple Challenges to Teacher Professional Identity

The data presented in this section will reveal that the multiple challenges teachers confront have strong influences on their professional identities and that these challenges

prompt a variety of responses from teachers. The discussion will illustrate that even among teachers in a bounded time and place, there is no such thing as an essentialized teacher identity.

The data reveal considerable diversity among the conceptions participants had of themselves as teachers, with some teachers finding it difficult to convey their views. For those participants who were able to formulate and express such a conception, teacher professional identity was perceived as being multi-layered and nested¹. Darlene, for example, was very clear that her teacher identity included, but was not limited to her identities as mother, lover, partner, person from a particular family class and number of years teaching. She states:

I think when I first started thinking about this question, one of the things I sort of wanted to say first and frame is that I think it is really hard to define your identity as a teacher as if it were separate from your identity say, as a mother, as a lover, as a partner, as a person, as a person in a family with a history, as a member of a class, right? as a member of a particular ethnic group, for some people, as a member of a religion. God knows other identifiers would be there too. So it is hard to separate that for me to some extent at all. Right? But, but I'll try.

Furthermore, Darlene volunteers that her responses need to be understood within the context of her years of teaching experience:

if you'd asked me these questions ten years ago, this is my twentieth year of teaching, if you had asked me these questions ten years ago I might have had a completely different set of answers for you. And I know for certain I would have had a completely set of different answers in my first two or three years.

¹This fluid quality of identity pointed out by these participants emphasizes the earlier theoretical claims about identity that were presented in Chapter Three of this study. Given these observations, it is important to point out that the categories presented in this section (and also the subsequent chapters in this dissertation) are not exclusive of each other and therefore should not be interpreted in isolation. For example, it is highly probable that the familial challenges the participants perceive have been strongly influenced by discourses that circulate among the public, the media, and the government. The ways in which the data are categorized and presented in the study are, in some ways then, artificial (and some might say arbitrary) constructions.

She adds:

It changes with who you are as a person, whether or not you've got kids, how committed you are, it can change as little as a semester to a semester with what kind of classes you have because your role as a professional, when you say I have OAC English, OAC drama, OAC Writer's Craft, which I have had at some point. . . is way different than my identity as a professional right now when I have three classes from hell essentially.

Darlene declares that her conception of identity is fluid and that she has recently begun to question and struggle with her “*self as teacher*” identity because of her relationship as a white, short female teacher with the young Black male students she has been currently teaching at Metro East Secondary School. Darlene points out that it is within this context that her comments about her own identity need to be understood.

Like Darlene, Belinda also noted that she inhabited multiple identities which included, but were not limited to, her identities as a mother, a fun person, a wife and a traveller. Unlike Darlene who sees herself as a teacher even more than as a mother, Belinda says that she rejects the notion that her teacher identity defines her. She explains:

I, I don't know, I just don't define myself by my job. I teach. I am good at teaching, I enjoy teaching, I like working with, with teenagers, it's a good age group for me. I like the different variety of stuff I am doing now with co-op and guidance, because just the classroom gets really tedious. But it's my job. It's not who I am. I am a lot of other people.

She adds, “*I am a lot of things but teaching is not at the root of who I am.*” It is worth noting here that Belinda's comments seem to contradict the assertion made in the opening of this dissertation that work is stable, consistent source of self-identity as DuGay (1996) has observed.

In the discussion that follows and in the later chapters of this dissertation, it will be shown that the participants' conceptions of themselves as teachers are strongly influenced by multiple challenges that they perceive come from both outside and inside

the immediate boundaries of teaching. Public and familial challenges prompt in the participants a variety of responses ranging from passive silence to aggressive defences of teachers and their work. Within its boundaries, teacher professional identity is strongly influenced by educational reform initiatives, challenges within teachers themselves and challenges presented by colleagues. The data will reveal that participants respond to these challenges in a variety of ways as well. In some cases, the response involves an acceptance of the challenge as something inherent to teaching; in others, the response involves confronting the challenge and still in others, the response involves the wilful subversion of some part or all of the challenge in an effort to sustain some degree of stability.

Public challenges to teacher professional identity

The identities teachers assume vary according to place or space. In public arenas such as soccer games or dinner parties, some teachers are very guarded about revealing their identities as teachers. For these teachers, public arenas are rife with discourses of derision (Ball, 1990; Smyth, 1998; Wallace, 1993) about teachers. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, several of the participants—Aerlyn, Diane, Coleen, Barbara and Natasha (later in the dissertation)—comment that they feel their identities as teachers are under constant negotiation with the public. Aerlyn, for example, reveals that in the year prior to being interviewed, she did not want to tell anyone she was a teacher and that she perceived a strong stigma attached to being a teacher—that anyone who did what she did was “*just a teacher.*”

It got to a point in the last year or so that I didn't want to tell anyone that I was a teacher. In fact, I still, in fact this summer, somebody at one of my kids' soccer games "oh, you know, if you were a teacher, you would still

have another month off” and I didn’t say a thing, I just said [to myself] “oh here we go, another one,” you know. But I’m, I, you know, and that’s awful because I, I mean I think I like what I do, I like being a teacher but if I have to not even identify myself as one, that’s terrible! [laughs]. And also you get people who say I am “just a teacher” I mean, and you know, I have heard people say that I am just a teacher. I mean “just a teacher”! I think, too, because I have children, I mean, that’s so important and a good teacher is so important. To say you are just a teacher? You could make a difference, a huge difference for a child, you know?

Similarly, Diane says that she gets “very nervous” when somebody asks her what she does for a living.

I am very nervous when somebody asks me now what I do for a living. I find that when you tell some people that you are a teacher, they immediately vent, sometimes to you, sometimes at you. Either problems when they went to school but more specifically I’ve had problems with people whose kids are in the school system and are venting as if I have some connection even if it’s elementary, I’ve still been vented at, you know, and they say during it has so much to do with all the strikes and the upheaval and the public saying what is our identity and we, we are speaking back about what our identity is and so on so I usually find I don’t really want to fight it, discuss it anymore, so I am a little leery when people want to know what I do.

Natasha discloses that when she is at a dinner party or other such public function where people often relate their occupations and other such things as part of their socializing, she will usually listen carefully to others responses when they find out that she is a teacher or she will listen to see if there is another teacher in the room. She concedes that she does this because she says, “on some level” the way others respond to what she does for a living lets her judge whether she wants to spend more time talking to them or not although she acknowledges that doing so is a “horrible generalization to make” but, she adds, “if we all do it.”

Natasha observes that in such situations, the response from the people with whom she is speaking upon finding out that she is a teacher typically involves them initially asking her what she teaches. When she tells them she teaches English, the response

ranges from either “*that is really neat, I had a great English teacher when I was . . .*’ or *it is ‘I am horrible at English work’ and they say they can’t do it, etcetera.*” Natasha says in these instances when people speak about or refer to the actual subject she teaches, she is more inclined “*to take [and put] stock into what they are saying.*” In contrast, however, she asserts that “*if the first thing out of their mouths is ‘oh you must like those two months off’ or ‘how’d you swing that?’ and ‘the weekends off,’*” she is more likely to make a “*sweeping generalization.*” She will say to herself “*okay here is someone who obviously doesn’t really know or has a stereotype [of teachers] in his or her head.*”

Natasha acknowledges the criticism by saying “*yes, [she does] get to hang out with kids all day and that is fun and that is great and [yes, she] enjoys all the perks that this profession offers.*” She says further that while she does “*hear them when they say things like that,*” what she used to always want to say to them was

well you could have all this too if you decide that you want to go back to school and you want to like stay up grading papers and essays and lesson plans and if you want to, you know, deal with parents screaming at you, screaming at you on the phone, if you want to do all that, well then sure you could have all of the things that I have too.

In the case of Coleen, it is her racial identity that she feels strongly influences how members of the public perceive her. To explain what she means, she recounts an incident in which she was required to have surgery:

I remember going to have surgery in ‘96. This is like 5:00 a.m.; it is February; it is snowing. And I am alone going for major surgery and I handed my medical papers to the lady at the desk, the young girl at the desk. “I’m here for surgery today,” [I said] and she said for me to fill this form and I have to put my occupation and what my salary was and I gave her and she pushed the form back to me when I had filled it and said, she didn’t even look at the salary that was put there, she said to me “you mean that you are the custodian.” At 5:00 a.m. I am going in for major surgery and this young girl pushed back the form towards me and said, “you mean you are the custodian.” You are the cleaner in the school, not the teacher. And my answer was “would a custodian make that salary?” [Pause] So, I

can never feel comfortable in Canada as a teacher because almost every, single, day, someone, questions something about me being a teacher.

Coleen discloses that because of her experiences, she hesitates to tell people about what she does for a living. She says:

I always just feel that I am just doing a job because there is no wholeness to it; there is some part of it that people would question and nobody accepts me. I don't feel accepted as a whole person, as a teacher and, and, I think that's what, you know, takes away from me being a teacher. I, I don't see myself too much as a teacher in Ontario. As a matter of fact, I hesitate to tell a lot of people what my profession is. Because people always question, that I am a teacher. And it is never going to leave me.

Familial challenges to teacher professional identity

In addition to public challenges, the participants noted that challenges to their identities as teachers also came from their own families. Both Diane and Barbara, for example, comment that they have found themselves surprised by having to defend themselves as teachers with members of their immediate families. Barbara recalls that during the time when the labour disputes were occurring and *"teachers were striking and not striking and walking out and working to rule and trying to help people see the other side,"* no one was giving her the benefit of the doubt even though they knew her, not even her husband:

And that surprised me. That surprised me and I even had to sit down with my husband. . . and say listen "you know what I do, do not. . . [laughs], do not buy into this, all the jargon, you know about teachers are underworked and overpaid, like you can't possibly buy into that." And then, you know, he stopped for a second and he realized that he was, to some extent falling into this prejudice.

Noting that because her husband's family is *"very staunch conservative"* and that they have *"had a lot of very rocky moments, especially during the strikes where there was a lot of fighting,"* Diane found herself thinking *"if this is my own family and we are*

arguing then how am I possibly going to stand up to others?" In Diane's view, many people do not stand up because teaching has so much to do with children, and, she says *"a lot of people don't really want to hear about what's truly happening."* Instead, Diane remarks, they just want to demand what they feel education should be and so *"it's really just talking to a blank wall sort of, it's sort of hopeless."*

In Diane's case, she reasoned that given her own family's criticism and challenge to her work as a teacher she would have considerable difficulty standing up to others; consequently, she engages in avoidance behaviours. She explains:

if they say, I find if they you know, do in open air as in say "so what are you doing?" I can easily say now I am on maternity leave and I can avoid the question and if they press, sure I'll answer it but I definitely don't take the worm to continue talking about it and you know, it's it's

In contrast, Barbara, who observes that teachers are scapegoats, conveys her compulsion to defend who teachers are and what they do. Whether it is by her family or by the public, Barbara reports that when she feels attacked as a teacher, her response is to become defensive. She says:

I do a good job and I work hard and damn it. . . and to tell me that either myself or my colleagues are somehow, you know, different than, different than someone who works in private industry because in private industry there is, apparently, all kinds of safeguards but I wouldn't, you know, to safeguard against underworking and safeguard against wasting time and safeguarding against all these things and safeguard against someone who is incompetent And I don't know, I wouldn't want to judge the private industry. I don't know. I haven't been in private industry. But I feel completely judged that somehow because we are in the public sector there's this, the pre-judgment that we are somehow not doing "the job" whatever "the job" happens to be. There's a scapegoating maybe I am trying to prevent the scapegoating, the scapegoating of teachers. You know, "it doesn't work so. . . ." it, you know, it must be the teacher's fault.

While public and familial challenges play a significant role in shaping the professional identities of teachers, there are numerous other challenges inherent in

teaching itself that the participants in this study perceive influence their conceptions of themselves. These challenges are derived primarily from inside teaching itself and include challenges prompted by educational reform initiatives such as the introduction of a new curriculum, new evaluation methods and, as will be shown in chapter nine, new forms of teacher appraisal. Challenges are also prompted by personal struggles with particular aspects of the teaching and by the relationships among colleagues.

Challenges prompted by educational reform

Denise reveals that her teacher identity inside her classroom has been able to remain relatively stable but she discloses that given the nature, scope and associated impact of the Harris government's education reform, she has changed as a teacher outside the classroom, especially with regard to her colleagues and school administrators. Diane claims that as a history and social science teacher, her teacher identity in the classroom has been directly challenged by the government because of its direction that teachers cannot discuss the politics associated with its education reform agenda, adding that while as a teacher she is prevented from doing so but her students are not.

Belinda also suggests that the government's education reform agenda has an influence on her identity. She maintains that the authority and rules inherent in teaching and being a teacher make teachers docile—in her words, “*sheep*.” Teachers are expected by the school system generally and administrators particularly to be compliant and she holds that “doors close” for teachers who do not comply. Using the government's new curriculum and method of evaluation as an example, Belinda explains what she means:

Oh God, the new curriculum. You know, as the school board has decided, as have a lot of boards across Ontario that we are going to evaluate knowledge and understanding, and thinking and inquiry, and application

and communication. It doesn't work in languages. There is no thinking and inquiry in grade nine French. They don't think in French, they don't inquire, they, they just don't. And so to force these artificial categories on certain subject areas where, I mean it works really well in math, it works well in English's and history. Apparently it is amazing in science, doesn't work for languages, doesn't work for dance, doesn't work well for music, so the fact that this is now arbitrarily, you know, "you are all going to do it, we don't care about the differences, you are all going to do it." I am struggling with that. I am saying "why are we doing this if it is not to the benefit of our students?" I am now going to count ten percent of their mark for thinking and inquiry. Over the course of this semester, I am going to have three assignments in there and they will be assignments that they'll, that I've made up that aren't even part of the curriculum. I've just made them up so I can have a mark in there. I can't see the point in that. I would like someone to show me the point but. . . .

For now, Belinda rejects the evaluation methods proposed by the new curriculum, and says that so far she hasn't yet implemented these categories but given that "*apparently [she] will have to in September,*" she will be "*going to make stuff up that fits in that category.*" Belinda is not in the least concerned about her decision to reject the new methods of evaluation; in fact, she says, it annoys her because it is just another hoop that she is going to have to step through. She laughs and says:

It, it annoys me but it is just another hoop I am going to step through and I'll do it but I, I, you know what I think the bottom line is if I can't see how it even, how it benefits the student. The fact that I am now dreaming up new assignments for these kids who will never speak French, have failed French every year since grade four and now I am going to pile more stuff on them to make getting that credit more difficult so they can repeat it again in grade ten just seems ludicrous.

Belinda states that her rejection and subversion of the implementation of the new evaluation methods stands in direct contrast to the acceptance of it by many of her peers and colleagues. It is for this reason that she characterizes her teacher self as a rebellious teenager.

This is why I feel like a rebellious teenager. It's because I look around me and you know, my own "department head" who you know, she is tripping over herself to get this implemented and doesn't see the fact that this isn't

working really well for us and maybe we should be letting someone know that this isn't working really well so we can revisit it and you know, see what we can do about it but so many people, teachers are sheep. We are, you know, we are a profession of lambs and sheep and nobody wants to make waves and . . .

Belinda offers an explanation for why so many teachers comply suggesting that teachers do not “*make waves*” because, as she puts it, “*resistance is futile*².” Laughing, she adds “*it really is.*” For Belinda, the reason most teachers do not make waves is because the more noise they make, the more doors that are closed for them. Belinda, on the other hand, has no difficulty making noise, noting that she cannot help herself and although Belinda has experienced the consequences of making noise, she continues to do so.

[laughs] Why do I make noise? Because I can't help myself [laughs]. Because it is who I am. I mean it is like you said, I can't, I can't just quietly follow along. Unless it is something I agree with. I am happy to follow along when a initiative comes along that I think is great. [But] it has to have something in it that would make it better for the students. If they would do something to grade nine French and you know what, it desperately needs something, that would help make it better for those students that have failed French every year since grade four, now if they were to come up with a conversational French course where these kids could start with bonjour, get their one French credit, feel happy about getting it because they have learned something and move and then be done with it, I'd be all for that, I'd implement it tomorrow. Changing stuff that creates more work for teachers without having any direct impact on the classroom, is, you are spinning your wheels, at least in my opinion. My time is valuable, I am not going to waste my time doing stuff that makes no difference to the students which for me, is the bottom line.

² Belinda's reference to the “resistance is futile” discourse is an intentional allusion to the Borg, a race of “cyborgs”—entities that have organic and mechanical (synthetic) parts and who strive to maximize and enhance their abilities through the use of technology—in the popular culture series *Star Trek*. The phrase is an extrapolation of the Borg's “classic hail”: “*We are the Borg. Lower your shields and power down your weapons. We will add your biological and technological distinctiveness to our own. Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated.*” (Wikipedia, 2005). In my view, it is significant that Belinda introduces this discourse; arguably, Belinda is the one participant who most strongly asserts her individuality going so far as to reject a teacher identity outright. She says, “*I am a lot of things but teaching is not at the root of who I am.*”

Belinda characterizes herself as a teenage rebel reporting that she resists when she feels forced to implement something that does not make sense to her. Although she states her belief that resistance is futile, she continues to engage in resistance if it is her sense that the changes do not benefit her students. In doing so, however, Belinda acknowledges that her noncompliance will have consequences. Belinda is at ease with such consequences because she explains, her identity is validated by her students, not by the other aspects of teaching. She says:

No. No, I mean I am, I, you know, if my students came to my class and hated my class and heard every day about how 'this sucks miss.' [laughs] That would affect me. That would bug me. I would have to look at ways so that it didn't suck any. But as long as the classes are running well, and I am helping the kids I need to help in guidance and you know, helping the kids in Co-op Ed that I need to help, I am good with that. I, I am not really all that much into the rest of it.

In contrast to Belinda, Aerlyn sometimes and Diane frequently adopt avoidance strategies so that they do not have to address such challenges. Diane also responds to challenges by shutting them out but she acknowledges that this is difficult sometimes because she is a social person by her nature, a quality in teachers that Tom identifies with when he expresses his view that “*teachers are people people.*”

Challenges within self

In addition to the challenges prompted by education reform, some of the study's participants have also noted that teaching itself presents personal challenges. Michael, for instance, comments that he wants to do a good job as a teacher but he finds that the timing and organizational aspects of teaching challenge and hinder this ability and desire to teach well. As a newer teacher, Michael has not experienced “*a lot of repeat classes*” and therefore he says it is his feeling that he seems like he is starting every semester from

scratch again. He says even though people will *“lend you stuff and give you binders and resources and things, you still have to put it all together.”* He adds, *“you can’t just take a handout and just give it to your class, you’ve got to make a plan of what you are trying to do”* and consequently, for Michael, another challenge of teaching has much to do with timing. In his case, he notes, the challenging organizational and timing aspects of teaching were exacerbated by the simultaneous introduction of a new curriculum, a new method of evaluation and other *“stuff coming in and being thrown at you from on high, very quickly and with very little support mechanisms in place to make sense of it.”*

From Natasha’s perspective, it is important for her to strive to retain her *“youthful idealism”* by keeping the relationship with her students a priority. While such organizational and idealistic aspects of teaching pose challenges for some teachers, for others it is teacher isolation and the way in which this aspect of teaching constructs and perpetuates feelings of guilt among them. For some teachers in this study, it is this challenge that is the most difficult personally.

Resisting discourses of guilt and teacher as saviour/altruist.

In Diane’s view, many teachers, herself included, do not respond to challenges or fight back because of the guilt complex that is inherently embedded in the nature of teaching. For her, teachers respond as they do because they have a deeply-held view that the public feels that they should be docile, complicit and not rock the boat *“because of the children.”* Although Diane herself, engages in avoidance behaviours publicly, she is very clear about her rejection of discourses that position teachers as altruists, martyrs, or saviours. Referring to it as the *“teacher as saviour”* discourse, Diane contends that it insinuates that “good” teachers give their lives to the children, to the education system

and that to do so is a good and noble thing—that the teacher will lead a spiritually fulfilling life if he or she does so. Diane rejects the discourse of the teacher as a student's last hope for spiritual salvation and is adamant that such a view is detrimental to teaching—period. This discourse, Diane says, has always been one that she has rejected:

No, I never even liked, I have always hated that line “if you have reached just one child isn't that enough?” and I think, “no those are terrible odds. I have taught hundreds, if I have reached one, I have very bad odds don't I, if I am only reaching one?”

Recalling that she has sometimes observed students say “*oh I thought you were my friend?*” Diane maintains that teachers can get too emotionally connected to students and this can significantly hinder their learning. She says,

when you start to see yourself as the saviour of the children, it's too much on anyone's shoulder and I don't think you will be a good teacher, if anything you'll try to be a pal and it's like a parent who tries to be a pal, it's not what I wanted to get into.

According to Diane, self esteem should be raised through “*truly learning and not by coddling*” and she rejects the idea that many people have about teachers who see them “*as that last hope for spiritual salvation and emotional help and crediting us with backgrounds of degrees of ed, you know, of psychology that no one has.*”

The strong sense that Diane has of what should and should not constitute teachers' work developed through her own teaching experiences. She reveals that early in her career she “*ran into some very scary situations with kids, where it was dangerous for [her] and she realized ‘who was [she] to pretend that [she] knew what [she] was doing getting emotionally involved with this troubled person.’*” Later in her career, Diane noticed the potential for damage from teaching when she went on strike for the first time. It was during this time that she realized how she “*had absolutely no life, none, whatsoever.*”

Prior to the strike, Diane says, she “*never had a chance to do anything at all for [herself] in terms of something as simple as working out, taking a course, or having a hobby.*” Diane recalls that during the first summer she did not teach summer school, she didn’t know what to do with herself—she decorated the house, “*read books by the dozen*” and did not sit still because she didn’t know how to allow herself down time. She says that, at the time, “*it was neurotic and unreal*” and made her realize she had not slowed down since she left high school; she had always gone to school in the summer, even at university.

When she went on strike, Diane says that it forced many teachers to suddenly have time on their hands and, she adds while laughing, “*to realize that you can’t be that Mr. Holland’s Opus and look at your life 20 years from now and say I have done nothing to develop myself.*” For Diane, that does not make for a good teacher and so after “*all that strike and that*” she is “*not throwing [herself] into extra-curricular like [she] used to*” nor is she “*allowing [herself] to be guilted as much,*” noting that “*there’s always that guilt complex that we know teachers have.*”

For Diane, a significant turning point occurred when a student who wanted a coach for cheerleading after the former coach relocated to another country, put out a note to all of the teachers at Metro East Secondary School that said “*I know some of you have spare time. I know some of you have spare time in your life and that there are hours that you can’t account for.*” Diane says she took offence to the student and her note because both appeared so “*sweet and innocent*” in thinking that teachers did not have this right to say “*you are right, I actually have time off from a job at the end of the day and I go home and what I do is purely selfish.*” Another reason Diane found her request so offensive

was *“that feeling of anger from the student”* that she had expressed during the strike to teachers that they did not have the right to speak to students about the disputes between teachers and the government. As Diane says, the request to teachers from the student for a coach made her *“more determined to take a step back.”*

Denise, too, identifies the “teacher as saviour” discourse, which she refers to as *“this mythology of the teacher.”* Although uncertain of its origins, she speculates that the idea of teaching as having a special calling has something to do with the priestly order of the Jesuits. Despite this uncertainty, Denise suggests that this view poses a considerable dilemma for teachers. She describes the dilemma that is constructed through the mythology of the teacher:

Yeah and on the one hand they want to nail us down to the number of hours in a classroom and on the other hand they want us to be these self-sacrificing after school, you know, you don't have a family, you are just, you may as well be a nun. I mean does it go back to like the religious, parochial system where nuns and priests and the brothers had all the time in the world and it's you know, and go back to I guess. . . most schools were religious I guess since the renaissance onwards right? I mean even back in Greek, you look at the, you know, Sophocles and Plato and the drinking of the hemlock and the students surround them you know. Like there is a lot of imagery and

Natasha, too, has realized that this view of teaching is unrealistic and that she is not going to *“save every student”* nor that she will be able to *“push every student to excel.”* She explains:

I mean these are things you've probably, we've all heard a million times. That's not going to happen. It's just not. You do the best that you can with every kid you can but you're not going to, you're not going to, you know. Some of these kids will never pick up a novel again, ever, after they leave high school and I don't think that it is realistic for me to think that they will.

Natasha's realization that she would not be able to *“save every student”* occurred during her last couple of semesters of teaching where, she says,

you meet these kids who are bright and intelligent but they are just, they're not the same person that I am and I am not going to make them the same person that I am and they do what they have to do. They jump through the hoops, I guess, to get this credit and away they go.

Challenges prompted by colleagues

Another area that some teachers perceive mounts significant personal challenges to their identities is located in the ways teachers relate to each other. These collegial challenges can be far more significant than those presented by the public, families, or teaching itself for some teachers. From Coleen's perspective, teacher colleagues provide the most consistent challenge to her identity and legitimacy as a person, *"let alone a teacher."* Beginning with her arrival in Canada from Guyana and enrolling in a teacher education program where she felt positioned as an immigrant and her identity questioned by her associate teacher to being hired as the only Black teacher at Metro East Secondary School, Coleen reveals that her identity is constantly being limited by her race. Although there have been a few colleagues and administrators who have been the exception, she points out that her identity has been challenged by many teacher colleagues in a variety of ways usually beginning with questions they pose about her teacher qualifications. She recalls her first day in her new position at Metro East:

from the moment I went to the school, the second day as a matter of fact, the school was short of teachers. I remember going into the school and being sent "run up here and keep this class and go over and keep this class and other stuff like that." And then there was a family studies teacher . . . who was teaching an English class and later on, the head of [the English] department . . . at the time, said to me eventually I am going to take over that grade nine English class from that Family Studies teacher because they had different people teaching all kinds of stuff because they were really short of staff when I went there. And [the family studies teacher] said to me on my second day, "do you know you got the job that my friend was supposed to get?" [laughs] So. . . And I said "Really?" and but I let it go because it, you know, the building was big, it

was new. I couldn't even find my way around so I couldn't be bothered with that. Later on I might have told her something else but I couldn't be bothered with that at the time.

When colleagues do not receive the answers to the questions that they assumed they would receive, Coleen reports that they then proceed to make the assumption that she and other teachers like her—Aaron, for instance—were hired because of the province's employment equity policy.

But I worked my way into it and then I found out that she [the family studies teacher] was not the only one saying that at school. Gradually when we started talking to, to other teachers, the first thing that most teachers would ask is well they didn't quite ask it, it was almost a suggestion as though we were there because of employment equity because I think at the time employment equity was a big thing in Canada in '92 when I got that job there. So they sort of used to insinuate that I got the job because of employment equity, I wasn't qualified, because I was Black, and that bothered me a lot. And then they would start probing and say things like "so how did you get your job?" I would say, "well, just like you did" and "Really?" and then they would say "You guys have university where you come from?" And I would say "Yes." And then it would be, "and did Canada accept that?" and I would say "yes." And I felt the need to also say "But I also went to university here" because I completed my BA here. I extended my BA to a four year BA here. Then when they would hear that, they would be really shocked that I, I, "and which university did you go to?" and they would say "so you went to York?" and they wouldn't ask me, they would assume that I went to York. But at the time I didn't know anything between York and U of T. I just knew that when I landed, I had no sense of direction and I asked the people that I was staying with to direct me to the nearest university up the road. So I didn't have to travel too much. You see. And then they would say, "you got into U of T?" That was the normal. [Amazed voice] "You got into U of T?" And I would say, "yes, I did." And they would be quite shocked that I got in to U of T but the tone changed when, when they automatically realized that I was as qualified as they were, they sort of moved on to something else.

If all else fails, Coleen adds, her colleagues challenge her accent. She says:

They attacked my accent. [Pause. Silence]. Oh okay, you are good enough; you are qualified, now I have to find something to belittle you. And then, they would, every time I talk, they would say "what did you say? what did you say?" as though they couldn't understand what I said. And

but it would always be some assertion to my accent and that is how I found myself feeling for years.

Because of these challenges and assumptions, including a frequently made one that she has come from Jamaica, Coleen says that she has become objectified and positioned as an outsider—she has become a Black Jamaican with an accent. Consequently, as she has noted earlier, there is no wholeness to teaching for her. Her teacher identity is removed from her and teaching becomes a job that she does. In contrast to Aerlyn and others who lament that the public and government view them as “*just a teacher*,” Coleen states that she would heartily embrace the notion of “*just a teacher*” but the discourses about race make that difficult—she cannot be “*just a teacher*.”

Despite the incessant questions about her legitimacy as a teacher, Coleen sometimes confronts such challenges directly. For example, she recounts that although she “*breezed through everything quite easily with straight A’s and made the dean’s honour role*” while studying in her teacher education program, she found that as soon as she entered the school setting it was different. She recalls that it was during one of her three practica when her legitimacy as a teacher was first called into question:

As a matter of fact one of my three practicums [sic] was when I met with the first, what I will call sort of question to my confidence. I was told by the teacher in question whose class I was teaching that she would prefer if I would imitate her when I taught the kids because the kids were accustomed to her voice and she wanted me to really try to go home and try to speak like her and I remember being so angry but with enough presence of mind to say to her that when these kids got older and they entered university, many of their professors are going to be speaking like me and it’s time they learned to hear different voices, that speaking was a matter of noise and if you listen well, you will hear. And I also said to her, I felt that she was, she was telling me that I was a monkey, that I should ape her. And I refused to do that. I let her know that I refused to do that and I took offence to it. As a matter of fact I remember telling her that I was going to take it up with the Human Rights Commission, that she was

telling me to ape her. And I also said to her that I came to Canada and that I will integrate, not assimilate. And I let her know that assimilation has made slaves of my people for decades and the next morning she came and apologized to me.

These examples suggest that Coleen sometimes chooses to confront directly the challenges to her identity as a teacher; at other times, however, she opts not to confront particular challenges for reasons that she, herself, determines.

To summarize then, this discussion has revealed that while some teachers such as Darlene and Belinda express difficulty in conveying their understanding of what it means for them to be a teacher, others have less difficulty. In Darlene's case, it was very important to her for me to understand that her identity as a teacher was highly contingent on things such as her years of teaching experience, the grade levels she was assigned to teach, the semester she was being interviewed and the specific subjects she had been assigned. Belinda's interview revealed that some teachers reject outright the suggestion that an identity can be defined through one's occupation. On the other hand, other teachers such as Barbara and Denise fully embrace "teacher" as an identity even to the exclusion of their identity as mother.

While many teachers' "in-the-classroom" identities can be relatively stable, the participant data also suggest that some teachers' identities are significantly destabilized by the public, their families and by the nature of teaching itself through such things as educational reform initiatives, personal struggles with teaching practice and the relationships among colleagues. For example, both Michael and Natasha, as new teachers, and Belinda as a veteran teacher note that they are confronted by many expectations that they see as hindering their ability to teach as well as they would like. From new curriculum expectations and assessment and evaluation methods to

administrative edicts, these teachers struggle to retain some stability to their work. Arguably however, their struggle is minimal in comparison to the struggle that others such as Coleen and Aaron have in assuming and retaining a stable teacher identity. As their interview data reveal, their ethnicity figures prominently in their identities as teachers and they feel that others' perceptions of them as teachers are significantly diminished by both subtle and overt racial bias that they feel is directed toward them by their teacher colleagues.

The interview data in this study not only reveal that teachers recognize the discourses about teachers that circulate among the public and themselves, the data also reveal that many teachers understand how these discourses get constructed. For example, Belinda is very clear that teaching is a profession of lambs and sheep and she articulates how that has come to be the case. While not referring to it as discourse construction, Belinda is able to explain the discursive formation of teacher identity. Similarly, Diane is able to convey exactly how the altruism discourses of teaching are constructed and sustained by both the education system and teachers themselves. Both participants note, however, that although they clearly understand how these subject positions are created for them to occupy, they reject or consciously choose to disidentify with these positions. For other teachers who may not be able to explain the construction of these discourses, the responses given may include avoidance and/or intentional subversion tactics so that they do not have to be positioned by these discourses in ways that challenge their identities as the teachers they understand themselves to be.

Finally, the interview data in this section reveal that when a teacher begins to speak about his or her identity, discourses about professionalism automatically begin to

emerge. Most frequently, this occurs when the participants refer to their teaching practice. Darlene, for example, is very clear that her identity as a professional is highly contingent on the subject matter she has been assigned to teach. The next section of this chapter explores how the participants in this study understand and respond to the discourses of teacher as professional and teacher professionalism.

Conflating Being a Professional with Being Professional

The interview data reveal that participants frequently conflate discourses about teachers as professionals with discourses of teacher professionalism. For several of the participants, what it means to be a professional in teaching needs to be distinguished from the professionalism that teachers exhibit or assume for themselves in the work that they do in their classrooms. Like Helsby (1995) has noted, the participants in this study refer to *being professional*—the quality of what they do and the conduct, demeanour and standards which guide their work, and they refer to *being a professional*—how they feel they are seen through other people's eyes with respect to status, standing, regard and level of professional reward accorded them. Although the data in this study seem to confirm that being a professional is clearly separate from being professional, the data also seem to suggest that this distinction is often difficult to sustain.

With regard to the latter concept, being a professional, several of the participants conveyed their belief that teaching is no different than any other occupation and that while, at one time, teaching may have been viewed as an occupation with esoteric knowledge, this view has been challenged and changed significantly over the years by many members of the public.

In preparation for the interview Natasha recalls discussing with her colleagues multiple notions of what professional means. For some, professional meant the amount of money one made for one's job and another view that others held where professional was understood to be the "*cachet of things*" that go along with doing something that is meaningful for a teacher and that is done in the best interests of the student. For her part, Natasha asserts that there is nothing particularly teacherly about being a professional. In her view, professional means getting a certain job done within a certain set of parameters and that given this understanding, a professional teacher is no different than a professional retail person. Both, she observes, involve obtaining the appropriate training that will enable one to work within the parameters established for the job. Professional means delivering what one can of the obligations one signed on for when accepting the position for which one applied.

For Tom, professional means "*not everyone can teach*" and like many other participants, professional in teaching means putting 110 percent into the classroom but not necessarily into other things like binders and lesson plans. Professional, according to Tom, does not mean Ministry of Education directives; rather, it means rapport and relational issues in the classroom. Aaron says that teachers must "*flip flop*" between being considered professionals and not being considered professionals. On the one hand, he observes, he and many teachers consider themselves to be professionals, yet "*the tools*" of the profession are changed by parents and governments with teachers not even being involved in the discussion.

Michael's conception of professional(ism) is that it is on a continuum whereby some aspects are fixed while others are static. For Michael, the more fixed components

include the organizational aspects of teaching—a professional in his view is one who is able to manage and organize efficiently.

Tina reveals that she has never really considered the word “profession” as it is applied to teachers and teaching as something she should attend to. In her view, profession is “*not some auspicious label;*” rather, it as something quite common. On the other hand, Tina views professionalism as something that is intuitive—an internal standard.

For some teachers, such as Tom, the designation of professional to teaching is justifiable because he proposes there is some specialized knowledge or ability to teaching. As he puts it, “*not everyone can teach.*” In contrast, however, teachers, such as Pauline, reject the notion of professional that assumes a teacher has esoteric knowledge. Like Tina and Natasha, Pauline contends that teaching has become much like any other common occupation. In her view, society once knew professional as a certain educational class that had a certain esoteric knowledge base that meant an individual was a professional, for example, a lawyer or a doctor. From Pauline’s perspective, nurses were “*always kind of on the borderline*” but engineers, like the others, were professionals. Society has shifted, Pauline believes, so that the definition of professional has become somewhat archaic and that today, it is possible for someone to be a professional waitress.

For Pauline, professionalism is more defined by one’s own attitude and pride and ownership in one’s work situation as opposed to “*something flimsy or like the amount of money [one] earn[s] or the amount of paperwork that [one has], or the initials that [one has] after [one’s] name.*” Pauline does not think that society is rejecting that as a concept; she says that “*certainly we have lost the concept of white and blue collar*” and

that today, “*if one looks, very few teachers wear a collar and tie,*” so for her, “[*the concept*] *is beyond that.*” Instead, she comments, “*there has been an intermingling or a leveling in, at least in Canadian society*” so that now one finds that “*when working with kids whose families have immigrated, they often have a much greater respect, they and their family, for the notion of teacher*” which Pauline speculates, “*is because in their cultures that class still has a knowledge base that is special and unique that sets them aside*” but, she adds, “*in our society that is gone. . . or going.*”

Pauline believes that this change in the conception of what professional means is a social change first, that is responded and reacted to by the government and teacher federations secondly. Pauline contends that, among the teachers’ federations, there is not a unanimous view on this changing conception. She recalls how, for example, that when teachers were under the *Teaching Profession Act*, Earl Manners, a past provincial president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation would often say

oh it would be so much better if we were under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. The negotiation timeframes are stricter, the rules are different, you can get to a strike position more quickly. You don’t hang out there for months and months and months of a contract if you are in a true labour relations format.

Pauline recalls, Manners “*liked the notion of going into that world*” and, Pauline reminds, “*OSSTF has entered the world of having, as members, people who are non teachers, some of whom are, in the old language, professionals—psychologists, psychometrists, and that sort.*” She further notes that OSSTF also has people who “*weren’t in the old world of professionals such as secretaries and bus drivers.*” In Pauline’s view, “*it’s just a levelling of the social classes, so to speak or a compacting,*” noting as well that she is not sure what it is which had preceded the government or federation’s decisions which led to these decisions. She says,

I don't think government, still today, would attack the salary and working conditions of doctors or the clergy, for example, the same way they would attack them with teachers because we haven't quite levelled that as much yet but I think that they are heading in that direction.

Pauline thinks that medicine is one profession where the government has begun looking at physicians differently than they one once did in terms of salaries, *"just for example."* She contends that the fact the government publishes what various physicians or classes of physicians earn is the sort of thing that wouldn't have been talked about twenty years ago. The predominant view then, was just *"oh thank God there is a doctor available and they are wonder workers aren't they?"* but now, Pauline suggests, physicians are being thought of more in terms of dollars and cents, the notion that *"yeah, they are doctors. Right."* For example, Pauline says, a doctor will say to you, *"well there is no point in my being open on Wednesday because I am working for free anyway because I have already hit my salary cap"* and so, she believes, *"we are in a different way of looking at it."*

Although acknowledging that it is *"so complicated because there are so many factors that occur simultaneously,"* Pauline suggests these changing conceptions do influence teachers' work in classrooms. For example, she says, in her district school board, teachers have been affected by their own strike, and in some peoples' cases, she says, *"work to rules have affected us."* In addition, Pauline believes that the new curriculum *"has had a big effect."* As an English teacher, she posits that the new curriculum has removed a lot of the latitude and flexibility which she thinks English teachers used to feel. She says that, with regard to professionalism, when she became an English teacher, she was given a course of study that was one page long and the course textbooks, none of which had study guides or prepared materials. Teachers were handed a

copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird* or *Julius Caesar*, for example, and it was assumed that the teacher would use his or her academic and university training to teach that novel or play in an effective way that was appropriate for the kids. Now, Pauline says, because of the new curriculum

that has been standardized to the point where every teacher who teaches the course has exactly the same assignments with exactly the same due date and therefore, it is in a binder with day by day lesson plans and a monkey can teach it because they are hiring people who are not subject specialists.

The assumption is that “*teachers do not have the academic background to take the copy of whatever textbook it is and just invent the learning materials and after all, why should we have to reinvent them every time?*” “*In the old days,*” Pauline says, teachers did keep reinventing their lessons and materials and consequently “*it wasn’t consistent from teacher to teacher and year to year and there were all kinds of things that weren’t necessarily ideal.*” Emphasizing that she is not “*idealizing that world,*” Pauline contends

the fact that it is all in a binder and that you get exactly the same material handed to you on Tuesday whether it is Mr. _____ or whether it’s Ms. _____,” has changed her notion of professionalism, “for lack of a better term” she adds, “because you are simply delivering curriculum. You are not inventing and creating. Of course there are still individuals doing certain things in their classrooms and that is wonderful but that is occurring to a lesser degree.

Pauline’s perception is that

the teachers who have been more recently hired, within the last five years just to be arbitrary, are more welcoming of that world and comfortable in that world to the point where they expect the binder of day to day lesson plans whereas [she] expected a one page course of study [laughter] and never expected anything else.

Although Pauline has observed that this phenomenon seems to be an increasing trend among teachers new to the profession, she is careful to point out that she is not

saying “*it is a bad thing.*” However, she does argue that this trend does make one less personally responsible and it makes one’s knowledge of the subject area less important and therefore, Pauline thinks “*it makes those old definitions of professionalism less applicable.*”

Although Pauline doesn’t think it is consistent, she does feel that there is a movement in the direction of creating a new kind of teacher. Noting that with the new curriculum changes that the province is currently undertaking, there are, among those who are inventing that curriculum, some of those same new teachers who are comfortable with a more standardized curriculum, Pauline suggests that

once the new curriculum is all in place, it may stay in place for who knows, a year or two and we may get more comfortable with that and so we all have the same expectations [so] that if you are assigned a new course for next year you walk in the first of September and you don’t come in in the summer and get the books and go home and read them, you [can just] walk in at the first of September, take the binder off the shelf and start photocopying day one.

The understanding that many of the participants in this study have of what it means to be professional in teaching, their *professionalism*, is seen very much as an internal quality that finds its expression in teachers’ practice in their decision-making about instruction, their response to expectations from ministry directives and from school administrators and in the relationships they have with their students and colleagues, among others. The analysis reveals that it is here where the boundaries between the discourse of being a professional (professionalization) and the discourse of being professional (professionalism) become blurred and conflated.

Aerlyn believes that being a professional in teaching involves negotiation whereby teachers give something and they get something. However, in her view, teachers have not been treated as professionals because they have not been “*dealt with*” and

“spoken to” in ways that would suggest that they were professional. Aerlyn wonders whether a teacher can be a professional given the parcelized and politicized nature of teaching. She reports her belief that there is no incentive to be professional; although she has difficulty explaining it, she attributes the main responsibility for this directly to the teachers’ union:

We are not being treated as professional. The whole, the whole profession has been, what is the word I am looking for? It’s been parcelized, I guess, or it’s been put with the whole, union thinking. I mean part of it is, I don’t even know how to explain this. The politics of teaching has kind of forced it into a, a non-professional thing, I think. And if you would hear how my friends talk about [emphatically] “the union,” especially Paul, who I just had dinner with. We’re not, people don’t really want us to be professional because, for me, a professional, certain things would be expected of us, we would be dealt with, spoken to, in a certain manner which we are not and that’s ah, there’s no, it doesn’t fit, to me, as a professional.

From her perspective and her observations, and although Aerlyn believes that she is a professional, she remains skeptical of the possibility that teachers can be professional:

Hmmm. I think that is a good question. Can you be? I mean, I think you can be professional as much as you, as you want, I guess you can try to be, but you know, I think you can be as professional, you can be professional and I think I am and I try to be in my own practice, you know, and it is kind of what I do with my students, what I, how I deal with colleagues, for the most part (laughs) but in terms of connecting to the larger education system, it is not really set up for me to be professional that way. In fact, nobody really cares that I am a professional or not. Really, nobody cares. I mean really, I have seen tons of people being hugely unprofessional and nobody cares! So obviously, it doesn’t make a difference whether I am professional or not. I am doing it for my own, for me, Aerlyn, because I think that is important to me, but does anyone else really care? I don’t know. Maybe in, maybe in different school environments it is more important than in others, but I would say [sarcastically] no, it is not that important. [laughs]

For other participants, whether or not they express it explicitly, the meaning of professional is much more fixed and definitive. Coleen, for example, suggests that she

very much feels like a professional in that she “*knows her stuff*” and “*gives 100%*.” Furthermore, Coleen maintains that professional means the way one carries one’s self. Similarly, Maureen claims that professionalism refers to “*being respectable in the community.*”

Although Michael does not feel like a veteran teacher, he reports that he is frequently positioned as one by his colleagues because of his later arrival to teaching. With regard to conceptions of what it means to be professional, Michael finds this positioning ironic because, in his view, a lot of the younger new teachers seem to be “*much more professional than [he] feels,*” adding that, “*at least they convey that.*” For Michael, professional(ism) involves “*conveying that sense of efficacy*” and he remains uncertain that he is capable of doing that. He says of himself:

I’m one of these people who tends to pretty much, what you see is what you get. Like I am not good at hiding things so I tend to sort of, if I’m having a lousy time, it’s pretty evident. If I am feeling frazzled or stressed out a little bit . . . [pauses] so I am not good at sort of maintaining a façade of, of complete professionalism

Elaborating on what he means by professionalism, Michael admits that perhaps he has to rethink his understanding and sense of the concept. Initially embracing the notion of professional as a relatively fluid concept, Michael states that its connotations have become more fixed. Explaining how his notion of professional has been evolving, Michael recounts how when he was a graduate student at university, he conveyed to another student his difficulty in relating to the professional persona he had been observing among other graduate students. Upon hearing of Michael’s difficulty, the student suggested that there was more than one way “*to do graduate school*” and that although what Michael had been observing with all of the “*automatons and ties and briefcases*” seemed to be the fashion, there were “*lots of other ways of doing the job.*”

Because of these comments, Michael has become aware that there are multiple versions of what professional means and so his own conception had been revised so that he now sees that it is on more of a continuum. There remain, however, some aspects that seem more fixed. He says that because he has not been able to get a good grasp on some of the organizational aspects of teaching, he does not feel confident and therefore less professional than some of his colleagues who seem to find these things much easier than he does. He describes a colleague who, for him, is the consummate professional:

Well I mean the perfect example of that is Ginny Corian, she sits right beside Darlene. Delightful person, I think very highly of her. Amazing, but she is a classic example of the package, a person who just walks in and phewt, walks in and she is just the model of efficiency and professionalism. Always dresses to the nines, always perfectly, everything perfectly in place, never seems frazzled. Perfectly, amazingly organized, she was, [laughs] the first day of exams last semester, she was already giving out handouts for her next classes next semester. She works all. . . [inaudible] [laughs] what kind of a freak [inaudible] are you? And she's like hyperorganized. She's got everything done, you know, and I'm, I'm in awe of that on some level, like I just can't, but I also know that I am not the only one who is in awe of her. A lot of people are. So there's sort of a continuum here. She's over here, a hyperorganized and then there's people in between. . . .

Because Michael declares there is a continuum of professional, he discloses that he does not feel completely or fully confident in the job. He explains:

I don't feel I guess on some level I don't feel I fully deserve [inaudible] of the job, like I am still working to earn it. To get there. And I am always scrambling a lot of the times, scrambling to get marks in, scrambling to get things back, and scrambling to sat on top of things. . . .

As a new teacher, Michael's sense of vulnerability in the organizational aspects of his teaching should be supported; furthermore, he should be offered encouragement to continue to grow in this area. Instead, as will be revealed in a later chapter, Michael divulges his feeling that his weaknesses have been unfairly highlighted in his first teaching performance appraisal that he characterizes as a terrifying experience where he

understood himself to be positioned by his principal (and the education system) as “*a loose end.*”

In contrast to many others, Belinda does not consider herself to be professional. As implied previously, in Belinda’s view, being a professional in teaching means being compliant—being a lamb and/or being a sheep. For Belinda, a professional is one who demonstrates leadership and confidence in doing and articulating what one is doing. Unfortunately, Belinda observes, this is not valued in teaching. Citing the example of professional development opportunities for teachers such as co-operative learning whereby teachers are expected to adopt teaching strategies because their employer has been promoting them, Belinda suggests that teachers are denied professional status because they are denied the opportunity to demonstrate leadership or state with confidence their own assessment of such teaching strategies. She explains:

Well you know, there are the, the opinions. I mean you know the stuff that’s out there. There are opinions about PD. You know like when the whole cooperative learning thing came out. Cooperative learning is wonderful. Everybody should do it all the time. It is the best thing ever made. Well then the pendulum swung the other way and you know, now it is something else but at that time, you couldn’t say “you know what, cooperative learning is okay and it works sometimes.” That wasn’t an acceptable opinion. “Cooperative learning is great” was the acceptable opinion. And when you hold a different opinion then you are not professional, you are not, you know, you are you are rocking the boat.

When you rock the boat, Belinda says, you are not as highly regarded and you are viewed as being less professional. She says:

Yeah, I think that would be the image. Yeah, for sure. I mean you see it, you see those teachers who are willing to go along with all of the initiatives and willing to say yes. They are promoted, they are put in positions. They are given opportunities even if it is something as you know a certain course that they would like to teach. . . . If you are a teacher that rocks the boat in someone else’s opinion, it doesn’t matter how good of a teacher you are. . . you won’t be as highly regarded.

Belinda discloses that not being as highly regarded does influence her teacher identity but she says that she knows she will have *“trouble towing the line”* her entire career. She says that she fully expects to be *“60 and still be in the classroom because she will never have it in [her] to follow blindly along”* and *“until the school system decides that they actually want leaders instead of followers to promote, [Belinda] will always be a teacher.”* On the other hand, Belinda adds,

I am good at teaching and I get good feedback from my students, I get good feedback from the parents, and my day to day life is, is good. I mean I enjoy coming to work. I have fun in my classes. I have fun in the other stuff that I do and that for me, is okay as far as a job goes. I mean there are worse things than going to work every day to a job that you like. And the other stuff, I just let it kind of fall by the wayside.

Belinda thinks that *“maybe professionalism is what you believe it is.”* Using her own children’s teachers as examples, she says she would rather have a teacher

who is in the classroom, involved with the kids, [and] is warm, is caring, [and] is willing to offer them the extra help they need, [and who] knows who they are [as opposed to] some [other] teacher that’s trying out the latest techniques every three days and doesn’t care so much about the students as they do about their own career development [because] the technique may work one day, it may work with one class, it may work with some kids but. . . .

Belinda wonders sometimes if this sort of teacher, who seems to be more interested in his or her own career advancement was ever happy in the classroom. She wonders *“if they feel connected in the classroom or if they feel like they are doing a good job in the classroom.”* In Belinda’s case, she says that she *“gets all of the feedback [she] needs from the students [she] works with”* and adds, *“if the powers that be happen to like what [she is] doing, that’s great. And if they don’t, that’s okay too.”*

In contrast to Belinda’s view that resistance is futile, Pauline argues that it is *“part of the teacher’s job as a professional is to question the change and resist the*

change where it seems logical." As an example, she says teachers in Ontario resisted destreaming and perhaps, she says, they were right because as she expresses it, "*Lord knows the pendulum has swung back.*" Currently, Pauline says that teachers seem somewhat resistant to standardized testing and the literacy test, for example, and the requirement that the literacy test be passed in order for a student to graduate now. She has observed that "*well guess what, the government has decided that that's not very necessary to graduate either.*" So for Pauline, rather than saying "*resistance is futile, resistance is futile,*" it is important to question and resist. Pauline concedes that she does see change as a pendulum and, therefore, she opines,

those who are leading, often go too far to the extremes because then they have the furthest to go to come back to the middle again once the rules have changed and I have often said "you don't want to necessarily be at the front of the parade, what do they call it, the implementation curve. You don't want to necessarily be in the vanguard; it is not always to your advantage because sometimes then you have to unlearn.

To illustrate what she means, Pauline cites the example of the four new evaluation categories of knowledge, thinking, application, and inquiry introduced with the new curriculum. She comments that in English the evaluation has been reversed and so "there is a whole lot of work there and mindsets and paradigm shifts that now have to be undone" and teachers wonder why they bothered in the first place, noting that the people who questioned and resisted were probably right.

Pauline can understand why people feel resistance is futile. She states

it certainly doesn't have immediate reactions in our experience, in our direct experience in the last ten years; however, I think it does have sometimes a long term influence when people get time to rethink it or the administrators or the powers above that are pushing a certain agenda. . . .

Pauline also understands that in education people are sometimes hesitant about questioning or about being oppositional because they are afraid of the possible negative

consequences to themselves and their career. She recalls a comment made to her several years ago that

as long as you don't need any favours from the system then you don't need to cow tow to it and so being, once you have a certain amount of seniority or once you have got a certain amount of subject expertise, then you don't need to be as shy which is where department heads used to be one of our great strengths in this board, and I presume across the province.

In a way similar to Belinda's observations, Diane conveys her belief that the notion or concept "professional" is frequently used by many both within and outside education as a "sort of weapon" in teaching. Within teaching, Diane suggests that teachers are exhorted to be professionals which, in her view, means teachers should never complain, take what they get, make sacrifices and not expect to get anything. As Michael has also noted, Diane claims that professional also refers to those teachers who are "moving up, those who have made a career of moving up [and] getting on the right committees." For others who don't see moving up and getting on the right committees as professional, professional means "being one of the team" with a pressure to socialize outside and, she adds, "if you don't then you are not being one of the team." Professional for this group also means sharing lessons and ideas and again with this view, there is an assumption that if one does not share, then one is not being professional because one is not proud of the work one does. As many of the participants in this study have stated, considerable value is placed on the opportunity to continue to learn as a teacher; for many of these teachers and Diane particularly, professionalism in teaching is understood as being inextricably linked to continuing to learn.

Of the many views expressed by the participants in this study about what it means to be a professional in teaching, perhaps it is Denise who most succinctly summarizes the way in which conceptions of teaching and conceptions of professional merge. For Denise,

the issue of the professionalization of teaching is a dichotomy between two views of teaching. On the one hand, the teacher as a worker view of teaching expects to see and understand things as labour issues; on the other hand, however, teachers and others also want to make teaching seem as if it is a calling from heaven. Denise says this latter view holds that "*teachers will be this martyred self sacrificial group [and] that if you don't you know make that martyrdom you have never had the calling to begin with.*" Denise contends "*you can't have it both ways*" and teachers, she suggests "*have largely bought into a lot of that crap where you will hear teachers say 'well, you know, it was a calling. I was born to teach.' Well it is a job. It is labour.*" For Denise, teaching is a job; it is labour and she maintains that teachers are engaged in a constant battle fighting with themselves and others over their identities as teachers and as professionals. She says

it is a constant battle and it is going to drag us into these labour issues all the time because we are fighting with our own identity and the government's view of how they want to shape teacher professionalism and the board's concept of who teachers are so you have got you know, and then parents' concept; you've got these four groups and this dichotomy going back and forth and so whoever is in power at the time or whatever group, they kind of use whatever image they want at the time that is convenient to use and the unions have done it both ways too. On the one hand it is "poor teachers;" on the other hand, it is "it's a labour issue." They, all of them use that dichotomy to their advantage.

To summarize, the data analysis presented in this section reveals that the internal standards teachers have of and for their own professionalism are often confronted by external challenges. Whether this occurs through curriculum reform by the government or by having to engage in strike or work-to-rule activity as directed by their teachers' unions, the participant data suggest that when teachers' sense of professionalism is challenged, their understanding of what it means to be a professional is also challenged. When this occurs as it frequently does, the internal standard of professionalism and the

more externally ascribed appellation of profession to teachers' work merge and consequently there is a significant influence on a teacher's professional identity. Several of the teachers in this study articulate their understanding of this merging very clearly. As Aerlyn puts it, "*in connecting to the larger education system, it is not really set up for me to be professional [in the way she understands her professionalism].*" For Aaron, this understanding is conveyed when he notes that while he and many of his colleagues view themselves as professionals (because of their professionalism), the "*tools*" of that professionalism—knowledge of curriculum, the ways students learn, etc.—are changed by parents and the government without even inviting teachers into the discussion. Furthermore, as Belinda remarks, once these tools are changed and teachers are directed to incorporate them into their professional practice, there is no room for dissent or disagreement and if criticism is expressed, a teacher will be seen as less professional by administrators. Although this can be the case, Pauline suggests that in contrast, her view of what it means to be professional in teaching necessarily means that teachers question and resist those things that seem logical to resist.

In addition to the governmental and public challenges to teachers' sense of professionalism and therefore their sense of what it means to be a professional in teaching, the participant data reveal that teachers' own organizations—for example, their union—can also play a significant role in challenging teachers' professional identities. Positioned as the mediator between individual teachers and their employers, the government and the general public, teachers' unions are understood by several of the participants in this study to mount a fundamental challenge to the professionalization of teaching and to these teachers' notions of professionalism. For teachers such as Aerlyn

and Tom, teacher unionism and the pursuit of the professionalization of teaching are incompatible. This incompatibility has been emphasized recently by the response of teachers' unions to the significant changes being made to Ontario's education system. Increasingly, teachers' unions have adopted (or have been forced to adopt) the language of labour in their relations with the government and the general public and so, as several teachers have noted, the view is that teachers are just like any other worker with collective bargaining rights. The problem with this view, as they perceive it, is that it stands in sharp contrast to the view of the teacher as a professional whose professionalism is selfless and whose commitment to students and their learning takes precedence over all else including a worker's basic rights. This dichotomous view of teaching positions teachers in highly ambiguous ways. As the remaining chapters in this study will reveal, teachers are forever battling with others and among themselves about what it means to be a professional in teaching.

Summary

This chapter has revealed that, for many teachers, teaching is understood in relational ways: by comparing teaching to other occupations, in reference to relationships with students and student learning, in relation to their own learning and in relation to teaching itself. The chapter has also suggested that, although there are common characteristics or similarities among teachers, there is no single teacher identity that all teachers share. Whether it is in response to government, public, familial or collegial discourses and challenges, each teacher seems to negotiate his or her identity in unique ways. Furthermore, there exists little uniformity among the responses that teachers give

to representations that challenge their identities. For some teachers, challenges are made directly, while for others, responses involve strategies of avoidance and/or subversion. The data also reveal that some of those teachers who employ avoidance strategies understand and frame their responses in relation to other discourses such as the “teacher as guilt-ridden,” “teacher as saviour” or “teacher as altruist” discourses.

The chapter has also revealed that these teachers often conflate the discourses of “teacher as a professional “ and ”teacher professionalism” and that the teacher professionalism discourse in particular seems to emerge automatically when they speak about their identities. The data in the first part of the chapter suggest that there is no essentialized teacher identity. So too do the data in the second part of the chapter suggest that there is no uniform view among teachers about what it means to be [a] professional in teaching. For some teachers, some of the time, the meaning is fixed; at other times, for these same teachers the meaning is fluid. Perhaps it is Belinda who sums it up best when she says “*maybe professionalism is what you believe it is.*”

The discussion in this chapter has provided a beginning glimpse into the ways in which teachers negotiate their identities with the discourses and associated practices that articulate through the larger community of which they are part—the public, the government, their families, and their colleagues—and through the nature of teaching itself. In the remaining chapters of this study, the nature of and ways in which the participants negotiate their professional identities with these and several other influences are explored more closely.

CHAPTER SIX

NEGOTIATING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY WITH THE PUBLIC, THE MEDIA, AND THE GOVERNMENT

Introduction

In this chapter, data are presented that explore the participants' perceptions of public, media, and government representations of teachers and teaching. The data presented in the first part of the chapter suggest that public representations of teachers and teaching are derived from deeply held stereotypes that have their roots in their early experiences of schooling and education. In the remaining sections, the data suggest the participants perceive a relationship between and among these public perceptions, the popular media, and the government. The data suggest further that for many teachers, public, media, and government portrayals of them and their work strongly influence their professional identities. The chapter examines how teachers construct their professional identities as they respond to and navigate their way through these portrayals.

Public Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching

According to the participants in this study, the prevailing discourses about teachers and teaching which circulated among the public during the reign of the Progressive Conservative government in Ontario strongly influenced media and governmental perceptions and portrayals of teachers and their work. The data suggest that that public, media and governmental perceptions emerged or were mobilized through

three distinct yet overlapping discourses: viewing teaching as work, remembering school days and responding to the ways in which home life intersected with school life.

Teaching as work

According to the interview data, many of the participants said that the public's contempt for teachers was derived from widely-held assumptions about teachers' working conditions which position teachers, according to Aerlyn as *"lazy bums who are unable to one-half hour more work than everyone else does."* In her attempt to elaborate the thinking that accompanies this discourse she maintains was pervasive among the general population, Aerlyn states *"You know, we're lazy. We have a nice cushy job and we don't really have anyone to report to, you know, you do your little thing in the classroom, who cares, and at 3:30 you can go home."*

In Aerlyn's view, none of these images are fair; however, she does concede that *"there are numbers of teachers that do that and fit that image perfectly"* but, she adds that *"[she has] to believe that the majority are not like that and that there are teachers, maybe like [her] who really take their job seriously, and want to do something. . ."* Aerlyn also posits that this image of teaching is sustained among *"working class people"* especially because this group of people perceives that because teachers belong to a union they will engage in *"all those union-type behaviours that go with belonging to a union."* According to Aerlyn, the fact that teachers strike and carry picket signs *"plays in to that whole capitalist factory preparation widget thing."*

In addition to the widely held criticism of teachers because they get the summers off, other commonly held views included the perception that Aaron identifies where the

public believes that a teacher's day ends at 3:30. Aaron also notes that there is a commonly held assumption that teachers are overpaid and "*paid even on summer holiday,*" which he claims is a significant misconception. For Aaron, this view is particularly troublesome because it reveals that "*[the public doesn't] even understand how teachers are paid*" because, he says, "*teachers are not actually paid over the summer holidays. They are paid, the money they get over the summer holidays happens to be whatever they have already put out as part of their contract.*" Aaron expresses his belief that if this was communicated to parents and the public, this particular discourse could be dismantled. In his view, "*nobody seems to have been strong enough or active enough to tell them that teachers are not paid during the summer time.*" Furthermore, he states, summer holidays are for students, not for teachers. According to Aaron teachers have a love-hate relationship with the public. In his view, the public thinks that teaching involves just showing up to teach—it does not understand that teaching involves hours of planning and marking.

While Natasha observes that some people think that teachers enjoy being teachers because they "*get to hang out with kids all day and that is fun*" and that this is a perk of the profession, Barbara reports that one of the reasons the public perceives teachers in the way they do stems from her belief that "*teaching is so nebulous.*" To her way of thinking, whereas nurses, for example, have managed to maintain a public image because "*they serve such an immediate public good,*" the results of "*teaching are so nebulous that the effect of a moment in grade five may not be seen until someone is 30.*" To illustrate, Barbara recounts that her husband who was unable to read until grade three, remembered how his grade three teacher taught him phonics and he remembered learning how to read

in grade three. But, Barbara adds *“he doesn’t remember anything else about his school days and only the fact that he was successful at reading in grade three.”* From Barbara’s perspective,

that teacher was just doing her job. And a kid who was a slow reader, so she sat down and did the phonics with him and off he went into grade four and off she went. No clue, I mean so teaching, the results of teaching are so nebulous that it’s hard to pinpoint. . . .

Another discourse that participants suggest strongly contributes to the contempt that many members of the public have for teachers is derived from the perception that the work teachers do is *“just teaching”* and that an individual who pursues and/or engages in such work is *“just a teacher.”* As Aerlyn explains:

And also you get people who say I am “just a teacher” I mean, and you know, I have heard people say that I am just a teacher. I mean “just a teacher”! I think, too, because I have children, I mean, that’s so important and a good teacher is so important. To say you are just a teacher? You could make a difference, a huge difference for a child, you know?

Remembering school days

In addition to the publicly held assumptions about the nature of teaching as work, many of the study’s participants believe the public derives its perception of teachers from individual experiences as a student. As Tina puts it, *“rightly or wrongly, the public perception of teachers comes mostly from their experience with their own teachers, regardless of how old they are.”* She adds, *“there’s an entrenched imprint of a memory there, of what teachers were to them”* so that *“if actually they’ve had good experiences, then that translates.”* Tina admits, however, even though she thought this view would change when parents met their children’s teachers, she still got the impression that the strongest impression the public forms about teachers came from their own experience of

schooling. Aerlyn understands this is an example of classical stereotyping that says because everyone has been to school, everyone feels they are or can be the “*armchair critics*” about the entire education system and based upon the particular experience had with particular teachers there is an entitlement to being able to judge the entire education system. Other participants—Darlene, Barbara and Denise—note that there is a “*mythical bad teacher*” discourse “*out there*” that is objectified by the public who at the same time very subjectively praise their own children’s teachers.

Intersections of home life and school life

In addition to the assumptions expressed about teachers’ work and about their own school experiences, participants observe that there a number of perceptions the public holds about teachers which seem to emerge only at particular times, for example, during periods of labour unrest. Generally speaking, the participant data suggest that many teachers say that most parents think teachers do a good job for the most part; however, it is only when teachers get angry or express that they are human that the public gets angry. According to Aaron, the problems arise when teachers “*blink*” when they get angry. For Aaron, it is only in times of disruption that parents and the public realize how integral teachers are to their lives. In Aaron’s view, because most parents cannot afford the time to do home schooling or the money to do private schooling, it is only during periods of labour instability when the public realizes it cannot do without teachers. Consequently, he surmises, parents sometimes resent how intertwined schooling and teaching are with their own lives.

Denise claims that public perceptions of teachers differ between parents of elementary school children and the parents of secondary school students. Furthermore, Denise suggests that these perceptions also differ depending on where one lives and the extent to which there is or may have been labour unrest in the school district where their children attend. According to Denise, some parents are more politically aware and are more likely to support teachers on a picket line and help out inside the school and show up at board meetings. On the other hand, there are other parents, "*probably the vast majority who are flogging through their days*" and who also see that labour issues aren't just happening in education but across the province. These members of the public see their own benefits dwindle and house prices rise and consequently there emerges a view among the general public that teachers "*have had an awful lot for too long.*" Added to that, Denise suggests when parent frustration with the withdrawal of extra-curricular activities is combined with the cuts to the classroom, the result is that parents place blame on teachers. According to Denise, from parents' perspectives, "*it's not the board, it's not the ministry; and it's not the trustees. It just comes down to what they see Johnny or Sally in the classroom getting.*" Parents blame teachers because they are the first line of contact they (parents) have with the education system.

Another way in which public perception is shaped by the intersection of home life and school life is through the ways in which students express or convey their school experiences. For several participants in the study, students play a pivotal role in the shaping of public perception of teachers. In Aerlyn's view, for example, "*elementary kids, young kids think teachers are the greatest . . . they think teachers are wonderful, they always love them.*" Aerlyn also speculates that, for the most part, high school students

like most of their teachers, particularly those teachers “*who still have the energy*” but students don’t like the ones who “*have burnt out [and who are] not into it any more.*” According to Aerlyn, the image that kids have of teachers is the one that they take into adulthood; it is an image “*of this person who just pops in for seventy-five minutes with a whole bunch of papers and then leaves again, and maybe the one they see coaching if that’s happening but not, they don’t get the all around picture.*”

Denise submits that high school students convey perceptions of teachers when they make their course selections. According to Denise, “*the kids know better than anyone who the ‘real’ teachers are*” and surprisingly, most people don’t know that students have considerable control over teachers and teaching. In Denise’s view this control is displayed in many ways. For example, she says

if a teacher is not a teacher to them they will make sure that they make it hell and then after that they can walk; they can, you know, vote with their feet and go into guidance and change, for the most part whatever they need to or they will have their parents call in or whatever, but the kids know and the, even the general level kids know who the real teachers are; they know when they are liked; they know on a day to day basis who is prepared, who is not; who wants to be there.

As this discussion illustrates, teachers perceive that the public holds many conceptions about them and their work that derive from their own school experiences. Britzman (1991) argues that these highly-stereotyped images “tend to subvert a critical discourse about the lived contradictions of teaching and the actual struggles of teachers” (p. 5). Such representations, she continues,

engender a static and hence repressed notion of identity as something already out there, a stability that can be assumed . . . trapped within these images, teachers come to resemble things or conditions; their identity assumes an essentialist quality and, as such, socially constructed meanings become known as innate and natural.

(p. 5)

The essentialist positions created for teachers through these public representations are understood by several of the participants in this study to be frequently sustained by the popular media. In the next section of this chapter, data are presented that support this claim.

Media Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching

The data in this study suggest that these participants believe the perception of teachers by the public is clearly influenced by the media, in both its ubiquitous day-to-day forms of newspapers and television and in its more popular forms of movies and magazines. Denise, for example, reports her feeling that many of the assumptions about teachers and teaching that are portrayed in the media are derived from the same “ancient archetypes” that are presented by such actors as Sidney Poitier in popular films such as *To Sir with Love* (1967). Denise contends that when teachers reveal that they, too are human and make calls for work-related issues, doing so contradicts the romanticized and idealized image that the public and media generally have and, consequently, teachers become tarnished and seen as *“unworthy or dirty or something. . . depending upon the paper or the who is presenting.”*

From the perspectives of these participants, many of the discourses such as the mythical bad teacher and discourses associated with teachers’ working conditions seem to be drawn upon by the media as well. Of the observations made by the participants, some of the most astute readings of the influence of the media on public opinion are those of Diane who says that she can understand why the public has the perception it does of

teachers given the ways in which the media portrays teachers. According to Diane, *"unfortunately, the media has really wanted to feed the hostility and anger because that sells papers"* and although *"there have been a couple of reporters that have tried to be reflective and show both sides, not necessarily by showing their personal feelings,"* Diane says, *"for the most part [she has] read nothing but condemning articles that have no truth to the facts they are reporting."* As an example, Diane cites the common media reference to the \$65,000 year salary that teachers make and the implicit assumption that teachers are excessively wealthy and privileged. Diane says that given the ways in which the media portrays teachers, she can understand how and why people respond to such images in the ways that they do. She says, *"I have decided I'd be mad too, if I weren't a teacher and I read this and I thought that they really only teach so many hours in the classroom."*

Natasha suggests that the media is an integral part in the construction of both public and government perception of teachers and teaching. In her view, the predominant view of teachers portrayed by the media is that teachers are never satisfied with what they have, the notion that they are always looking for an easier way out in whatever kind of arena one might consider whether that is *"the whole extracurricular thing or the teaching load or classroom sizes or salary."* The view is that teachers are *"never ever satisfied."*

Natasha does not know where these messages come from and from her point of view, *"it just doesn't seem rational to think that every time teachers have a beef they go running and screaming down the streets that they are complaining about it."* She says it is unreasonable to think that when there is a problem teachers run to the media to complain and advocate or whine for some redress. Instead, Natasha surmises that the

media just seems to be “*listening in all the time to hear what [teachers] are talking about, even if it includes the sort of ‘in-house’ things that would not be of concern or of interest to a school or a board or a province.*” Things, that in Natasha’s view, “*teachers should be left to deal with on their own;*” however, she adds,

it’s almost as if the media is always sort of listening for any sign of discomfort or any sign of anger or sign of, you know, us not being happy with something and then they jump on it and there it is for everybody to see.

Natasha is uncertain of whether that “*comes from listening to parents or listening to teachers or listening to students or where that comes from,*” but, she adds, “*no matter where it comes from it always gets magnified all of a sudden by the media’s reporting of it.*”

In another attempt to explain this phenomenon, Natasha recalls recent conversations with her parents and other teachers where they concluded “*it just seems that it is the teachers’ turn [to become] the flavour of the day*” and the media always wants to have a teacher story or an education story. Natasha remembers that ten years ago, “*it was the doctors who were always getting dumped on*” and perhaps it is just now the time that teachers get “*dumped on.*” In the end, Natasha concludes, “*I don’t know where they get the ideas from or why they feel they have to but they do.*”

From Tina’s perspective, specific media seem to perpetuate negative images of teachers and teaching and she cites several examples to substantiate her view. In one instance, she suggests that the *Toronto Sun* was particularly effective at presenting a negative image of teachers “*when it [was] fashionable*” to do so during the reign of the Progressive Conservative government. In another instance, Tina contends that particular

reporters like Rosie DiManno¹ of the *Toronto Star* are, by virtue of their position, given license to say whatever they want because *“it will have an impact.”* In Tina’s view, the media unfairly and idiosyncratically perpetuates the spectacular and sensational aspects public opinion.

The role of the media in the articulation and perpetuation of the public’s opinion of teachers and teaching is understood by some of the participants to be directly related to the government’s perception as well. Michael, for example, suggests that the communication strategies employed by the government during the time were conscious attempts *“to undermine the teaching profession and to discredit it.”* In his view, public and media attitude has been *“stoked by the Harris government and their agenda”* whereby the government was able to appeal to the *“simmering public resentment of teachers”* by creating *“brilliant marketing campaigns with their advertising”* which further inflamed the resentment. Barbara has also noted the strategy employed by the Progressive Conservatives. From her perspective, the Harris government or *“whoever did its research or came up with its strategy at whatever political meeting they sat around. . . was just brilliant at tapping into that underneath, that seething contempt that some people must have for teachers.”*

The powerful effects of the media are noted by Hallam (2000) who suggests that the *“image of an occupational group or profession that is (re)presented in the media is often taken axiomatically as a measure of that group’s social and economic value”* (p. 7). Bascia (1998) as well comments on the media coverage of teaching and teachers. She

¹ See Appendices D, E and F for further commentary on DiManno’s article.

notes that in the case of teachers' unions in particular, little attention is given except during episodes of labour conflict. Then, she writes,

the union is personified as a tough-talking president and teachers chanting slogans—sound bites that appear to have little connection to the classroom or school issues but rather emphasize concerns about teachers' salaries and working conditions, at least implicitly portraying teachers and their organizational effects as selfish or obsessed with minutiae.

(p. 895)

In the next section of this chapter, the data presented explore the ways in which the participants understand and respond to their perception of the government's representation of them and their work during this period of education reform. The data reveal that some participants perceive the government places little value on the work they do as teachers.

Government Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching

Fletcher (1999) contends that in addition to being a platform for major policy change, the Progressive Conservative government's "Common Sense Revolution" was also a vehicle that changed the nature of political communication and public discourse in the province. According to Fletcher (1999), the Harris government adopted an American-style Republican communication strategy to move its platform forward. Among other elements, this strategy involved extending the election campaign, relying heavily on television, and scapegoating various groups (p. 1). The central communication strategies employed by the government during both of its election campaigns involved the "centralized control of a simple message, extensive pre-writ campaigning, heavy reliance on targeted television advertising, the use of 'hot button' or wedge issues to polarize the

electorate” (Fletcher, 1999, p. 1). With regard to education in particular, the strategies attempted “to shore up support for their policies . . . in education, to reinforce the image of teachers’ unions as unrepresentative or obstructive, and to promote Mike Harris as a credible leader” (Fletcher, 1999, p.1). The data presented in the next section of this chapter suggest that the Ontario government wilfully joined public and media discourses about teaching with the discourses of “economic recovery and prosperity, job creation, renewed growth through tax reduction, and regulatory burden” (Gidney, 1999, p. 234) of its Common Sense Revolution. This joining effectively enabled the government to position the teaching profession generally and unions particularly as scapegoats. In the views of the participants, this discursive positioning contributed to the construction of teacher professional identity in profoundly significant ways, in some instances even forcing some teachers to consider leaving teaching altogether.

From the very beginning of its mandate, the Ontario Progressive Conservative government under Mike Harris framed its agenda for education reform using the words “quality” and “value,” and the words “excellence,” “accountability,” and “high standards” followed very shortly thereafter. In one of his first announcements concerning the restructuring of the province’s secondary school program, John Snobelen, the first Minister of Education appointed by Harris, noting that this initiative was “fulfilling one of the government’s commitments in the Common Sense Revolution” stated that “every student deserves the best quality education we can provide and taxpayers deserve the best value for their education dollars” (November 2, 1995). Throughout the remainder of its terms and through a regular series of announcements concerning its agenda to reform the Ontario education system, the government continued to polish its message about the

importance of pursuing excellence and quality to ensure accountability; it regularly placed slogans such as “excellence in education” in all of the media backdrops used to make its announcements thereby reinforcing the images of excellence, quality, high standards and accountability, among others. By naming its omnibus Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act* and by the consistent association of its reform initiatives with these words and phrases and by making frequent allusions to its Common Sense Revolution platform, the government was easily able to normalize or naturalize these phrases so that they became firmly entrenched in the public’s mindset—in effect, becoming the public common sense as well. Once established as common sense, the pathways to achieving excellence, through standardized testing, for example, became easily and readily normalized as well.

In many ways, the Progressive Conservative government *was* responding to public and educator sentiment that changes to the province’s education system were, as some have argued, long overdue. It would be unfair to suggest that the Ontario government under Mike Harris was single-handedly responsible for adopting a standards-based approach to the education of Ontario’s students. As Raphael (1993) observed, the acceptance of the objectives-based approach was well under way in most Canadian provinces, the United States and nations around the world by 1990. Indeed, international interest in many western countries including Britain, the United States, and Australia in obtaining “excellence” in education through large-scale measurement of student achievement had been growing for some time and to date shows little sign of abatement.

In her analysis of educational change as a field of study, Romero (1998) notes that the “excellence” discourse has been able to sustain its survival over a considerable period

of time. In this researcher's view, this discourse is closely related to the technical perspective of educational change. Romero (1998) also observes that the excellence discourse has been taken up by alliances such as "the new right movement, corporations and businesses and religious fundamentalism" (p. 54). Citing Tyack and Cuban (1995), she notes further that the media have played a significant role in articulating the discourses of these groups and, as a result, the ability of professional education groups such as teacher organizations to define educational change has been eroded significantly. While some of education groups and organizations have been silenced and de-legitimized (Elliott, 1995) by this discourse, Romero (1998) is quick to point out Apple's (1996) observation that other groups of educational professionals have been supporting technically selective "excellence" initiatives through the construction and development of testing practices.

In Romero's (1998) view, this excellence discourse

constructs a myth about the crises in public education and [it] uses the notion of standards to direct attention to a decline of achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics in relation to the needs of the economy and the submissive answer that education must give

(p. 55)

This myth, Romero (1998) observes is debunked by Tyack and Cuban (1995) who argue that not only is it irresponsible to accuse education for economic decline, but by making a correlation between education and the social and economic situation, teachers come to be treated unfairly as a "hot potato" and they suggest that furthermore, this correlation fails to recognize the complexity of the labour market. Romero (1998) supports Apple's (1996) argument that the most difficult task is not to improve education, but to improve the kind of jobs that the market has to offer, especially for those outside the dominant groups. Romero (1998) writes, "what is clear is that progress and decline are political

constructs that confuse educational change issues more than they clarify them” (pp. 55-56).

In Ontario then, the Progressive Conservative government’s “common sense” agenda to revolutionize the Ontario education system can be understood within the framework provided by Romero’s (1998) analysis of the excellence in education discourse—right down to the government’s first education minister, John Snobelen’s, decision to “invent a crisis” and “bankrupt” the education system (Snobelen, 1995, p. 142). Its interest in standards and increased testing and its removal of references to equity and anti-racist education from the curriculum are just two of the examples that are almost identical to those that have occurred elsewhere (see for example, Kenway, 1990). Furthermore, with modifications such as the redefinition of instructional time, attempts to mandate teachers’ extra-curricular involvement and the removal of principals and vice-principals from teachers’ unions, the Ontario Progressive Conservative government has indeed, as Tyack and Cuban (1995) argued, used teachers as its hot potato.

As the above discussion reveals, the excellence discourse is not an isolated or unitary discourse; several other discourses, such as standards, quality and accountability are articulated as well. These discourses work together to create a grid of specification so that, in the case of teachers and teaching, the teacher becomes positioned as the individual who is to make the standards improve. Teaching in this discursive formation becomes the means by which excellence is achieved. Furthermore, in these “common sense” discourses, teaching is understood in very much the same way as the economic market is; it is a technical and rational way of conducting one’s work. Teaching, in these discourses, becomes relatively easy and straight-forward, so much so, that given a standardized and

resource-supported curriculum, anyone can teach. Viewed this way, the teacher becomes much like any other worker who has or needs some knowledge but generally speaking, in relation to the highly specialized knowledge of other professions, his or her knowledge is not that dissimilar to most other workers. In the discussion that follows, the participants express their understanding of and responses to this government positioning.

Discourses of excellence: Teacher as worker, content provider and technician

The comments and analysis made by Aerlyn, Michael, Barbara, Darlene, Natasha and several other participants reveal that not only do they understand what the discourses of excellence, standards and quality are, but also they are able to articulate how the practices associated with these discourses work to construct their identities as teachers. As Aerlyn maintains, for example, the image of teachers held by the government is that they are workers. In the government view, she says

We are, we are workers. We clock the, you know, punch the clock, get in and do our thing. We get those lunches and we get those you know, summers off, and then that's it, we're, that's all we do and we expect to be paid a lot, you know, because we are important

Furthermore, Aerlyn understands the government's representation of a teacher is that he or she is are "*not too smart person or somebody who didn't quite make it doing what they really wanted to do. . . the cliché of 'those who can't. . . those who can't do, those who can't do, teach.'*" Aerlyn rejects this perception most strongly because it underestimates the importance of what teachers do. She says the stereotype paints teachers as over-inflating their importance and it is here that Aerlyn has "*a huge problem*" because she thinks that the government has underestimated the importance of teachers and "*not gone about it the right way*" and also that "*treating teachers as if they are unprofessionals,*

that they are not professionals, that they are workers," the idea that "anybody can teach." She finds the way in which the government has taken up this view of teaching to be particularly offensive. She says,

And the way the government's doing it is, I think that is their attitude: "Anyone can teach so get in there and do another hour damn it!" [Laughs] Really! I mean that's what they are saying, right? 'Cause anyone, because if, you know, there is three guys lining up to get their summers off that we'll hire and they will be just as good as you and that's just not true. It's not, so that's.

Although she may not present it this way, Aerlyn and other participants acknowledge that for many teachers the subject position created by the government's "excellence in education" discourse for them is one that they reject for themselves. Aerlyn's conception of herself as a professional stands in stark contrast to the subject position she is encouraged to occupy by the excellence in education discourses. Aerlyn completely rejects the representation of schooling and education where teachers are "just factory workers preparing students for the workforce" because she says, "firstly, that view is hugely biased" and secondly, "it does a disservice to the students ultimately because work is only a small part of life." That view, she suggests,

only gives as much value as the work they are eventually going to get so if, if Johnny finishes school and he ends up pumping gas, it is because of his lack of education but Johnny could be a genius pumping gas and be a great critical thinker but nobody values that, right? What they are looking at is his net worth. He pumps gas and he gets paid three dollars per hour and that's, that's, I think that goes against what a lot of teachers start out thinking.

Although Aerlyn acknowledged the existence and was dismissive of this discourse when she first started teaching, she did not say anything about it; however, now, she declares, "this government has really poked us enough, [she] correct[s] people when, in other conversations, [they] are talking about what teachers really do." Despite Aerlyn's

attempts to correct people with regard to what teachers do, she also acknowledges that perhaps there is some truth to the discourse, that for some teachers, teaching is work and, she says, *"I mean that's how they are; they are really workers."* Although this view bothers Aerlyn and she struggles to resist it herself, noting that *"in her own personal work, [she] is going to resist it,"* in conversations with other teachers she will point out that there are *"teachers that do exist like that,"* and so, she concludes, *"[teachers] have to look at what [they] are really presenting to the rest of the world."*

Michael, too, is able to clearly articulate his understanding of how these discourses work to construct particular subject positions for teachers to occupy. As a new teacher, Michael reports that one of the demoralizing aspects about teaching is *"this really pervasive sense that we're just here as content providers"* and so

the people at the ministry decide 'well this is the new curriculum, this is the new evaluation. Here you go. Implement this. We are not going to tell you how to do it, we are not going to give you any support, do it, just do it. And you got to do it fast and you have to do it now.'

Michael, like Aerlyn and others have noted, the teacher just does it. He says,

we'll keep taking whatever you send us, we don't have any input into this because we are just content providers. We are just technicians, you know, and that's, it's a very, that's to me, it's a very low status view of teachers. All we do is, we are just there to follow orders and pass on whatever gets passed to us.

Although Michael does not accept that conception of himself as a teacher, he acknowledges that he has to on some level because *"that's what we are doing."*

Commenting on the introduction of the province's new method of evaluating student achievement, he explains:

Like the new evaluation, I have adapted that, you know, the four categories and I still don't understand what they mean. And I can't find anybody who can give me a definite answer. Application, how is thinking

and inquiry different from knowledge and understanding? It makes no sense to me, it's all just vague, you know, semantics. When is a quiz knowledge and understanding, when is it thinking and inquiry? [The answer?] When you want it to be [raucous laughter]. It drives you up the wall. I just think, I can't take it seriously and I have, that's the problem I have, I have this kind of emperor has no clothes mentality that if it's, it makes no sense, I can't pretend that it makes sense and go along with it. Yes, I have to go along with it. Yes, I've got my four mark sheets but it just seems completely arbitrary. Okay, I am just going to put this in here so I have got a few in each category but if someone calls me on it, I can spin it, spin it probably and make it make, justify it being in there but why is this a good thing? Why is this providence that we have these categories that you know, in this [inaudible] and say well we're accountable now because we have these four categories like in English, the old categories thirty percent writing, twenty percent oral communications, you know, ten percent work habits, ten percent ISU, exam. That, conceptually, to me was very clear and very easy to understand, for parents as well as for me, and for students. My students have no clue when I give them the course outline, "well, I just want you to know that twenty percent of the course is going to be application." They are like [pewt, waves hand over head]. [laughs]. So how is this a good thing? And parents are no better; parents have no idea what this stuff means.

Michael rejects the conception of the teacher as technician that is being promoted within the Ontario education system. This discourse has permeated and frustrated other aspects of Michael's work as a member of the professional development committee at Metro East Secondary School. He suggests that all of professional development that has gone on at his school for the last two years has been technically oriented. To illustrate, he recalls a professional development day that he attended recently, the focus of which was a two hour session on a new computer program designed for curriculum planning, a session that was, for Michael, a complete waste of time. He says,

That's what all the PD is, like how do we do, make, PowerPoint presentations, how do you use this, how do you do a new evaluation strategy. It's all very technically oriented and there's no PD that looks at equity issues, that looks at conflict resolution, that looks at the meat of, what it actually means to interact with kids in this setting and to do it well and to make sure that kids are not getting excluded, you know, and that's

right at the heart of what we should be focusing on and it's getting zero attention at this school.

For Michael, the above example is illustrative and typical of the larger trend of teachers as technicians and he wonders why teachers should be concerned about *"that stuff."* For him, in this discourse teachers are there *"to provide content to kids who are consumers and parents who complain that their kids don't get what they are supposed to get."* He understands this teacher as technician discourse as part of the business model discourse which, for Michael is *"all about providing product on demand."* The problem Michael has with that and *"the whole thing about technology in the classroom"* is that it's an instinctive need to jump on a bandwagon to say

that's great, let's get all the grade nines out to do Powerpoint presentations but who cares if they can actually discuss ideas and think critically? Well "as long as they can do a Powerpoint presentation and wear a tie, they will be sailing, you know, they will be set for life" [laughs] you know.

Michael also points out that although the discourse that positions the teacher as a technician is the most pervasive at this time, there are other conceptions of teaching; however, he intimates, the other kinds *"[don't] get any press"* and *"no one talks about [them]."* Struggling to recall the specific names for the other discourses, he finally describes the one conception of teachers and teaching that he claims doesn't get attention. Referring to this discourse as *"teaching as a subversive activity,"* with whom he associates the names Neil Postman and Paulo Friere, Michael reveals that although he has *"a long way to go just to reach those kinds of goals,"* for him, at least there is something in that discourse that inspires him in terms of why he wanted to do this job. He says that, although making connections with students is important and being able to stimulate them to think critically and creatively about things is important, what is also important for him

is *“trying to spur them to become involved citizens.”* For Michael, *“that’s a huge concern”* because the current preoccupation with business is going to isolate and *“cut people off from anything going on in the world”* and create apathetic people. He says, *“I guess what bothers me about this whole corporate model of professionalism is that schools, to me, should be the one spot where they can get away from that.”*

For Michael, there is a direct relationship between and among the use of computer technology in schools and the business discourses that have permeated educational discourses, including the teacher as technician discourse. While acknowledging that Metro East Secondary School has a technologically-rich environment with a computer in every classroom, Michael observes that most of them don’t get used. The emphasis placed on technology in schools, Michael contends, is not only unwarranted, but farcical. He recalls that when he applied for the teaching position at Metro East, he was told that he would be asked a question about technology in the classroom in his interview. He knew the expected response was that he should be *“all gung ho”* knowing as well that *“if you came out and said ‘well I think technology in the classroom is a complete crock’”* the odds would be very low that he would be offered a teaching position, adding *“no one’s going to hire you.”* So, when the time came for Michael to be interviewed at Metro East, he went on the school’s website the night before the interview and read that the school had *“a computer in every classroom,”* and that the school referred to itself as *“the school of the future and all of that stuff.”* He went to the interview and told the principal and vice-principal how very impressed he was by the school’s website and that it said there’s a computer in every classroom. He recalls that they just *“kind of let that pass”* and although they didn’t comment to that, they sort of nodded. Michael then added that he

thought that that was very important but that he hadn't really had much chance yet to use technology in the classroom although he was *"excited by stuff he had seen in Parkdale when doing his practicum."* He recounted how *"an English teacher there had won an award for doing an online poetry thing with. . ."* During the whole interview, Michael admits, he didn't really know anything about the online poetry thing, and that in reality he was *"spewing crap"* to the principal and vice-principal because he believed *"that's what they want to hear."*

Michael says he does not have *"a lot of bells and whistles"* in his teaching and although sometimes students may feel his classes are boring and that perhaps he should *"try to do more of that stuff (technology)"* in his classroom, he reports he cannot help but feel that even a crude form of technology like the overhead projector is relied upon far too much by teachers; their use is little more than a diversionary mechanism to focus student attention which also makes students docile. He says

how many of these teachers use overheads every single day? It's just mad with them. [laughs] Just give me the overheads. Turn the lights, put the overheads up and I don't know, I don't get what's so great about them. [laughs] Why do you need an overhead? Why can't you just give every kid a copy of the sheet and read through it and discuss it, you know.

Michael's quarrel with technology and its *"turn the lights off"* approach to education is that he understands it as part of *"this whole move for accountability"* with its *"teacher testing² and all of that."* For him, *"it's all part of that same movement to quantify everything, you know that bean counter mentality, you know, let's just focus on what we can hold in our hand and look at, and measure and quantify."* For Michael, teaching

² See Appendix L for a description of this program and some background context concerning its

is just so complex and fluid and unpredictable and messy. It's the messiest job imaginable. How can you possibly try and quantify it, you know, and make it fit into these little holes? That's what they want to do and they are scared of it, that's my real feeling about it. They are scared, like, they don't know.

The "they" to whom Michael refers are "the evil forces" which include the (then) current government and the business world who try to impose their values and ways of operating on social institutions and that's why he is leery about the whole push for technology. In his view,

it's driven by market forces to get computers in there to get kids hooked [and] while they may get the immediate skills for better jobs, they also need to learn how to think critically, how to be able to do research and discuss ideas and express themselves in writing, in speech [things that] the computer or any other technology for that matter cannot help you do.

Like Michael, Belinda has difficulty with the evaluation methods introduced by the government's curriculum reform. She, too, responds by engaging in subversion tactics that enable her to negotiate and manage the conflicted subject position in which she finds herself placed. Belinda says, of the new method of assessment, that she is "*fudging a lot of that because [she doesn't] see it as relevant.*" On the other hand, she says, she understands that every grade nine math student needs to learn this before they go on to grade ten, and so, she says,

curriculum is important [but] these arbitrary categories that we are going to mark in are not as important. Curriculum, I'll teach. I'll make sure I cover everything. If I fudge a few thinking and inquiries, I am not getting upset about it [laughs] you know. . . .

Belinda is fully aware that her actions could result in negative consequences and she consciously thinks about the consequences before she acts but says she is willing to take the risk.

implementation.

And do you know what? Part of it too is how do I avoid getting slapped on the wrist? How much of this can I finagle around before someone comes down on me? . . . I haven't implemented the new curriculum, the new marking at all in my German class because I know that I am the only one that teaches German and no one else knows what is going on. No one is coming down on me about that. They will ask me about my French marks, then I will have to show someone those. German, no one will ever ask.

Furthermore, Belinda is “absolutely” at ease with her decision because, she says,

nothing has changed in the way I teach French except for the fact that I have changed two or three assignments so I can get some marks in that category. What happens in the classroom hasn't changed at all. And if I spend eight hours revamping all of my assignments per unit in German, just to get them to fit under the new things, what I do in the classroom still won't change. The students will still learn at the same pace. They will still learn.

Belinda wishes to make clear that it is not that she is opposed to change. Quite the contrary, Belinda welcomes change in her teaching:

I will change my teaching. I'll throw out lesson plans, I'll reteach things to meet the needs of the students. I am not going to rework something to meet the needs of some arbitrary document that somebody somewhere behind a desk thinks is important [laughs]. Unless you can prove to me that it is also important to my students, and that it'll make a difference.

Although Belinda would like someone to “prove it to her,” she does not think that will ever happen. She concedes that perhaps she is “working from a basis of ignorance” and adds,

maybe if someone that knew everything came and explained to me why thinking and inquiry was really vital for grade nine applied French students, and could convince me of that, I'd be happy to implement it. I can't see how it is important.

Natasha is very direct about the government's view of teachers with regard to the excellence discourse. She reports that government views teachers as “files” and as “the means to achieve better test scores.” From the government's perspective, teachers are

“the interface” to enable students to get better marks so the government can the “go and file away somewhere, the results of that.”

Teacher Responses to the Discourses of Excellence

Most of the participants in this study seemed to reject the government discourses that positioned them as technicians and content or service providers. Many of them admitted to subverting those discourses where necessary, that they were unable to reject outright. A few participant responses suggested a somewhat ambivalent stance with regard to these discourses and their rejection of them. Tom, for example, conceded that the Harris government was very successful in making the public think that “those who can’t, teach” and that neither the government nor the public could not possibly understand the nuance of what it means to be a teacher. Yet he also suggests interestingly that given the encumbrances on teachers such as those from the school board administration and the labour side of teaching, he would like to become a freelance teacher where he could say *“put it to the highest bidder. If you want my services, you like what I am doing? All right [I am for hire].”*

Belinda’s responses too, at times, seem to suggest a degree of ambivalence about the extent to which rejection or subversion of these discourses is possible. Despite labeling herself as teacher who closely resembles a rebellious teenager, Belinda discloses that sometimes resistance is futile. She observes that her rejection and subversion of the implementation of the new evaluation methods stands in direct contrast to the acceptance of it by many of her peers and colleagues. It is for this reason that she characterizes her teacher self as a rebellious teenager.

As noted above, the “common sense” excellence discourse is directly related to other economic or market-place discourses. For Diane, the central interest of the government is a financial one. Although, in her view, the financial woes of government are not and should not be the concern of teachers, she maintains that teachers bear the guilt of *“this constant talk of the cost of education and the taxpayer dollar.”* Moreover, somehow she, as a teacher, is funnelling it into her own pockets. She says, *“it’s not within my daily job. I am not sitting there throwing ball point pens out the window.”* For Diane, the government has been successful at making this implicit suggestion that money is being wasted by teachers, that their salaries are too high, and that *“fat needs to be skimmed.”* In her view, these insinuations are accompanied by the idea that the government *“needs to get rid of the bad”* and although Diane thinks this is true of any profession, *“it is always the ones they don’t mean who feel all of the guilt and it is the one’s who aren’t being good [for whom] the message never hits home.”* Consequently, she contends, *“all it does is make the good teachers have this constant feeling of guilt”* and end up defending themselves by lamenting that they are *“trying my best.”*

Diane’s view is that *“most teachers were ‘A’ students who have always been keen to win approval”* and she argues, *“if it [the way the former government approached education reform] was handled properly, it would be so different because that’s why we are all teachers.”* Diane suggests that teachers *“are keeners.”* *“We are,”* she says laughingly, *“we seek approval, we follow the system, we are not law breakers and it is such a shame that it has gone the way it has because we are so malleable.”* Diane wonders why the government hasn’t seen that. She finds the fact that it hasn’t remarkably funny. She says, teachers are by their natures, eager to please and that if the government

had approached them differently, a very different outcome would have occurred. She explains

If they had approached us differently, you know, instead of saying, it is the old story "you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar." If they had used it in a different approach like "we had realized that we are not giving our teachers enough room to expand, to grow, that we are not helping them seek their fullest potential" you know, putting a different light on it, not, "we are watch dogs" but "we want to help you even get better" would have been so nice.

Diane's belief is that the government has only been concerned with money and that *"it has been very corrupt in the way that they have done things."* She adds *"they have done their silly publicity shots of school and, just everything that they have done, you know."*

In keeping with market-place discourses, Denise thinks the government sees unionized teachers as *"the union."* For her, the government either sees the teachers' union as *"a group of militant thugs beating the hell of the compliant little group who doesn't know better,"* or they see *"a huge group of slackers or perverts and drug dealers who take advantage of the system."* For Denise, there are several views the government has of teachers and *"depending on where they are going with whatever policy they want, they'll figure that out."*

Denise recalls that it has not always been this way for the teachers of Ontario. She remembers that when she first started teaching, the Minister of Education of 14 years ago who came into her classroom and *"it was a completely different relationship when they came into the classroom."* Noting that although teachers of the seventies might think differently because of the time *"they were going through that labour battle,"* for Denise, there wasn't the animosity then that there is today. Then, she recalls, *"it was a sense of*

pride. I mean we prepared our classrooms. It was like an honour to have the Minister through."

In contrast, Denise recalls an experience where, twelve years later, another Minister of Education visited her school, Metro East Secondary School. Although initially having difficulty remembering which Minister it was who visited because "we have had so many of them [ministers of education]," Denise is able to recollect the visit by the (then) second education Minister of the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government, Dave Johnson. Denise describes that preparations for his visit entailed ministry staff visiting the school during the summer to ensure that it was an appropriate venue. During these preparations, someone noticed that the school had an elaborate podium that had been carved by a locally renowned artist with a symbolic representation of the school's mascot. It was determined that this podium would be an excellent venue from which the Minister could make an important announcement. Denise recounts that she, several other staff and the principal (with whom teachers were on better relations because it was before the strike), hid the podium and

so [the Minister's] press or his people who come in to prepare the environment, this backdrop kind of press, were frantically looking for this thing [and because the podium] could not be found [the Minister] had this really ugly grey thing [and his people] were not happy with it.

Denise uses this example to illustrate her feeling that "now it is just a joke." For her, "there is no sense of continuity from the teaching profession to the ministry and working together as a unit. It's just this completely fractured system all working at odds against each other. It is so dysfunctional it is unbelievable."

Barbara has a clear and distinct relationship between her identity as a professional teacher in the province of Ontario and the former Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris. She alleges that, in her view, the teaching profession has been demeaned since 1995. Since then, Barbara remarks, she has had to defend both the teaching profession and *“the fact that [she is] a professional.”* Although Barbara attributes significant responsibility to the government for contributing to the societal perception of the teaching profession, she also indicates that she does not think it is the Ontario government specifically who is to blame for *“the difficulty and everything because,”* she says, these situations are not new and nor does she think they are isolated to Ontario. Having conceded this however and acknowledging that although these things are happening all over, in Barbara’s view, the Ontario government certainly *“did go down a very specific path in a very specific way with a lot of money behind it and that gave the government a very loud voice.”* That voice, Barbara contends was heard far more loudly than teachers’ individual voices, and, consequently, teachers have been put into the position of always having to defend themselves. She explains,

when you are always on the defensive, you’re not making any headway. You can’t go forward if you are constantly defending what you do and how you do it. You know, you can’t apologize for having summers off and yet at the same time justify having summers off, like it just doesn’t work.

Barbara contends that

teaching is the profession that everyone feels they are an expert on . . . where everyone went through school so therefore they must know . . . they have internalized somehow what it means to be a teacher and then that bias gets tapped into by a political government that has another agenda and you get this sort of bashing of teacher professionalism.

She continues,

These prejudices that somehow because they were students for thirteen years, they have an innate understanding of teaching having been on the receiving end somehow gives them power to understand what was going on at the delivery end. It is one of those superficial logics, a superficial logic which should make sense [because] "I was there so I know." And yet it does not. It does, it just does not. It falls completely apart because the receiving process, the delivery process and the receiving process are totally different.

Because the government has been so effective in capitalizing on these prejudices, she says, as a teacher, she then has

to sit around at my dinner table and I mean we, we're at the, really, we got to the point, there were conversations where, you know, one friend would say "Oh God, don't bring up teacher. . . oh God don't bring up Harris, don't bring up teaching again, she is going to start" because I, I couldn't let it go. . . .

Barbara understands that the views of teachers and teaching that the Harris government capitalized on are enduring and pervasive. She remarks that with all of the professions there has always been a bias that somehow individuals in those occupations haven't earned the right to be called a professional, so

doctors overbill and underwork, they just go golfing. Lawyers cheat and, you know, bilk the system. Teachers, you know, what do they do from nine to three, ten months out of the year with holidays coming out of the, you know, coming from left and right?

Although Barbara concedes that this criticism of professions is not innate to teachers, there is an underlying bias about teachers being lazy and underworked that teachers "*have to carry, through no fault of their own, through the school system, and through the ten month school year.*" This burden suddenly makes them less than someone who is working 12 months of a year and, consequently, Barbara opines, they become targets for public and government criticism.

In an attempt to explain why teachers become targets for this criticism, Hoyle (2001) argues that a combination of factors contribute to the generation of an occupational image. With teachers in particular, Hoyle (2001) suggests that the perception of teachers is shaped significantly by the ambiguous diverse and diffuse goals purposes of education. Furthermore, he writes that the ambiguities are reflected in the expectations of the teacher's role. The participants' observations in this study parallel Hoyle's. Aerlyn, Michael, Maureen, Belinda and Pauline said that the philosophy currently dominating the Ontario education system is one that views the purpose of education as obtaining a job. From the moment the Progressive Conservative government launched its Common Sense Revolution, it made clear this philosophy both implicitly and explicitly in its policies and its communication brochures. Consider, for example, this excerpt that appears in its "On" report to Ontario taxpayers in the fall of 2000 under the heading "How the New Curriculum is Preparing Students for the Future:"

How can students prepare for work?

All students in grades 7 to 12 now prepare an annual education plan to help them develop long-range goals and choose learning experiences outside the classroom. The new high school program includes work experience, cooperative education, apprenticeship training and school-work transition programs.

Ontario's new Passport to Prosperity initiative encourages employers to provide high school students with hands-on training in the workplace.

Regardless of whether this educational philosophy was adopted prior to or alongside the other "common sense" platform thrusts of job creation, economic recovery, and renewed growth by reducing tax and regulatory burden, it became the "common sense" [govern]mentality and officially sanctioned philosophy of education for Ontario. Given that the government view of the purpose of schooling and education is to obtain

employment, by association, teachers are viewed as the vehicle to accomplish this goal. As Pauline, Michael, and others note, teachers become service providers or content providers; students become clients or customers.

Summary

This chapter has elaborated some of the public and governmental portrayals of teachers and teaching that were identified and described in the previous chapter. In addition, this chapter has revealed other representations including some of those articulated through the popular media. The chapter has suggested that these conceptions of teachers and teaching may influence teacher professional identity in significant ways. The data suggest that public discourses are predominantly concerned with the nature of teaching as work, especially in comparison to the working lives of the general public, the recollections members of the public have of their own experiences in schools, and the ways in which schooling generally and teachers particularly intersect with homelife. Although it has also been suggested that some teachers perpetuate these same discourses through their practices, the data reveal that many of these discourses construct subject positions for teachers that many say are untenable.

The data in the study suggest that these participants believe the media's perception of teachers is clearly influenced by public and government portrayals of them and their work. Whether it is because teachers are the government's current "flavour of the day" or whether it comes from listening to parents, teachers or students, or whether it occurs only during periods of labour unrest, the data suggest that negative discourses about teachers and teaching are magnified through the media's coverage. The data

suggest that the dominant discourses perpetuated by the media are concerned with teachers' working conditions including such things as the perceived benefits of the job. The data also reveal that some teachers perceive that specific media appear more eager than others to perpetuate negative images of teachers and teaching.

The data presented in the latter part of this chapter have suggested that there is a relationship between teacher professional identity and the former Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris. In the view of one participant, the teaching profession has been demeaned since this government came into power in 1995. Since then, teachers have had to defend both the teaching profession and their professionalism.

The data reveal that participants understand the government discourses of excellence, standards and quality have worked to construct their identities as teachers in ways many of them reject. The majority of the participants perceive that the government views them as workers, content providers, and technicians. In this view, anyone can teach. The teacher (worker) provides content to the student (consumer) and their parents (consumer) complain if they perceive they are not getting what they are supposed to. One participant perceives this discourse to be part of the business model discourse of providing product on demand. This participant suggests further that there is a direct relationship between and among the business discourses that have permeated educational discourses, the use of technology in schools, and the movement towards accountability. In these latter discourses, another participant suggests, teachers become "*files*" and "*the means to achieve better test scores.*"

These "common sense" excellence discourses are directly related to other economic or market-place discourses. Because the central interest of the government is a

financial one, teachers bear the guilt of the cost of education to the taxpayer. The implicit suggestion is that because teachers waste money and their salaries are too high, “fat needs to be skimmed.” Congruent with these market-place discourses, teachers perceive that the government sees unionized teachers as “*the union.*” In this view, teachers little more than “*militant thugs, slackers, perverts, and drug dealers who take advantage of the system.*”

Standing in stark contrast to their conceptions of themselves as teachers, the participant data reveal that while the excellence in education discourses cause some teachers to feel demoralized, the related “financial woe” discourses position teachers in ways that make them feel a constant guilt and a need to engage in a perpetual defence of themselves. Other responses to these discourses involve both the outright rejection of being position as technicians and content or service providers. Where rejection was not possible, participants admitted to engaging in the subversion of these discourses. Perhaps more interesting however, has been that some participant responses suggested a somewhat ambivalent stance with regard to these discourses and their rejection of them.

The implicit relationship between and among the public, the media, and the government sustains multiple and contradictory representations of teachers and teaching. These discourses that circulate outside the boundaries of the teaching work to suspend teachers in a continual negotiation for and about their professional identities. The remaining chapters of this study reveal that this negotiation occurs within the boundaries of the teaching population as well through their union, specifically the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, their regulatory body, Ontario College of Teachers, and between and among themselves and the administrators who oversee their work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEGOTIATING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY WITH THE LOCAL TEACHERS' UNION

Introduction

The interview data presented in this chapter are divided into two parts. Both data groupings will suggest that the discourses about teachers and teaching which particular teachers' unions¹ articulate and the discursive practices in which they engage and perpetuate have considerable influence on the ways in which teachers understand and make sense of their professional identities. While there are exceptions, both parts of the chapter will also reveal that the influence of teachers' unions on their teacher identity is negative. In the first part of the chapter, the data reveal that many teachers perceive a dichotomy between professionalism and unionism. This dichotomy is characterized by tensions and ambiguities over the purposes of the union, its overall effectiveness, consequences for becoming involved too directly with union activities, and the potential of teachers' unions to enhance teaching. The data suggest further that these tensions and ambiguities surface at particular times. In the second part of the chapter, data are presented that illustrate the ways in which teacher unionism played out in the participants' daily lives during a period referred to as 'The Troubles'. The discussion in

¹ All of the participants in this study were members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. While many participants' comments were directed specifically at this union and their local district branch of this union, many other comments appeared to be directed toward teachers' unions generally. In those instances where comments refer to local incidents, the reader should infer "the union" to be the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. In other instances and where the data make it possible to do so, the discussion attempts to distinguish between this specific union and unions generally.

this section focuses on the ways in which teachers navigate and perpetuate the discourses teachers' unions construct about teachers and the work of teaching.

Mike Harris Government and Teachers' Unions

During the reign of the Progressive Conservative government under Mike Harris, teachers' unions became an integral aspect of the public, media, and government discourses about teachers and teaching. Perceptions of teachers' unions not only by the government, the media, and the public, but also by educational administrators and teachers themselves were heightened considerably throughout the reign of this particular government, perhaps because of the government's clearly-adopted anti-union stance.

This anti-union posture was adopted by the Mike Harris Conservative government early on in its campaign and was sustained throughout its terms in office with a firm resolve "to limit their influence and significantly weaken them" (Axelrod, 2001). This resolve frequently played itself out publicly in the media with each of the education ministers—John Snobelen, David Johnson, Janet Ecker, Elizabeth Witmer—in particular, Mike Harris, himself, making comments, insinuations and accusations about teachers' unions' attempts to thwart the government's reform agenda. For example, under the headline "Tories Won't Be 'Blackmailed' by Teachers: Harris" with the subheading "Premier Launches New Attack on Union Bosses," Brennan (2001), a government affairs columnist for the *Toronto Star*, wrote that in a speech to a Chamber of Commerce Mike Harris stated that the government "must not be blackmailed into harmony at the expense of quality and results" and he accused teachers and their unions of trying to "poison our schools" and resorting to blackmail and intimidation. Harris contended that "the special

interests and the union bosses have fought [the government] every step of the way,” “opposed every quality-based reform that [the government] brought in,” “they misrepresented our motives and they misrepresented the facts” and “they have tried to poison our schools with illegal strikes and by withholding co-instructional activities from our students” (Mike Harris as quoted in Brennan, *Toronto Star*, 2001).

The government restricted the unions’ power in a variety of ways. Indirectly, it removed power from school boards to negotiate such things as class sizes, teaching hours, and preparation time and the board’s ability to levy taxes (Axelrod, 2001). The unions’ power was also curtailed through the government’s enactment of Bill 160, the *Education Quality and Improvement Act*, which, as Axelrod (2001, p. 6) put it, “evicted principals and vice-principals from teacher unions.” According to Axelrod (2001, p. 6), “this symbolic gesture” served to undermine the unions’ power and to remove ambiguity surrounding the role of administrators as the school management who was directly answerable to government especially during its restructuring initiatives. This move, as many of the participants in the study suggested, resulted in not only soured relationships between school administration and teachers because of the repositioning of vice-principals and principals unambiguously as managers. But also it contributed to a crisis in leadership where shortages of principals and vice-principals began to occur and, where positions were being filled, teachers with very little classroom experience were occupying them.

In addition to the removal of principals and vice-principals from teachers’ unions, the government also sought to weaken federations by introducing legislation to make mandatory for teachers what had traditionally been voluntary participation in extra-

curricular activities. "Bill 74," as it was known, sought to redefine instructional time so that it was limited to time only spent in front of a class teaching a credited course. It required that secondary teachers increase their class load average to 6.67 periods as opposed to the original 6 periods secondary teachers were normally required to teach over the school year. This redefinition of instructional time increased the number of students in teachers' classes, increased the marking load for many teachers, and meant fewer teachers were needed per school. Because many individual teachers and their unions perceived that teachers were being assigned more work, the unions encouraged their members to boycott extra-curricular activities *en masse* in an attempt to demonstrate that teachers did not have time to participate in them. Bill 74 also gave the government the power to make mandatory teacher participation in extra-curricular activities which it even redefined as 'co-instructional activities'. In response, teacher unions and hence teachers engaged in work-to-rule campaigns throughout the province. Eventually, the government bowed to the pressure from parents, students, teachers, and the public generally, repealed the section of Bill 74 concerning mandatory volunteerism and then it redefined instructional time to include remedial help, being on call for other teachers, and supervisory work such as overseeing cafeteria.

Teacher Professional Identity and the Professionalism/Unionism Dichotomy

The dichotomy between teacher unionism and teacher professionalism is a familiar one (Bascia, 1998) with the perceived value of unions and of union involvement being deeply influenced by teachers' personal experiences (Bascia, 1997a, p. 72). Both

this dichotomy and teachers' perceptions of the value of and involvement in unions emerge very strongly in the participant data in this study.

The data in this study reveal that many of the participants perceive a dichotomy between professionalism and unionism. This tension is perhaps most clearly articulated by Denise when she says that the union, in its attempt to combat the negative images of teachers in the media, has been "*definitely trying to promote as professional [the teacher as] someone who wears a suit and tie.*" She attributes this notion of professional to "*what's happened in the media [with] the sex abuse [and the] scandals*" and she adds that she thinks that the union is

unfortunately in a sense, presenting a dichotomy because they want to say 'yes, we are workers, we're labour. Is that fair? Our working conditions are your child's learning conditions'.

In Darlene's view, "*one of the biggest problems with professionalism is that it sometimes creates this notion of [the] self-employed, where [teachers] think they work for [the principal].*" Darlene says that she is "*always correcting the young teachers when they call [the principal] their boss.*" She tells them, "*No, the school board is your boss. [The principal is] their agent.*" Furthermore, she discloses, "*when someone attacks [her] role as a worker, of course it is going to affect [her]*" and that

having grown up seeing what class struggle is, she understands and locates all of these troubles, not personally like [her principal during 'The Troubles'] hoped [she] would and go home crying, but contextually in the larger sense of class struggle. . . and does it affect me? Sure, but it's again, do I think I am right? Yeah.

Darlene's attempts "*to correct*" other teachers is, in many ways, personally motivated and it is usually directed towards teachers who are new to teaching at the school. She does this because

some of them are too new to see, just too new. I mean you radicalize out of your own experience, right? Nobody can radicalize for you, and nobody, you don't radicalize as something you read, usually, although some people sort of do but it is usually out of your own individual direct experience.

Darlene says that she is patient and knows that it will not be until these teachers are on the picket line that they will understand what she means. She adds, *“their understanding of working for the board and being a professional in this board right now [is directly attributable] to the year they're hired and how long they've been here.”*

When asked if she has ever thought about teaching in terms other than as work, Darlene replies that she does enjoy it but she thinks that *“it is dangerous not to [think about teaching as anything other than work].”* She says, *“It's a job. You are a worker. You have rights as worker. You have responsibilities as a worker and if you start seeing yourself as doing something else, they can run right over you, you know”?*

Although Darlene admits that much of what the union does such as protecting teachers' workloads is directly related to her notion of professionalism, she also acknowledges that in some instances the relationship between teacher professionalism and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation has not been effective. She says,

I am not going to say that OSSTF has been the champion of professionalism, I don't, I don't think that's true. I think that there's a lot of things PR-wise we could have done. I don't think Earl Manners is necessarily the best spokesperson for professionalism.

She offers a comparison of what would have happened had the government increased the workload of the province's physicians:

Could you imagine if we said to the doctors in this province, 'okay, you normally see seventy-five people a day. You are now going to see a hundred. I don't care how you do it, see them.' They wouldn't say that to any other professional in the world and still expect them to get the same pay and do as good a job. It's not sensical, you know.

It is interesting to note here that Darlene's comments are parallel to Denise's observation that the union wants it both ways. While arguing that teachers are workers and that it is dangerous not to think about teaching as anything but work, Darlene's comparison between teachers and physicians regarding workload draws upon the same discourse of professionalism that she earlier rejects when she says that she does not have the luxury of thinking about herself as anything but a worker and that "*one of the biggest problems with professionalism is that it sometimes creates this notion of [the] self-employed*" which, in essence, doctors are.

A rupture point in the professionalism/unionism dichotomy discourse: Work-to-rule

The dichotomy between professionalism and unionism is perhaps most noticeable, as Aaron pointed out in chapter six of this study, when teachers "*blink.*" In Aaron's view, problems arise when teachers get angry. He says "*when teachers get angry, parents get angry*" and he observes that it is only during such times that parents and the public realize how integral teachers are to their lives. Ingersoll (2003) writes about this phenomenon as well. He contends that a significant amount of the work teachers do as part of the normal routines of their jobs is, in fact, work that extends beyond the official expectations and requirements of the job. Further, he found that this workplace phenomenon—which he refers to in teaching as an "ethos of individual teacher responsibility"—is invisible and taken for granted. However, when this perceived ethos is challenged, it can become quickly and highly visible (p. 176).

For Ingersoll (2003), it is in "work-to-rule" strikes and job actions by teachers' unions where this ethos is rendered visible. It is in these circumstances that teachers

literally work according to the formal rules and contractual obligations of their jobs. Working the minimum number of expected hours, teachers do not participate in extracurricular or many of the other countless voluntary activities that teachers typically engage in such as

telephoning parents, assigning and grading homework, participating in after-school extracurricular activities, writing college or job reference letters for graduating students, helping students complete college applications, conducting rehearsals, after-school tutoring, helping with holiday programs, sponsoring clubs, serving on committees, chaperoning field trips, and preparing for graduation exercises, among others.

(pp. 176-177)

According to Ingersoll, school efficiency erodes very quickly in “work-to-rule” situations and it becomes evident to the public almost immediately that teaching consists of much more than many assume it does. As Ingersoll said, when this realization occurs, and as Aaron has noted above with the “*blink*” comment, it comes as both a surprise and an annoyance to the public. Ingersoll (2003) writes

it is for just this reason that work-to-rule job actions by teacher unions can be a powerful tool for collective bargaining. They bring to attention the fundamental tension between control and consent—the fact that organizations need, and benefit from, the goodwill, commitment, and consent of their employees.

(p. 177)

Criticisms of work-to-rule job actions typically include charges that such actions are illegitimate because they demonstrate that teachers are selfish, lack care and commitment toward students, and demonstrate a lack of professionalism. Ingersoll (2003) points out that the assumptions about a profession that underpin this argument are based upon attitudinal rather than structural characteristics and that the kinds of voluntary tasks referred to above are in fact not extra efforts to be rewarded but obligations to be

expected. Ingersoll continues that the assumption embedded in this view is that teachers are accountable for the social growth and well-being of the students while in school and not the larger community (Ingersoll, 2003). He writes

Such criticisms can be highly effective in reasserting and reinstitutionalizing these normative mechanisms of control, to the extent to which teachers themselves accept their altruism as a legitimate obligation, as a necessary part of what being a professional, and hence feel guilty of shirking their responsibilities.

(pp. 177-178)

As Ingersoll astutely observes, work-to-rule campaigns can be employed by teachers' unions as a powerful collective bargaining strategy. They have been particularly effective. However, it is my contention that just as the extent to which teachers themselves accept their altruism as a legitimate obligation and as a necessary part of what being a professional, teachers' unions must acknowledge that employing a work-to-rule campaign as a collective bargaining strategy also reinforces and resinstitutionalizes the tension between professionalism and unionism, not only among members of the public but among teachers as well. This tension, as shown by the interview data in this dissertation, plays itself out in teachers' daily lives in multiple ways. Indeed, as Darlene, Barbara, Diane and others point out below, perpetuating both views is dangerous and contributes significantly to the perception problems that teachers feel they have among members of the public, the media, the government, administrators, teachers themselves, and as will be shown in the next chapter, the Ontario College of Teachers.

A rupture point in the professionalism/unionism dichotomy discourse: Union stereotypes

The tensions between unionism and professionalism are also evident when participants comment on the stereotypical image they sense a teacher's union, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, has of teachers. For Aerlyn, the image is male and aggressive. She describes how she pictures the "union teacher" as

a male who has been in the profession for about seven or eight years; he's probably approaching the grid and he's tired of the job; the energy is maybe not as much there as it used to be, or maybe never was and he wants to get paid more now because he's, you know, he is probably approaching middle age and wants to be, get more money!

And she adds,

I really picture the union person really as, it's men, male and I wonder if, I mean it makes sense to me—I mean men, especially, I have always said if men have to be the main bread winner in the family and they are teachers they better get in there and fight because you know, things aren't going too well [laughs] for them, so. . . .

In contrast to Aerlyn, Belinda suggests the stereotypical image portrayed by teachers' unions is female; however, this teacher is an "over-worked haggard-old lady, that must be forced to do three hundred hours of cafeteria supervision and on calls and not be recognized and [she has] poor benefits."

Interestingly, both Aerlyn and Belinda suggest that the teachers' union portrayal of teachers can be compared to the image they perceive is portrayed by the Ontario College of Teachers. For Aerlyn, the image of the teacher presented by the College of Teachers is more professional in that it is female and an elementary level teacher who is there to promote and enhance the teaching profession. According to Aerlyn, women want

to be professionals without fighting and, whereas the union is there to fight, the College of Teachers is there to enrich.

Although Belinda also compares the teachers' union portrayal of teachers with that of the College of Teachers, this portrayal is quite different from Aerlyn's. For Belinda, the image presented by the College is one where the teacher is

up there as this glossy professional, wearing a three piece suit and with all of [her] lesson plans all computer processed and [she has] got eight computer labs at [her] disposal and [she has her] Palm pilot ready to go and, on a whim [she] can tell you any mark from any student in the past 20 years.

For Belinda, neither this image nor the union image is accurate. She says the reality is "somewhere in between" and, she adds, "the reality of every day teaching is in between."

The tension between the portrayals of the teacher as a worker as opposed to the portrayal of the teacher as a professional is understood by many of the participants in this study to be directly related to the perceived purposes of teachers' unions generally. For some, such as Aerlyn and Tom, the notion that professionals can actually be unionized is questionable with Aerlyn wondering "how many professions have a union?" and Tom wondering if teaching is the only profession that has a union. Tom's comments about the purpose of the union reveals some degree of ambivalence. He says

I signed the union card. I have some allegiance. There is strength in numbers. I think that you have to follow, in some sense, that whole notion of solidarity. That's how we negotiate. That's the current context. 'Okay, I've got to do my part for that.'

While Tom believes that there is some ethical obligation to supporting the union, he also admits that, at times, he decries that obligation and that he doesn't want to fulfill it because "it's just another obligation." He says, "you are handcuffed at your knee, as a

teacher. Management handcuffs me, labour handcuffs me and I am not able to do my job. That's the frustration."

A rupture point in the professionalism/unionism dichotomy discourse: Altruism versus employee contract rights

For Barbara, the dichotomy between professionalism and unionism is related to the history of teaching itself and to the conflict between the altruism often associated with teaching and the important aspects of teachers' working conditions. In her view, *"teaching was not always a unionized profession, but that it has become unionized profession now."* The union, according to Barbara, *"holds [her] professional qualifications [and paperwork],"* but *"not [her] professionalism."* Although she always knew it was the vehicle through which she would get certified, she also states that

the union always did seem to speak up for teaching as a profession in terms of bargaining for contracts and their role was always to elevate the profession, to give teachers more status, control over their work environment, and all the different labour conditions [such as] class sizes, to create a better education system.

Whether it is true or not, Barbara reveals, she *"bought into that"* view of the teachers' union. Although Barbara does not know for sure whether her understanding of the purposes and functions of her teachers' union is accurate, she indicates that she agreed to them, whatever they may be, when she signed her contract to teach because it was they who, in her view, were negotiating a better system of education and a better working environment and therefore making a better classroom for her to be a better teacher.

Barbara admits that she bought into the view of the union as her friend and as an entity that worked to create a better education system generally. But she also admits that when it comes to salary and remuneration, central issues of concern to teachers' unions,

the altruistic views of teaching that are frequently associated with professionalism become both problematic and paradoxical and result in teachers being “*damned if they do and damned if they don’t.*” She argues that because teaching is “*not a business model;*” it can never be justified the way other professions are validated because, in Barbara’s view, “*salary does validate a profession.*” According to Barbara, if teachers want or are going to improve their status as professionals, they should follow the logic of the market economy workplace. But she adds, this is something that will never happen because teachers are highly unlikely to acknowledge publicly that they have achieved a six figure salary given the public perception that teaching is “*like the priesthood, an altruistic profession.*” Paradoxically, she observes, “*if teaching is truly altruistic, it should not be remunerated and yet if it’s an altruistic profession, it’s a profession and professions are remunerated.*”

Barbara, like Denise earlier, seems to suggest that teachers are either trapped by or seem to perpetuate their own suspension within the discourses of altruism because they will never be more vocally aggressive with regard to remuneration. In making her argument, Barbara alludes to the common practice that occurs in the business world where “*CEOs and CFOs [get] their bonus packages.*” She suggests that the titles ‘CEO’ or ‘CFO’ only have an impact because they are followed by a six or eight digit bonus package; on their own, she proposes “*these titles at a clerk’s salary or at an entry level salary is just a fancy entry-level position.*” It is Barbara’s belief that CFO and CEO are “*only important the way [teachers] are defined by our summers. CEOs and CFOs are really defined by their salaries and their professionalism comes from their salary.*” Barbara concedes that teachers are their own worst enemies because they are not

operating on the same playing field [as CEOs and CFOs]. . . . We don't feel justified in asking for financial remuneration as proof of . . . an important job in a society that values an important job that defines an important job by the money that it pays, by money that it receives.

For Barbara, teachers are “*doing it to themselves*” because they can never say publicly that they deserve more money. She says, “*it's not in the vocabulary. And those that say it are the 'bad teachers.'*” In her view, the public view of teaching is that teachers are not in the profession to make money. Yet, ironically, she remarks, teachers “*work in a market economy where the amount of money you make defines the importance of your job*” so, she adds, if teachers want or are going to improve their status as professionals, they should follow the logic of the market economy workplace, something she says will never happen.

If you follow that logic to its logi. . . if you take that to its logical conclusion it's very frightening because if we want teachers to be, if you want to raise the profile of the profession of teaching, you need to raise the salary. It'll never, we're just not the group to do that. It just, we, historically perhaps? I don't know.

The union as watchful parent

Natasha understands that one of the purposes of the teachers' union is “*to give [teachers] a voice,*” but she remains ambivalent toward the union and she indicates that it is important to question the agenda of the union. For her, the union is “*sort of the parent who is watching over [her] and saying you have to do this, you can't do that*” regardless of whether the teacher might think it is good for the student or not. This surveillance function of the union is, for Natasha, not unlike that enacted by her school administration but, she concedes, with the union, the surveillance is “*just on a larger scale.*” Natasha also discloses that she is sometimes paralyzed because she perceives the expectations of

the union and the expectations of the school administration to be incompatible. She explains

then all the conflict comes in where what administration might be watching teachers for is not always what the union is watching for so you again, that whole schizophrenia comes in where you don't want to anything because one of these bodies, one of these sort of groups might be upset with you. You feel like you kind of don't want to do anything.

This paralysis that Natasha reports she feels is also exemplified when she describes the conflict she feels about the union stance taken toward the government-imposed, College of Teachers implemented recertification program. As she says, she was conflicted over her desire to get credit for courses she might take and the union position that teachers not submit the acknowledgment of completion form to the College of Teachers. Again, the result of being positioned in the intersection of these conflicting obligations, Natasha becomes immobile:

It sat on my desk and sat on my desk because I didn't really know what I thought about it because I thought "well you know, it's all well and good to fight" and "okay I don't feel I need to be tested or recertified or whatever, so I am not going to sign this and if I do take courses, I am going to do it for me and I don't care" and then I felt but, then I started thinking about is that just sort of not picking your battles wisely and then I felt "but if I go through all this and I do take these courses and I enjoy them and [inaudible] then why shouldn't I get credit? I am getting credit for it why shouldn't I get that credit recognized?" and I thought about it but I didn't know what to do. It sat there and it sat there. . . .

Suspicious of union motives

The suspicion that Natasha had concerning the motives and agendas of her particular teacher's union is indicative of a more general discourse about the political nature of union work that emerged throughout the participant interview data. Aerlyn, for example, draws attention to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation to print

material to highlight the politics. She says *"the material they print out is very political; it is usually written by men actually, when you start to look at it and it has a different flavour. It's all, you know, work conditions. . ."*. Tina, as well reveals her perception of the political nature of the work of teachers' unions. In her case, she suggests that the level of interest and involvement with the union must be something she could identify with, and not something she perceived had a political agenda for the sake of politics. She discloses that she rejects any sort of union thrust, because it was always her impression, not *"from any study or real experience,"* that the whole group preservation of the union wasn't necessarily the stance one should take on every single issue. She recounted an instance where she saw one of her colleagues, who had been reading about a group of unionized workers, told her he *"wanted to support some union somewhere, just because it was a union,"* as the time when she realized that she *"was just so not that person."* For Tina, it was very important to know *"how these issues relate to [her]"* unlike her colleague who told her he would *"be there in a heartbeat,"* being *"the guy with doughnuts [who had taken] the day off [his own work so he could] support these guys."* From Tina's perspective, her colleague *"didn't even know what he was supporting"* and so she added, *"you have to weigh that in whatever you are reading about."* She noted as well that much of the union influence on her as a teacher was minimal and that for much of the work done by the union, she had to wear a filter because *"a lot the stuff isn't germane"* to what she did as a teacher.

This analysis suggests then, from a Foucauldian perspective, that the regulation of a union member's behaviour can be seen as a disciplinary technique that is employed to regulate, govern and essentialize a teacher's identity. Teachers are expected to comply

with the union's perspectives despite their disagreement or misgivings about those perspectives. The union expectation is that the individual teacher will act in ways that conform to the particularized collective identity it wishes to sustain. Similarly, as this study will reveal in a later chapter, teachers are disciplined by the discursive practices that are enacted by the school administration. Here, too, teachers are under surveillance and their subject positioning limits opportunities for dissention. Although the limitations inherent in these competing and contradictory teacher positionings are directly acknowledged by teachers, they are able to find ways, whether effective or not, to address or at least manage these conflicts. In some instances, this navigation is accomplished through inactivity; in others, the conflict is dismissed outright.

Perceptions of the local teachers' union vary by district²

The data in this study suggest that the perceived value of the local teachers' union is highly variable among school districts. Two of the participants in the study, Diane and Barbara, noted that their local Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation union in their new school districts were markedly different from those in the district that

² The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation is a provincial organization that has many standing committees and councils which are supported by provincial office staff (secretariat) members, and member volunteers. Its legislative body is referred to as the Provincial Council and acts on behalf of the federation between annual meetings. The federation is comprised of "bargaining units" organized into 35 "districts" which represent geographic areas of the province. Essentially regional offices which often employ their own administrative staff in buildings owned by OSSTF, these districts receive a rebate of members' fees based on a formula. All bargaining units and districts must constitutions and an elected executive. Members elected by their peers to lead bargaining units are often full-time employees on leave from their jobs who serve the membership at the local level. Districts hold annual meetings to elect members, set budgets and amend constitutions. It is at the district level that members decide what is to be negotiated within provincial priorities and vote to accept or reject collective agreements. Within each district, each school or workplace is designated as a "branch" that has its own site-specific elected president and executive members. Among other things, the branch president acts as a liaison officer between the branch or workplace and the bargaining unit, the district and or the provincial executive.

incorporated Metro East Secondary School. In Diane's case, her perception of the union local in her new district was much more positive than that in her former district.

In Diane's new board, she reports, there were even committees in place in which the board and the union worked cooperatively on strategies to help teachers. Here, she notes as well, that teachers' anger is not directed at the board at all nor is it directed at the union. In this board, Diane has observed, there is a "*far greater feeling of solidarity and compassion*" where people who stand up at staff meetings receive support from colleagues who have experienced conflict over the extra-curricular situation.

The difference between this attitude and the one of her former school and board just "*blew [Diane] away*" which, she adds, "*is what attracted [her] to the board.*" When she went to this board, she says

even though it wasn't in any contract, they paid outside people to do lunch duties, and after school duties and morning duties and the teachers didn't have to do [supervision] while they were having to do four out of four. . . . [Furthermore] they made a point of constantly stressing, 'this is a job. Your health and your family come first' in staff meetings which I thought well, you know, are you for real?

In attempting to account for this difference in attitude and approach to relationships with teachers, Diane surmises that because the administration must have been part of it also, there was a trickle-down effect because, she observes, "*even the union/board had committees together to help think of ways to help teachers during this time.*" While the sense she had was "*was really alien to [her],*" the feeling she had was that teachers and the board were "*in this together.*"

Barbara also notices a significant difference in both the quality and intensity of union activity in her former district as compared to that in her new district. Because her

new school board *“is so financially strapped,”* the power of the union has been reduced significantly. She says the union’s ability to create a cohesive profession has been eroded because the union spends more time advocating for money to keep the pools open to maintain swimming programs than it does worrying about professional issues. She says, *“I mean you can’t get something from nothing, so it’s been really, even the union’s ability to create a cohesive profession has been eroded.”* To illustrate her meaning, Barbara relates a specific example of how her district school board had a recent Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation sponsored professional activity day which she attended. She describes how the day unfolded:

And, 6000 teachers, down at the coliseum. They moved the horses out, 6000 teachers down at the coliseum. Herded in, no pun intended, but certainly herded in. We would listen to two speakers. Here is an opportunity for a professional body, a union, to create, elevate, establish, reinforce, reintroduce [laughs], you know, the idea of teaching and what they did is we have two guest speakers, one wonderful man, Alfie Kohn, you might even be familiar with his research on testing and stuff, talk about bad standardized tests to a group of people that applauded his every – brilliant speaker, I loved listening to him – who applauded his every breath [pause] . . . [softly, as if a parenthetical expression] “we know, yada, yada, go on [as in continue, tell me something I didn’t know – my addition] Go on. [laughs] True, you know, less, do [inaudible], I mean, but the day could have been spent so much more effectively and yet we were there sort of in a pr, I don’t want to say propaganda mode because it was valuable, what he said, [pauses] it just came from the wrong place, you know. It’s not, that wasn’t the union’s job to get us all together for a PD day to tell us, you know, that standardized testing is bad. Yeah, we know. Can we, can we do something more constructive?”

Barbara then describes the second speaker of the day:

You know, and then Linwood Barclay, in the afternoon. Another excellent speaker, funny man, wonderful writer in the Star to tell us how we’re undervalued. [emphatically] “Ya. Got it. You’re right.” Applaud [claps hands] again. “You are right, we believe you. Absolutely.” But you are talking to 6000 people who agree with you. You know, go talk to, you

know, go book out the Skydome during a baseball game and tell those people.

As Barbara observes, teachers know that “*standardized testing is bad*” and that “*teachers are undervalued.*” Her query of “*why are you spreading that message to us*” reveals her frustration and concern over the use of these resources which she pleads to “*please use in a different way.*” This example, for Barbara, is illustrative of her disappointment with having changed boards and expecting a louder union voice; instead, she was getting the same and less.

Barbara’s frustration with the inability and ineffectiveness of the union in her new board because of that board’s financial situation stands in stark contrast to her previous board, which, “*for all of its faults was able to supply the schools with the level of funding that at least worked.*” She reasons that, although there have always been tensions and an adversarial relationship between “*union and employer,*” the adversity “*was focused on teaching, making teaching better.*” The fight in her new board is about “*getting money for desks and making sure that the wiring is fixed.*” She adds, “*what a teacher is and what a teacher’s role is in the classroom really doesn’t figure in the equation.*” Barbara provides an analogy to describe the situation and conditions in her new board

it’s almost like you need food before you can, you know, you need food, you need your basic needs, your food, your shelter, your clothing before you can start thinking about, you know, the philosophical, before you can start thinking about [imitates a philosopher] “hmmm, I wonder what’s, you know, I wonder what I am going to do tomorrow.” [Never mind] thinking about tomorrow, because you need to eat today.

In contrast to her previous board, the teachers’ union in her new board is

not even concerned, as a whole right now, about the profession of teaching because [the union is] too busy dealing with how to keep the pools open and how to keep, I mean the sort of very nitty-gritty essentials

.....

From Barbara's perspective, the fact that her board cannot afford to "keep the pools open" is yet another example of where teachers get blamed.

It's the teacher's fault. You know, the pools aren't open, it's the teacher's fault. Somehow, it's the teacher's fault. If, maybe if teacher's worked in the summer, I don't know. [Or if they just didn't ask for so much more money, then there should be enough to pay for the pools].

Barbara's expression of her need for more meaningful professional development opportunities is supported by Bascia's (2000) contention that

teacher unions can do more than merely respond to the concerns of the public and policy makers or function as alternative technical assistance providers; they have an obligation to be responsive to their members. Teachers are critical of their unions' sponsorship of professional development when those strategies do not reflect the support teachers believe they need—and which are in fact their organizations' legal obligation to provide.

(pp. 387-388)

Predominantly negative perceptions of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Many of the participants in this study have viewed teachers' unions with a high degree of ambivalence. Yet, some participants placed considerable value on unions generally. Barbara and Darlene, for example, very much value the role that the teachers' union can and does play in influencing teachers' working conditions which, in Darlene's view at least, is directly related to professionalism. For Barbara and Darlene, in a way similar to the conclusions drawn by Bascia's (1997a) studies of union-active teachers, membership and involvement in union work was never questioned. In Barbara's case, she took it for granted that the union was an integral part of her occupation as a teacher. In Darlene's case, her family history and the immediate neighbourhood in which she was

raised strongly influenced both her decision to become a teacher as well as her decision to become actively involved in the union. She says,

Everybody I knew who I was growing up with was in a union. There was no question that you were positive about unions. There was no question that it made the lives of the, all my friends' dads that worked at Pittsburg Paints better, you know, and they were on strike for a couple of years.

In contrast to these positive perceptions of unions, however, the majority of the participants in this study have viewed the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation negatively. Some participants' comments, such as those made by Aaron, confirm Bascia's (1997a) finding that involvement in union activity suffers from a somewhat negative reputation. In Aaron's view, unions are little more than vehicles for union leaders to pursue their own self-interest in order to position themselves for a bigger role. As evidence to support his contention, Aaron says that one need only look at union leaders such as Syd Ryan who after "*shouting left, right and center for his employees*" runs for public office. From Aaron's perspective, working in unions at the local level is a way in which individuals can then methodically work themselves up to a higher level. Consequently, he maintains that the union is ultimately ineffective at representing teachers' interests because the leaders are really out for themselves and they are unlikely to do anything "*to ruffle feathers because ultimately or eventually, [these union leaders] will be partying with these people [later on].*"

Other participants in this study lamented the fact that they had no choice in becoming a member of the union. For some teachers, such as Tom, Natasha, and Denise who acknowledge and recognize that they owe some sort of moral obligation to the teachers' union, the conflict is seemingly manageable. For others, mandatory membership

in the teachers' union causes anger, resentment and ultimately a very negative impression of the union which in turn, reinforces the professionalism versus unionism dichotomy. Aerlyn, for example, contends that the lack of opportunity to choose whether or not to become a member of the union is particularly unfortunate for new teachers. Recalling her own experience of becoming a teacher, she observes that nobody asks teachers when they 'sign up' whether they would like to be a member of the union. Furthermore, once someone becomes a teacher, the expectation is to abide by the union's rules. If the teacher disagrees, Aerlyn declares, he or she is disciplined. As an example of what she means, Aerlyn recounts how, during the summer in which our interview occurred, the union in her school board, 'pink listed' summer school; teachers who otherwise would have taught summer school were prevented from doing so. Aerlyn noted that *"that caused huge anxiety for people because there are some people who depended on that income for the summer and to hear the union is saying 'no, absolutely not, you can't work.'"* She adds,

now, it ended up being effective but how professional is that? I mean they are denying people their right to make money and. . . . Like I can't be part of this big collective you know, 'ra, ra, picket thing.'

Because of her frustration and dissatisfaction at having to be part of the union and the fact that she does not identify with the union and its *"ra, ra, picket thing,"* Aerlyn empathizes with teachers who are new to the profession. She says:

I have to feel for some of these younger teachers who, they have no idea and then some union guy, or, woman has to go in and say [officially], "you know, you shouldn't be coaching because according to rule 960" well, you have no clue about that rule.

As a new teacher, Maureen confirms Aerlyn's view. For example, she says that she is uncertain about what OSSTF does. She indicates that although she knows it is a union and that as such it is *"supposed to look out for [teachers],"* she also recalls that

"when [she] came in, nobody ever sat [her] down and told her 'okay, this is what [the union] does for you.'" Instead, she recalls, "all [the newly hired teachers] were told [was] 'it's contract, contract, contract'" and then they were invited to become involved in the branch (as a member of the executive). Maureen recalls how no one accepted the invitation because she and the other new teachers were aware that their involvement would be "*career suicide*."

Maureen says that she would never join her local district even though considerable pressure was placed on new teachers to become involved so that they "*could be in the trenches sort of thing*." She recalls basing her decision not to become involved upon hearing that, every time a teacher who had been actively involved in the union, especially because they had been actively involved in the striking, when they received their schedule for their next year's timetable or their supervision schedule, "*they got screwed over on their time table*." Maureen did not want that to happen to her. Because of this, Maureen says, ever since she began teaching at Metro East, the union has been, in her mind, "*almost always a negative thing, just by listening to what people say*." From what Maureen has gathered, the union "*hasn't helped anybody*," and she has noticed that

when the union does do something, especially when one teacher talks about another teacher, you are supposed to go and let them know twenty-four hours' notice and it is so funny, sometimes the things that come out that is the silliest thing.

Maureen's perception, that a teacher's involvement in the union is akin to career suicide, illustrates and reinforces once again a discourse of professionalism that limits what kind of teacher will get promoted within the educational hierarchy. Teachers who are perceived by those in educational administration as union-active or critical are

disciplined in a variety of ways including, among others, having their careers cut short by being denied promotions within the school and/or board, having their preferred teaching assignments taken away from them or, as will be shown in a later chapter of this dissertation, being positioned as a child at staff meetings where individual teachers are separated from one another to thwart any attempt at resistance. In Maureen's case, the acknowledgment of the discipline that ensues from union involvement is powerful enough to prevent her from accepting the union as her friend, as Barbara had. This discourse of professionalism effectively and summarily negates teacher unionism as an option.

The perceived role of unions in the construction of leadership discourses

Bascia (1997a) has pointed out that one of the reasons some teachers become involved in union activity is because they are interested in pursuing leadership positions within education more generally. Denise, in this study, for example, has observed that in her former board, prior to the removal of principals and vice-principals from teachers' unions, a teacher's direct involvement with union activities was viewed positively as a way for the teacher to acquire skills and abilities that were seen to be necessary for assuming other leadership positions such as vice-principal or principal. She acknowledges however that frequently, in her view, a teacher's involvement in the union as a way to assume leadership positions involves the setting up of "*power relationships [that are] abusive, manipulative, and take advantage of people.*"

In contrast to now, rightly or wrongly, Denise recalls that when she first began teaching, the relationship between administrators and the union was friendly and collegial

but also manipulative. Denise says that when she first started teaching 14 years ago, she recalls that very early into the school year, she was approached by her school vice-principal, who at the time was very close friends with the current district union president, and was, in her view indoctrinated by the vice-principal's subtle invitation to dinner and to her first union meeting. She describes this indoctrination process:

But see, young teachers, that was how they, you were indoctrinated, I guess, almost, right? There was definitely a process, I am calling it indoctrination, you know, subtle though it might be, where you're invited to the vice-principal's for dinner and that is like a big deal when you are a first year teacher on probation and you go for dinner and you go to your first union meeting and then you know, you are invited to go down to, like Hamilton, and the principals were on the busses and part of that movement at the time, and so that, an awareness of yourself, a teacher's political life for us in those days came very early in our teaching careers and it was a positive thing and I think in those days, even to become a principal you almost had to have some sort of union involvement.

To illustrate, Denise recounts, in the interview, how many of her board's current principals and superintendents held OSSTF or ETFO (Elementary Teachers' Federation Organization) positions. She states that *"it was expected"* and that that *"was how you learned about leadership, about labour practices, how to run a school without, you know, getting the board mired in a bunch of legal battles."* In contrast to today, she chuckles and adds, the union is now viewed as a pariah and furthermore, she says, it is highly unlikely that the branch president today is ever going to be a school principal.

Prior to the principals and vice-principals being removed from the union, Denise claims that the relationships between a *"department head, even teachers and the administration"* were quite different where, for example,

at get togethers like staff parties the principal was there [and] could have a beer and there was definitely a sense of [the principal] being part of a staff, like more a leader, a curriculum leader, a master teacher, and

intellectual leader. . . [someone] . . . [who] really understood teaching, it was a completely different relationship.

In those times, Denise reveals, even at union meetings and in staff meetings, there was a sense of deferral and mutual respect. To illustrate her point, Denise recounts how in her first school staff meetings were run by committee where the principal never determined the agenda.

It was staff meeting; it was a committee that the principal sat on but the teachers determined the agenda, the information items and conducted the meetings and the principal was there as a staff member and they were there for the OSSTF part meetings and discussion.

In contrast, Denise remarks that the staff meetings at Metro East, especially during 'The Troubles' "*just bordered on the ridiculous.*"

The analysis presented in this section has revealed that the perceptions that many of the participants have of unions generally and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation particularly is strongly influenced by the ways in which unions intersect with their daily work. The discussion has shown that among the participants in this study, the overwhelming perception of teachers' unions as particularized by the Ontario Secondary Teachers' Federation is a negative one. In the next section of this chapter, data are presented that reveal more directly the ways in which union discourses and the practices associated influence teachers' professional identities.

'The Troubles', Unionism, and Teacher Professional Identity

As mentioned in the chapter four of this dissertation, the period that Darlene and others refer to as 'The Troubles' included both the span of time during which the teachers in this district school board were on strike for three weeks and the year and a half to two

years which followed. Darlene reflects on this period as a time that her identity as a teacher and as a person was challenged in profound ways. As the local school branch president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation during this time, Darlene felt a strong sense that her identity during those years was "*in many ways more as a union leader than as a teacher*" where both her colleagues and her principal saw her as "*OSSTF incarnate.*" When asked whether she felt that identity was self-imposed or externally-imposed, Darlene acknowledges that it was a bit of both perhaps, although she prefers to call it self-embraced. Darlene states:

A bit of both, a bit of both. Everybody came to me for everything. She (the principal of the school) was after so many people; there were so many grievances, so many issues that we had to mediate. I was going to three meetings a week, at the union offices, at least three when I was district vice-president. There's a, a whole lot of work behind the scenes that no one ever sees. . . ran a new committee that we started. All that kind of stuff. So some of it was self-embraced rather than imposed. And some of it was I didn't have a choice.

Darlene speaks very strongly about the actions of the principal of the school during this time period, who, she reports, mounted a particularly hostile and deeply personal challenge to Darlene's identity:

She (the principal of the school) was out to ostracize me and make me look, if she could ostracize me, she thought she could silence the union and obviously that she made, right, cause she saw it as personal not as political. You know, she was out to get rid of my friends, she went after Monica, she got rid of Donnie, you know, I mean it was just, just ridiculous.

Although the challenge to Darlene's identity by the school principal and the circumstances in which Darlene was positioned (or positioned herself) was potentially one that would rattle many, Darlene was able to withstand the challenge because of her strong philosophical convictions and background:

But at the same time there was enough in my background and enough in my understanding of political theory that I, it was always a fundamentalist belief that I was right and she was wrong. She didn't break me. I am sure she rues that to this day, you know.

Professionalism equals unionism

For Darlene, the concept of professional is, in some ways, very much related to the work of teachers' unions. She recalls the labour problems that teachers in the province were experiencing when the Progressive Conservative government was redefining instructional time and increasing teachers' workloads. Darlene describes how she, through the union, worked hard to protect the three period workload; she notes that anybody who accepted the increased workload or collaborated in any way with the change, was in her view, not professional because *"there was no way that was good for teachers and there was no way that was good for students. It virtually killed people."* She adds that when she had to teach four out of four periods, it *"nearly killed her."* She says, *"I did not do a good job. I was not as professional as I wanted to be. Those kids suffered and so fighting that fight, I think, was the responsibility of a professional."*

Darlene says that she feels nothing but contempt for those teachers who did not resist the government's imposition of an increased teaching load. She believes that even though the job action taken by the teachers in her district school board was painful, it was necessary. Furthermore, in her role as a local school branch president, she says that she was one of the people who helped ensure that other teachers in the province did not have to teach seven periods.

You know, even though in my heart I still believe we are the reason the whole province doesn't have seven. I believe it, you know and I think that I was one of the people that made that happen and I have nothing but

contempt for people who sold out early. They disgust me. I don't think they deserve what we got but they are going to get it too which is the sad irony.

Since 'The Troubles' time period, Darlene's says that "*some of [her] sense of identity has been very good and some of it has been difficult.*" From her perspective, although the school principal was unsuccessful in breaking her, she was successful in many other ways. According to Darlene, the principal "*managed to clean house*" which resulted in about 85 teachers out of 120 staff either leaving the school for other schools in the board or schools in other district school boards or in some cases, leaving teaching altogether. Darlene claims that the principal hired, in her view, "*really young, really right wing, really privileged rich kids who, ideally had particular anti-union attitudes:*"

I think that is who she went after. I, you know, some of them have said to me since that she asked somewhat veiled questions like she is not supposed to about their attitude towards the union, right. She's not supposed to ask any of those kinds of questions at all.

Referring to them as "*dregs,*" Darlene also suggests that some of the teachers hired by the principal to replace those who left were of questionable quality. Others were, as Darlene puts it, "*just naïve . . . as we all were in those first couple of years:*"

And, maybe those are also the dregs, maybe those, some of those people are the ones who are left because we have serious doubts about the quality of some of those people who are here. Some of them are good; I don't want to suggest that. And some of them are just naïve, right, as we all were, in those first couple of years.

Veteran and new teachers: The importance of knowing past discursive practice

Darlene posits that many of the newly hired teachers reveal their naiveté when they refer to older teachers as "*just complainers.*" In her view, the fact that new teachers do not have an understanding of the history of 'The Troubles' is problematic. Darlene believes that this history is important for them to have. To illustrate, Darlene says that

the board's decision to restructure the role of the department head in its secondary schools to a new 'lead teacher' role has resulted in the role being "*degenerated into a materials handler.*" Darlene contends that first and second year teachers are applying for lead teacher positions because, "*they don't see that they can't do it.*" In some ways, Darlene says she cannot blame them for applying for these positions because "*quite frankly, what they've seen, they can do because it is a Joe job, you know.*" Given this situation, Darlene says that trying to maintain her professional integrity and any sense that her experience and knowledge of 20 years really matters is sometimes quite difficult because, as she puts it:

for the most part, for many of the young teachers it is a total lack of humility. A total unwillingness to learn anything from those of us who have been here awhile because we were characterized to them by admin as whiners and complainers and they shouldn't hang out with us, you know, so that makes it harder.

Because of her position as president of the union executive at Metro East Secondary School during 'The Troubles', Darlene emerges as a central figure in many of the tensions experienced by the teachers at Metro East. Some participants in this study have understood her as someone who has exacerbated these tensions. For example, given her position as union president and her characterization of many of the new teachers as the "*dregs,*" it is little wonder that many of them have responded negatively to the teachers' union. Recalling a comment they heard Darlene make in their presence that the board was "*scraping the bottom of the barrel*" when it hired new teachers to replace those who left, both Michael and Maureen, suggest that the union certainly has not won any support among those newly hired teachers. Maureen discloses that she recalls thinking "*I don't think I was at the bottom of the barrel. [laughs] Like I think I was*

happy that I got something in a subject area that I wanted to teach in.” But Maureen also reveals that she and many other of the new teachers “totally talked about it all of the time” and that such comments made them angry:

it just makes us angry because you shouldn't be thinking that we are at the bottom of the barrel. Like somebody might have said that about you a long time ago. You had to learn all sorts of new things when you came into teaching. Like nobody's perfect when you first come in to the door. Nobody is. And you just learn. Some people learn faster than others. So almost like you should be helping. I am sure somebody mentored you somewhere along the lines so why can't you do the same thing? I am not saying "hand over your binder." Even support in saying "how are you today, how did you do" or "have you had a prep period? Do you need a five minute break to use the washroom?" Or something. Anything like that would just be sort of you know, a pat on the back saying you are doing a good job. Or even saying "you are going to make it." And I know some teachers who do do that but then you have others that tell ya, you know. . . .

In trying to understand and make sense of the attitudes and behaviours displayed by the veteran teachers toward the new teachers at Metro East, Maureen admits that although she doesn't know where the bitterness comes from, she surmises that she sometimes thinks it is “*jealousy in a way.*” In Maureen's view, some of the bitter teachers are jealous because others, like herself, “*have survived through this whole ordeal in the last three years and [they] are still doing a good job.*” She also thinks that part of the jealousy stems from the fact that she and the other new teachers came through the change of the school's administration having had good relationships with both administrations. She speculates that

because of the entire strike situation from previous, maybe there wasn't such a good relationship with administration with a lot of these people so they felt as though we were getting stuff that probably we shouldn't have, like courses that we wanted, that they wanted, that belonged to them.

Maureen admits that she “*totally understands that*” and she says that

I think I'd be quite upset if I felt that I was being shafted [softly]—the terminology I am using! I, I honestly don't know whether they want us to look up to them because they are the old teachers. I don't know. I think that if I had a couple, ten years from now if new teachers came in and with different ideas from the colleges, I think that would be great because they have more energy than I will probably have in ten years from now, so I think it just bothers me a lot that people just can't put aside the bitterness or jealous feelings for various reasons, whatever they may have. Like some people that I still don't get, why they act the way they do.

Darlene's comments aside, Natasha, Maureen and Michael have all expressed how they felt pressured by not only the veteran teachers at Metro East but also the district union staff as well to know the union history in their district generally and at Metro East particularly. As the interview data reveal, their sense of being pressured is real. For example, Darlene comments that the new teachers have "*a total lack of humility*" and an unwillingness to learn anything from veteran teachers who, in her view, have been characterized by the school's administration as whiners and complainers. Even Tina, who in a later chapter in this dissertation reveals her sensitivity and empathy toward teachers new to teaching, declares "*there is no homage [from the new teachers at Metro East] to what [veteran teachers have been] through.*"

From their perspectives, Natasha, Maureen and Michael have each responded to this pressure in her or his own way. Natasha recalls that when she first started teaching at Metro East, she felt she was forced to know "*everything there was to know about the union situation and everything.*" She discloses that instead, what she was most concerned about was surviving as a first year teacher. Natasha indicates that her response to this pressure has been similar to the responses she gives to other stressful and challenging aspects of being a new teacher. For Natasha, this means, for now, she will "*play up*" her new teacher identity with its idealism and naïveté. She explains:

You know what I mean? Like I, it's that sort of very idealistic and naïve thing, "well as long as I get the lessons taught and the kids go home and they've learned a little something and you know they are a little better off than they were when they walked into my classroom then everything is okay. And I don't really, you know "oops I forgot to fill that form in" or "oops I forgot to vote on that." Just because I think, as a new teacher, I am trying to survive day to day in the classroom with all this other stuff right now is lower down on the list of priorities, which was really hard.

Once she feels more comfortable as a teacher, which she says she is gradually becoming, she will begin to investigate all the other obligations that she senses she has and how they affect her position at Metro East.

Maureen's response to the expectation that she and the other new teachers know and appreciate the history that veteran teachers endured has been to acknowledge it but also justify her own feeling that the expectation placed on new teachers is unwarranted. Maureen reveals that together, she and the other new teachers at Metro East have generally found so much negativity in the district school board and that because it has been occurring for so long, responses by veteran teachers to questions posed by new teachers either "*seem to be very hostile*" or "*always allude to back to 'when [they] were in the trenches kind of thing or 'when this happened'.*"

Maureen indicates that, as a relatively new teacher herself, she relates well to the other new teachers at Metro East; however, she also points out that she does understand what "*[the veteran teachers] had to go through*" and she "*wouldn't want to go through a strike.*" She recalls that during the strike, "*[she] was in teachers' college . . . [she] was supposed to be placed [in a school in this board] and so [they had to wait] for a whole month.*" She adds that although she is very happy that "*they did [the strike] to benefit [teachers like her],*" she does not like the expectation she senses from veteran teachers

that somehow she and other new teachers “*should have to pay back for some reason.*”

She says

I get that feeling a lot that well we should be thanking them all the time, but we weren't even here. And we do. I do say thank you, like you know, “I am really sorry that you lost four weeks of pay, like holy cow I wouldn't want to do that either.” But my time will come, I think, that I will have to do that exact same thing. But I don't think I would want to make the new teachers coming in feel like “well, now you've got to pay me back,” kind of thing.

Maureen expresses her feeling that she is often conflicted because of being positioned in this way, that “*it kind of splits you down the middle*” and she adds, “*there's no cohesive whole*” among the teachers. Maureen has also observed that the teachers who went on strike and still remain at Metro East “*always call themselves the veterans*” and she and the others who joined the staff are “*the new teachers.*” She says, “*a lot of them like to define it that way*” because, she speculates, “*there were so many new teachers in the school [and so] that's why they did that.*” In contrast to Maureen's understanding of how the more experienced teachers became to be self-named as veterans, Darlene and Barbara note that it was the new teachers who positioned them as veterans, and complainers and whiners.

As a chronologically older new teacher, Michael finds himself conflicted in ways that many other younger new teachers are not. Because Michael was hired shortly before the exodus of many of the teachers at Metro East, Michael frequently finds himself grouped in and positioned with the veteran teachers. Because he occupies these dual positions, Michael can understand both the new teachers' anger and resentment toward the veteran teachers as well as the views of the veteran teachers since he witnessed and experienced many of the same things they did.

Barbara's observation that new teachers do not view the union as their friend, as she did when she first became a teacher, is supported by Maureen's comments about her own feelings and those of the group of teachers with whom she socializes and also through Natasha's expressed ambivalence toward the union.

Using documents as a tool for sustaining union discourses and practices.

As further evidence to illustrate the ways in which the tensions between the new and remaining veteran teachers at Metro East unfolded in these teachers' daily lives, one of the participants in my study shared with me a notice that had been posted on teachers' workroom walls at Metro East Secondary School. Appearing on the next page, the document, titled 'Veteran Teachers' Luncheon,' was presumably created by (a) veteran teacher(s).

Veteran Teachers Luncheon
(Resignation Prevention Luncheon)

Topics include:

- self massage techniques (i.e. how to pat your own back)
- creative uses for coloured paper
- effective hall walking while holding a clipboard
- CYA (cover your ass) workshop – Sign up early – available only to those who have previously taken the KAWS (kiss ass with style) workshop
- budgeting and tax relief (after all the 1.5% increase rendered all of our tax sheltering efforts virtually ineffective/obselete [sic])
- diplomacy workshop: how to stand firm on any decision while making it clear you will always bow to the slightest parental pressure

MMMMmmmm! Refreshments will be available!

TBA

(Timbits may be available)

(Probably not since most of the funds available have been appropriated by new teacher get-togethers where one group of new teachers meets yet another group of new teachers and then all the new teachers gather around food to discuss exactly why there are so many new teachers and why we are not allowed to acknowledge the existence of any veteran teachers anyway?)

Please note if the seminar fails to prevent resignations, the following follow-up luncheons will be offered:

Resume padding - how to get your name on everything; nothing too trivial

Cover letter drafting - prioritizing the reasons you want to get the hell out!

Date Pending

(provided the new teachers find themselves sufficiently relieved of stress and energized)

* * * * *

This 'Veteran Teachers Luncheon' announcement document can be understood as evidence not only of the obvious tension and conflict that ensued between the new and veteran teachers at Metro East, but also as evidence of how teachers understood the ways in which those tensions unfolded in their daily lives. For example, by setting the document's intended audience as veteran teachers, the author(s) imply that there must

have been a series of new teacher meetings or luncheons where veteran teachers were not invited. This suggestion is reinforced by the topics to be included in the meeting. For example, the 'self massage techniques (i.e., how to pat your own back)' suggests that veteran teachers have not been acknowledged or recognized, presumably by the school's administration. 'The CYA (covering your ass)' workshop, 'KAWS (kiss ass with style)' workshop, and resume padding seminar topics suggest that veteran teachers perceive new teachers have been quick to apply for and accept the headship positions that many of the veteran teachers either resigned from or refused to apply for.

Documents and the incidents associated with them such as the one above provide an interesting opportunity to analyse the other, often more subtle discourses that frame teachers' work. For example, as pointed out above, such documents may serve their purpose by surfacing and highlighting discursive practices that veteran teachers perceive undermine their past collective efforts, such as the *enmasse* resignation of the department heads within the board. Posting such documents in workrooms and distributing them to teachers' mailboxes is intended to remind new (and veteran) teachers of the document's author(s)' perceived importance of the history of past collective efforts in which teachers have been engaged.

Other documents that are created by teachers and aimed toward their colleagues can profoundly affect the intended teacher's identity. Tina, for example, divulges that during 'The Troubles' at Metro East Secondary School, she and a colleague participated in a prank on Diane, assuming Diane would respond to the prank in the spirit in which it was done. Tina reveals that they fabricated a very sarcastic memo that had supposedly come from the district local union office warning teachers of the consequences of doing

or participating in certain actions. She recalls that the memo contained typical warnings such as "*If you cross the line, you'll get this. . .*" which was then followed, not by a list of punishments or sanctions, but rather by a list of rewards because "*the union didn't and wasn't having any success*" in moving the board along. So, she recounts, among the list of 'punishments' was more library time. Tina put a copy of the memo on Diane's desk, thinking she might find it funny. But, Tina concedes, she didn't. According to Tina, Diane "*totally took offence.*" In retrospect, Tina thinks her taking such offence was "*just her guilt projecting itself*" because, in Tina's view, the teacher just skipped over and ignored the rest of the memo which was "*anti-union, anti-union, anti-union*" and she just focused in on "*they think I sold out to get more library time.*"

Shortly after this incident, Tina recalls, Diane and Darlene "*had a blow up.*" Noting that neither was "*entirely accurate*" and that both may have been "*actually lying too,*" Tina recounts that when Diane had applied to be a lead teacher, Darlene allegedly "*gave her grief*" about her decision to apply and a terrible shouting match between the two ensued in their workroom in front of other colleagues. According to Tina's account, Diane accused Darlene of suggesting that nobody eat lunch with her and "*all of this nonsense.*" The shouting match, which Tina characterizes as "*ugly,*" unfolded in front of Tina and Barbara, who had also worked on the memo.

Because Diane perceived that Tina had a close friendship with Darlene, she stopped speaking to Darlene. Tina recalls feeling disappointed at the fact that Diane was still harbouring a grudge against Tina because she had, the very day of the fight between Diane and Darlene, invited Diane over to sit with her at lunch because she says, she didn't want to be like Darlene. Darlene, "*who wouldn't admit to saying don't sit with*

them but doesn't want you to sit with them” but she adds, that “*didn't go very far because Diane doesn't speak to [her].*”

As a result of this incident, Tina reports that Diane resigned and “*left in disgust*” from her teaching position at Metro East, transferred to another school board. Unfortunately, Tina concedes that these things do happen and it is her feeling that “*there is nothing [she] can do about what [she] truly think[s] was [Diane's] guilt.*” In Tina's view, Diane “*filled a position that people more nobler [sic] wouldn't have anything to do with.*” Diane's decision, Tina declares, was “*just opportunistic and people saw right through that despite her alleged loyalties to the department and what not.*”

Documents aimed at individual teachers such as the one authored by Tina and Barbara can often draw upon discourses that are subtle but which when examined provide interesting insights into teacher perspectives about, for example, the value they place on particular subject areas. This document, intended as a reminder and pressure tactic for Diane not to accept a headship position, listed the consequences for doing so. Included among these, which were intended to demonstrate the union's ineffectiveness, was the “*punishment*” of being assigned library periods. This particular choice of punishment draws on an unstated but clearly implied assumption on the part of Tina, Barbara, and presumably other teachers, that working as a teacher in the school library is not as difficult or challenging a job as is a regular classroom teacher.

Another example of a document created to exert pressure on teacher colleagues was one composed by Darlene³ and directed toward her department head. Because he

³ It is important to note that Darlene did not present this document to me within the context of this interview. When the document was submitted to the department head during the earlier part of ‘The Troubles,’ Darlene also distributed a copy of the memo to each teacher in the English department. Since I

originally indicated his decision to resign his headship position as Diane had done, Darlene felt she could not accept a timetable he participated in developing, especially given the union's direction that teacher timetabling was an administrative responsibility. As a response to this action, Darlene wrote a letter expressing her views and she distributed a copy of the letter to all of the teachers in the department.

In presenting her rationale for not accepting the timetable, Darlene writes that since it was wrong for the department head to timetable, it was "*equally wrong for [her] to accept it.*" She reasons that because timetabling had been removed from the department head job description in the *Education Act*, it was now considered by the union to be a voluntary activity—no different than coaching, running clubs or field trips. Consequently, Darlene felt that since it would be hypocritical for her to benefit from these voluntary activities, it would likewise be hypocritical for her to benefit from his timetabling. The letter points out that the department head's decision to renege on an earlier agreement to decline a timetable he received from the principal because she had given him a release period was being done at the expense of other teachers whereby some teachers may have bigger classes or another new teacher would have to teach four out of four periods. The letter cites an earlier conversation they had where Darlene informed him an individual teaching load wasn't technically grievable and that it would be up to the individual teacher to turn down a release period knowing it could come at the expense

was a member of the department at that time, I received a copy as well. While I kept this document over the years, it was never my intention to make use of it in this study. It is also important to reveal that my decision to interview Darlene was not influenced by my possession of this document. I did not seek Darlene's permission to refer to this document because it was distributed to all of the teachers in the English department and therefore I considered it to be within the public domain. My use of the document in this context is purely illustrative; it is not to judge Darlene or her action.

of others. The letter concludes with an admission by Darlene that her decision was made after much consideration and that she respectfully requested the department head please understand that her decision is *“an individual decision [she had] have made in order to maintain [her] loyalty to OSSTF and the integrity of the office to which [she] was elected.”*

Darlene's letter is noteworthy because it illustrates not only the power dynamics that can occur between and among teacher colleagues in times of conflict but also the extent to which the smooth operation of schools is dependent on teacher goodwill in assisting with such things as timetabling. While such an activity seems benign on the surface, it is a particular discursive practice which, as Ingersoll (2003) has observed, is a very powerful control technique involving the regulation and definition of what teachers can and cannot teach, often despite teachers' educational backgrounds, personal interests and preferences.

Darlene's letter to her department head also illustrates how discourses about teachers and teaching that are constructed elsewhere play themselves out in teachers' daily work lives. The complexity, multi-layeredness and concordant discourses that emerge through such documents contribute to the suspension of teachers in a perpetual state of fluctuation. For example, teachers are bound by collective agreements that create essentialist subject positions for them; in effect, they become aggregates. Is it possible for teachers to be individuals and yet be bound by collective agreements? As pointed out throughout this study, the discourses that construct teaching by teachers' unions, school boards, the government, the public, teachers themselves and the nature of teaching itself create impossible positions for teachers to occupy. As Darlene's letter illustrates, these

positions are both accepted and declined, occupied and vacated at whim. While conceding that it is one's prerogative to do so, especially because these positions are easily and readily available, occupying them without attending to the contradictory and incongruous discourses that intersect contributes significantly to the paralysis that many of the teachers in this study speak about. The effects of such documents on the identities of their intended targets can be significant. As pointed out by Diane below, the pressure tactics used by the union and the effects of the prank document forced her to leave Metro East.

Unionism and collegial relationships

Natasha's observation expressed above that she feels paralyzed at times because of the confluence of what she perceives to be competing expectations of her administration and the moral obligations she feels she owes the union and the College of Teachers is also expressed by several other participants in this study. As a few the participants have observed, sometimes this confluence is promoted and exacerbated by school administrators as they try to maintain control over teachers. During 'The Troubles', for example, Belinda reveals that in some ways she was penalized for having been involved in the union during 'The Troubles' at Metro East Secondary School. She recalls that she did not see eye to eye on a few things during the reign of the principal at the time. Just after the strike, when she was returning to teaching after a maternity leave, with a three year old and an 11 month old, the principal put Belinda "*right away on a four out of four*" teaching assignment although she hadn't been scheduled to teach four out of four originally before the strike. In addition, Belinda recalls that at the end of that

year, she spoke to the principal about some guidance positions that had come up. Belinda said that the principal informed her that “*until [she] could show that [she] was willing to work with the administration, [she] would not be given those positions because she (the principal) [saw] guidance as an arm of the administration.*” In response, Belinda said that she “*begged to differ*” and that her view of guidance “*involved being an advocate for the students and helping the students*” and that she “*could care less about [the principal’s] administration.*” Because of her comments, Belinda says she believes that she was not given any sections in the guidance department.

Diane recalls that when she taught at Metro East, a clear demarcation was made between the administration and the teachers’ union. It was during ‘The Troubles’ that the phrase ‘the admin team’ became popular. For Diane, the adoption of this identifier for themselves by the school’s administration only exacerbated the problem caused by the removal of principals and vice-principals from the teachers’ union. In her view, it was very clear from the administration that it saw teachers as “*on their own.*” She recalls believing that the implicit message from the principal was that if teachers did not comply with her, there was no avenue to complain even if they felt there was some discrimination or bias occurring. In Diane’s view, the conditions “*took away a chance to keep professionalism and allowed for a lot of blackmail*” which is, she adds with laughter, how she became department head.

She explains that during ‘The Troubles’ the considerable tension between the school principal and the union president for the school involved frequent attempts by one to bring the other down. According to Diane, as the tension continued to mount, the principal began a series of actions in the hopes of breaking the union president. One

action involved taking away the courses the union president liked and replacing them with courses she knew the union president “*couldn’t stand.*” In Diane’s view, this meant giving the president, who saw herself as “*a bit of an elitist teacher,*” general level classes.

As a result of this action, some problems began to occur among the teachers within the workroom Diane shared with the union president. In Diane’s account, while it would never be admitted, some people in the workroom were influenced by the union president to create chaos for the board by engaging in subtle work actions such as neglecting to conduct accurate book counts. She suggests that while this chaos meant to break the board’s back, it was actually doing more harm to teachers and Diane had hoped that perhaps if she accepted the acting history department head position the teachers in her area “*could get back to some sort of little haven.*” Diane discloses that because she accepted this role, she got threats from the union president and people approached her to let her know the union president had advised them against sitting with her at lunch hour and to inform her that she was “*basically stabbing the union in the back.*” Eventually, Diane found out that things that had been said about her by a third person were not true and because it became “*really insane,*” Diane felt that she “*just didn’t want to be there anymore.*”

Diane recalls that, just before she left Metro East to teach in another school board, she had never witnessed such childish and hypocritical behaviour among some of her colleagues. Characterizing that period of time as “*like being in high school yourself,*” she adds that she “*avoided that cool crowd when [she] was in high school and [she] would be damned if [she] was going to be sucked in when [she] was there.*” From Diane’s

perspective, teacher colleagues engaged in what that she referred to as “*backstabbing, false-faced, wishywashy back and forth*” behaviour.

Diane says that she has always admired someone who stood up for their principles even if she didn't like the person. But during the period just prior to her departure, she observed the same people who had been like “*the Nazis of the picket line*” suddenly “*scrambling for stuff that would help themselves out.*” In Diane's view, the hypocrisy was most evident among these individuals who, she says, held themselves up “*as real sacrifice for the cause*” during the strike and teaching four out of four periods and the other challenges that ensued. Yet, she notices, “*the first chance [they] got [they] could get cushy timetable[s] for [themselves], and [they] took it!*” Diane found it extremely difficult to witness such behaviours from these people who are so self-indulgent that they “*start to shut the outside world out as [their] way of surviving when [they] made people's lives hell*” earlier. Diane “*can't stand hypocrites*” and claims that several individuals, including Darlene, caused much pain and hardship for other people and were “*in many ways they are oblivious to the extent of the damage they did.*” Of Darlene, Diane says, “*Darlene killed my respect for unions. Killed it. And I really believed in the power of unions and now I feel they should be axed from the system altogether.*”

Diane resented the fact that Darlene and other members of the school's union executive who, because of the official union position on participating in extra-curricular activities, would berate and scold teachers who did so. She gives an example of how the union executive at Metro East “*went after*” one teacher who assisted in organization of and chaperoning of a school dance. Diane recalls how they “*attacked*” this teacher at the dance and let her know she was going against the union position and that she would not

receive any union support if anything happened because *"she shouldn't have been there in the first place."* Shortly after this incident, Diane observes, was the sheer hypocrisy of one of those same members of the union executive. She held her own rally to get parents to come to the school to talk about the extra-curricular German trip. The teacher said that doing so was somehow *"okay"* because it was supporting her teaching program. Diane says that these examples were typical during that time and that the hypocrisy was *"so much the vogue that people couldn't even hide it. That's unprofessional to me."*

During 'The Troubles', Denise and many of the department heads in the board submitted their resignations *en masse* because of the ways in which they perceived the board was treating them and its teacher employees generally. Her greatest fear was realized when once she resigned, the principal *"took that opportunity to bring in a teacher another principal was more than happy to get rid of."* She states,

the writing was on the wall there of what was going to happen and [the principal], we knew it, I mean there is no way that that could have worked and not only with me but with the rest of my department also saw that and in a way as a group we regretted this decision because we made the decision as a group too; it was talked about the resignation and what could happen and we all felt like we kind of cut our nose off to spite our face because it ended that working relationship that we really did have as a department despite our dysfunction sometimes

Denise indicates that she shared with her department colleagues her decision making process all along the way because at that point with the larger labour issues, the decision wasn't only hers. She reasoned at the time that whatever she decided, she would still have to work with the people in her department. She had seen how colleagues treated some of the other department heads who kept their headships. *"Most of them have now left because they lost the complete respect of their staff,"* she says. Denise also

comments, however, that her decision to resign also meant that the other teachers in the department would also have to leave because of their inability to work collegially with the new head, noting that *“every single one of them except Maureen, who is a first year teacher, left.”* In Denise’s view, *“that’s the way that [the principal] wanted it.”*

In Denise’s opinion, *“superintendents and some of our newer principals cannot understand a teacher who wants to be a teacher”* and she adds that she doesn’t think *“they understand that mentality.”* She says that because there was the massive resignation of so many of the department heads in her school board, the superintendents and newer principals have *“clearly panicked”* as evidenced by

giving headships to first year teachers [and] giving vice-principalships to people who you just have to shake your head and wonder because no one else wants to apply for them. And they really have a hard time with a teacher who doesn’t want to be a leader of other teachers and because I think as individuals they have left their craft behind, that being in a classroom most of the newer principals have absolutely no desire ever to be in a classroom.

In contrast, Denise observes, some of the *“old guard principals”* though *“they were not all great”* did at least *“[do] their dues for 20 years.”* Now, Denise observes, there are cases in her school board where people are *“getting on the list who have taught for four years”* and she wonders *“what the heck are they going to teach a teacher who has been in the classroom for 20 years?”* From Denise’s perspective, her board is having *“a hard time”* with leadership. She points out that

there is a huge group of teachers who have no desire to be, recognize that themselves, love being in the classroom, so they may choose leadership roles within the union because they see that system [of leadership] as being faulty.

Darlene claims that the school principal of Metro East was *“out to ostracize”* her and *“silence the union.”* As will be expressed by Denise in a later chapter, the principal

even went so far as to physically separate teachers who she perceived were plotting against her to sabotage her agenda. Perhaps not as overt, but nonetheless significant, Diane has observed as well, that the relationship between teachers and administration was soured even further by the seemingly simple adoption by the principal and vice-principals of the moniker 'the admin team'. Diane's observation and recognition of this practice highlight again the significant influence that language can have on teachers' perceptions of themselves and their positioning within schools.

Summary

The data presented in this chapter support the findings of Bascia (1997a, 1997b, 2000) in several ways. They support her observations that teacher unionism is

densely interwoven in the structural, material and normative dimensions of teaching, both shaping and reflecting surrounding working conditions, including authority relations with administrators, collegial interactions and the . . . nature of teaching itself.

(Bascia, 1997b p. 438)

They lend support to her contention that teachers are "socialized by their unions in important, often interrelated, intersecting and sometimes contradictory ways" (p. 395) and they illustrate her observation that the variety of teachers' opinions on the utility of unions in and of itself challenges the "one-size-fits-all" conception of teaching (Bascia, 1997a). Concomitantly, the data challenge the notion of an essentialized teacher identity. Interestingly, however, the interview data presented also suggest that like the discourses drawn upon by other members of the public, the media or the government, the discourses and discursive practices that are frequently employed by teachers' unions can construct

subject positions for teachers that are equally essentialist. Consequently, teachers can and do feel constrained, encumbered, immobilized, suspended, or paralyzed.

The chapter has revealed that the anti-union stance adopted by the Progressive Conservative government, particularly during the reign of Mike Harris, has had considerable influence on the construction of teachers' identities. By frequently insinuating that teachers' unions were against the 'common sense' discourses of quality and excellence and by accusing unions of poisoning schools, the participants suggest that the government was highly effective in portraying teachers' unions to the public in negative ways. Consequently and because their membership in unions is legislated in the province of Ontario, many teachers perceive this negative portrayal in ways which profoundly affect their identification with unions and teaching, in some instances denying, hiding or avoiding questions about their identities as teachers from the public and their families.

The data presented in the first part of the chapter have shown that teacher perception of the discourses articulated about them, both by the government and their union, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, were understood by them and framed within the larger discursive dichotomy of unionism and professionalism in teaching. The data suggest this dichotomy surfaces at particular times—in work-to-rule situations, through expressions of union stereotypes and when teachers engage in acts of altruism during periods of contract negotiations. Other findings in this part of the chapter include a perception that there is little difference between the union's surveillance of teachers and the surveillance of their work conducted by school administrators, a

suggestion that teachers' perceptions of the local teachers' union vary by district and a suggestion that unions play a significant role in the construction of leadership discourses.

In the second portion of this chapter, the data explore the ways in which teacher unionism played out in the participants' daily lives during a period referred to as 'The Troubles'. The data presented in this section provide a glimpse into how teachers navigate the discourses teachers' unions construct and sustain about teachers and the work of teaching. The data illustrate that for some teachers, there is no difference between teacher professionalism and teacher unionism. The descriptions of some of the events and practices that ensued between 'veteran' and 'new' teachers during 'The Troubles' illustrate the importance some teachers place on knowing a particular unions' past discursive practices. The 'Veteran Teachers Luncheon' poster and other such documents illustrate the extent to which some people will go to ensure that these union discourses are sustained. In the last portion of this discussion, the data present some of the ways in which teacher unionism affects the relationships teachers have among themselves and the relationships they have with their school administrators.

The chapter has revealed that teachers, by virtue of being a teacher in the province of Ontario, are forced to occupy positions such as union member that many feel are anathema to the images they have for themselves. Even for those teachers who accept such positioning, however, the interview data presented in this chapter have revealed that they do not do so uncritically— occupying the subject positions created for them through union discourses is sometimes highly problematic. The incidents recounted in the participant data between the principal and the teachers at Metro East illustrate the ways in which the contests over teacher unionism and teacher professionalism play out in

teachers' daily lives and the influences these tensions have as teachers attempt to understand who they are.

Bascia (1998) has pointed out that the media typically demonstrates little interest in teachers' work except when they want to "portray teachers and their organizational effects as selfish or obsessed with minutiae" (p.895). When placed alongside the previous chapter in this study where teacher perception of the role the media play in the construction of teacher identity was examined, this chapter has revealed that the 'minutiae of teaching' of which the media is often critical, have very real consequences in teachers' professional lives. The participant data provide concrete evidence of the intellectual, emotional and physical effects that can occur by the manipulation of such minutiae—for example, redefining 'instructional time' or by making mandatory voluntary work by manipulating language whereby 'extra-curricular' becomes 'co-curricular'.

As a final note about the data presented in this chapter, I feel it is important to acknowledge that while the data presented seem to suggest that the participants perceived unions as a largely negative influence on their identities, this might only be the case because of the time period in which the data for this study were collected. Similarly, it would be very misleading to suggest that the analysis provided here presents an authoritative, balanced or comprehensive portrayal of the ways in which new and/or veteran teachers at Metro East related to one another or the ways in which teachers related to each other and/or to the school's administration. I have intentionally chosen to highlight some views and by so doing I have excluded and silenced others. For example, although it is important to highlight new teacher responses to Darlene's characterization of them, it is equally important to acknowledge that the work that Darlene engaged in that

goes on behind the scenes is often hidden from teachers and is frequently ignored by them. As Bascia (1997a, p. 70) has pointed out, teachers like Darlene who engage in political work in their own schools and districts often risk the discomfort or dislike of administrators and colleagues and as will be examined in a later chapter, frequently they and the colleagues with whom they associate often pay a great price for the work that they do.

The dichotomies and polarities created by and through the discourses and practices of teachers' unions like the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation that influence the construction of teachers' identities are not unlike those created by the government-legislated self-regulatory body for Ontario's teaching population, the Ontario College of Teachers. The next chapter of this study will show as well that while it, too, creates essentialist subject positions for teacher to occupy, teachers not only resist and reject these positions for themselves but they question the authority of the College of Teachers to determine what their teacher identity should be.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NEGOTIATING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY WITH THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Introduction

Once it was elected to office in 1995, the Mike Harris government wasted little time implementing its version of the professionalization of Ontario's teaching population. Among its first tasks in this respect was the enactment of legislation to create the Ontario College of Teachers, the self-regulatory body for Ontario's teaching population. Ever since, the College¹ has endured both overt criticism from its membership and teachers' unions and covert criticism from the very government that created it, with much of this criticism being levelled in response to the perceived purposes of the institution. Teacher members have viewed the organization with hostility seeing it as little more than a vehicle to punish them and revoke their licenses to teach. Teachers' unions have viewed it as an organization that has usurped their power to discipline their own members and as a bureaucratic vehicle for taking money from their membership. Since its creation, union opposition to the College has played itself out politically with slates of union-sponsored candidates running for membership on the College's governing council. Once elected, power struggles between the union slate of members and the government-appointed members were frequent occurrences. These conflicts have been especially apparent when

¹ In most instances when references are made to the Ontario College of Teachers as 'the College', the reader should infer these to mean the Council of the College. In those instances where the reference may seem to imply that the institution is a 'body' or corporate entity, this is done so intentionally to reflect the author's perception that some degree of ambiguity is sometimes manifested in its publications and practices.

the Progressive Conservative government that created it solicited advice from the College. Frequently, the advice given by the College was ignored because it did not support the government's policy direction in areas such as mandatory teacher testing, for example.

Since 1995, the Ontario College of Teachers has been struggling to express to its members and the larger public how it sees itself and the role it plays with regard to teachers' working lives, administrators' working lives, teachers' unions, teacher preparation institutions and organizations, and the provincial government. The first part of this chapter argues that among self-regulating professions, there are competing meanings of regulation and standards. Further, I present the case that these competing meanings become even more problematic when applied to the teaching profession. The discussion in this section then focuses on the Ontario College of Teachers specifically and examines the understanding of regulation and standards that emerge through selected texts produced by the College. The discussion suggests that the conflict the College has been struggling with parallels the enduring conflict among competing discourses of professional, professionalism and professionalization in teaching. In the second part of the chapter, the participants of this study express their understanding of and response to the College as their self-governing body and its influence on their professional identities. The data suggest that while the majority of participants view the College as an arm of the government, many wish this were otherwise. The last part of the discussion focuses on participants' responses to the College's publication *Professionally Speaking/Pour parler profession*.

Competing Notions of Regulation and Standards

In writing about the history of self-governing professions in Canada, Casey (2003) observes that while many modern professions existed in the era of pre-Confederation, it was “only the legal and medical professions that were established as self-governing to any significant extent” (p. 1-1)². According to Casey (2003), this began to change as the other professional groups became better organized and began lobbying legislatures to extend self-governance powers to their particular professions. In those instances where it was granted, self-government consisted of the organization having the authority to act as a gatekeeper to the profession through its licensing powers by determining the qualifications of prospective members through some assessment mechanism. In addition to the granting of qualifications, the organization was also empowered to regulate the conduct of the licensee by establishing rules of practice and standards of conduct enforceable through a discipline process (p.1-1).

Casey (2003), citing the Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights *McRuer Report* (1971, p. 1183), points out that historically there have been three groups with an interest in the effectiveness of and fairness of the self-governance of professions: the public, the profession itself, and members of the profession who are subject to regulation and potentially, discipline. Casey (2003) posits that for the public, the single and most important reason a self-governing profession exists is to protect its interest by ensuring that only the qualified and the competent are permitted to practice and that members of the profession conform to appropriate standards of professional conduct (Casey, 2003,

² Casey's (2003) book does not contain serial pagination from beginning to end. Because the beginning of each chapter is paginated with a 'one,' the chapter number appears hyphenated alongside the page number.

p.1-3). Casey (2003) argues that the profession's interests are concerned with the proper functioning of the organization both to ensure that the incompetent and unethical are identified and removed from its membership and that the public perceives the profession to be functioning properly in its interest (Casey, 2003, pp. 1-3). Finally, Casey (2003) suggests that for those members of the profession who may be subject to discipline, the central interest is because "disciplinary sanctions can lead to the loss of one's profession, the loss of one's work" (pp. 1-1-3).

Although the creation of the Ontario College of Teachers was done under the auspices of the Progressive Conservative government of 1996, it is important to note that the idea of a college of teachers had been circulating for some time prior to this government's election into office³. As Gidney (1999) notes, the original plan for and structure of a college of teachers was set in motion under the direction of education minister David Cooke of the former NDP government. Taking its lead from the authors of the Royal Commission on Learning (1995), this government, despite opposition from the leadership of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation who saw such a College as an infringement on its purview, decided to proceed with the creation of a committee to design the structure of the College in a bid to restore its dismal standing in the polls at the time. The purpose of a regulatory body for the province's teaching population as it was suggested by the commission stands somewhat in contrast to the purposes of self-regulation as outlined above by Casey (2003). The Royal Commission writes:

³ The authors of the Royal Commission on Learning (1995) note that the idea for the establishment of a College of Teachers for Ontario was first proposed in the mid 1980s by the Minister of Education at the time, Bette Stephenson; however, the idea was dropped after it was rejected by teachers' federations because of concerns related to collective agreements.

We believe strongly that it is time for teachers to have a stronger collective professional role through an independent College of Teachers. With the College, control of professional standards will be transferred from the Ministry of Education and Training to the profession itself. Teachers will have greater autonomy, and also greater responsibility, with input from others in the community, for deciding on entry requirements, accrediting programs, and generally determining the standards for professional teaching practice.

(p. 53)

While it would be misleading to suggest that they did not think it equally important, the position taken by the commission's authors can be interpreted as being more about the professionalization of teaching than about the preservation and protection of the public interest. At first glance this distinction among purposes and whose interests may have been served by these purposes may not seem to be important; indeed, for most professions it may not be important. In the case of teaching, however, an understanding and articulation of this distinction is very important. As I pointed out in chapter two, historically and presently, teaching is an occupation that continues to straddle the line between the general and formal professions. Furthermore, discussions about teaching frequently conflate informal, formal, sociological and historical meanings of profession and professionalism. It should not be surprising then that there are a variety of understandings individual members of the College, teachers' unions, the government, and members of the media have of the College's purpose(s) and function(s).

Defining regulation

Black (2002) observes that there are many accepted understandings about the meaning of 'regulation'. Sometimes, regulation is seen simply as a type of legal instrument. Sometimes it is seen as an action, sometimes as an outcome and sometimes as

a property. As an action, for example, the dictionary definitions of 'regulation' include controlling, governing, directing, altering, adjusting with reference to some standard or purpose (Oxford English Dictionary). In addition to the dictionary definitions, other meanings of the concept emerge through the literature about regulation including ones that view regulation as co-ordinating, ordering (Ofitel, 2000) and facilitating (Baldwin & Cave, 1999). Other distinctions include those made between regulation and control (Rhodes, 2000).

From a 'professions' perspective specifically, regulation has a variety of meanings. The Royal College of Nursing in the United Kingdom, for example, holds that "there is not one comprehensive definition of regulation" (2004, p. 1) and that different approaches to regulation have taken place over the last three decades in Britain. These have included understandings of regulation as deterrence (Reiss, 1984) where sanctions are levied for failure to meet clear standards set by the regulator, regulation as compliance (Kagan, 1984) which involves a reliance on trust and mutual willingness to give and receive support and guidance when standards fail, and responsive or 'smart' regulation (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992) which is valued because it is adaptable, flexible, and situation-specific. In each of these views of regulation, the positioning of the regulated occurs with varying degrees of agency with the former being considerably more constrained and restricted than the latter.

In Canada, the Registered Nurses' Association of Nova Scotia⁴ produced a document entitled "Self-regulation: A Foundation for Excellence in Nursing Practice" (1996). The purposes of this document were to raise awareness of the principles of self-

regulation it adopted and to highlight how the Association applied these principles in its programs and services to enhance nursing practice and promote excellence in client care.

According to the document

[t]he concept of self-regulation is complex and often not well understood by those it is meant to benefit, the public and members of self-regulating professions. Essentially, self-regulation refers to the authority given to a profession to establish a code of ethics, set standards for its members' education and practice, and license and discipline its members; with the underlying premise that the public interest will be protected.

(p. 1)

The document further acknowledged that:

Historically, nurses have viewed the Registered Nurses' Association of Nova Scotia's role in self-regulation rather narrowly; focusing predominately on its authority to license and discipline registered nurses. This focus tends to overlook the broader scope of Association activities which are designed to promote good practice and prevent poor practice

(p. 1)

In contrast to the understandings of regulation presented through both of the nursing organizations above, a jurisdictional review report (Alderson, 2003) prepared for the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council of Ontario noted definitively that "a broad consensus exists among numerous jurisdictions that regulation of health professions is a matter of the public interest and not a profession's interest" (p. 4). The report quotes the policy foundation to the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RPHA)* regime produced by the Health Professions Legislation Review (1998) in which it clearly articulates that the regulation of health professions must be done in the public interest:

The important principle underlying each of the criteria [for regulation] is that the sole purpose of professional regulation is to advance and protect

⁴ With the proclamation of the *Registered Nurses Act* in January, 2002, the Registered Nurses' Association of Nova Scotia became the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia.

the public interest. The public is the intended beneficiary of regulation, not the members of the profession. Thus the purpose of granting self-regulation to a profession is not to enhance its status or to increase the earning power of its members by giving the profession a monopoly over the delivery of particular health services. Indeed, although these are common results of traditional regulatory models, they are undesirable results, and the model of regulation we recommend [the *RHPA*] aims to minimize them.

(pp. 9-10)

As these examples reveal, debates ensue over both the definitions of regulation and in whose interests regulation is enacted; these debates become even more confused and conflated when the notion of standards is added to the discussion, particularly with regard to the occupation of teaching.

Defining standards in teaching

Just as the teaching profession is a relative newcomer to the phenomenon of self-regulation, so too is it a relative newcomer to the phenomena and tradition of establishing professional standards. It is important to provide a critique of the advantages and disadvantages of defining and having standards for the teaching profession as others such as Sachs (2003) have done by drawing attention to the importance of asking whose interests are being served by professional standards and what effects their imposition has on teachers individually and collectively. For the purposes of this study, the discussion that follows focuses on the ways in which standards are typically used with respect to the teaching profession. Sachs (2003), for example, points out that “the idea of standards for the teaching profession has been circulating in education policy discourses and debates for much of the latter part of the 1990s” (p. 175). Pursued alongside other initiatives by governments and bureaucracies in Australia, the UK, the US and elsewhere, she contends

standards for the teaching profession have been developed in an attempt by governments to improve educational performance of educational systems and to improve the practices of teachers in classrooms. In some cases, Sachs (2003) observes, governments have imposed professional standards so that they can be used as regulatory frameworks and bureaucratic controls over teachers, particularly as they relate to licensing and certification procedures. In other instances, professional standards are understood, as Darling-Hammond (1999) puts it, “to hold promise for mobilizing reforms of the teaching career and helping to structure the learning opportunities that reflect the complex, reciprocal nature of teaching work” (p. 39). Sachs explains further that standards are frequently viewed as beneficial to the improvement of the quality of teaching in three significant ways—one, that the introduction of standards will improve the performance of teachers; two, that they will improve the standing of teachers; and three, that standards will contribute to the on-going professional learning of teachers.

Yinger (1999) has argued that educational standards are one of the most powerful tools available for professionalizing teaching. Drawing on Abbott’s (1988) sociological analysis of the professionalization process, the model that Yinger (1999) proposes for the professionalization of teaching is best understood as “a process of claiming and acquiring jurisdictional authority for defining, thinking about, and acting on specific problems of practice” (p. 96). In his proposal, the role of abstract professional knowledge and its translation into internal professional social controls such as standards are highlighted (Yinger & Henricks-Lee, 2000, p. 96).

In Yinger’s (1999) view, abstract and case professional knowledge, which is primarily generated and legitimized by the academy, form the basis for a profession’s

claim to cognitive jurisdiction. In other words, cognitive jurisdiction is a profession's right to claim responsibility for conceptualizing, categorizing and acting on professional problems (p.96). According to Yinger, this right can only be claimed when professionals demonstrate mastery of a body of abstract knowledge. Yinger contends that the formal rationality embodied in the academic disciplines and academic professional study provide culturally accepted formulations of the world of practice. Through this knowledge base, new practice is generated and standards for the profession are legitimated. In turn, these standards establish internal control by the profession over training, entry to practice, and practice itself. This internal control "consolidates the profession's legitimacy and jurisdiction by demonstrating attention to performance and quality control" (Yinger & Henricks-Lee, 2000, pp. 96-97).

A profession does not only need knowledge for establishing cultural and cognitive jurisdiction. A profession must also interact with and claim social jurisdiction in the arenas of public opinion, the legal system, and organizational systems (Yinger & Henricks-Lee, 2000, p. 97). In other words, and as observed by Hoyle (2001), a large part of becoming a profession involves convincing the rest of society of the legitimacy of that status. The ways in which public, legal, and organizational arenas endorse the establishment of standards for professional training, licensure, and ethical practice make this especially true. As Yinger and Henricks-Lee (2000) put it: "in claiming social jurisdiction, a profession asks society to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights; jurisdiction has not only a cultural formulation but a social structure as well" (p. 97).

Standards, then, function in several ways in the development of a profession. They demonstrate to the public and to policy makers that a profession has sufficient quality controls for the processes of professional education, for controlling entry into the profession (i.e., licensure or certification), and for basing effective practice on a defensible knowledge base. In this sense, standards can be used both for the improvement of the quality of practice and for gaining social and cultural recognition and legitimization (Yinger & Henricks-Lee, 2000, p. 97). In another way, standards can function as parameters and guidelines for conducting professional work by defining effective practice in terms of desired outcomes and in terms of preferred procedures and performance. Standards both articulate inquiry frameworks that can be used for assessing and creating new knowledge and practice, and they can also become the basis for establishing training and continuing education parameters (Yinger & Henricks-Lee, 2000, p. 97).

In a similar way to Yinger (1999) above, Schutz and Moss (1999) also note the multiple functions of standards; however, their analysis focuses more directly on the multiple meanings that standards can have and the implications that ensue from these meanings. Drawing on the work of Sykes and Plastrik (1993), Schutz and Moss (1999) argue that it is useful to see the many definitions of educational standards as lying on a continuum running from a vision of standards as promoting dialogue and democracy to a vision of standards as transmitting authority and control. On the more democratic end of the continuum, they argue, standards tend most frequently to be represented by metaphors like “emblems” or “rallying flags” (p. 1). To illustrate this view, the authors cite D. Ball (1992), a prominent member of the group that created the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Professional Teaching Standards who states that

these standards do not comprise proved statements about how to teach mathematics but a set of commitments about good teaching. They were designed to provide a medium for focused and grounded conversation about such teaching, to create a context of direction for the development of practice.

(p. 15)

According to Schutz and Moss (1999),

standards at this end of the continuum appear to be largely intended to reflect the common projects of a community, defining who “we” are and indicating a direction toward which “we” are moving, embodying shared goals and ideals that can be interpreted in multiple ways and participated in by a diverse group

(p. 1)

This view of standards acknowledges the active engagement of the practitioner in determining and constructing meaning about practice. Teacher practitioner identity is viewed as open, negotiated, and dialogic.

On the other end of the continuum, Schutz and Moss (1999) point out, is the view of standards as authoritative. Citing Ravitch (1995) as an example, they note that the authoritative approach to standards tends to argue that “every meaningful standard offers a realistic prospect of evaluation; if there were no way to know whether anyone was actually meeting the standard, it would have no value or meaning” (p. 9). Thus, they argue,

the authoritative vision tends to stress the need for standards to provide relatively *fixed* (italics in original) guidance for reliable judgment, bringing with them a sense of authority and duty, and power to guide the action of those who are subject to them.

(p. 1)

At first glance in this description where the authority of the standards is viewed as “guidance for reliable judgement,” the authoritative view of standards is not unappealing

because there appears to be an implicit openness contained in the words “guidance” and “to guide” which suggests the possibility for the negotiation of meaning. However, the references to “duty,” “power,” and “subject” in effect negate much of the practitioner agency, diversity, and multiplicity implied.

To summarize, this discussion has illustrated that there are multiple and often competing understandings of regulation and standards as they relate to professions generally. The regulation of a profession is often understood to involve control and direction through the establishment of standards to which the regulated is held accountable by means of compliance to the standards. On the other hand, the discussion has also drawn attention to alternative conceptions of regulation that involve an understanding of governing authority as responsive and enabling. Examples from the health professions were presented as a way to illustrate these competing views of regulation and standards. The discussion has also shown that the competing views of regulation and standards found in the professions generally can also be found in the teaching profession. It has been argued that while both the regulation of teaching and the creation of standards for teaching have been pursued in an attempt to legitimize teaching as a profession, there continue to be debates about regulation as a responsive and enabling authority or as a controlling authority and about whether standards for teaching should be viewed as discrete and measurable or whether they should be viewed as dialogic and emblematic.

Given these multiple and competing understandings of regulation and standards then, particularly as they relate to the teaching occupation, there exists a strong likelihood of considerable tension between and among the understanding of purposes and functions

of an organization that has been created to self-regulate the teaching population of Ontario. The next section of this chapter explores some of the ways in which the Ontario College of Teachers has conveyed these understandings to the public, to policy makers, the media and to its own members.

Regulation, Standards and the Ontario College of Teachers

An analysis of the College's web pages that were available in 1999⁵ reveals that when the College was created, its creators seemed to be trying to make it be all things to all people—parents, students, the general public, the government and its members. It tried to persuade teachers that its existence was necessary, that it put “responsibility for the teaching profession in teachers’ hands,” that its creation would give teachers the “recognition and status they deserve,” and that teachers would “play a lead role in shaping the future of all aspects of their profession.” The website also attempted to persuade the public by informing visitors that the College “makes the teaching profession more accountable to the public” and that “public accountability is the key to teacher discipline.” Clearly, the language employed in the College's early messages presented an understanding that viewed regulation as both a path toward the professionalization of teaching and the means to making teaching more accountable to the public. However, despite the early suggestions that its creation would enhance the teaching profession and teachers' sense of themselves as professionals, almost immediately following its creation, it seemed to dismiss the professionalization project in favour of an assertive punitive disciplinary stance. Through regular public communication releases which announced the

suspension, cancellation and revocation of the certificates of teachers who had been brought forward to its disciplinary committee and through its accreditations of teacher education programs, the College seemed determined to prove itself a strong disciplinarian.

Employing discourses of similitude by making frequent comparisons between it and other self-regulatory bodies such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Chiropractors of Ontario, and the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the College reinforced a conception that regulatory bodies were solely about the protection of the public interest and nothing about the enhancement of the teaching profession. In addition and in keeping with this view of regulation, the College spent a considerable amount of its time articulating to its members and others its legislated mandate⁶ despite the flaw that its first object is, in fact, not an object at all. Rather than critically reflecting on the objects and their interrelationship with one another, College staff presentations continually highlighted the directing and controlling verbs that were included in the objects—for example, “issue,” “renew,” “amend,” “suspend,” “cancel,” “revoke,” “reinstate,” “accredit,” “investigate,” and “discipline.”

The zeal to demonstrate its punitive disciplinary power and its particular understanding of regulation were evident in a variety of ways. For example, in the Blue Pages of its publication *Professionally Speaking//Pour parler profession* the College highlighted the detailed results of the hearings of teachers who had been brought before its disciplinary panel. The success of this “messaging” was also evidenced in the popular

⁵ See Appendix I for an excerpt taken from the 1999 Ontario College of Teachers’ opening webpages.

⁶ See Appendix J for the objects of the Ontario College of Teachers as they are identified in its legislative mandate.

media as politicians and journalists embraced and reinforced the discourse of regulation as controlling in their comments and opinion pieces about the College. In one instance, for example, a journalist for the *Toronto Star* quotes David Cooke, the former NDP education minister as saying “The Ontario College of Teachers is not a College *for* teachers but a consumer protection agency” (Urquhart, 2004).

The punitive disciplinary understanding of regulation adopted by the College for external communications and presentations was conveyed through the internal work of the College as well. In my role as a program officer working at the College, I recall feeling uneasy at being told that each unit of the College was responsible for work that related only to its particular object(s), and as staff, we should not be concerned with the relationship of our object(s) to others. For example, because I worked in the Standards of Practice and Education unit, the only object that my colleagues and I were to be concerned about was that which dealt with “establish and enforce professional and ethical standards applicable to members of the College.” We were expected to ignore the relationship between this object and the one belonging to the Investigations and Hearings Unit that dealt with “discipline and fitness to practise issues.” I reasoned at the time that that these “practise issues” (the verb form being spelled with an ‘s’) could not possibly be different than the issues of and about “practice” logically embedded in the “professional and ethical standards applicable to members of the profession” which were within the purview of our unit’s work. In another instance, we were not to be concerned with those objects that dealt with the accreditation of teacher education programs despite the fact that these same standards were the foundation upon which programs would be accredited.

In both the communications expressed and presentations given on behalf of the College and my personal impressions while employed there, the view of regulation adopted by the College shortly after its creation might be perceived as punitive and controlling. Perhaps the most explicit expression of this understanding was conveyed in a fact sheet (2001)⁷ about self-regulation in Ontario that was (and still may be) included in the orientation manual for members of the College council distributed by the staff from the policy area of the College. In keeping with the view of regulation used by other professional bodies and presumably the author(s) who created this particular document, the main purpose of a regulatory body such as the College of Teachers, "as with all regulation, is to promote and protect the public interest, not to advance a profession." If not absurd, the message conveyed has been, at the very least, unfortunate for an occupation that continues to struggle with its status as a profession. Such a message and position that are accepted and communicated by Council members and the staff of the College only serve to further alienate its own members.

While it is difficult to speculate on why this understanding may have taken hold, it is my suspicion when the College was being set up, there was uncertainty among its staff about how to proceed with its work. Consequently given the urgency and immediacy of having to demonstrate it was ready to assume its responsibilities organizationally, little attention was given to the ways in which its objects supported and were integrated with each other. Those objects that seemed more bureaucratic and manageable such as the issuance of certificates and the maintenance of qualifications were pursued quite easily. Other organizational priorities and responsibilities such as the hiring of staff and the

⁷ See Appendix K for an excerpt from this fact sheet that defines self-regulation.

orientation of council members were likely viewed to be relatively bureaucratic and easily managed as well.

A competing view of standards and a competing view of purpose

In contrast to the view of regulation as controlling, directing and punishing that began to dominate the official language and understandings of some of the staff of the College, another, more democratic understanding of regulation was emerging in and through other work in which the College was engaged. As indicated above, the early College web pages revealed that the College believed strongly that regulation also meant developing standards, ensuring that teachers continued to grow and develop professionally, accrediting teacher preparation programs and developing systems to issue certificates. Consequently, a major focus of the College involved the development of its standards of practice, ethical standards, a professional learning framework and procedures to accredit teacher education programs. For the purposes of this discussion, only the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* will be addressed.

In the text used to introduce the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document, the College states the *Standards* were created to articulate what it is that makes the self-regulatory body, the Ontario College of Teachers, a unique professional body. Noting that the term or phrase “standards of practice” refers to the descriptors that answer the question “what does it mean to be a teacher?” the document explains that these descriptors include statements about students and student learning, professional knowledge, teaching practice, leadership and community, and ongoing professional learning. Further along in its introductory material, the document identifies a number of

purposes for which the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* were developed:

- to focus on the responsibility of the teaching profession to enhance student learning
- to provide a common understanding of what makes “being a teacher” a unique professional experience
- to clarify the knowledge, skills and values implicit in the practice of teaching
- to provide the basis of ongoing personal and professional growth and the accreditation of professional learning programs
- to represent the aspiration and goals of the teaching profession
- to enhance the dignity of the teaching profession
- to acknowledge the contribution the teaching profession makes to Ontario society
- to assist the College in fulfilling its mandate to govern the practice of teaching in the public interest

According to the document, all members of the College should be able to “see” the work they do described in these standards of practice and they “are not intended to be the criteria for the ongoing performance appraisal of individual members of the College” because “performance appraisal remains the responsibility of the employer.”

Setting aside the criticism that the College usurped the responsibility to define teacher identity for the province’s teachers without their consent, the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* do convey potentially powerful images for Ontario’s teachers. An analysis of the descriptor statements and specific elements included in standards of practice reveals a number of assumptions about teaching, teaching and learning and the teaching profession that are contained within and among them, some of which include the following:

- teaching and learning are inextricably linked
- teaching practice can be made explicit
- teachers actively construct knowledge about teaching practice
- a body of teacher knowledge exists
- teaching is highly contextual
- teaching has moral dimensions
- teaching is an art

- teachers are self-directed learners
- teachers are reflective practitioners
- teachers are researchers
- teacher learning impacts on student learning
- professional learning is the foundation of professionalism
- responsibility and accountability are demonstrated through systematic and rigorous reflective practice

Given these assumptions then, the image presented of Ontario teachers is that they are relatively autonomous in their work, they are able to self-direct and self-select their learning opportunities and they are able to demonstrate their responsibility and accountability through their teaching practice.

As originally conceived by those at the Ontario College of Teachers who worked on them then, the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* were intended to present a language of teaching practice (Yinger, 1987) that is invitational and dialogic. The adopted view of standards was very similar to that outlined above by Schutz and Moss (1999) where standards are viewed as emblematic. Stated using present tense verbs, they present a view of teaching that recognizes the multiplicity, diversity, and messiness of teaching. The assumption about teacher identity contained in the *Standards* is open and negotiable. In addition to recognizing this multiplicity, the *Standards of Practice* as originally conceived convey particular notions of responsibility, accountability and the pursuit of quality. Placing a significant emphasis on the role of reflection in and on practice, the *Standards* seem to suggest that systematic inquiry into practice is an integral part of what it means to be a teacher in Ontario. The *Standards* advocate an image of a teacher who is an active participant in her own professional growth; a teacher who

- understands that her learning is directly related to her student's learning,
- acts as a role model who demonstrates lifelong learning,
- engages in a variety of learning opportunities individually and collectively that are

- integrated into practice for the benefit of student learning,
- recognizes that continuous professional growth is an integral part of teaching,
 - recognizes that her teaching and professional growth are influenced by personal, social, and educational contexts,
 - understands that teaching practice is enhanced by many forms of knowledge, ways of knowing, and ways to access that knowledge,
 - anticipates and plans the kinds of learning they will need to respond to a variety of educational contexts,
 - demonstrates a commitment to continued professional growth,
 - knows that professional learning is most effective when it is job-embedded, relevant and supported by others within the educational community,
 - reflects on her practice and learns from experience,
 - draws on and contributes to various forms of educational research, and
 - collaborates with colleagues to improve practice

Quality and excellence in this view of standards is understood to be more or less ephemeral. Both are understood as only being approximated and arrived at through continuous reflection on practice; hence, the emphasis in this view on conversation and dialogue among practitioners about their knowledge of and on practice.

Not surprisingly, an open and enabling understanding of standards is highly incompatible with a view of regulation that is controlling, constraining and directing. As discussed above, standards in the regulatory sense of control are understood very differently. In keeping with the Progressive Conservative government discourses of quality and excellence where knowledge can be codified, standards become enforceable through measurement and compliance. In this understanding of standards, teachers must be able to provide only measurable evidence to demonstrate that teaching practice is improving student achievement. Teacher knowledge in this discourse of standards is explicit and therefore teachers and would-be teachers can learn the appropriate knowledge and skills so they can be reproduced in classroom environments where student achievement can be replicated. Teachers who do not or cannot demonstrate the

predetermined behaviours associated with the improvement of student achievement may not be fit to practise and can be brought forward for disciplinary action.

It is my contention that the challenge of the discourses of “standards as dialogue” and “regulation as enabling” to the discourses of “standards as measurable” and “regulation as controlling” which would have inevitably occurred inside and later outside the College did not have a chance to materialize. Because, while the development of the College’s *Standards* was underway, so too was an increasing government and public sentiment that teachers were not accountable, that teacher quality was declining and, that in order to improve student learning, teacher learning would also need to improve. Indeed, in its 1999 speech from the throne, the Progressive Conservative government stated:

Ensuring quality education for our children requires measuring progress and making certain that all of our teachers have the tools and training they need to get the job done. Just as we now test the performance of our schools and our students, so too should we test teachers.

The clear indication in the throne speech of the government’s direction was followed with a direct order to the College to develop a teacher testing program⁸, the aim of which would be to improve the teaching quality among the province’s teachers. Given this new mandate, the College tentatively ceased its standards and professional learning framework development so that it could focus on the government’s demand. Consequently, the opportunity to introduce an alternative understanding of regulation conveyed through a view of standards as open and dialogic was lost.

⁸ See Appendix L for a description of this program and some background context concerning its implementation.

As the government moved forward in its direction to test teachers, the *Standards of Practice* and the *Professional Learning Framework* began to receive criticism because of the open and “motherhood-type” statements about teaching practice contained within them. This criticism became more and more overt as the government’s teacher reform agenda gained momentum. For a variety of reasons, including the fact that the College had officially adopted a punitive disciplinary view of regulation and that many members of the College staff subtly and covertly rejected views of the *Standards* as open and enabling, the College appeared by many to be receptive to and almost welcoming of the government’s edict to implement its teacher recertification/teacher testing program.

While some of the staff within the College of Teachers welcomed the government direction because making its *Standards* more explicit was in keeping with the controlling and directing view of regulation, others welcomed the challenge because it had the potential of forcing the College to defend a view of standards that understood quality and excellence in teaching as an ephemeral pursuit that involved shared inquiry and dialogue among teachers. Neither of the above occurred. Because the College was unable to convey how its standards assured quality and excellence in the way the government expected, it was unable to convince the government that it warranted the keeping of its status as a legislated self-regulatory body. Consequently, if not in reality, at least symbolically, the Ontario College of Teachers lost its self-regulatory status when the government usurped the power of the College when it set up the “Ontario Teacher Testing Project” (2001) the mandate of which included “developing and implementing policies, programs and provincial standards for teacher qualification testing and recertification.” This thereby effectively and summarily removed some of the most

significant responsibilities that are considered by most self-regulatory bodies to be central and fundamental to their purview, namely professional qualification and certification. An additional control the government usurped included the regulatory power to determine entry to the profession which it redefined as an “entry to the profession test” which it contracted the Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey to administer.

With regard to what self-regulation means, the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Professional Learning Framework* have been neither well articulated by the College nor collectively well understood by its members. While there has been, to some degree, a shared understanding of regulation among some members of the College staff and while this understanding has come to dominate many of the communications and presentations delivered by the College, this particular understanding of regulation has been contested by the images of teaching that are implicitly and explicitly conveyed through its standards of practice for the teaching profession. The discourse of “regulation as controlling” is congruent with a “discourse of standards” as calculable and measurable. In these discourses, the professional teacher is positioned as one that needs to be monitored, controlled and where and when necessary, disciplined and punished. Teaching practice in this discourse of the professional teacher is viewed as technical; the professional teacher is a technician who, by adherence to codified knowledge and specific behaviours can be effective and successful in increasing student achievement.

In contrast to these discourses of regulation and standards, discourses of “regulation as enabling” and “standards as democratic and dialogic” position the professional teacher alternatively. Here, the professional teacher is one who is trusted to

have some degree of expertise and who is able to make informed judgements about his or her practice as a teacher. Through interaction with colleagues and others, the professional teacher in these discourses makes formal and informal inquiries into the practice of teaching with the expressed purpose of improving student learning and teaching practice. In these discourses, regulation is understood as necessary to the teaching profession so that, as Casey (2003) said, the incompetent and the unethical are removed where they must be; however, regulation in these discourses also means providing a framework within which inquiry into practice can occur so that opportunities for the enhancement of professional practice can occur in the public's interest. In this sense of regulation, professional, and public interests are not mutually exclusive.

When the Ontario College of Teachers was created, it adopted an unproblematic notion of professional. Consequently, much of the work of the College that has ensued has been plagued by this omission. If discussion about what it means to be a professional in teaching and how that meaning might be shared has occurred among the province's teachers, the participant interview data presented in the next section of this chapter confirm that teachers believe themselves to have been left out of such discussion. Because such an important discussion has not occurred in any meaningful way, both outside the College among its members and inside the College among its staff, the tensions over the purpose and function of the College continue to exist. In the discussion that follows, teachers' understanding of and response to these purposes and functions are examined.

Teacher (Non)Identification with the Ontario College of Teachers

Participants in this study indicate that they have had (and continue to have) little or no opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Ontario College of Teachers about its function and purpose and its relationship to their professional identities as teachers. Generally, the interview data reveal a high degree of uncertainty about the origins of the College of Teachers and the circumstances under which it was created. This uncertainty is expressed in statements such as “*I think [it was created to]*” which are coupled, in many instances, with teachers expressing their frustration about being uninvolved in its creation in any meaningful way. As Aerlyn puts it:

Well, to be honest, I don't understand that whole thing, like suddenly somebody decided that we needed a College of Teachers and that will make us professionals? Like that doesn't work, I mean I thought that we, as a group of teachers, or some people who represent us should have decided that but the government decided that, didn't they? Yeah, so what did we decide in any of this and if we didn't decide how can that make us professional? I mean we are not! We are just “yes” people. You know, we say “yes” to the right people. You say “yes” to the union because they are in charge of your pay cheque [laughter]. You say “yes” to the College of Teachers because you have to pay them 90 bucks every year and somebody said you have to!

Although the data were punctuated with uncertainty about purpose and function throughout them, a few common themes did emerge. These included a perception of the College as an arm of the government that was coupled with a desire that it were otherwise and an outright rejection of the College's publications.

The College as an arm of the government

For several of the participants, the College was viewed as an arm's length office of the government. Darlene, for example, remarks that her feeling is that the (then)

Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris, created the College with the hope that it would *“be his mouthpiece.”* She surmises that Harris hoped the College would do a number of things to the teaching profession on its behalf including making a declaration that teaching was an essential service and therefore making teachers unable to take a strike action. Darlene expresses strong hostility toward the College, characterizing it as being *“totally irrelevant.”* From her perspective, the College is an institution that *“takes [her] money”* and is staffed by

an absolutely gutless bunch of assholes . . . who have turned their back on education for their own self-advancement, who are total pawns of the Harris government, who don't seem to give a shit. That's what I think of them.

Like Darlene, Pauline's comments about the College alluded to a relationship between its creation by the government and teachers' unions. In her view, the creation of Ontario College of Teachers *“has removed from the Ontario Teachers' Federation the sense of ownership and responsibility for certain issues such as the discipline of members within the profession.”* She points out as well that in her former role as a district president for the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, she had often said in the print media that

the creation of the College of Teachers . . . has actually deprofessionalized the profession rather than enhancing the professionalism [because] it is that additional level of scrutiny and exterior ownership and responsibility which replaces the internalized sense of responsibility.

In keeping with the view of the College as a controlling mechanism for the government, several other participants expressed their understanding that the College was about little more than power and coercion. Denise suggests *“teachers just see [the College of Teachers] as a body completely imposed without any consultation”* and that

"it is not representational of [teachers] although it is supposed to be representing [them] in some professional capacity." In her view, teachers have had no decision on what the College is going to be and so they see it as just *"another level of coercion and a power, another structure aside of all the mess of all the other power stuff [teachers'] have."* Michael explains the feeling he gets when he interacts with the College, especially when he enters the physical building where its offices are housed, is one that is similar to the feeling he experiences when he goes through the customs area while traveling. He says that the College *"just scares [him]"* and *"it feels like if you piss someone off, they are going to hurt you; they have complete power over you."* Diane draws parallels between the College and watchdogs. She says *"they are a reminder that [teachers] are being watched"* and that *"someone can complain to them, that they will observe the teachers, [and] that they will take away their degrees."* It is her belief that the College is more like a police force than a help to her as a teacher. She proposes as well that the people they hired are nothing but watchdogs and, like Darlene above, she questions the motive of why they became part of the College of Teachers because she adds, *"there hasn't been any one on one contact with them. They're meaningless to [her]."*

Natasha understands the College of Teachers as just one more of those bureaucratic structures that frustrates teachers' work. To support her contention that this is the case, she relates a description of the bureaucratic process she had to undergo recently in order to get her teacher certification, an experience that she indicates left her feeling that teachers are little more than files and pieces of paper. She explains the bureaucratic process:

I mean I am in the process of trying to do my honours specialist now that I've kind of hit that two year mark and I went to the OISE website and it said even if you did your teacher training, it was something, the way I understood it on the website was you know, even if you did your teacher training with us, we still need transcripts to prove that you are a teacher. Duh, "well you have them because you gave them to me" or it will say "we need" you know, "in order to prove this, the College needs you to . . .". Why should I have to spend all of this time and energy running around getting transcripts and pulling things out of my file that you already have in your file and it's just ludicrous and silly and it's just one more thing that gets in the way of me and the kid and me wanting to better myself so that I can better serve the kid, the student, whoever is in my class, right. That kind of stuff bothers me and so all these different bodies that kind of hover around us and kind of impose their own image of what we should be.

Natasha views the College of Teachers and bodies like it as barriers between her and her students. She claims that she is often torn between and among the various bodies that she must respond to—the district school board, the government, the teachers' union and the College of Teachers. She recalls thinking that when the College of Teachers came into being, the first thing she thought was

it's just more, it's more paperwork, it's more administrivia, it's more, that whole cachet again, well doctors have a medical board, and lawyers had the bar and so we need one too so let's just put a whole bunch of people together, put files, you know, set up files for everything and I just, I just, it's just one more thing pulling at you because they have an image of what they think we should be doing, the government has an image. . .

Tom, like Natasha, conveys his sense that the College is no different than any other bureaucratic institution. He says he has a "jaded view" of the College because it was thrust upon teachers and "anything that is thrust upon [teachers, he reacts] to." According to Tom, who does not like authority, teachers are, by definition, "squashed and confined and constrained" and "always having boundaries." He says "that's the nature of institution" and the College of Teachers encumbers and constrains what he trying to do as a teacher. According to Tom, such institutions "squash the fires of vision"

by preventing teachers from “*dream[ing their] dreams and enact[ing] them in the classroom . . .*”

As evidence to support the view of the College as an enforcement agency of the government, Belinda elaborated an experience she had recently regarding the College’s *Standards of Practice*. While commenting on the College’s government-mandated teacher recertification program, Belinda suggests that the College has made a mockery of its own standards of practice by forcing additional qualification course providers to include assignments that refer to the *Standards*. She recounts that as part of an online assignment for an additional qualification course she had taken, she was required to take one of the five *Standards of Practice* and relate it to Co-operative Education. She says that while she was doing it, she was “*ripping her hair out.*” She explains:

I wrote this six page paper the entire time thinking “this is the biggest load of bullshit I have ever written in my life.” It was just garbage [laughs]. Are you kidding me? Obviously it had to be in the course so that the course could be approved by the College of Teachers so it could go into this, you know, recertification thing and I was just annoyed the entire time I was writing it. Sure I could write it. Anybody with a university degree could write it. Is it meaningful? No.

Although Belinda disliked being forced to use the *Standards of Practice* in this particular way, she concedes that

in fairness, the five standards of practice are not that hard to meet for a good teacher. If you are a good teacher, you should see yourself in all of those and they, they’re pretty much okay. It’s just the other stuff.

The College as a vehicle to elevate teaching

While the predominant view of the College among the participants was one that might be characterized as punitive and bureaucratic, several of the same participants expressed their view that they wished it were otherwise. Diane, for example says that she

is “*not against a College of Teachers*” because she contends the profession needs one. Even Darlene, despite her strong criticism of the College, concedes that there is value in having a College of Teachers. Here, Darlene’s point is that the College might be otherwise with a change of government, that it might be “*more professional like other organizations such as pharmacists if it were reconfigured and its control turned over to teachers, that the majority on the board would be teachers.*” Darlene says that in principle, she does not see a College of Teachers as necessarily opposed to OSSTF. She says “*I am not, in principle, opposed to the concept, if it were run by teachers elected to it.*”

Aerlyn expresses her wish that the College was created under other conditions. She says

I mean if they had come from another source, if they, you know, had come from their own, it might have been a better set up but because they were like imposed, that’s a problem because people are already suspect [thinking] ‘Now, oh it is coming from the government.’

For some other participants such as Barbara, there is speculation that the central purpose of the College is the professionalization of teaching. In Barbara’s view, at least “*on paper,*” the College was established “*to preserve and elevate the teaching profession.*” Although she maintains she is uncertain about what its actual purpose is, she simultaneously says she is confident that “*its charter*” was to “*to create a professional body. . . an association, to elevate teachers with other professional bodies to give teachers standing that they otherwise wouldn’t get.*” However, she concedes, “*it has had an inverse relationship.*” Barbara points out that she has found it fascinating to see that, as the College of Teachers was coming into its existence, the demoralization and the demise of teaching as a profession were becoming increasingly more pronounced. She

says that the two have emerged almost at the same time and that while the College should have been at the forefront of a response to protect the profession when it was being attacked. *"It has been reactionary, and if not reactionary, invisible, which is worse than reactionary."* Barbara draws attention to her perception that during the education reform it was ironic that while the College and various grassroots organizations such as People for Education lobbied (or should have lobbied) the government for change and offered support to teachers emerged, the more the general public began to question teaching.

Barbara does not know if she can account for the inaction or reaction of the College of Teachers in response to this public erosion, but she does feel that its inaction has been *"despicable, deplorable and awful."* In her view, the College has been *"ineffective as any kind of a professional organization designed to represent a profession."* Instead, she says, it has been *"simply a vehicle to deal with the mechanics of whatever new system the government happens to put in place."* For Barbara, it is simply *"the bureaucracy with which everything gets distributed, done, mailed out, collected, filed, and disciplined."* She adds that she is also uncertain if there is even *"one course that they offer [or] workshop that they give."* She says

There isn't one kind of day, a professional day, to sort of celebrate the profession, to create some kind of camaraderie amongst the profession, to, to get everyone who's even, who's like minded to say 'yes, damn it, we are a profession.' They are not saying it so they've been completely ineffective.

Barbara is also very aware of her biases regarding the College and suggests that novice teachers' understanding of and response to the College of Teachers may be very different from her own. She suggests that newer teachers *"have a much better*

relationship with the College of Teachers than [she does]" because her *"perspective might be also her timeline."*

As evidence to confirm Barbara's speculation, Maureen, a teacher who is relatively new to teaching suggests that the College of Teachers is just a part of the reality of teaching. She says that it is *"just there"* and that she *"gets [her] card every year"* and that *"[she] pays [her] 90 or 120 dollars to them."* She says *"If I have any questions, I know I can call them."* Although she sees the College as part of the reality of teaching, she points out that she wishes *"almost in a way that they (the College of Teachers) were a little more out there and a little bit more for teachers."* Like so many other participants, Maureen questions her view of the College wondering if perhaps the College is *"doing a heck of a lot more for teachers than [teachers] know about"* and that if it is, then *"maybe [teachers] should be told about it so [they] do know what's going on."* Maureen suggests that if the College was trying to do things like professional development for teachers or making sure that teachers were *"keeping . . . [their] wellness and sanity"* and *"just kind of making sure that there are support systems for [them]"*, then she thinks the College *"would be coming along that way little by little."* But, she adds, *"she is really not quite sure."* Diane, too, points out that *"if [the College] did inservicing, [she] would be thrilled."*

Although Tina is highly critical of the College, she did express a wish that she had something tangible that would let her know what the College was. However, she says it is her feeling that she has been given *"no specific details about what they are doing for [teachers]."* Although she acknowledges that her comment may be construed as a joke, the reality for her is that she doesn't know what the College is or does. She says that *"life*

before [the College] isn't measurably different than life with them [now]." She adds that if the College is "doing something that improves [her] lot [and her] students' lot, [then] maybe [she'd] have the opportunity to respect what they do, but [she doesn't] don't know." Furthermore, she says, "if there is collusion with the Mike Harrises of the world then obviously [her] opinion will worsen." She says that the fact that the College of Teachers "exists now is so immaterial" and that "it is just a label and another fee." She adds that

whatever connection to being professional that teachers have, it's in 100 percent more to do with their conscience and the fact that when you tell people you are a teacher, all of a sudden there is an understanding there that you are probably much more trustworthy than some other people.

She says that in her view, professional involves "a connection between samaritanism and goodness and people of high conscience" and she is uncertain about whether the College has anything to do with that.

Professionally Speaking/Pour parler profession

Another theme that emerged through the participant data concerned the publications produced and distributed by the College. For the majority of the participants, one publication—*Professionally Speaking*—stood out. The magazine was identified and characterized by participants in both positive and negative ways. Referring to it as the "happy little pamphlet" that comes to her door, Diane says the stories in *Professionally Speaking/pour parler profession* do "nothing for [her]." She elaborates:

Stories of Joe Blow as a teacher and how happy he is mean nothing to me . . . and I don't care to read about somebody's lovely vacation, somebody's trip to Guatemala and how they've learned. I really don't care.

The publication and its stories, she says, remind her of when she taught daycare: *"It's phony, surface material to make everyone go 'oooh'. Scratch beneath the surface and you will probably find nothing."*

Like Diane, Tina and Denise's comments suggest that they perceive the magazine to be about little of substance and reflective of the College generally. Tina says that the magazine, like the College *"is window dressing."* Denise exclaims, *"I get a glossy magazine that I grumble about, like I paid 99 dollars and I get this hundred and fifty page, 'what is this?' and it goes in the recycle bin. I barely look at it."*

Belinda, acknowledging my (then) position at the College of Teachers initially pleaded *"[Fred], the magazine is annoying; you need to stop sending me the magazine"* and then she adds sarcastically, *"It's glossy, it's wonderful [sarcastically], it's all encompassing, it's people that have nothing else to do with their entire lives except dedicate it to their classroom."* Drawing a comparison between the image of teachers presented by teachers' unions and that presented through College publications, Belinda says she sees little difference—both put her into a box. She says that whereas the union represents her as this *"over-worked haggard-old lady, that must be forced to do three hundred hours of cafeteria supervision and on calls and not be recognized and [she has] poor benefits,"* the College of Teachers represents her as a super teacher with myriad electronic gadgetry at her disposal to report on student achievement.

Aerlyn as well commented on the image of the teacher and teaching that emerged through the pages of the magazine. Like Belinda, Aerlyn's comments made comparisons between the College and teachers' unions. According to Aerlyn, the stereotypical teacher the College catered to was represented through a section of the magazine called 'My

Remarkable Teacher'. Aerlyn reports that for her, this image of was of a woman who *"had a different idea about professionalism."* Asked to elaborate, Aerlyn stated that she perceived the woman to be an elementary teacher who has been teaching for some time and who is there to promote and enhance the profession. This woman's idea about professionalism involves more paper and reading. In contrast to the teachers' unions, Aerlyn claims that, in contrast to her union who gives *"current negotiation updates,"* there is *"a little more openness to the College of Teachers."*

It would be misleading to suggest that all comments about the magazine were negative. There were a few participants who saw some value in the publication. Maureen, for example, reveals that she reads the magazine's 'Blue Pages' to obtain details about the charges that have been made against teachers brought forward for disciplining. She adds, *"and it's good. At least it keeps you up-to-date as to what's going on."* Aerlyn suggests that because the College *"prints out a lot of stuff so that if [one] really wanted to, [one] could find out what they are all about."*

As the responses reveal then, many teachers are confused about the purposes and functions of the Ontario College of Teachers, particularly with regard to its role in the professionalization of teaching. For some teachers, the College's role is understood in relation to the role of teachers' federations. In the responses of these participants, discourses of professionalism merge with discourses of unionism where one teacher wonders if individuals who work at the College do so out of self-interest at the expense of teachers as a collective. Others wonder if an institution like the College of Teachers can co-exist with teachers' unions. In the view of one participant, the removal of authority from the teachers' federations for such things as the disciplining of members has actually

resulted in teachers feeling *less* responsible and accountable for their actions. In her opinion, this loss of internalized responsibility has actually deprofessionalized the profession as opposed to enhancing the profession.

For the vast majority of participants, however, the College is viewed as a government-imposed bureaucracy that has become, as Aaron puts it, "*the puppet of politicians.*" These participants articulate very directly their perception and understanding of the official discourse of regulation as controlling that the College has adopted. This understanding is conveyed in a variety of descriptions used to characterize the College—a police force, a watch dog, a customs office, and in one instance without using metaphors as a "*level of coercion and power.*" The dominance of this discourse of regulation is so firmly entrenched that it has become normalized among new teachers. For Natasha, it functions like any of the other barriers she perceives exists between her and her students; like the government, it is a bureaucracy that she is obliged to respond to. Maureen observes that the College is just part of the reality of teaching; however, she too wishes it functioned in a more positive way with its members. The success of the College in communicating its punitive function is evident in the comments made by participants about the Blue Pages; while some teachers detest these pages purely because they detest the magazine which houses them, others conveyed that they were intrigued by the results of discipline hearings.

Still, for other participants, the Ontario College of Teachers has little, if any, importance to their lives as teachers. Indeed, one teacher wanted to know what it was. For this participant, the College has nothing to do with professionalism, which she understands to be related to an individual's conscience.

In contrast to the understanding of the College's role as punitive disciplinarian, some teachers do see the College playing a role as a professional organization that can potentially both support individual teachers and enhance the status of teaching. While there continues to be a large degree of ambivalence over its value, some teachers, in this discourse, understand one of its functions to be a provider of professional development with several participants expressing their desire that the College have at least one day "*to sort of celebrate the profession.*" Comments such as this and those of Tom who proposes that teachers must be enabled to ". . . *have vision [and] dream their dreams and enact them in the classroom*" suggest that these teachers at least would be more welcoming of a discourse of regulation that was enabling and responsive.

Finally, the participant comments suggest that there is something about the College's publication *Professionally Speaking/Pour parler profession* that teachers find disturbing. Described variously as a slick and glossy magazine to a "*happy little pamphlet,*" the participant's comments imply that the magazine can be understood to symbolize the ambiguity teachers perceive about the purpose and function of the College. On the one hand, at least one teacher sees some of the magazine's content attempt to be about professional issues; on the other hand, others reject the magazine for the same very attempt. Perhaps an even more interesting observation that emerges through this data is that while several of the participants made note of these publications and made claims that they did not read them, they continued to maintain they did not know what the College was about.

Summary

The first part of this chapter has argued that the multiple and competing understandings of regulation and standards that exist among self-governing professions remain just as problematic when these are applied to the teaching profession. Through an examination of selected texts produced by the College, the discussion suggested that when the College was first created it adopted a punitive disciplinary stance to prove itself a strong disciplinarian to the general public. The discussion also suggests that the controlling and punitive view of self-regulation that the College seems to have officially adopted is challenged by the images of teachers and teaching that are embedded in its *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*. The notion of regulation embedded in these discourses of the professionalization in teaching suggests that it can be responsive, flexible, enabling, enhancing, dialogic and democratic.

In the second part of the chapter, data were presented that suggest that eight years after its creation, teachers' perceptions of it continue to be very negative. The data show that several of the participants emphatically reject the authority of the College to determine who and what they should be as teachers and what teaching as a profession is or should be. As a perceived arm of the government, the participants understand the College to be a reactive institution that revels in the construction of more and more bureaucracy for itself and in the creation of barriers for the membership it purports to serve. The data also suggest that the reason this negative impression endures is due to the perception among teachers that they have had little positive interaction with the College despite wishing this was otherwise. Participants feel that there has been little opportunity for them to engage in meaningful dialogue with the College about their professional

identities as teachers. Participants also suggest that they perceive little value in the College publication, *Professionally Speaking/Pour parler profession*.

Although the influence of the Ontario College of Teachers on the construction of teacher identity seems to be minimal (as evidenced in the participant interview data), my contention is that there exists a strong possibility that the discourses about teachers and teaching the College produces now and those it may produce could have considerable influence on the construction of teacher professional identity. Since its creation by the Progressive Conservative government, the College has manifested and sustained many of the government discourses about teachers and teaching including the now repealed mandatory professional learning program. By adopting a punitive disciplinary stance at its inception, by maintaining a particularized view of self-regulation, by reacting instead of acting, and by myriad other subtle and overt practices, the College does influence the construction of Ontario's teaching profession and the ways in which its members negotiate their [non]identification with it. In a similar way, the discourses that articulate in their daily interactions with their colleagues and the administrators who oversee their work in classrooms and schools prompt teachers to engage in considerable negotiation among themselves about their professional identities. It is to this area that the next chapter of this study focuses its attention.

CHAPTER NINE

NEGOTIATING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN THE SCHOOL

Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which the participants' identities as teachers are influenced by their relationships between and among the colleagues and administrators with whom they work. The first portion of the chapter examines collegial relationships. The discourses that emerged through this data focused on teacher personalities and stereotypes and the relationships among collegial self-interest, professional development and educational leadership opportunities. In the second portion of the chapter, the relationships between teachers and the administrators who oversee teachers' work are examined. The data presented in this discussion suggest that through their control of such things as course assignment and distribution, decision-making about curriculum and teacher evaluation, administrators sustain particular subject positions for teachers to occupy. The chapter demonstrates how the discourses that emerge through the data are not singular or isolated; rather, they are shown to be interrelated in complex and nested ways.

Negotiating Professional Identity with Colleagues

As revealed in chapter five of this study, several of the participants have observed and commented on the loneliness and isolated nature of teaching. Diane, for example, has observed that living with isolation is one of the first and often most painful lessons many

new teachers must learn—that being a teacher means being alone with youngsters for most of the day. Tina, too, comments that, in the case of Metro East, the physical alienation of the school building exacerbates teacher isolation. She says she saw this alienation in people and *“because of the turnover in staff, they could come and go without, you know, ciphers in the snow, little blip on the screen but no real impact.”* Despite this reality of teachers’ work that has also been discussed by several researchers (see for example, DiRezze, 2001; Fullan, 1982; Hargreaves, 1994; Ingersoll, 2003; Lortie, 1975; McTaggart, 1989; Smyth, 2001), opportunities do exist for teachers to engage and interact with one another. Many of the participants in this study have noted that collegial behaviours and the extent and quality of this interaction with one another has some degree of influence on their identities as teachers.

Aerlyn, for example, says that if she had her way, she would *“rearrange the whole [school] structure”* because of the way in which teachers as colleagues work together. Aerlyn confides that she has no influence on her colleagues, noting that she thinks *“it would be nice if [she] could or if other people could influence the way [she did her] work”* because, she says, *“valuing teachers and what they do”* is very important and *“there is a lot to be learned from other teachers.”* But, Aerlyn observes, teachers are always *“at [their] little work stations doing [their own] stuff.”* Aerlyn expresses her frustration:

I mean there could be another person in my school who is doing fantastic things and I would never know and I think that’s, I think that no we don’t influence each other as much as we should so that is one point.

Aerlyn adds, however, that she thinks *“negative energy can influence the way people do their work,”* something that she has seen first hand. Aerlyn states her belief that when

enough people, both inside and outside the education system become cynical, it really begins to take a toll on a teacher and, she remarks, while the teacher might not take that cynicism into the classroom, he or she may take it into the hallway or begin to look at students, other teachers and the school administration cynically. She adds, "*you start to really. . . you can be really negative. I mean, we've seen that!*"

Aerlyn says that having lived through periods of great negativity being expressed by teachers where colleagues "*run down the system*" and gossip about teacher colleagues and what they did or did not do and what did or did not happen in that class, collegial influence can significantly affect another teacher's disposition. Aerlyn suggests, "*the more you hear about it the more you think 'this is a really rotten place to work.'*" For Aerlyn, "*colleagues can influence each other probably more in negative ways than in positive ways.*"

Although negative influences can be very strong, Aerlyn is quick to point out that positive attitudes are expressed as well. However, she wishes that these expressions of optimism would be enhanced by a collegial support system that would enable teachers to work more closely with one another. Diane echoes Aerlyn's comments as she recalls what she was taught about teaching through her teacher education program. Recalling that she was told and encouraged in her teacher preparation program to "*watch your other friend's classes, observe and all these suggestions*" and that there would be time to do that, this has not been her experience in teaching.

Tom proposes as well that the environment in which teacher colleagues work can have considerable influence on a teacher's identity. Tom thinks that while teachers' workrooms "*can be incubators for ideas*" and "*very positive,*" they can also be "*the pit*

from hell itself when you've got a mix of personalities and visions that do not jive." Tom reports his sense that he is fortunate his particular workroom experience has been a positive one. He says he likes his colleagues and he gets along well with them. He says in his workroom, teachers want to help each other and he observes "*when things are working well. . . the collegiality works, soars.*"

Diane also comments on teachers' work environments. She explains that at Metro East, teachers were housed in multi-disciplinary workrooms where individual teachers had workspaces for lesson preparation and marking and other things that teachers typically do while not in their classrooms teaching. She describes being in such workspace environments as "*certainly a different kind of workroom experience.*" She reveals that in such spaces, one teacher's business is everyone else's business. In addition to over-hearing and in some instances being part of personal phone calls or phoning parents, teachers could not help but be privy to gossip and the personal lives of their colleagues. Diane recalls that as a teacher at Metro East, "*there really is no where to hide and when [teachers] did find places to hide, the office converted it back to office space.*"

Ranging from teachers' staffrooms or workrooms that can positively or negatively influence teachers' work days to observing the negative influence of veteran whining and complaining about new teachers as Aerlyn, Tina, and Michael note, teachers do attend to the particularities and idiosyncrasies of one another. Diane, for example, divulges that from her experience, "*teachers are weird*" and that "*English teachers are eccentric.*" She recalls how the former head of the English department who, although he was "*not department head material,*" was at least very efficient at managing the material aspects of the position. She also discloses that she found the department head approachable if it was

"one-on-one" and that she "could get somewhere" but she also concedes that the ways in which he interacted with other teachers, especially those in his department, was sometimes was questionable and that "no secret was safe with [him]." Diane wonders in what other profession you see this kind of personality because, she contends

we are all performers in the end. We are all out there; we're all center of attention. We are all used to getting our way and being in command and it has a weird effect after a few years on different people.

Natasha as well imagines that there are particular "teacher types." She says that in a school as large as Metro East Secondary School and with its "huge teaching staff," there are bound to be stereotypes or "these little groups you kind of bash 'em in your own head." Natasha refers to one of these groups as "the martyrs," and although she says she will not question their motives "as far as [what] they are doing is for the kids" she does think that "there is some other kind of self-serving, 'I feel better about myself'" aspect to the ways in which the martyr group conduct themselves as teachers. Another group that Natasha has identified is the group of teachers who, though they may not all be parents, "treat every student as if they are their own personal, like, their child." She explains that this type of teacher is the one who would typically exhibit behaviours or express attitudes that convey the sense of "I'm the parent, you're the kid, you do what I say." She adds, "it's that very authoritarian, very, almost tyrannical, way of looking at your role as a teacher." The third group, according to Natasha is the group that everybody else fits into who are able to balance the idea of the teacher as an authority figure with the notion of the teacher as someone who can facilitate student learning. Natasha sees herself as belonging to this latter group. She explains that she reflects this notion to her students by telling them that "[she's] been doing it a little bit longer so [she] might have a few more

answers but *[she doesn't] profess to have them all.*" Depending upon their age and background, among other things, this group, according to Natasha, is able "to find that balance" where "they can be the authority figure but they can also be someone the kids feel close to, trust as a peer in some ways." For each of the teachers in these groupings, Natasha speculates there is an individual version of what professional means and, she adds, in her view, no one version is more valid than the other. She says, "if it works, I guess, do it."

As shown in earlier chapters of this study, the ways in which colleagues interact and respond to one another can and do have profound effects on a teacher's professional identity. The incident described earlier where Tina and Barbara played a prank on Diane reveals that some collegial relationships and interactions involve direct confrontation. Others, however, although much more subtle, can have just as profound effects on teacher identity. Aaron, for example, discloses in his comments his sense that he is frequently excluded from working with some of his colleagues because of his race. He says sometimes that there are teachers with whom he works who "don't want to make you part of *[inaudible]* team for various reasons." He speculates that these people don't perceive [him] as "an equal" and that they don't think he will actually understand what the task is that the team or group has been assigned or is engaged with. He says, "they always see you as an outsider" and "all these things affect how *[he]* deal[s] with *[his]* job." Consequently, Aaron admits, these challenges help him to fortify himself and they make him compensate by doing "over and above what is expected of *[him]*."

Although teacher colleagues can and do influence one another in a host of ways, the interview data in this study reveal that collegial self-interest plays a particularly

significant role in the ways in which teachers negotiate their identities among themselves in the school.

Several of the participants in this study, Tina, Darlene, Michael, Diane and Denise in particular, have commented concerning the role that collegial self-interest plays in such areas as teacher leadership and the ways in which they understand behaviours associated with teacher self-interests to be nested within a network of discourses that circulate to frame their work as teachers. The ways in which these nested discourses articulate thwart any real opportunities for teacher leadership. Given their pervasiveness, actually work to undermine and perpetuate particular discourses that sustain and maintain existing subject positions for teachers, which in effect, work to keep teachers teachers, suspending them in a state of perpetual negotiation of and for their professional identity. The next section examines these participants' understandings of the ways in which colleague self-interest influences teachers' professional identities.

'Just a teacher' and 'moving up' discourses

As Tina and several other participants note in this study, there exists a particular discourse that positions teachers in a way that devalues and derides the work that they do. Referred to variously and in many places throughout the interview data, including government, public, union, and College of Teachers discourses, the 'just a teacher' discourse is perhaps best described by Tina when she says that she has been recently thinking that "*only being a teacher was a little common and maybe pedestrian in terms of the ceiling on somebody's career.*" Others including Aerlyn, Barbara, Michael, Belinda, Diane, and Denise all refer to the 'just a teacher' discourse. As each of these participants

note, this discourse is surfaced in a number of ways but perhaps this discourse becomes particularly evident when a teacher expresses interest in, as Diane puts it, *"moving up."*

Diane has observed in teaching that there is, ironically, more support for teachers who express a desire to leave the classroom than for those who stay and certainly more support than from those teachers who experience difficulty. Diane has observed that there seems to be whole regime of subtle support systems and practices that convey the message that *"moving on"* out of the classroom is viewed as positive growth. She recalls that her sense while at Metro East was one of *"if you were moving on to a position of headship you were given these wonderful gifts"* whereas if you *"just transferring for the sake of being a teacher at another school you were just given a wave good bye."* In Diane's view, the message and attitude conveyed were very strong. She says, *"it was definitely that attitude of you have done something wrong unless you are moving up"* and, she continues, *"I still carry that need to explain why we want to move on."*

In attempting to understand the phenomenon of 'moving up', Diane explains that when she first started teaching, *"there was definitely that impression that moving up was where you should want to go if you were really an eager teacher."* She now understands that there is *"a fine breed [of teacher] that can do the job"* and that *"it is not because [he or she is] smarter."* She says, *"[being a department head] is a demanding job [that takes an ability] to balance personalities, [an ability] to be sensitive and allow teachers to save face but still help send them in the right direction."* According to Diane, there are *"not too many can do it"* and she says that when she comes across a teacher who has this ability, she really admires them and realizes that she, herself *"is not the kind of person that can do that position."* On the other hand, Diane does not think any less of herself for

not *“moving up to head and then principal and then so on;”* something she believed would get her away from why she wanted to be a teacher.

Like Diane, Denise also suggests that the impression conveyed to teachers early on in their careers is that they should be seeking opportunities to leave the classroom as quickly as they can to avoid being ‘just a teacher’. In her experience, administrators play a significant role in perpetuating this view. From Denise’s perspective, administrators do not understand that notion of wanting to remain in the classroom teaching. *“And funny enough,”* she adds, in her view, *“male principals have been more understanding of female teachers with families than the female principals.”* She says, *“as a group [she has] always found [female principals] ten times more demanding because they have sacrificed their families for [their] career.”* Denise recalls when she and another teacher were pulled aside by their principal in their first year of teaching and were told by her that they were both *“going to be a department head in four years.”* In Denise’s case, the principal was right. The principal also told them that the board was trying to *“fast-track”* certain teachers because they anticipated so many principal retirements in the near future and that she was trying to *“fast track young females for administration”* and she wanted to know if they were interested in doing some job shadowing. Denise says that her response at the time was to decline given the challenges she felt she still faced as a first year teacher. She says that at the same time she was being asked to fast track, she was, as a first year art teacher, trying to learn how to *“keep the kids in the classroom from stabbing each other with exacto knives.”* She recalls the principal saying *“well you are going to be a department head in four years, then what are you going to do? You are*

going to have it all mastered. Then what are you going to do?" Denise recalls replying in response, "I am going to teach."

Denise surmises that although she does not know for certain, part of the reason administrators and others view teaching and remaining in the classroom with such disdain, is societal pressure. She explains that part of the reason may be related to her observation that many teachers come from middle class backgrounds. She says

maybe it is some self disdain for teaching, just a teacher, just teaching. Maybe it is this middle class, as a whole, having achieved this middle class that because probably if you look at most of our backgrounds we are probably working class, for the most part. You know, I don't think many of us have parents who have graduated from Havergal (a private school for girls from affluent families). So you know, we are very working class and it's this generational push to have your children become a, you know, lawyers and doctors or and somehow teaching isn't quite, you know, "oh my daughter is a principal. My daughter is a vice-principal. My daughter is a teacher. Oh, but she is a department head."

Denise suggests that many teachers get swept up by the notion of having to leave the classroom to become more than 'just a teacher'. She expresses how this discourse frequently articulates with the altruistic, martyrdom discourses of teaching and the ways in which teacher colleagues and administrators perpetuate these discourses. She says "teachers know amongst themselves who is staying later" and she reveals that in her own case it was not uncommon for her to have four or five extracurricular things going on despite having a young family. According to Denise, giving so much of oneself was seen as "a badge of stamina or merit" where she would get a special Christmas card from the school principal that said something like "I have never met anybody with such energy. . . ." something Denise saw even then as having "almost killed [herself] doing." And yet, she discloses,

I didn't want to be admin; I don't know what the hell I was thinking. It was like, in all honesty, I think it's like approval, you know, being that hard-working, like a, I think some people just have that need of a certain point in time getting those kudos for being that martyr.

Darlene, as well, suggests that teachers are often seduced into occupying the subject positions created by the martyr and just a teacher discourses. Commenting on the high degree of involvement and commitment she gave early in her career, she says that in retrospect, doing so was “*stupid.*” Employing a discourse of teaching as unionized work, Darlene reveals that she worked “*worked hours and hours and hours of unpaid overtime*” that “*no sensible person should have ever done.*” She also acknowledges that her reasons for investing so much of her personal time into her work, especially the extra-curricular work, included both the fact that “*[she] liked it*” and at the time, she was running away from her marriage. She recalls as well that she “*wanted to be there and there were immense rewards in that program because they threw money at it. You could do anything you wanted, you know, so . . .*”. In addition, she recalls that as a teacher, she “*felt like [she was] on the forefront,*” and “*it was very, you got like strokes. [The school she was in] was the headship school at those times.*” All of these those things and the fact that Darlene “*was in the stage where [she] was being groomed to go on to be department head really quickly*” contributed to her decision to work so much more. She adds, as Denise has commented above, that she had been told she would be department head before she was twenty-five, and although she says it is something that is ridiculous in retrospect, “*when people say things like that to you, you sort of believe them, you know, so . . .*”.

In contrast to how she says she felt earlier in her career, Darlene suspects that given her union-active involvement during 'The Troubles', any opportunity for her to become a department head has been removed. She says she "*very quickly realized [the principal during 'The Troubles'] was never going to promote [her] to anything*" and she adds, "*and that in the current climate, [she] didn't want to hang out with those kind of people.*"

Both Diane and Tina express their understanding of the initial ways in which one begins entry into the 'moving up' discourse. For Tina, indications of this desire often get expressed at staff meetings, which are, she suggests their own discursive events. She explains that despite others' views to the contrary, most teachers reluctantly attend staff (or other) meetings, not because they don't want to improve or contribute to the discussion of important educational issues, but rather because they perceive such meetings to be more about who is conducting the meeting and what they gain by conducting it. She explains:

I cannot stomach somebody telling me that they have got a brilliant idea when they are just, you know, building on their, their resume, right? So we just, we know those people exist and so you are a little annoyed that you have to sit through somebody who's, who is just advancing their own careers, but once you know that, you can listen to whatever the thrust of their particular little ditty is and if there's anything useful there, then I think you can trust that that most people will take what is useful, filter all the rest and then if it is applicable, then it gets applied, if it's useful, if it's really is because we still all want to do stuff that keeps the kids interested and, and helps us.

In Tina's view, much of what is presented to teachers by colleagues, especially those who are interested in advancing their career, is done so under the guise of professional development. According to Tina, it is often the case that "*the latest and*

greatest instructional strategy” presented teachers is typically something that many teachers already do, except it has been repackaged and re-presented with a fancy new name. Giving a fictitious example, she says, “*until somebody just said ‘well, [the] Q-matrix [strategy] is just really questions’, teachers were expected to implement the Q-matrix in their classrooms as if it were some innovative teaching strategy.*” Tina adds, “*but somebody is making a living out of their Q-matrix, you know.*” Tina views with disdain the teachers who support and pursue such methods of career enhancement and although she says she does not like saying it, she thinks of these people as “*warm bodies and bureaucracy*” who have little to do with teaching or education. Tina points out, however, that there are some individuals she has encountered who have made positive and helpful contributions to improving her teaching practice. While she recalls that one of these was a board consultant who she remembers as “*inspiring,*” she also remembers wishing at the time there were more of them. Not to be overly cynical, she adds that in addition to stumbling upon “*[some] awesome teachers*” while teaching night school with another school board, she has also worked with “*some excellent teachers*” at Metro East Secondary School.

In Darlene’s view, much of the professional development that is presented to teachers is “*crap.*” She says, “*it’s all about how to find the different objectives in the new curriculum,*” adding “*any idiot can do that.*” Instead, she suggests, teachers should be “*discussing the fact that there have been 12 fights in the school in the last two weeks,*” which because they haven’t been doing, “*really annoys*” her.

From Darlene’s perspective, this lack of discussion about what she sees as substantive and important issues emerging lately among students at Metro East is

symbolic and “*indicative of a divide and conquer*” tactic used by the administration of the school to keep teachers apart and not give them a collective voice. Darlene adds, “*we don’t even have joint staff meetings anymore; they have two sets of staff meetings.*” Not only that, she says, “*there are no committees except a PD committee that [the principal] chairs.*” Darlene recalls that prior to ‘The Troubles’, “*there were probably ten active committees at any different time in this building [and now] we have one*” because, in her view, the principal “*doesn’t want to hear from the staff because he was trained by [the former principal] who was afraid of her staff.*” Because of this, Darlene speculates that “*that’s going to boil over and kick him in the ass at some point, because people have issues that they are concerned about and so it is hard to be professional when you are not consulted.*”

Belinda expresses a strong sentiment about and says she struggles with teachers who leave the classroom to go off to the school board or other places to become ‘facilitators’ or ‘consultants’ or other similarly-named positions. For Belinda, these people reinforce and perpetuate the ‘just a teacher’ discourse that suggests being a classroom teacher is somehow less important than the work often done by such individuals at district school board offices. She says, these people

would like to think and I think they would like to have the rest of us think that they are more professional than we are. That they are more involved in their jobs, that they have better ideas, that they are, you know, taking it to the next level, they are not just in the classroom. But it is that whole “just in the classroom” that bugs me. “Just in the classroom” is the most important job in the education system. People sitting at the board office, while you may believe what you are doing is important and while some of it might be, [laughs] here is where it is at. This is what matters, in the classroom.

As the comments by these participants reveal, the discourse of career advancement or 'moving up' discourse articulates with professional development discourses whereby an individual's self-interest is frequently obtained at the expense of colleagues. In addition, this discourse means a number of other things as well. For Diane, moving up means having more degrees, moving up the chain of command, having a little more power, being invited to meetings that others aren't, being "*in the know*," and getting to "*pass it down*." 'Moving up', she says, is like being in "*a secret club where you have some information that you share and some information that you don't*" and where "*you have the power to dish out courses and punish*."

Diane distinguishes between moving up for altruistic reasons and moving up for selfish reasons. She maintains that in her view, very few people move up for what she understands to be the right reasons—selfless reasons. For Diane, teachers learn about the chain of command in education by listening, watching and observing the people who move up. Frequently, she has observed that personality changes in many of those who move up whereby they begin to engage in what she refers to as "*a great deal of suckage*," the practice of ingratiating themselves with those who have already moved up. The discursive practice of moving up is, for Diane, directly related to what it means to be a professional. She contends that when people use the word "*professional*," it is frequently used as a weapon and she reports her feeling that for many of her peers, professional means making a career of moving up and getting on the right committees.

Although not referred to as directly, Darlene, Denise, and Pauline acknowledge the discourse of moving up and merge it with a discourse of professionalism when they comment about the practice of the administration at Metro East appointing as department

heads, new teachers with two and three years teaching experience. For Darlene, this practice has profound implications for professionalism in teaching because, in making this decision to engage in this practice, her district school board is passing over

a whole generation of leadership and [promoting] asskissers, as quickly as they can whether they are ready or not, whether they have the respect of staff or not and in some cases, whether they even want to be there or not.

In Darlene's view, there are many teachers who are ready and willing to accept these positions. As evidence to support her contention, Natasha was appointed department head of English at Metro Secondary School three years after she began teaching at the school.

Denise has observed this practice as well and she suggests that because of the massive resignation of so many of the department heads in her board, the superintendents and administrators have "*clearly panicked.*" Consequently, she contends, they have been appointing first year teachers as department heads and promoting and giving vice-principalships to people who, she declares, "*you just have to shake your head at.*" Denise, like so many others in this study, has observed that the discourse of 'just a teacher' is so pervasive that educational leaders cannot understand or really have a hard time with a teacher who doesn't want to be a leader of other teachers. She speculates that her board is having a hard time with leadership and that there is a large group of teachers who have no desire to be leaders as leadership is currently constructed and practiced. Instead, she proposes, these teachers opt to remain in the classroom or choose leadership roles within the union.

As this discussion has illustrated, teacher leadership discourses merge with and are constructed through professional development discourses, moving up (hierarchy)

discourses, altruistic discourses, and ultimately discourses of what it means to be a professional. These discourses (and others) form a discursive formation the intent of which, through capillary power and disciplinary power is to keep teachers teachers. In other words, these discourses construct subject positions for teachers whereby those who accept and occupy them willingly are rewarded by 'moving up' from the 'just a teacher' discourse. In doing so, the discourses that constructed the 'moving up' discourses are maintained, sustained, and even enhanced; consequently, these discourses contribute significantly to the suspension of teachers in perpetual negotiation about what it means to be a teacher. It is these discourses that several of the participants note, construct a profession of lambs and sheep where teachers and their colleagues reinforce the practices that construct the good teacher as someone who passively follows and does what he or she is told. Given the rewards which ensue from accepting these subject positions, it is not surprising, then, that school administrators are perceived to play a pivotal role in sustaining and managing these discourses whereby they reward teachers for being followers.

Negotiating Professional Identity with School Administrators

The discursive position that school principals occupy through their legislated role grants them significant power to make key decisions that directly affect teachers' work. Ingersoll (2003) proposes that this power extends to the hiring and evaluation of teachers, deciding teaching assignments, determining professional development directions, and setting school discipline policy, among numerous other things (p. 83). While not writing about discursive practices specifically, Ingersoll's (2003) analysis suggests that there are

many ways in which school administrators control teachers and their work and discipline them to occupy particular subject positions with regard to what it means to be professional. This control over the meaning of professional in teaching that is enacted by administrators occurs in various ways through the bestowing and withholding of “perks” which include such things as the distribution of physical space including particular classroom location, teacher workplace allotments, the determination of a teacher’s daily schedule, course teaching assignments, and course load; the distribution of students to courses and teachers; the assignment of non-teaching duties; and the control of the portion of the budget devoted to such things as funding for field trips, projects, and professional development conferences (Ingersoll, p. 126). Ingersoll writes, “in concrete terms, this means that principals have discretion over key resources on which teachers are dependent and over key policies and issues that directly affect the jobs of teachers” (pp. 126-127). Typically, this source of administrative discretion is used in informal ways by administrators; nonetheless, it is a consequential means of governing and disciplining teacher behaviour by rewarding some and punishing others (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 127). One of the most dramatic ways perhaps in which school principals enact their control and power over teachers is illustrated through an incident that occurred during ‘The Troubles’ at Metro East which involved Denise, Darlene, and the principal at the time. The nature of this power and the ways in which teachers negotiate their professional identities through the enactment of this power is discussed in the section that follows.

During ‘The Troubles’, Denise says that the relationship between teachers and administrators, especially at Metro East, was particularly strained. For Denise, the view of the administration toward teachers was that they were like children. She says, “*there was*

this real sense that teachers resented being treated like children or someone who had to be put under control and manipulated." This control and manipulation was overt, *"absolutely frightening,"* and, Denise divulges, no attempts were made to hide it. She recalls, as Darlene noted above, how during whole school staff meetings or other situations where teachers and administrators came to together teachers were separated into different rooms and administrators made conscious efforts to make sure specific teachers were not in the same room. From her perspective, she thinks the administration did these things because it feared it would lose control of teachers and consequently, control of the school. Because Denise had worked with and was friendly toward Darlene, she became associated with Darlene and vilified because of her strong union activity in the school.

Denise claims that before the strike, the principal of Metro East was *"coping okay"* with the staff and *"things were working along lovely."* However, when the teachers began their strike and it started to get prolonged, things changed. The principal, Denise observed, started to come out on to the picket line and began presenting the board's position to the teachers on the picket line. She was told not to do that and eventually, Denise says things began *"to get a little ugly out there"* because the principal would, for example, come out to the picket line, wave the superintendent across the picket and tell the picket captain to stand back. In essence, she was, in Denise's view, *"taking control of the picket line"* an action for which Denise asks *"how dangerous is that"*? Eventually, teachers were ordered back into work and, Denise recalls, when they returned inside, *"already there [was] some animosity."* A critical point came when the

principal herself, without consulting or creating a nomination committee, picked the student who was to receive the annual award that had always been donated by OSSTF.

Although the student who she selected to receive the award was deserving and was coincidentally a student who Denise was currently teaching, OSSTF wasn't given a voice in making that decision because the principal had "*shut out*" OSSTF. Denise recalls that when the strike was over, all schools in the board were required to schedule workload committee meetings to monitor teaching assignments and other things related to teachers' workloads. According to Denise, the principal of Metro East refused to even abide by the arbitrator's rulings and the board's decision to have these committees that were supposed to meet with her. She thought she would just bypass them.

Although Denise was not on the executive, she speculates that Darlene, the school's union local president, put her foot down. The executive decided that they were not giving the OSSTF award to the student who had been selected by the principal and were doing so, not because the executive didn't like the student, but because the award was not the principal's award to give. Furthermore, the executive decided that they would withhold the prize cheque and not be in attendance at the presentation. Given the fact that the date for the presentation had been selected, parents had been notified, and the names of students had been printed already on the awards list, the principal was "*facing a complete humiliation.*" She called Denise into her office, sat her down and told her that it was her responsibility as a department head and part of her leadership duties to resolve this for her and that she was to go and "*basically tell Darlene to shut up and do as she was told.*"

At the time, Denise admits, she was dumbfounded by what the principal was telling her to do but she was even more shocked to see the principal resort to manipulation by drawing on Denise's emotions in order to persuade her to do as she asked. Knowing that Denise really liked the student, she highlighted the fact that he came *"from a very poor family"* and was someone *"who could use this money"* and she wanted to know how Denise *"could deny this child this."* Denise recalls that she then lamented *"and what's going to happen to [the student] because his name is on there and he's not going to get called up and poor [the student's name]."* Denise responded by reminding the principal that she and Darlene were friends outside of school, implying that the principal's request would be very difficult for her. According to Denise's account, the principal acknowledged she was aware of their friendship but held firm in her direction telling Denise *"this is your responsibility."* Upon reflection, Denise thinks that the principal expected her to do one of two things. Either *"go manipulate Darlene"* and by doing so earn herself *"some kudos, maybe a little bit more budget money or make sure [her own] position was firmly entrenched in that school"* or Denise says, she expected her *"to just shut up and play dumb and not do anything."*

What Denise did was, as she puts it, *"kamikazed."* She told Darlene immediately what had happened and phoned the executive of her board's union and the union president was called in. At the time, Denise recalls, the principal was thrilled that the president was coming in because she thought that Darlene was *"being rapped about that OSSTF award."* But that was not why the president was coming in to the school. Instead, with six pages of notes written by Denise about the incident, the principal was threatened

with a labour charge of coercion. Denise remarks, the principal "*just harassed [she and Darlene] from that point on.*"

This incident illustrates the ways in which discourses about teacher professionalism are drawn upon to position and discipline teachers in particular ways. As Denise reflected, the principal's attempt to coerce her into supporting her decision to bestow the OSSTF award without the executive's approval, involved the principal appealing to Denise on an emotional level by drawing upon a sense of professionalism, suggesting that she would be unprofessional if she did not demonstrate a higher level of commitment toward her 'poor' student.

An attack such as the one above on a teacher's individual sense of engagement and commitment is just one of the many ways in which school administrators convey to teachers how they understand a teacher's professional identity (Ingersoll, 2003). In Ingersoll's view, an even more potent source of power that administrators have over teachers is the control they have over who teaches what and to whom. Acknowledging that while "teaching is subject to an elaborate array of licensing requirements designed to assure the basic preparation and competence of practitioners prior to employment," Ingersoll observes that principals continue to have an unusually high degree of discretion in making decisions about teaching assignment and that "once on the job there is little regulation or rationalization of how teachers are actually employed and used" (p. 128). Ingersoll concludes that for most secondary school teachers, being given an "out-of-field" teaching assignment in a course area for which they have little formal preparation can have a negative impact on teachers' sense of efficacy and identity. Similarly, Ingersoll

writes “to be given the least desirable courses that no one else wants can have disastrous consequences” (p. 130).

The data in this study support Ingersoll’s contentions about the assignment of teaching duties. As Maureen, Michael, Darlene and Belinda have observed, being asked to teach courses where the degree of comfort and confidence is low can be considerably unnerving. Maureen, for example, recalls how the previous semester, the principal had called her into his office to ask her to teach dance in the upcoming semester. Although she did not want to teach dance, she was uncertain about how to say no to her principal “*without having repercussions*” because she says, knowing that saying no to her previous principal resulted in a backlash from her, Maureen was reluctant to say no to the new principal “*for fear of that happening again.*” Because Maureen was very upset about being asked to teach dance and because she did not know how to tell the principal nicely that she did not want to teach the course, she turned to her colleague for advice on how to proceed. Her colleague suggested that Maureen be honest with the principal and tell him about her back problems and the stress she was experiencing about being asked to teach the course. So, Maureen admits, “*I was honest with him [whispers] and I didn’t say ‘no I don’t want to do it’ and he was fine with that hopefully. I haven’t seen my timetable yet so I don’t know. . .*”.

In addition to controlling teaching assignments, principals also have considerable control over the assignment of nonteaching duties such as staffing study halls, policing the cafeteria, and student restrooms can also be significant, especially since many teachers tend to dislike these duties very much because of their perceived deprofessionalizing characteristics. Recall Tina’s observation in chapter two of this study

when she was making her decision to take a leave from teaching: *"and I see myself in the cafeteria asking some schmuck to put his garbage away and feeling like this is not meaningful, that I should be beyond this."*

In many ways then, discursive practices such as those above place teachers themselves in positions that are highly similar to those of their own students where they must acquiesce and conform to the authority of their overseer. In these and other ways such as seeking approval from administrators to participate or engage in professional development opportunities, teachers become infantilized. As Denise notes above the view of the administration toward teachers during 'The Troubles' was that they were like children. She says, *"There was this real sense that teachers resented being treated like children or someone who had to be put under control and manipulated."* Describing it as *"absolutely frightening,"* Denise elaborates the extent to which administrators would go to maintain control of teachers when she relates how blatantly and overtly the administrators at Metro East Secondary School would separate teachers into different rooms and make conscious efforts to make sure specific teachers were not in the same room.

Implementing the teacher advisor group (TAG) curriculum¹

Administrator control, disciplining, and infantilizing of teachers occurs in other subtle ways as well. Belinda, for example, proposes that the control administrators have over curriculum policy implementation often hinders and sometimes completely negates teachers' ability to be openly critical of policy initiatives and/or their implementation.

¹ A Policy/Program Memorandum issued by the Ontario Ministry of Education stated that effective June 27, 2005, Ontario schools were no longer required to establish a teacher-advisor program.

Citing as an example the implementation of the Ministry's new Teacher Advisor Group program (TAG) at Metro East, Belinda points out that while she felt that the program as it was originally conceived was conceptually sound, its implementation was woefully inadequate at her school. From Belinda's perspective as a guidance counsellor, the program's content, delivery and placement within the scheduled timetable meant that both teachers and students viewed it as a waste of time. She says,

TAG is useless [the way in which was being implemented at Metro East]. You are wasting my time and the kids' [time] and they know it. When we had TAG as a separate period, they were skipping. I mean you must have had 40 percent attendance on TAG days.

Pointing out that one of the vice-principals at Metro East was a principal writers of the TAG curriculum for grade 10, Belinda comments *the administration wrote the curriculum. . . Did he do it and know it was a piece of garbage when he did it? I don't know.*" Belinda says that while she is uncertain why such initiatives and the ways in which they are implemented where everyone knows they are not working are perpetuated, she is certain that there was (and continues to be) little opportunity for her or other teachers to offer alternatives. Elaborating, she contends *there is no room for input and there's certainly no room for dissent.*" If teachers do talk about the program, they are expected to speak about it in particular ways. She explains

if you are going to talk about it, you are going to have to talk about three lessons out of ten that are really amazing. You know, "the educational plan worked really well and thanks for doing that." That's the way you would talk about it. You wouldn't say "you now what, the annual educational plan worked really well; these ones didn't work as well, let's look at what we can do to make them better." [Saying that] is not an option.

Belinda thinks the reason she and others cannot point out alternative ways of conceptualizing and implementing program such as TAG is, she says, because "they

believe, they, whoever they is that wrote them, believe that it is good" and that there are never any forums for others such as herself to express dissent. "Unless," she adds,

you're one of them, the mansion after school of like-minded individuals, but it certainly wouldn't be beneficial to my career to make a lot of noise of what sucks about TAG [laughs] . . . Or anything else for that matter. You know, you either say something positive or don't say anything at all really.

Belinda's commentary about the TAG program demonstrates how she understands the way in which the rules of particular discourses are controlled; in this case, administrator control of the discourse of policy implementation. As previously noted, entering into a particular discourse means adopting particular ways of talking about a topic. There are acceptable and intelligible ways to talk, write or conduct oneself. Occupying a particular discursive space also means that there are limits and restrictions about what constitutes legitimate thought, speech and action. Belinda's observations on the effectiveness of the local implementation of the TAG initiative reveals her perception that administrator control of discourse is strongly held and wields significant influence on the regulation of teacher behaviour.

The teacher performance appraisal discourse

Another way in which administrators use their power over teachers is through the discourse of the teacher evaluation or the teacher performance appraisal. Ingersoll (2003) points out that

[l]ike most bureaucratic procedures, teacher evaluations become official documents and, hence, leave a "paper trail" with a life of their own. Not only do these documents play a key role in determining whether a new teacher receives tenure or a permanent teaching contract but also are placed in teachers' permanent employment files. They can follow a senior teacher in the event of a transfer to another school, and teachers are well

aware that a positive recommendation from one's principal can be important for later career moves. Moreover, the manner in which school administrations perform evaluations adds to teachers' sense of vulnerability. In most schools, teachers have little control over who evaluates them, what criteria are used, and the method by which evaluations are carried out.

(pp. 112-113)

Furthermore, in large schools like Metro East Secondary School where staff turnover is high, it is probable that the administrator assigned to conduct a teacher evaluation may not even have a subject-matter background in that teacher's discipline and may bring with him or her particular understandings of teaching that may be highly incongruent with the way in which teaching the subject area has been traditionally conceptualized. In other words, the philosophical and epistemological understandings of the teacher being evaluated may differ in profound ways from the expectations of the administrator conducting such evaluations. The way in which teacher appraisals have been constructed make the implicit assumption that school administrators are or have been superior teachers themselves and are therefore qualified to make judgements that can have potentially profound implications for a teacher's career. As Michael's comments illustrate below, the teacher performance appraisal process can have significant influence on a teacher's professional identity, particularly when the teacher is new to the occupation of teaching.

As a condition of being hired by a school board on a probationary contract in the province of Ontario, new teachers or teachers new to the board are typically required to undergo two performance evaluations. Although Michael was to have had the first of the two evaluations a year prior to our interview, he confides that the first of the two was on the verge of occurring, now, two years after teaching. The reasons for this delay are many

and present an opportunity to examine the intersection of multiple discourses that converge to position Michael in a particular ways, all of which affect and influence his identity as a teacher.

Michael recounts how at the end of the first semester, he went in to speak with the then principal of Metro East to inquire about the evaluation process and noted that, from his understanding, he was required to have had two evaluations and he had not yet had one. The principal, he recalls, “*got really sheepish and said ‘well, er, blah, blah, blah. . . you slipped through somehow’*” and that he “*was on her list.*” Michael recounts that the principal then asked him if he would please take over a suddenly departing teacher’s drama classes which he agreed to do. Given the request and as a show of her gratitude for his willingness to take the drama classes, Michael says that the principal put his evaluation on hold for a bit. Shortly after this, the principal received a promotion to superintendent, and she came in to Michael’s classroom a week before the end of the year to do his evaluation. Michael describes the evaluation:

She comes into my very last period class on the very last day of June without any warning and I, I was stunned. My kids were scrambling around to put on their final presentation and it was my .5 class, too and I had a lot of the worst grade ten kids. . . just think, everything, you know, I could not believe . . . Anyway, so like I just said to her, you know, “I really think this is unfair and it’s going to be completely useless. Like how are you going to get anything useful out of this.” And she got all huffy and said that I was taking it personally and she took it personally [inaudible] and said “well I get the feeling that you don’t want me to do your evaluation” and I just looked at her and said “that’s not it at all, it’s just that the timing is off [inaudible]. . .”. She just wanted to tie up her loose ends before she moved on. I was one of her loose ends.

A week after this incident, Michael says, the principal took him aside and told him that she agreed and that he was right and she gave him a letter. According to Michael, the

contents of the letter basically said *“thank you for letting me come into your class, sorry that I was, sort of sprung it on you and I agree, it is right, you should wait until the fall.”* She commented that Michael *“had a very challenging class and this letter will confirm that you have been a teacher here for two years.”* Pausing, Michael adds, *“Nice letter. Very helpful. A lot of gratitude, too, for giving up my other timetable and helping her out of a jamb. This will confirm you have occupied space for two years.”*

Michael admits that he was not at all surprised by the way in which his teacher evaluation appraisal unfolded given the fact that he had observed similar sorts of behaviour from the principal directed at other teachers at Metro East:

I've seen nothing but that kind of behaviour that she has directed towards other people on staff so that was, that was my turn basically, to get some shit dumped on me. And I didn't expect to be treated professionally by her because I have seen horribly unprofessional behaviour by her since day one, since I came here.

Discourses about educational leadership

Through such anecdotes and critical incidents of their experiences as recounted by Michael above, the observations made by the participants in this study reveal several implicitly held assumptions about educational leadership. Other participants such as Denise and Pauline have made such observations explicit. Denise, for example, discloses that the experiences she underwent as a novice department head at Metro East have profoundly influenced her notions of what it means to be a professional in teaching. She recalls that as part of their orientation to their new positions and as a team-building exercise, all of the department heads were gathered and taken to a week-long board sponsored-workshop at a resort where one night they played *“the change game.”*

Denise describes the change game as being similar to a board game in which the players engage in role playing scenarios. At the time Denise initially viewed the game as *“a stupid waste of time”* whereby the board was paying a fortune to have department heads sit there and be given all these meals when they should have been *“talking about things like how many desks to order.”* Upon reflection, she now understands the change game to be *“basically how to manipulate teachers into doing what you want them to do.”* She says that in retrospect, she sees that the game was *“all about manipulation and game playing and your own desires in getting ahead, your own advancement, who to talk to, how to talk to them. And I thought this is really a shit [inaudible].”*

Denise says this was not the first time she played the change game and recalls playing it at ‘Head’s Up’ conferences that used to be run by the woman who became principal of Metro East just prior to ‘The Troubles’. In Diane’s view, it is very interesting to examine the types of games that are played at staff meetings and those types of conferences to see what is really being suggested or implied by playing the games. As an example, she cites how at one professional development session she attended, teachers were asked to spend two hours playing scavenger hunt. She remembers thinking *“here is a group of professional teachers on a day when the taxpayers pay and [teachers] spend two hours on a scavenger hunt”* who are essentially being taught and encouraged to view teaching as about being aggressive, about getting ahead and about winning. She says, *“there [was] nothing co-operative about any of it.”*

From Denise’s perspective, in games such as the change game and other similar games, teachers are positioned as *“just like pawns on a chessboard [so] that [by] using certain techniques of psychological control, [one] can exert any power that [one]*

want[ed].” Denise recalls again that at the time, she thought the games, because of the examples that were used, were more stupid than anything else. She describes that the games involved, for example, different scenarios a department head might encounter in a school. Trying to recall exactly what the game entailed, Denise describes one scenario in which a department head needed eight textbooks and the challenge was how the department head was going to acquire them. The game player pulled a card from a deck of options and on certain game cards the player was told that he or she had not been successful because he or she hadn’t spoken to the right person and so on. Denise surmises that the fact that that game has stuck with her all these years later and as a result of *“those dynamics that the heads were taught”* department heads were *“set up for a fall.”* She adds sarcastically, *“that was good leadership.”*

Perhaps even more telling was the experience Denise had with the principal of Metro East whereby she was *“really forced to rethink what leadership means”* asking herself whether leadership meant hierarchy and control or whether it meant education and a sense of what was right and what was fair. Such construals of leadership and such manipulative and coercive behaviours enacted by administrators, Denise proposes, are probably not that uncommon in other occupations; however, she reports her view that it is unfortunate the idealism that often accompanies new teachers is not harnessed and rather than having and encouraging an indoctrination process that uses power brokerages to have teachers aspire to and attain administration positions, let teaching and what happens in classrooms be the basis for attaining such positions. Denise expresses her belief that educational leadership is much more than managing student discipline but, she remarks, given the message that three and four years teaching experience is sufficient to become an

administrator, it is little wonder that new teachers come to believe that they don't need to be a teacher for very long in order to be perceived as leaders by those doing the hiring.

Pauline, like Denise, suggests that the way in which educational leadership is constructed has very little to do with what she understands as leadership. Instead, she says, she views principals and vice-principals as managers, much in the same way that she viewed her own role as president of her union district. Pauline contends, that for a variety of reasons, there is little room for an administrator to be a visionary leader whereby he or she could put a particular stamp on a school. Given the degree of influence that the government has over curriculum and other enhanced bureaucratic expectations placed on the role, she reasons that the notion of the principal as lead teacher is obsolete, that there is perhaps no room and no reason in today's school for an iconoclast-type leader. More and more, she observes, the principal role more closely resembles that of a business manager.

Summary

Arguably, one of the most powerful, yet often very subtle influences on teacher professional identity is that which occurs in the classrooms, hallways, cafeterias and other areas of the schools in which teachers work. Through their daily interactions with their students, their colleagues and with the administrators who oversee their work, teachers negotiate and navigate the subject positions that are constructed through the discourses and regimes of practice that underpin the work of teaching in school systems. Little and McLaughlin (1993, cited in Talbert and McLaughlin, 1994, p. 128) note that a teacher's work life is "conducted within multiple organizational settings, each of which influences

aspects of the teaching job and delimits a professional community of particular character and strength.” The contexts for teacher community include school sectors, districts, schools, departments, and, for many teachers, professional associations such as networks, collaboratives, and as we have seen in chapter seven, unions. These multiple communities are, further, embedded in one another and so the discursive practices which ensue from and through them can be mutually reinforcing or competing in the signals and conditions they set for teachers’ professional lives and collegial relationships.

This chapter has revealed that the teachers interviewed for this study negotiate their professional identities among themselves and the administrators with whom they work in very complex and nested ways. It has revealed that the discourses and the practices that sustain them and which are inherent in the daily routines of teaching are not unitary; rather, they articulate in concert with, but also in contrast to multiple other discourses that originate both inside and outside of classrooms and schools. From the physical organization of schools into classrooms to the spaces where teachers are assigned their own workdesks and from the ways in which veteran teachers approach and relate to novice teachers to the ways in which teachers pursue their own career self-interests, this chapter has shown that teachers occupy and vacate, sometimes at whim, the discursive subject positions that are created for them through their daily interactions with their students, their colleagues, the administrators and others with whom they work.

Arguably, one of the most interesting findings from this data is concerned with the ways in which teachers exploit the discourses of teaching for their own self-interests. As many of the participants have expressed in the data, teachers not only acknowledge and name the discourses that construct a teacher’s identity, some of them are able to explain

exactly how teachers engage in the perpetuation of these discourses and they admit the futility of trying to change the practices that ensue from them. Through their descriptions and explanations of their daily experiences, the participant data presented in this chapter reveal the ways in which these discourses articulate, circulate and perpetuate. For example, observations made in this chapter by participants suggest that these teachers understand educational leadership as something that is constructed through teaching. In other words, the discourses which frame teachers' work and which are sustained through various practices that create particular subject positions for teachers to occupy are the same discourses that are drawn upon by would-be administrators as they enter into the "moving up" discourses that are equally available to any teacher who wishes to enter into them. But as we have seen in this study, many of these discourses that become available are themselves particularized and involve adopting subject positions that in many ways are antithetical to teachers' conceptions of what it means to be a leader in education. They perceive that educational leaders devalue their work as teachers and they understand themselves to be subject to manipulation by administrators through myriad control measures that are inherent in teachers' work. In effect, administrators use the discourses of teaching to discipline teachers in particular ways that keep teachers teachers and allow for little resistance against their disciplinary power. Given this phenomenon, one wonders what it is that would-be administrators are aspiring to then. If would-be teachers are leaving the classroom because they think that they will be leading, it would appear, from the perspectives of many of the participants in this study, that they are being misled themselves. Furthermore, the participant data seem to suggest that, teachers who remain

in the classroom and embrace the notion of teacher leadership² are also being misled into believing that ‘teacher leadership’ or ‘teacher as leader’, as it is sometimes referred to, is leadership. In fact, the data seem to suggest that the participants in this study, at least, view teacher leadership as an oxymoron.

There is no question that the data in this chapter seem to imply that the discourses that construct teachers’ work are highly constraining and create very passive subject positions for teachers to occupy. It would be misleading to suggest however, that teachers do not engage in resistant and or subversive activities. As the interview data in this study demonstrate, teachers can be highly resistant and be very successful in subverting the discourses that they perceive position them in ways that are incongruent to their notions of themselves as teachers. This said, regardless of such resistance and subversion, the analysis in this study suggests that the nested and multi-layeredness of the discourses that construct teaching keep teachers suspended in a state of perpetual negotiation whereby it becomes increasingly difficult for them to move forward.

The next chapter, by way of conclusion to this dissertation, elaborates on this contention and offers suggestions for the ways in which this contention can be explored through further study.

² See Appendix K for a definition of “teacher leadership.”

CHAPTER TEN

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: SUSPENDED IN PERPETUITY?

Introduction

Drawing upon Foucauldian notions of discourse, identity, and governmentality, this study has sought to isolate some of the discourses articulated about teachers and their work in and through Ontario education reform between 1995 and 2004 and to explore how various constituents take up these discourses. The study has attempted to understand how one discourse gets articulated with another and how teachers address what frequently appear to be discordant discourses. It has also attempted to explore how teachers' identities, through their actions and responses, shape and are shaped by the various discourses being articulated about them and their work.

Specifically, this study has attempted to conduct a critical discourse analysis of the theoretical construct of teacher professional identity. The primary data set for the investigation has been comprised of the interview texts of 14 secondary school teachers who teach or who have taught in a large district school board in the greater metropolitan Toronto region between 1995 and 2004. Using these data and data derived from particular documents such as newspaper articles, government press releases and official documents, webpages and other textual material, the study has sought answers to these research questions:

1. How do others (e.g., government, media, teacher organizations) present teachers (as professionals in the context of education reform) in contemporary Ontario?
2. How do teachers understand and respond to these views (discourses)?
3. What discourses do teachers draw on and therefore accept about teaching and teachers' work?
4. What discourses do teachers resist and reject about teaching and teachers' work?
5. Is there a relationship between this acceptance/rejection and how these teachers see themselves? If so, what is the nature of this relationship?

The data analyses presented in this study have provided some preliminary answers to these research questions; however, there remains considerable work to be done in this important area. The study has revealed that outside their schools and classrooms, the public, the government, the media, and teacher organizations articulate discourses about teachers and teaching and engage in discursive practices that the participants perceive to position them in particular ways. This positioning influences the ways in which teachers construct their professional identities. For some of the participant teachers, some discursive positioning is viewed unproblematically. For others, this positioning is responded to by rejection, and in many cases, by the wilful subversion of discourses perceived to challenge these teachers' perceptions of themselves. The study has revealed that the discourses and associated practices that occur inside schools and classrooms also construct particular identities with which teachers are expected to identify. Again, for some teachers, identification with these subject positions is natural and commonsensical.

For others this identification creates significant dissonance that can result in a variety of responses and behaviours.

The study has shown that despite teachers' challenges and or subversions of discourses about them and their work, the perception of several participants is that a large number of teachers do not challenge these discourses. The study has revealed that just like the public, the government, the media and their organizations, individual teachers also make essentialist claims about themselves and teaching. Like the others, these claims are also expressed in ambivalent and sometimes contradictory ways.

The findings in the study suggest that teachers negotiate their professional identity perpetually through their acceptance, partial acceptance, rejection, and/or subversion of the discourses and practices they perceive to articulate both inside and outside their schools and classrooms. Despite claims to the contrary, there is no essential teacher professional identity. Teachers engage in perpetual acceptance and rejection of the discourses that construct the teaching profession as they "perform" (Talbert, 2002) their teacher identities. Similar to what Stronach, et al. (2002) have concluded, this study concludes that the perpetual performance of teacher identity constitutes professional(ism) in and the professionalization of teaching.

The final chapter of this investigation presents more detailed concluding comments about the findings that have been drawn from the data analyses conducted in the study. It discusses some of the theoretical and practical issues and implications that emerge as a consequence of these findings, and it offers some suggestions for areas of future research. The first part of this chapter draws parallels between the findings in this study and a study conducted by Stronach, et al. (2002) that examined the ways in which

British teachers and nurses constructed their professional identities during and after a period of significant education and health care reform. The discussion suggests that the findings of this study reinforce several of those identified by Stronach, et al. (2002), namely that there is no evidence for sustaining the notion of “a teacher,” that the concept of “a professional” is plural and “the professional” is a “false singularity,” and that professionals are plural, inherently split and unstable. Following this discussion, the next part of the chapter identifies some of the theoretical and practical implications for this study. This section argues that educational research conducted from poststructuralist or other such “postmodern¹” perspectives will, in all likelihood, necessitate the researcher having to defend the adoption of this particular theoretical perspective as well as the practical implications that may derive from having adopted this perspective. Having made an attempt to defend the theoretical perspective and having argued the importance of problematizing essentialist conclusions, the last part of the chapter offers a more modest proposal for conducting future educational research in this area.

Findings

In their analysis and review of the research on the professional identities of nurses and teachers, Stronach, et al. (2002) argue that the “‘professional’ [teacher has been] a construct born of methodological reduction, rhetorical inflation and universalist excess” (p. 110). Historically and presently, they propose further that whether “cast as a poetic, philosophical or political figure, the professional is constructed emblematically” (p. 111)

¹ For the purposes of my argument in this chapter, I am not making a distinction between poststructuralism and postmodernism although I recognize that many would consider this an important distinction to make.

and has been positioned paradoxically within simple polarities or binaries whereby he or she is reduced to a singular meaning and employment while being simultaneously inflated to improbable symbolic importance (Stronach, et al., 2002, p. 111).

These binaries, they point out, are well-documented in the literature and go by many names. For example, they note that the teacher has been positioned variously between the practical and the “technical” (Galton, I. Hargreaves, & Wall, 1999; Smith, 1999), the traditional and the progressive and the holistic and the fragmented (Chinn & Jacobs, 1987; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Kirby, 1995;). They also note that the teacher has been positioned as the “‘key’ to the ongoing contestation between state control and professional autonomy” (for example, Giri, 2000; Helsby, 2000; Ozga, 2000). In addition to these binary positionings, these researchers write that the literature “systematically [pins] down” the “professional” in terms of different types of knowledge (Eraut, 1995; Ruddy, 1998), stages of development (Benner, 1984; Huberman, 1993), and typologies of role (Hoyle, 1974) (Stronach, et al., 2002, p. 111).

Stronach, et al. (2002) also point out that in the literature they reviewed not only is the “professional” consistently portrayed as one who is continually “harassed,” but it also seems to consistently present ways in which the professional can be assisted out of the constraint. In their analysis, the literature presents professionals as being “regularly consigned to, threatened with, or rescued from, ‘proletarianization’ (Ginsburg, 1997; Hargreaves, 1994; R. Murphy, 1990; Turner, 1993), ‘bureaucratization’ (R. Murphy, 1990, p. 75), ‘intensification’ (Bell, 1995, p. 17; Campbell & Neill, 1994; Galton, et al., 1999), and deprofessionalization’ (Parkin, 1995)” (Stronach, et al., 2002, p. 111).

The paradoxical positionings of the “professional” teacher (and nurse), they argue, have been made more difficult by what they refer to as “the charge of ‘universalist excess’” (p. 112). That is, the recent and increasing interest of governments and policy-makers to create definitive lists of competencies for nurses and teachers in a quest to define the “universal nurse,” the “generic health worker,” or the nationally specified “competent teacher” (Stronach, et al., 2002, p.112).

For these researchers, the result of characterizing “professionalism” through this methodological reduction, rhetorical inflation, and universalizing excesses is one that is well known in anthropology—the emergence of the “collective individual” (Stronach, et al., 2002, p. 112). In nursing and teaching, they suggest, this collective individual has become known as “The Nurse” and “The Teacher” (p. 112). Stronach, et al. (2002) write that this collective individual is “the very stuff of stereotyping.” They suggest that an alternative way to understand “the professional,” “professionalism” and the nature of professional performances (p. 112) involves an examination of “the ways in which the question of ‘professionalism’ is bound up in the discursive dynamics of professionals attempting to address or redress the dilemmas (etc.) of the job” (p. 112).

This study of teacher professional identity parallels the work of Stronach, et al. in that it has been my initial attempt to examine how teachers understand and respond to many of the commonsense understandings about them and their work. The data reveal that many of the paradoxical binaries, polarities, or discourses identified by Stronach, et al. (2002) exist and construct subject positions for teachers to occupy which both constrain and enable their agency. The data show that discourses about teachers and teaching are not isolated in their articulation; rather, they frequently occur in, across and

through multiple other intersecting, shifting, and frequently conflicting practices. Many discourses such as the 'settling for teaching,' 'anyone can teach,' 'those who can, do, those who can't, teach,' 'teacher as technician' and the 'just a teacher' discourses articulate in concert with altruistic and hierarchical 'moving up' discourses and discourses about excellence, high standards and quality in education in ways that result in particular discursive formations or discursive regimes. These integrated discursive systems produce powerful and particular mentalities about teachers and teaching, the objects of which are to govern, regulate, and sustain the teaching population as it exists. Such governmentality is a complex discursive formation that sustains the teaching profession in stasis. The goal of the hierarchical observation and surveillance within the education system is to manage, supervise and sustain the limits and boundaries of the discourses that are employed to frame and govern the teaching population. As a product of this system of governmentality, the teacher is seemingly forever suspended in teacherly discourses. Contained and constrained by the intersection of multiple and conflicting teacherly discourses that create simultaneous polarities such as the altruistic and emblematic 'teacher as saviour' and the commonplace, pedestrian 'teacher as worker' subject positions, teachers experience the sorts of constraints referred to in the above discussion. This study has revealed that these polarized, dichotomized discourses suspend teachers in a perpetual state of having to negotiate their professional identities as teachers.

"There Is No Such Thing as 'A Teacher'"

The findings in this study share strong similarities with the general conclusions about contemporary professionalism among teachers and nurses in Britain drawn by

Stronach, et al. (2002) in their study. Included among these is their claim that “there is no such thing as a teacher.” The data in this study of teacher professional identity confirm this assertion. In their overall self-presentations, the participant interview data in this study seems to suggest that teacher identity is fragmented, unstable, shifting and sometimes contradictory or expressed as conflicts. As Stronach, et al. (2002) have observed, “these ‘shards’ of self-accounting seem to belie the professional as a ‘type’ with a substantial core identity that is stable, definitive or essential” (p. 116). Chapter five of this study has shown, for example, that teachers understand themselves and their colleagues to be any number of entities: a construction crew member, a shop foreman, a person, a learner, an outsider, a lamb or a sheep, a critic, a rebel, a beleaguered and challenged individual, an isolated individual, and a game player, among many others. These “shards” were variously drawn upon to account for their overall response to contemporary teaching contexts. For example, one teacher mobilized her novice teacher identity to address the tensions she felt when being forced to reconcile competing demands from her school administration and her union. In some instances, and highly congruent with Stronach, et al.’s findings, the same participant might assert the need for autonomy in his or her work, criticize the nature of an innovation while simultaneously praising the initiative, or aspects of it. Another teacher participant, for example, does this in her description and criticism of the Teacher Advisor Program at Metro East.

Rather than read such findings as reducible to a larger and more stable label, such as “supportive conformist” or “surviving conformist” or “non-compliant,” Stronach, et al. suggest that a preferred way to read the data involves viewing the professional as “mobilizing a complex of occasional identifications in response to shifting contexts” (p.

117). The shifting contexts both outside the boundaries of the teaching population in the public sphere as well as within the boundaries of the teaching population through its union, its self-governing body, and its classrooms and schools, competing polarities construct, for many teachers, profoundly conflicting subject positions which they understand and respond to in a variety of ways. For some teachers, some of the discursive positions that construct teaching are accepted as unproblematic. Many of the participants in this study, for example, quite easily draw upon discourses of similitude with the medical and legal professions when speaking of their work as teachers. They very much see themselves as professionals alongside medical doctors and lawyers. Others seem to reject such comparisons at times and yet mobilize such comparisons at other times. Some participants acknowledge and accept that when the government reforms curriculum, it is the teacher's job to implement that curriculum unquestioningly. Still others accept the discourse of the teacher as saviour, an altruistic martyr.

This study has also shown that sometimes, discourses about teachers and teaching are only partially accepted. For example, several of the participants state that while they are critical of the way in which the Ontario College of Teachers was established and the ways in which it has conducted its work, they are not completely opposed to having a self-regulatory body like the College. On the other hand, several of the participants in this study have indicated that they reject many of the discourses that construct the teaching profession. For example, some have noted that teaching is a "profession of sheep" and most teachers accept this positioning, whether or not they can see this discursive position created for them. From the perspectives of these participants, this is the case for a variety of reasons including the fact that teaching has been populated by women historically and

because the women and men who become teachers are often of middle class backgrounds, they are reluctant to engage in acts of resistance, and they therefore “take things.” Further, some of the participants have observed that when teachers refuse to be positioned as “sheep,” they are frequently disciplined negatively. Consequently, these participants reason, there is little incentive to challenge such positionings. This is not to say that teachers do not resist. As this study has revealed, teachers successfully challenge and or subvert the discourses that construct such positions; however, a large number of the participant teachers do not. By accepting these discursive positions as unproblematic, the discourses that circulate to construct teaching are sustained and successfully keep teachers engaged in a negotiation for and about their professional identity.

Outside of classrooms, schools, and other organizations in education, the perception of teachers is equally as diverse and sometimes quite contradictory. The discourses about teachers and teaching that the public, the government, and the media and some teachers themselves articulate and employ frequently suggest that teachers as professionals and teaching as a profession is a rather common and pedestrian notion, that there is little difference between teaching and any other occupation. As Tom and Barbara point out and as several other participants seems to suggest, the government, the public, the media and many teachers themselves believe that ‘anyone can teach’ and that teaching is ‘just teaching,’ after all. On the other hand, the same government, public, media and teachers also understand and portray teachers’ work in ways that suggest that there is something that differentiates teaching from other occupations. For example, the short-lived new re-certification requirements for teachers, the background criminal checks, and the public registry system that allows a teacher’s credentials and certification status to be

viewed seem to suggest something is special about teaching. As shown in the public and media commentary about the Witmer incident used to introduce this study, teachers are expected to behave in particular ways and when they engage in behaviours that are deemed to be unteacherly, they will be held responsible and accountable for their actions. The critical discourse analysis of the DiManno article² demonstrates the powerful role that a single member of the media can play, especially during periods of large-scale education reform, in both the [mis]interpretation of educational policy and re-articulation and re-circulation of deeply and long-held culturally entrenched stereotypes and scripts about schooling and teachers and teaching, particularly with regard to teacher professionalism.

“A Professional’ Is Plural and ‘The Professional’ is a False Singularity”

A second assertion about teacher professional identity that Stronach, et al. make and that is confirmed by the data in this study is that “‘a professional’ is plural and ‘the professional’ (The Teacher) is a false singularity” (p. 117). Although many of the participants in the study made essentialist claims about their identities as teachers—for example, the claims that teachers are workers—these claims are frequently expressed in ambivalent, contradictory and ambiguous ways. As we have seen, one participant’s claim about being a worker with labour rights is framed by her personal history of having been raised in a working class community. However, despite this participant’s argument about being a worker and that *“one of the biggest problems with professionalism is that it sometimes creates this notion of [the] self-employed,”* the participant mobilizes a

² See Appendix E.

discourse of similitude when she compares the work of teachers to that of physicians. In chapter seven of this study, where a document written by one of the participants was used to illustrate how discursive practices are enacted among colleagues, we have seen how teachers can frequently both occupy and vacate at whim subject positions and identities available to them without attending to the contradictory and incongruous discourses that intersect while occupying such positions. Such actions contribute significantly to the paralysis that many of the teachers in this study speak about.

The participant data reveal that such essentialist claims are not the unique purview of teachers as individuals; rather, such claims are also made by teachers collectively. The discourses articulated by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) and the Ontario College of Teachers, for example, are also frequently ambiguous and teachers respond to these in both positive and negative ways. Engaged in a perpetual state of collective bargaining with those who attempt to define the parameters of the work of teachers, teachers' unions potentially play a powerful role in the construction of teacher professional identity. However, as Denise has pointed out, teachers' unions, the OSSTF in particular, frequently want to embrace altruistic discourses of teaching that create a romanticized version of professionalism that views teaching as akin to a calling and vocation while simultaneously embracing discourses that construct teaching as labour and teachers as labourers. She says, "*you can't have it both ways*" and teachers, she maintains "*have largely bought into a lot of that crap*" about teaching as a calling and that they were "*born to teach.*" "Well," Denise says, "*[teaching] is a job. It is labour.*"

The Ontario College of Teachers, the government-created and self-proclaimed "voice of the Ontario teaching profession," has assumed the role of governing the

teaching population of Ontario. Although this body has been granted through legislation the authority to govern and regulate Ontario's teaching population, this study has suggested that the College has adopted a particular understanding of self-governance, one which the teachers in this study respond to with rejection and fear. Through its collective objects, but particularly with regard to the object concerning standards, the College has assumed the authority to define what it means to be a teacher in Ontario, in effect, determining a professional identity for teachers. While one participant in this study has acknowledged the "Standards of Practice" as being reasonably reflective of what teachers should know and be able to do, she also acknowledged that the inclusion of these standards in assignments for her professional development course were forced and intended to act as little more than an accountability mechanism that would enable the course provider to offer the course. This study has also suggested that the original intent of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and *Professional Learning Framework* was that they be viewed as open and serve as the basis for dialogue about what it means to be a teacher. Yet, with the facile compliance and assistance of the College of Teachers, the *Professional Learning Framework* was re-positioned by the former conservative government as a mandated Professional Learning Program (PLP), and in the case of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, the government created a series of "look fors" to be employed by administrators when conducting teacher performance appraisals. Gone is the original intent for discussion and in its stead is a particularized and essentialized teacher professional identity that teachers are expected to embrace, indeed are coerced into

embracing through the normalizing gaze of the examination—the teacher performance appraisal.

Such seemingly contradictory assertions made by teachers individually and collectively, Stronach, et al. suggest, can be understood as “dynamic and ambivalent aspects of situated performance” (p. 117). The individual (or union or College of Teachers) seems caught or split between grounding narratives that offer, in the case of the individual teacher at least, “differing versions of a professional self along with tangential manifestations of a personal self” (pp. 117-118). Such contradictory assertions should not be surprising given the inherently ambiguous locations in which teachers, individually and institutionally, frequently find themselves.

“Professionals Are Plural, Inherently Split and Unstable”

A third observation made by Stronach, et al. is that “professionals are not just plural; they are inherently split, in ways which define the role” (p. 118). Furthermore, these pluralities are unstable. The interview data in this study suggest a similar conclusion with many of the participants commenting on how they have felt compelled to juggle or toggle between and among multiple professional selves as they struggled to come to terms with the myriad changes to the Ontario education system. Threats to their preferred professional styles through initiatives such as the new assessment and evaluation methods (as noted by Belinda and Michael, for example) have forced teachers to otherwise accommodate or resist such external impositions. This juggling and toggling between and among professional selves does not only occur in response to externally imposed situations; indeed, teachers’ professional identities are influenced by discourses that

articulate in the daily work they conduct in their schools as well. This study has shown that through the interactions with their colleagues and the administrators who oversee their work, teachers navigate the discursive formations that are constructed in their classrooms and other places in their schools. Through such elements as the hierarchical observation enacted by school administrators, a disciplinary power is produced which acts as an integrated system organized as a multiple, automatic and anonymous network of relations with effects of power that derive from one another. In such systems, “supervisors perpetually supervise” (Foucault, 1977, p. 171 cited in Adams, 2003, pp. 55-56).

Through their normalizing judgement where school administrators become “experts” and perform their functions of surveillance, categorization and intervention through such things as teacher timetabling and teacher evaluation, administrators construct positions which teachers are coerced to occupy and whereby they assume particular identities within these individual or particular sets of discourses. As this study has shown in the stories about teacher timetabling related by many of the participants in this study, the normalizing judgement of school administrators, as a disciplinary function, punishes nonconformity and, in addition, rewards conformity through gratification and privileges for good conduct and behaviour. As one of the most powerful disciplinary techniques, the examination or teacher performance appraisal—the normalizing gaze—combines both hierarchical observations and normalizing judgement through which individuals can be classified and judged (Foucault, 1977, p. 171). Such practices can have profound effects on teachers’ professional identities.

This study of teacher professional identity has revealed that teachers, in their daily practice and in the arenas outside the boundaries of their classrooms and schools, engage in multiple, frequent, and sometimes quite profound negotiations about their identities. Often, these negotiations manifest in series of dilemmas that accrue in and through their often incongruently dynamic and shifting practice as teachers. The data in this study suggest that the tensions, contradictions and compromises that teachers must navigate are a significant and inherent part of what it means to be professional in teaching.

Given this analysis and discussion then, what are the implications for the findings in this study? The next section of this chapter makes some suggestions in this regard.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

As a novice researcher and academic, I have been given a variety of challenges, not least of which has been the conceptual difficulty in attempting to provide a theoretical problematization of the professional(ism)(ization) of teachers and teaching without being drawn into the debate about whether or not teachers are professionals. Perhaps even more challenging however has been the tendency to accept that there is a particularized teacher professional identity and advocate for it. Although this study has tried to avoid constructing 'the professional teacher' as some essentialized entity in the way that Stronach, et al. (2002) refer to above, I admit that at times, it seems as though I may have done just that. In chapter one, for example, where I employ Du Gay's (1996) observation that as a fundamental human category, work is represented not only as livelihood, but also as a stable, consistent source of self-identity, I recognize and acknowledge that doing so tends toward contradicting the poststructural theoretical stance adopted in this study for

understanding identity. The apparent contradiction is emphasized when citing Mercer (1991, p. 43 in Du Gay, 1996) in the same chapter who writes: “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something is assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.” Based upon such citations, it would seem then that I am contradicting the theoretical perspective that is employed in this study—Foucauldian poststructuralism—and its understanding of identity when I cite in chapter two Kondo’s (1990, p. 24) contention that identity is “negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, (and) the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended power-laden enactment of those meanings in everyday situations.”

Such conceptual challenges have prompted me to ask myself questions throughout the study about my purposes and the theoretical positions that I have adopted to undertake the study. It has been through the frequent posing of these questions that I have been able to conclude that although Foucauldian poststructuralism provides a powerful lens through which to understand teacher professional identity, its adoption as a theoretical perspective for conducting educational research is not without difficulties.

Defending “Post” theory and research

As pointed out at the beginning of this study, this perspective for understanding teaching and teachers as being discursively constructed has become increasingly popular among a number of researchers over the years. In the United States, for example, Popkewitz (1998) writes about the politics of schooling and the construction of the teacher. Noting that his central concern is not only with the structures within which concepts and explanations are formed but with discourses as systems of knowledge,

Popkewtiz indicates that his “use of discourses is to direct attention to the intersection of multiple knowledges that govern the practices of teachers” (p. 12). As discussed above, Stronach, et al., in Britain, have written about “the ways in which ‘discursive dynamics’ come to re-write the professional teacher and nurse as split, plural and conflictual selves” as they are located “within a complicated nexus between policy, ideology and practice” (p. 109). In Australia, Thorpe and Green (2000), deconstruct the curriculum commonplace (Schwab, 1969, 1971) of “teacher” using as a model Foucault’s (1977c) analysis of the “author-function” concept to ask:

What would it mean then to talk about the discursive construction of teaching - that is, to see teaching as a social practice that is itself discursively constructed? What value is there in treating teaching, and also the figure of the Teacher, as first and foremost objects in and of discourse? What if we suspended for the moment our commonsense organising frames of humanism and realism and foregrounded instead issues of discourse and rhetoric, representation and signification? What might be the implications *and* challenges for fields such as teacher education, curriculum research and educational policy?

(p. 3)

More recently, Delhi and Fumia (2002) have used Foucault’s notion of governmentality to understand “how teachers learn to negotiate the spaces between promises of improvement, effectiveness, and accountability that are made in heterogeneous discourses of education reform and their experiences of deteriorating material conditions and social relations of schooling” (p. 1).

Despite this growing acknowledgement of the strengths of poststructuralist perspectives among educational researchers for understanding not only teacher identity but also the field of education more generally, this theoretical approach, like other

postmodern approaches, is not without its critics and its problems. Peters (1999), for example, identifies these criticisms and problems in an encyclopaedic entry:

Poststructuralism will be resisted in the domain of educational theory and research for some time to come not only for the reason that this domain, at least in the mainstream, is inherently conservative, being largely state or federally funded, and still strongly imbued with the positivist ethos it inherited during its historical development and professionalization as a legitimate field of study, but also because poststructuralism—if we can both risk and indulge a singularization—at the broadest level carries with its philosophical reaction to the scientific pretensions of structuralism, a critique of the very Enlightenment norms that “education research” today prides itself on: “truth,” “objectivity,” “progress.”

(p. 1)

Referring to postmodernism more generally, Beyer and Liston (1992) point out that postmodern analyses have

raised a number of important questions about the role of knowledge claims and forms of rationality (in general and with respect to schooling in particular), the relationship between individual and particularistic situations and larger social contexts, and the predicaments of disenfranchised others.

(p. 371)

However, they propose the field of education is challenged by such analyses and theoretical approaches because within the field, “both intellectual engagement and transformative practice are mandatory for educators” (p. 371). They write:

In positing what appears to be a self-referential and particularistic realm of theoretical discourse as the successor to modernism, postmodernism may limit the kind of productive moral and political actions that can make a difference in the public space—may erode, that is, the notions of pedagogy and praxis that are so crucially important in educational theory and the reconstruction of social, cultural, and educational institutions. Postmodernism, in the end, seems to undermine moral responsibility for the educator, the artist, and the citizen, as it makes problematic significant contributions to alternative social and educational actions.

(p. 371)

The difficulties posed by 'post' approaches both for their utility and for their audience accessibility have been addressed and discussed by numerous researchers and theorists. Among the many who have made significant commentary on the utility of these theoretical orientations is Ellsworth (1989) who wonders why employing or adopting a critical approach to pedagogy does not feel empowering. More recently, commentary has been made by St. Pierre (2000) who attempts to unpack the "intelligibility of postmodern educational research, Pillow (2000) who "[deciphers] attempts to decipher postmodern educational research" and Atkinson (2002) who challenges what critics have called the greatest fault of postmodernism—that it lacks an agenda for social change. In responding to four associated arguments that critics of postmodernism make: 1) that postmodernism disempowers those to whom it claims to give voice; 2) that it appeals to intellectuals and has no practical value; 3) that it denies the possibility of the construction of a new social order; and 4) that it colludes with the status quo in its refusal to act, Atkinson (2002) suggests that contrary to these criticisms, through the acceptance of uncertainty, the acknowledgement of diversity and the refusal to see concepts such as 'justice' or 'society' as fixed, postmodernism offers a powerful force for social change.

Indeed, as one of the central figures in postmodern theorizing, Foucault has been criticized directly for being inattentive both to the place of human agency and to the capacity of humans to possess knowledgeability—an amalgamation of discursive and practical consciousness and the unconscious (Pignatelli, 1993a, p. 3). Unlike Giddens (1982), for example, who, in his theory of structuration speaks of human agency as "the possibility that the agent 'could have acted otherwise'" (pp. 8-10); Foucault remains silent on this topic. While Giddens (1982) acknowledges the "bounded" character of

human agency, Foucault is “not willing to vaporize the human subject or embed him/her in a manipulative discursive regime” (Pignatelli, 1993a, p. 3).

Pignatelli adds that for many critics, Foucault’s critical analysis persistently appears to lead to a desperate, hopeless position. They often accuse him of “operating within a theoretical vacuum that eschews critical consciousness but unremittingly depicts the horrors of a present circumstance that is organized around the image of the prison ‘as the exemplar of power as discipline’” (Giddens, 1982, p. 223 quoted in Pignatelli, 1993a, p. 4). The critics are left wondering not only if *all* of society is like a prison and whether there is any point to it all, but also they wonder where Foucault is in all of his analysis. They reason that it is not only a question of not being able to find a line of resistance in Foucault’s seminal works, it is also a matter of “not sensing the struggle that Foucault, himself, is willing to undergo given the preponderance of evidence he gathers and the bleak conclusions that he comes to” (Pignatelli, 1993a, p. 4).

Given the divergence of opinion about the strengths and limitations of postmodern theoretical perspectives generally and Foucauldian poststructuralism particularly then, I write this conclusion fully anticipating that this study will have to be defended not only theoretically, but also practically on the grounds that its findings or implications will be challenged because they are not action-oriented or optimistic enough—indeed, they will not help us ‘progress’ toward an essentialized ‘truth’.

Admittedly, I concede that the findings in this dissertation do seem to suggest, generally speaking, a pessimistic view of teaching and teachers as a population. The data in the study suggest that overwhelming majority of the discourses that construct the profession discipline teachers to be passive and docile subjects and, certainly, the title I have selected

for this study reinforces this pessimistic outlook. Although this is the case, I am not the first to draw such conclusions. In fact, many researchers have drawn similar conclusions. While not technically writing from a 'poststructuralist' perspective, Bullough, Gitlin, and Goldstein (1984), as one example, writing about ideology, teacher role and resistance note that

The teacher's role is a severely constraining one. Teachers are excluded from curriculum decisions, from participation in establishing ends toward which they may work. Their area of influence is over what means will be utilized to achieve others' ends, but even here the range of what is acceptable is narrowly defined. . . .In pursuit of professional standing among peers and administrators, teachers work at a furious pace and spend an inordinate amount of time on technical matters, on clerking, on record keeping, on dispensing materials, leaving them precious little time for reflection. Their relationship with students is quite businesslike because the quest for efficiency makes detailed personal knowledge of pupil needs and interests unnecessary.

(p. 34)

"This is a bleak picture," they add, that is "maintained and reinforced by the values of public service and technocratic mindedness, by professionally shared habits of interaction and expectation, and school structure" (p. 34). Britzman (1991) too, acknowledges teachers are "trapped within . . .[stereotypical] images" whereby they "come to come to resemble things or conditions [so that] their identity assumes an essentialist quality and, as such, socially constructed meanings become known as innate and natural" (p. 5). More recently, Zembylas (2003) acknowledges that teachers realize that they are deeply embedded in the norms and rules govern and make them objects and that they find it very difficult to "escape" from them (p. 125).

Whether it is employed in everyday parlance as 'commonsense,' 'stereotype,' or 'worldview' or in more formal ways such as Zembylas's (2003) "norms and rules" or

Stigler and Hiebert's (1998) "cultural script" or Britzman's (1986) "cultural myth" or Tyack and Tobin's (1994) "grammar" or whether it is employed in reference to particular research or theoretical orientations such as "sacred story" (Crites, 1971; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), "paradigm" (Kuhn, 1962), "ideology" (Althusser, 1971), "hegemony" (Gramsci, 1971), "discursive formation" (Foucault, 1980b) or "governmentality" (Foucault, 1991a), the sense that teachers are "constrained" by, "deeply embedded" in, "trapped" by, or as several of the participants in this study put it, "*contained in a box*" (Belinda), "*handcuffed at the knee*" (Tom), "*flip-flopping*" (Aaron) or "*feeling a sort of paralysis and schizophrenia*" (Natasha) is an undeniably real and pervasive phenomenon.

Britzman (1991) suggests, and the participant data in this study support this view, that the reason this may be the case is because we have all played roles opposite teachers for a significant part of our lives. Our experiences as students tell us what a teacher is and does and so "teacher" becomes an identity that is at once both familiar and strange" (p. 59). In common parlance terms, these experiences become "cultural scripts" that guide behaviour and provide frameworks that enable others, and teachers themselves to come to know what to expect about teaching. As Stigler and Hiebert (1998) point out, because these scripts are often widely shared and because teaching, as a complex system which is embedded in the wider culture, is highly stable over time and not easily changed, the cultural scripts seem so commonsensical that they become so naturalized they are neither readily apparent to members of that wider culture nor to members of the particular culture of which it is part (p. 5). Biklen (1995) concludes as well that teachers themselves can and do often contribute to the cultural construction of teaching:

Knowingly or not, teachers draw on discourses as they tell stories of their practice and depending upon which discourses they draw, they legitimize, to varying degrees, this or that discourse and associated practices. These shared cultural texts, in other words, become part of the commonsense understandings about teachers and teaching as an occupation.

(p.78)

Problematizing the emancipatory claims of 'Post' research

Clearly, this pessimistic outlook for teachers and teaching as an occupation would leave many fretting about the futility of trying to change things. However, as Stronach, et al. (2002) note above, there have been many educational researchers who have offered suggestions on how to reframe schooling and/or have suggested ways teachers and teaching can actively respond to the cultural scripts, the ideologies, the hegemony, the discursive formations and the governmentalities that shape the education system. In their analysis of the “grammar of schooling,” Tyack and Tobin (1993), for example, attempt to deconstruct these cultural scripts—in their case, the organizational patterns that shape instruction—by arguing that these are not “ahistorical creations etched in stone” (p. 478). Instead, they suggest, the organizational patterns of schooling (as a particular cultural script) are the product of particular groups with particular interests and values at particular times—hence they are *political* in origin (p. 478). Further, they note that educators have learned over generations to work within these traditional organizational patterns, “habit is a labor-saving device” (p. 478). They argue that the familiar matrix of schooling has

persisted in part because it enabled teachers to discharge their duties in a predictable fashion to cope with the everyday tasks that school boards, principals, and parents expected them to perform: controlling student behavior, instructing heterogeneous populations, or sorting people for future roles in school and in life.

(p. 478)

Tyack and Tobin (1993) suggest that since it is humans who build organizations, humans can change them. In their view, because the cultural constructions of schooling have changed over time, they can change again and they suggest that a deliberate attempt to do this would require “intense and continual public dialogue about the ends and means of schooling, including reexamination of cultural assumptions about what a “real school” is and what sort of improved schooling could realize new aspirations” (p. 478). They contend that a shared set of beliefs could energize a broad social movement to remake schools. They write

to do so would require reaching beyond a cadre of committed reformers to involve the public in a broad commitment to change. This would require not only what is taken for granted but also preserving what is valuable in existing practice. The cultural construction of schooling need not be a block to reform. It can be an engine of change if public discourse about education becomes searching inquiry resulting in commitment to a new sense of the common good.

(pp. 478-479)

With regard to teachers and teaching, Sachs (2003) advocates that through the adoption by teachers of an “activist professional” identity (Sachs, 2000), commonsensical notions of teachers and teaching can begin to be dismantled. Like Britzman (1991) and others, including several of the participants in this study have, Sachs (2003) observes that many people feel there is little that is esoteric about teaching. Furthermore, because everyone has experience with and an opinion on how to teach and what the attributes of quality teaching are, their experience of schooling and teachers gives them the evidence to pass judgement. She suggests that the standing of teaching will only be developed if there is strong community support for teachers collectively. Sachs concedes that public

media campaigns that promote “teacher bashing” and that focus on the few incompetent teachers do little to promote the status of teaching. She acknowledges further that declining work conditions, reduced public funding and the politicization of education policy and practice further diminish the standing of teachers in the eyes of the community. Despite such challenges, Sachs (2003) argues, a sustained campaign in support of public education is required “where the accomplishments of teachers are celebrated, where the stories and narratives of teachers are told, and the contribution that teachers make to the individual lives of their students and to the society are acknowledged” (p. 181). She argues further that this also requires a new kind of teacher professional, one she refers to as an activist professional (Sachs, 2000). According to Sachs (2003, p. 181),

the activist professional works in different ways with their colleagues and other educational stakeholders. They work collectively towards strategic ends, they operate on the basis of developing networks and alliances between bureaucracies, unions, professional associations and community organizations. These alliances are not static, they form and are reformed around different issues and concerns. The activist professional takes responsibility for their own on-going professional learning, they work within what Wenger (1998) calls communities of practice. Importantly, communities of practice develop in larger contexts—historical, social, cultural, institutional—with specific reference to resources and constraints. Some of these conditions and requirements are explicitly articulated. Some are implicit but no less binding (Wenger, 1998, p. 79).

Writing about the ways in which discourses of the economy have shaped and continue to shape education, teachers and their work, and citing Greene’s (1982) description of the re-creation of a “public sphere” within which discussions about the lives, aspirations, memories, traditions and trajectories of students and teachers might meaningfully occur, Smyth and Shacklock (1998a) suggest that in response to these

economic discourses, “there is a pressing need for accounts of what is happening to teaching that enable teachers to reclaim the voices/discourses/practices of schools” (p. 27). In their view, what is needed is a critique of the ways in which power, privilege and status are created, sustained, and used to propagate particular versions of schooling and they suggest that what is required is

the pursuit of wider analyses of teaching and the construction of more hospitable environments and conditions in which teachers can be assisted to develop ‘indigenous’ comprehensive theories of their teaching—ones that move beyond blaming themselves as the cause of the problem. . . . This will require a radical departure from the current widespread view that there are generic teaching competencies. . . the one-size-fits-all view of teaching, and will require forms of agency that situate theories of teaching within the broader social, economic and political forces working to shape that teaching.

(p.27)

Luke (2004), too, suggests ways in which education and teaching can be changed. Arguing that education and teaching need to be understood in relation to “a transnational strategy for democracy and education that confronts directly the challenges of globalization, geopolitical instability, and multinational capitalism” (p. 1441), He says that the effects of current policy orientations to testing and accountability in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom have constructed teachers as a sort of “commodity fetish.” In his view, many teachers’ unions’, professional organizations,’ and teacher educators’ responses to this construction are inadequate because they are “an acritical defence of the self-same systems and practices that themselves are struggling to identify, name, and contend with new material conditions and discourses” (p. 1424). Further, he contends, the situation is compounded by a tendency among many educational

theorists, researchers, and policy makers, across a broad ideological and methodological spectrum and the teaching profession itself to respond to this “commodity fetish” by

[reasserting] the principles of democratic, state education and of egalitarianism . . . [a response he notes is] characterized by an assertion of . . . the need for a fair go, about the right and entitlement to education for all, the necessity of a common curriculum, preparation for democratic citizenship (which, in relation to digital and globalized civic spaces, geopolitical secular and nonsecular conflict, we don't fully understand yet), and the demand for a system that brings together in common experience and cause an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse community. . . .

(p. 1428)

As powerful as these arguments should and must be, Luke (2004) concedes, “the profession, whatever it has become, whatever and whomever it entails, wherever it exists, and whomever it actually is, has yet to articulate a powerful, new strategic vision of teachers and teaching for new times” (pp. 1428-1429). Instead of these and other responses that “simply argue that teachers should become more activist” (p. 1440), Luke argues for a vision of teaching as a cosmopolitan work and profession in critical and contingent relation to the flows, contexts and consequences of cultural and economic globalisation. He wonders:

What if we considered teaching not as a profession, not as a kind of reified, universal phenomenon the characteristics of which we struggle to map onto competency scales and teacher education outcomes statements, teacher education curriculum, and industrial agreements but rather as dynamic social field?

(Grenfell & James, 1998 as cited in Luke, 2004, p. 1429)

Luke (2004) contends that reconfiguring teaching as

a complex set of relational exchanges between heterogeneous and differentially positioned human subjects, as a form of dialogic intersubjectivity that occurs within the constraints of dynamic institutions [might also] deparochialize [teaching] without universalizing it, looking

for confluences, similarities and points of overlap between teachers working in very different national and political economic contexts.

(p. 1429)

In such a reconfiguration, Luke suggests, the teacher would not be seen as a “psychological composite or sociological ideal type, which so much of the literature on teaching and teacher education [portrays the teacher as];” rather, the teacher would be viewed as “situated in relationship to institutional fields of regional and national governance, and the capital production of goods and texts, but also in relation to the emergence of larger transnational economies, and their affiliated cultures and identities” (p. 1429).

There can be little question, in my view, that the suggestions for changing schooling and teaching presented by these researchers are laudable. Tyack and Tobin’s (1993) acknowledgement of the role that particular political group interest has played and continues to play in past and current organizational patterns of schooling, for example, is significant. Equally, if not more significant is their recognition that educators, by force of habit, have learned over generations to work within these traditional organizational patterns. There is much merit in Sachs’ (2003) suggestion as well. Her description of the ways in which the activist professional works with colleagues and other stakeholders through fluid coalitions that focus on different issues and concerns recognizes not only the fact that these groupings are bounded by historical, social, cultural and institutional resources and constraints but also the importance of continuing to mobilize and dissolve these groupings as they are required. Much like the suggestions of Sachs (2003), those proposed by both Smyth and Shacklock (1998a) and Luke (2004) also resonate very strongly with me. These proposals seem to me to understand the importance of sustaining

an awareness of the situatedness of teaching within a larger context that is fluid and contingent; moreover, they challenge the notion of a reified, universal teacher and teaching profession.

While I find much strength and much that is appealing in all of these approaches, I also sense that there is something that is, if not absent, at the very least sometimes silent within some of these proposals. Admittedly, this sense is not only almost intangible but it may also be the result of a misconstrued and limited reading of their work regarding suggestions for change. Clearly, the problem of attempting to essentialize teacher identity is acknowledged by Sachs (1999) when she writes that “in terms of its orthodox uses, the idea of professional identity is rarely taken as problematic” (p. 4). Further, citing Melucci (1996), she maintains “identity must be forever re-established and negotiated. It defines our capacity to act autonomously and allows for the differentiation of ourselves from those others while continuing to be the same person” (p.5).

In Smyth and Shacklock’s (1998a) work, their citation (p. 10) of Deever (1996) is a clear indication they understand that proposals for radical change will always be bounded by the existing education system. Deever (1996) writes:

What we must accept, and begin to work with, is a recognition that the basic structures of schooling will continue to exist. We must follow the examples of the opposition in appropriating existing structures for our own uses and our own definitions. . . . By treating translation and compromise as evils to be avoided, we position ourselves in a hopeless spot *outside* (italicized in original) the area of conflict. We know how the game should be played, but we refuse to travel to the park where it is happening; we demand both the game and the crowd come to us. This has not occurred yet, and I think it is safe to say that it probably will not We must be willing to put our theories through the muck of negotiation and compromise that characterise daily practice in contemporary schooling.

(pp. 178-80)

Smyth's (1992) earlier work demonstrates this awareness as well where he criticizes the ways in which the advocacy of reflective practice for teachers has been framed within a "professional development for teachers" policy initiative. Smyth (1992) argues that, among other things, "particular forms of reflective practice, far from being emancipatory or liberating for teachers, are in fact another 'iron cage' that serves to entrap them and bolster the New Right wing ideology of radical interventionism (Quicke, 1988)" (p. 270).

In making his case, he contends that

. . . reflective teaching is entering a phase, like many other educational ideas and reforms, where it has become co-opted and institutionalized. Like most educational reforms long before it, it is being 'cast in the mold of the technological mindset and thus support[s] standard practice rather than challenge[s] it,' largely because schools . . . are 'imperial indifference to even the consideration of reform' (Giboney, 1990, p. 40).

(Smyth, 1992, p. 275)

Having said this however, the dissonance I experience is derived from my perception that there continues to be embedded within these (and other) courses of action, a notion of educational change that neglects to retain a healthy scepticism about whether change can indeed occur and a neglect to continue to retain teacher identity and teachers' work as problematics. It is for these reasons I contend Foucault's theorizing offers significant insight for understanding the phenomenon of teacher professional identity particularly and educational change generally.

In his analysis of agency in Foucault's work, Pignatelli (1993a) maintains, where others do not, that there is in Foucault's theorizing "an abiding interest in freedom, in possibility, in being other, in constructing less oppressive conditions" (p. 6). He suggests that there are several recurring elements or themes in his writing that attest to such interests. One of these themes, according to Pignatelli (1993a), is Foucault's (1983b)

challenge for us to “refuse what we are” (p. 216); that is, the practice of freedom relies upon a refusal to base one’s actions on the ability to occupy an enlightened place or a fixed identity (Pignatelli, 1993a, p. 6).

Pignatelli notes further that Foucault’s “project of freedom” is framed also by a deep skepticism. According to Pignatelli (1993a), Foucault understood freedom is an “opening-up to different possibilities, to ways of seeing ourselves and our practices differently by attempting to identify the arbitrary in what may appear to be fundamental or essential” (pp. 6-7). In Pignatelli’s view, Foucault was especially concerned and perhaps his most compelling when he raised suspicions about discourse practices that form around progressive concerns and the humanizing of brutal expressions of power (p. 7). Citing Dews (1984), Pignatelli argues that for the most part, Foucault’s explicit project was one that documented “the forms of knowledge and modes of social control characteristic of...modernity” that constitute a form of subjectivity as “regimented, isolated, and self-policing” (pp. 91, 77). Extrapolating Foucault’s theorizing to teachers and teaching, Pignatelli (1993a) argues that “teachers need to understand this form of restraint as a disturbing demonstration of the inverse relationship between the practice of freedom and the ravages of a gaze that, in part, is self-imposed and that forms and monitors one’s identity” (p. 7).

He contends further that although Foucault wants to push our ability *not* to see this to its limits, it is also important to remember that Foucault was concerned with being more than a cartographer of identities. Pignatelli (1993a) writes “a critical-emancipatory project emerges by underscoring what Foucault deliberately remained rather elusive about” (p. 7).

Interpreting Foucault (1988), Pignatelli (1993a) suggests that the practice of freedom is the struggle to remain mindful to one's present status and condition so that one might see it more intensely, and to know one's circumstances deeply in order to recognize recurring games of truth. This effect, he maintains, is crucial to what he calls "Foucault's project of freedom." Further, he writes:

At the same time, it means maintaining, as Foucault (1988, p. 41) says, 'a desperate eagerness to imagine, to imagine it [the present] other than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is'. Foucault takes as the project of modernity the continual project of self-invention, not self-discovery; the challenge of surprising oneself, the testing and reassessing of who one really is in the presence of an active and productive imagining.

(p. 7)

Pignatelli (1993a) adds further "in the act of being inventive and in the practice of self-interrogation freedom is indistinguishable in its negative and positive aspects" (p.7).

One other theme that underpins Foucault's understanding of freedom is risk. In Pignatelli's (1993a) view, risk, for Foucault, has a kind of dual status:

On the one hand, there is the attention he pays to transgression and its possible consequences, to exceeding or, at the least, testing limits. . . .On the other hand, given his preoccupation with what he takes to be our current danger around the issue of normalizing practice, Foucault, with Friedrich Nietzsche, is also concerned about the attendant consequences of *not* risking oneself, one's truth, one's beliefs.

(p. 7)

In another discussion of present ethico-political dangers, Pignatelli (1993b) put it this way:

Foucault does want to preserve the possibility of agency and choosing to be otherwise, of moving against a life constructed through, and regulated by, a normalizing mode of discourse-practice. But, in the face of a form of governing that remains shrouded in the naturalistic garb of the everyday

and stubbornly invisible, he also wants us to be aware of what is at stake if we choose to remain silent and inattentive.

(p. 6)

The practice of freedom for Foucault then, “embraces both an ‘inner’ critical engagement of self-constituting practices as well as an ‘outer’ questioning of the conditions within which the self is constituted, an ongoing individual and collective challenge to fabricate alternatives” (Pignatelli, 1993a, p. 8). With regard to teachers and teaching, Pignatelli (1993a) writes

In the light of the epistemological, political, and ethical commitments teachers make to shape what they do and how they think about what they do (and the very real effects those commitments have on the lives of their students, their students’ families, and others), a vital project of teacher agency can ill afford to remain inattentive to such concerns (p. 8). . . . Teacher agency is an agonistic, daring enterprise marked by uncertainty, resolve, and trial; an effort that might operate at the margins of scientific truth about ourselves. As Foucault (1972) repeatedly reminds us and often vividly demonstrates, teachers can neither evade nor absolve themselves from the violence of discourse—its ‘ponderous, awesome materiality... [and its] links with desire and power’ (p. 26) Hence, the project of becoming aware, of practicing freedom, is a deep and broad reckoning of one’s official discursive positions and professional status as nodes or loci of power maintained by the production of knowledge about oneself, one’s peers, and one’s students.

(p. 10)

Following Foucault (1980b), Pignatelli (1993a) argues that when teachers exercise their agency it is caught within a typically modern, complex paradox of knowing subject and manipulated object. Ironically, he adds,

if teachers test the limits of ‘regime[s] of truth’ for example, by asking not, ‘Is it true?’ but rather, ‘Who wants it to be true?’ What are the *effects* of saying this is true and not that?’—they erode the authoritative ground upon which they speak.

(p. 8)

Asking such questions Pignatelli (1993a) contends,

forces teachers to recognize that they are not only critically engaged with, but are also constituted *within*, these regimes. They can neither plan nor advocate for a fixed position cleansed of the exigencies of power. Furthermore, this does not reduce everything to intrigue, calculation, and advantage; indeed, norms can and *should* exist. To suggest the opposite would reduce agency to dispersed, enfeebled disruption; it would thin otherness to disembodied, fragile offerings.

(pp. 8-9)

It is important for me to state at this point that my criticism of proposals for change such as those advocated by Tyack and Tobin (1993) and Sachs (2003) is not done in any way to suggest that I do not find considerable merit in such projects. Rather, it stems from an unsettling and persistent notion that has emerged through the analysis conducted in this study—an urgency that I not fall into the trap that Stronach, et al. (2002) suggest frequently occurs with research that uses Foucault’s work whereby, as they put it, “the professional must be rescued from the iron cage of the classroom or the ward,” the notion that “out of surveillance, governmentality and so on emerges the ‘authentic’ teacher, in a rather mysterious rebirth (Ball, 1999, p. 14)” (p. 3). I am not convinced that projects like these and others will lead to the outcomes that are often proposed will ensue from them. On the other hand, I am also aware that many would not construe or consider it productive for me to leave teachers where the data in this study suggest they should be left—suspended in a perpetual negotiation state of negotiating meaning about who they are and about which subject positions they are able to occupy. I remain attentive to the charges laid against postmodern analyses and in defence draw attention once again to Pignatelli (1993a) who although cognizant of Foucault’s reluctance to identify as a

postmodernist, uses J. W. Murphy's (1988) remarks about postmodernism to convey the notion of agency suggested by Foucault. Murphy (1988) writes:

Postmodernists have never stated that establishing norms is impossible, but only that they originate from language use. For some realists, however, this announcement is tantamount to inviting chaos. Postmodernist education does not encourage normlessness, but, much more important, requires that persons assume responsibility for truth.

(p. 182)

In Pignatelli's (1993a) view, the interpretive freedom afforded here

opens the way for a broader, less privileged, and more public contest about what is valued and who gets heard. It does not foreclose the possibility of agreement. At the same time, acknowledging one's situatedness in the contest reminds contestants of their partial, perspectival positioning. . . . It is a strategy for teachers that attempts to mitigate prior justification from every form of resistance, and to delay speculation about how and when freedom is exercised or if its practice is legitimate. It clears some space for alternative ways of thinking and acting in opposition to the present regime of technicist practices within which teachers find themselves constituted.

(pp. 10-11)

My concern is that teacher agency, whether individual teachers enact it or whether it is enacted on their behalf through the organizations that purport to represent them, does not fall into the same essentialist trap that has consumed the notions of the professional teacher and professionalism in teaching.

In my view, Zembylas (2003), using a Foucauldian perspective to explore teachers' emotional responses to the discourses, practices, and performances that constitute identities, demonstrates this healthy scepticism when he acknowledges that although they do constrain teachers sometimes in very profound ways, these discourses and performances are not absolutely determining. In his work, he advocates the importance of teachers becoming aware of the technologies of power that govern them at

the personal or institutional level. He suggests that it is crucially important for teachers to begin identifying how they come to know teaching in the way that they do and to learn how their identities as teachers are constructed. Following Foucault (in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983b, pp. 208-226), he argues that resistance (understood in terms of “local” resistances and struggles) is possible only if power is seen not as necessarily repressive but as something that can have positive effects, such as attaining feelings of happiness, pleasure, and wisdom. Thus, power needs to be perceived not as a negation of individuals’ capacity to act but as an element in the constitution of one’s subjectivity—in other words, power works through and not against subjectivity. Power is about the struggles and the resistances that are possible within existing power relations.

He argues that a Foucauldian perspective on teacher identity provides teachers with a way of thinking that can help them to overcome the discourses that make them objects, to negotiate new positions and new discourses in their professional lives. This perspective encourages teachers to think and “author” themselves differently, to ask not only how particular discourses and the practices associated with them have cut them off from their desires but also how these have installed alternative desires and habits that they take on as part of themselves (Zembylas, 2003, p. 125).

Zembylas (2003) suggests that there are a number of strategies teachers can use to construct new discourses. For example, he observes that some educators suggest autobiographical reflection and storytelling as methods for helping teachers view their teaching from alternative perspectives; however, he is quick to point out that such a strategy should not imply that the product of these recollections constitutes self-knowledge. Rather, he points out

the advantage of [such] methods is that they demonstrate how stories can help teachers construct new discourses and enact new performances, as well as how these new discourses and performances can become *political forces* for changing the ways in which teachers interpret educational matters and for helping them constitute new forms of subjectivity.

(p.126)

He writes further that a major implication of exploring these ideas in relation to teaching is that “they allow us to overcome the fundamentalism that characterizes teacher identity categories” (p. 126). Zembylas (2003) cites Connolly (1991) who contends that identities based upon foundational claims to stability clash because they cannot accommodate each other’s existence. Alternatively, he maintains that when identities are understood as anti-foundational, as historical events that are continuously performed, the constitution of multiple and contingent identities is opened up. Such a view becomes nonsensical when some identities are defined as “other” or “different.” It is Connolly’s (1991) contention that the pluralization of identities leads to greater tolerance and understanding for the many possibilities available to individuals or groups (Zembylas, p. 127).

While noting that his approach exposes issues of profound political significance for teacher emotion and teacher identity, Zembylas (2003) suggests that one way in which exclusionary power can be resisted is through “the constant deconstruction and subversion of emotional rules coded in various ‘grounds’ (for example, morality, utility, efficiency, professionalism)” (p. 127). Zembylas (2003) acknowledges that while the barriers and challenges which impede the formation of new teacher identities/subjectivities might suggest that there is little prospect for change, he posits that, at the very least, teachers might use the strategies he has suggested above to contest

forms of subjectivities and the emotional regimes that have been invented for them. He writes “in contesting their subjectivities, teachers are engaged in an exercise of responsibility and resistance. This may not guarantee any kind of “freedom,” but it begins to offer strategies for the care of the teacher-self” (p.127).

While remaining observant of Goodson’s (2003) cautions about the storying of teachers lives either by them or by others—that these need to be closely interrogated and analysed in their social context, Zembylas’ (2003) proposal is one which resonates with me more strongly than the others presented above. He seems intent on not only retaining teacher identity as a problematic, but also because he acknowledges that, while change must be pursued, there is also a realistic stance in his position that recognizes the possibility that change may also be futile. So, having made my case in the best way that I can—for now, where does that leave this study? What implications ensue from this deliberation?

A More Modest Proposal for Disrupting Essentialist Claims about Profession(al)(ism)(ization) in Teaching and about Teacher Identity?

In articulating the implications this study may have, I am making a conscious attempt to resist being seduced into arguing a case for making teaching a ‘profession’ or advocating for change that would result in a single new identity for teachers. Despite the seductive appeal of proposing a ‘new teacher profession(al)(ism)’ or proposing that teaching as an occupation be (re)professionalized, reformed, redesigned, remade or making proposals for teachers to become ‘activist professionals’ or ‘transformative intellectuals’ or other such ‘stable labels,’ I want to argue that ‘teaching is what teaching

is' and that 'teachers are what teachers are' instead, and to propose a much more modest project for change that reflect these realities as they plays out in the lived experiences and identity practices (Talbert, 2002) of teachers. In the next section of this chapter, I make suggestions for ways in which essentialist claims about teaching and teachers can (continue to) be problematized through initial and continuing teacher education.

Initial teacher education

The findings in this study suggest that teachers begin to understand very early in their careers that the ways in which teaching is constructed create barriers that often prevent them from being the teachers they would like to be. Extending this finding to one logical conclusion might mean that it would be helpful for teacher education programs to attend more directly and make more explicit the contextual realities of the classrooms, schools, and education systems teacher candidates will be entering. While there are several researchers who have made proposals outlining how this might occur (see, for example, Luke, Luke, and Mayer, 2000), Klein's (2004) proposal, framed by an understanding that professional identity is constituted in practice, is particularly appealing to me. She suggests that new approaches to teaching would be premised on the intersecting discourses of teacher education including what she refers to as a "'border' discourse or pedagogy" that valorizes

- pedagogic work as always and everywhere identity work;
- author/ity (state of authoring a professional journey) for prospective teachers [this can only be within the discourses through which they have been, and are currently, constituted]; and

- epistemological and ontological uncertainty regarding “best practice.”

Elaborating, she suggests that

A first step is to have preservice teachers recognise how pedagogic work always influences identity; to note, first at a personal level, how the words used to describe them and the discursive practices that engulfed and caught them up in school and community contexts continue to influence their teaching and lives.

(p. 5)

Citing Phelan (1996), Klein (2004) continues

Within teacher education discursive spaces need to be made for the students to recognise and analyse the educational, cultural and biographical discourses that have shaped them; they need to recall the discursive practices of the homes, communities and classrooms in which they grew up, how these practices supported or suppressed their learning and their sense of themselves as competent and confident students. From the different stories the preservice teachers tell, of how they were positioned (perhaps as ‘clever,’ ‘remedial,’ or ‘slow’) and the effects this had on their learning, they will realise how identity, as well as intellectual knowledge, is shaped or constituted in discourse.

(p. 5)

In this way, she suggests, “preservice teachers could then be supported in celebrating their differences, in sharing the different ways in which they see the world, not to find one better than the other but to learn more through engaging critically with differing perspectives” (p. 6).

In addition, she proposes that it is important that “the power of traditional teacher education programs to strip students of the right to speak and be heard on matters pertaining to their own education” (p. 6) be questioned. While noting that students obviously speak when given the opportunity, she contends “they are rarely heard due to the inflexible, pre-determined structures of teacher education” (p. 5). Citing Youngblood Jackson (2001, p. 386) who observes that teacher education programs traditionally

valorize experience as if “learning to teach is a linear process in which a novice student becomes a teacher through the function of unproblematic experience,” Klein argues that because preservice candidates’ experience can have positive or negative effects on developing professional identities, it is essential that their experience be problematized. Furthermore, Klein suggests that “the discursive practices of teacher education could be renewed to situate the teacher *in process* in learning situations where s/he is able to achieve authorship or authority in knowledge construction” (p. 7). She writes

The preservice teacher could be positioned as one who may or may not know curriculum content and pedagogical strategies, but who can find out; as one who is different from every other teacher, who has special (constituted) qualities and abilities that are dynamic and changing from day to day. . . .preservice teachers will flourish in discursive contexts that encourage them to learn from every person they meet, to endlessly ask questions and carefully listen to the answers, as they chart their learning-to-teach journey in novel ways.

(p. 7)

Klein argues that the romantic view of teaching that has dominated teacher education programs needs to be dismantled and replaced with new discursive resources and practices “framed by notions of teachers and learners as constituted, and all learning contexts as socially and politically compromised” (p. 7). In this way, Klein (p. 8) contends the hope would be to build up in prospective and new teachers a sense that, as Phelan (1996, p. 344) puts it, “prospective teachers would learn that a teacher’s identity is an invention, a constant social negotiation among discourses that are made available during teacher education and thereafter.” She says that one of the goals of innovative teacher education programs would be to “interrupt discourses centered on humanist understandings of the individual that, in operation, are counterproductive to teaching and learning in new ways” (p. 8).

*Continuing teacher education*³

Hargreaves (2000), writing about four ages of professionalism and professional learning, observes that

if teachers [in the post-professional or postmodern professional age] are to maintain and pursue professionalism at this point, they will need to defend themselves against the powerful forces of de-professionalization . . . [by] maintaining and reasserting many (although not all) parts of the modernistic project of teacher professionalization that were most prominent in the age of the autonomous professional.

(p. 169)

Among other things, Hargreaves (2000) suggests teachers can do this by “*counter[ing]* [italics in original] the discourses of derision, of *blaming and shaming*, among politicians and the media, that have helped create and sustain a loss of public faith in, and regard for, teachers and their work” (p. 169). While I agree that countering such discourses is extremely important, I would add that in order to do so, it is imperative that in-service teachers become educated about the ways in which the teaching profession and teacher professionalism are constructed through government, media and public discourses and associated discursive practices. My contention is that in-service teacher education should also extend to critical reflection on the discourses and practices that are constructed and sustained through their organizations, their schools and their own classrooms. In the following pages, I draw upon several recommendations and suggestions of others to encourage and promote teachers’ active participation in the

³ I use the terms “continuing teacher education,” “in-service” and “ongoing professional learning” interchangeably.

deconstruction and reconstruction of discourses and associated practices that comprise teaching⁴.

Engaging in the perpetual deconstruction and reconstruction of government, media, and public discourses and discursive practices about teachers and teaching.

Following Ball (1993)⁵ and Thompson (2002), I understand policy-making as the wilful or intentional construction of discourse and discursive practices. For Thompson (2002), policies are generally the result of processes of consultation and contestation that inevitably involve compromise. Noting further that policy documents often hold diverse ideas and implied actions together in some tension, she suggests that Ball (1998) aptly captures “the blend of politics, pragmatics and opportunistic mimesis involved in policy making” (p. 1) when he writes:

Policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work.

(p. 127)

Thompson also holds that significant policy-making almost always occurs in the public arena and that it is subject to a range of input and media commentary which inevitably plays itself out in both wording and strategy. Policy makers thus not only shape the understanding of issues dependent upon their assessment of the policy environment, but

⁴ I am assuming that the individuals who would be interested in these suggestions have adopted or assumed a critical perspective on teachers’ work and teacher identity; that is, these individuals would have adopted a critical stance toward all aspects of initial and continuing teacher education.

⁵ While Ball (1990) makes a distinction between “policy as text” and “policy as discourse,” I make no distinction since my understanding of discourse encompasses both the textual and non-textual.

must then also work to ensure that the community endorses this understanding.

Furthermore, she contends

policies are taken up and translated into administrative guidelines and processes, management responses and grass roots interpretation in ways that are far from predictable or universal. In school sites policies are incorporated into particular histories, ways of doing things, priorities and understandings by a particular group of staff serving a particular school community. Policies are more often diffracted and refracted, than simply implemented (p. 1).

Similarly, I embrace Ozga's (2000) notion of policy as a process rather than a product—a view that understands the policy process as the “negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy” (p. 2). Ozga (2000) states that her desire is to “remove ‘policy’ from its pedestal, and make it accessible to the wider community, both as a subject of study and a possible research area” (p. 2). My contention is that by understanding policy as discourse, accessibility to policy can be actualized. I support her argument that

implicitly and explicitly. . . policy is to be found everywhere in education, and not just at the level of central government, and that there is virtue in engaging with policy in this way, because it contributes to a democratic project in education. . . .

(p. 2)

With regard to teachers specifically, Ozga (2000) suggests that by examining policy *for* teachers, questions can be posed about the nature of the relationship between teachers and research and policy and this relationship can be engaged with and debated more deeply. She also suggests that by viewing “teachers as a policy case,” as the focus of a policy-making activity, questions can be posed about the ways in which policy makers have dealt with teachers. She argues further that teachers need to engage in policy research and research on policy as part of their professional responsibility (p. 11).

To assist teachers and others who support their work in deconstructing and challenging the assumptions about teaching, teachers and education that are embedded in government and organizational policies (as texts/discourses) and the practices associated with them, I suggest that posing Vidovich's (2001) questions about the production of a policy (as text/discourse) may be particularly helpful. Focusing on the context of policy (as text/discourse) production and the struggles or tensions that are occurring in the production of the policy (as text/discourse), some of these questions include asking when the construction of the policy (as text/discourse) began and why it began at that time, which (stakeholder) group interests has been represented in the production of the policy (as text/discourse) and which have been excluded, what processes have been used to construct the policy (as text/discourse) and why and whose interests is the policy (as text/discourse) intended to serve?

Vidovich (2001) suggests another series of questions that concern the context of the policy's (as text/discourse) practices/effects and the struggles or tensions that occur in the enactment of the policy (as text/discourse). Some of these questions include asking whether the policy (as text/discourse) is being practiced in a wide variety of localized contexts, asking questions about who is able to access the policy (as text/discourse) and how open the policy (as text/discourse) is to interpretation by practitioners, asking questions about who implements the policy (as text/discourse) and posing questions about the extent to which the policy (as text/discourse) is actively or passively resisted and whether this resistance is collective or individual.

Engaging in the perpetual deconstruction and reconstruction of discourses and discursive practices about teachers and teaching articulated by teachers' unions.

The findings in this study support and extend the findings from Bascia's (1997a, 1997b, 2000) work. While the data presented in this study suggest that particular teachers' unions play a significant role in the construction and sustenance of discourses about teachers and teaching with which members of the occupation are encouraged and expected to identify, I would argue that these findings could be generalized to all teachers' unions. The data reveal that some of the participant teachers perceive the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation to exert psychological pressure on them which forces or compels them to enact their identities in particular ways. By adopting discourses that sustain and create subject positions for teachers that construct essentialized views of teachers and their work, particular teachers' unions sometimes contribute significantly to the tensions that teachers must navigate as they negotiate their identities.

The data suggest that it might be beneficial for teachers' unions generally to acknowledge and understand the ways in which their members—teachers—respond to their construction and perpetuation of these discourses. Instead of perpetuating discourses because they are politically expedient or because they purportedly serve the teachers' professional purposes and interests or the interests of students, it might be helpful for particular teachers' unions to recognize that doing so can and often does exacerbate many of the very problems concerning teachers and teaching about which they are often heard lamenting in discussions with the public and government.

The data also suggest that during periods where teacher professional identity is [intentionally perhaps] destabilized and ruptured the dichotomies between teacher unionism and teacher professionalism can be discerned quite clearly. Given the surfacing of these often latent tensions, such occasions might be opportunities for teachers, as individuals and as collectives, to explore ways in which these competing discourses can be reconciled.

Engaging in the perpetual deconstruction and reconstruction of discourses and discursive practices about teachers and teaching articulated by the Ontario College of Teachers.

The findings of this study contribute to an emerging literature on self-regulatory and self-governing bodies for the teaching profession. The participants in this study have suggested that the Ontario College of Teachers has little, if any, impact or influence on their professional identities. It is my contention, however, that by virtue of its existence and its legislated authority to make, or at the very least suggest, policy direction, the College has the potential to influence the construction of teacher professional identity in significant ways.

The College's *standards* seem to acknowledge that teaching is an inherently dynamic, contextual, relational and fluid activity. While this acknowledgement is laudable, it is important for teachers and the College to remain vigilant in order to prevent the *standards* from emphasizing and perpetuating romanticized versions of teacher identity that are congruent with many of the essentialized dichotomies referred to at the opening of this chapter. To illustrate, the *standards*, as they presently exist, can be criticized for presenting and advocating a very limited view of reflective practice. While

the standards encourage reflective practice and acknowledge that teaching is influenced by personal, social and educational context, there are no explicit provisions that encourage teachers to examine how these influences impact on their teaching practice. Teachers should be encouraged to be reflective not only about their own subject area and teaching practices but also about the purposes of education. When teachers can only be reflective practitioners about the isolated world of their classroom, teacher agency and participation in defining and influencing the discourses about teaching that get constructed outside the classroom are curtailed in fundamentally significant ways. As Smyth (1992) observes, caution should be exercised about advocating reflection for teachers.

As educational systems move to display what appears to be an increasing interest in an array of so-called reflective approaches to the professional development of teachers, Smyth suggests that we would do well to remind ourselves that, as Wildman and Niles (1987) point out, policymakers (including institutions such as the Ontario College of Teachers) at national, state and local levels are always geared to “acquiring more power, not giving it away” (p. 29). Perhaps before buying into others’ enthusiasm that teachers become reflective practitioners, Smyth (1991) argues, a closer examination of how power in the educational arena is “becoming transformed in various ways and, in particular, how the changing configurations of teachers’ work hold significant implications for the way in which power is distributed and wielded” (pp. 323-46). As Wildman and Niles (1987) put it: “We generate a great deal of rhetoric about how teaching should evolve as a profession, while at the same time dispensing information and expectations that promote business as usual” (p. 30).

Another criticism of the *standards* concerns the limited and idealistic view and expectation of the relationship of teachers to their larger communities. Teachers must be able to determine the extent to which they interact or not within the larger educational and public communities of which they are a part. The plurality of their identities suggests that teachers are individual practitioners as well as workers with contractual rights and they should not feel obligated or be pressured into engaging in practices that remove from them their sense of agency.

Engaging in the perpetual deconstruction and reconstruction of discourses and discursive practices about teachers and teaching that articulate in schools.

The data in this study suggest that teacher professional identity is strongly influenced by the experiences and practices that are enacted inside classrooms and schools, particularly through the relationships teachers have among themselves and through the relationships they have with school administrators.

The study reveals that teachers themselves can and do contribute significantly to the construction of their own professional identities through their daily practices. While in many instances teachers enact their identities by resisting and subverting the discourses about teaching and teachers that they feel contradict their sense of self, in other instances, teachers perpetuate the very discourses that they criticize negate their agency.

Although they are writing about role and not about identity, Bullough, Gitlin, and Goldstein (1984) nevertheless offer suggestions for ways in which teachers can attend more directly to the influences on their work. Acknowledging that the obstacles to altering teacher role are formidable, these researchers note that teachers are constantly challenged by situations that surface contradictory values which, in turn, result in

teachers' engaging in unpredictable behaviour. Furthermore, these researchers contend that teachers act in subtle ways to minimize job constraints to make work more satisfying. In short, they note, "teachers do not always do as they are supposed to do and consequently hegemony must be continuously re-established" (p. 34).

Their research concluded that although teachers do not simply or completely passively accept role boundaries, the primary aim of their actions is "to make life more satisfying, to give utterance to important and unexpressed values, not to change school in any way" (p. 35). Consequently, they note, although a suggestion exists that there is room for change, teachers' actions are not radical. They write:

For dissatisfaction to become resistance that aims at emancipation teachers must first understand role—how it prohibits a fuller expression of values and how it limits what is seen as educationally desirable and possible. Understanding role requires critique of the ideology of public service and technocratic mindedness as sources of and justifications for boundaries.

(p.35)

They continue:

To begin this difficult task, teachers must walk across the hallway and engage one another in dialogue about their work. Teacher dissatisfaction has its importance at this point for it provides initial topics for discussion. Frustrations and ways of dealing with them need to be shared, but teachers must move from griping toward identifying common interests in the quest for an educational ideal that will permit discrimination between acts that are radical and those that are reproductive. Collectively, they must seek out and exploits cracks in the institution within which to build an enriched and more emancipatory role.

(p. 35)

While I am not suggesting that teachers need to be emancipated, I do concede that an important first step that will enable teachers to recognize the ways in which teacher professional identity and the teaching profession generally are discursively constructed

involves their becoming engaged in dialogue with one another about the work of teaching⁶.

In addition to the relationships that may or may not exist among teachers themselves, the relationships teachers have with school administrators can and do contribute significantly to the construction of their professional identities. One way in which teacher professional identity is influenced through relationships with their administrators occurs as teachers understand and respond to discourses of educational leadership. The study has suggested that the existing conceptions of leadership remain and endure because the discourses that construct teaching are the same ones that construct the discourses and subject positions for would-be educational leaders. Principals are people who have accepted leadership discourses as they are constructed by and through teacher discourses. Principals reinforce, indeed, manage and lead others to perpetuate the discourses that they drew upon to become principals. They manage the creation, maintenance, and exacerbation of the intersection of competing, conflicting, and conflating discourses that produce the dilemmas that suspend teachers in perpetual negotiation of and about their identities. Students of educational administration—in other words, teachers—need to develop a greater understanding of this role and recognize and acknowledge that their teacher colleagues understand the role administrators play very well and that the teachers with whom they will eventually work will respond in a variety of ways when negotiating their identities with them. Administrators' understanding should evolve, not by studying what teachers teach, but by attending to what the “realities

⁶ I am aware that this suggestion is not new. As noted in a previous footnote in this chapter, I assume that those who would help teachers become critically aware are those who have already adopted or assumed a critical perspective on teachers' work and teacher identity.

of teaching” are and to the nature of and ways in which the discourses that underpin and construct teaching are the same discourses that underpin and construct educational administration. Understanding teachers as professionals means that all educators must acknowledge that teachers play active roles in negotiating their identities and when they resist and subvert discourses about them and their work, they are not doing so because they dislike change; rather, their professional identities are being challenged in sometimes very profound ways.

Future Research

In addition to the implications for initial and continuing teacher education that have been suggested by the findings in this study, the findings also suggest areas for further research that focus on the phenomenon of teacher professional identity.

Drawing comparisons to Zembylas’ (2003) work, this study has revealed the importance of attending to “the multiplicity, heterogeneity, and contingency that are often masked by attributions of a unified or standard ‘teacher identity,’ as in certain disciplining conceptions of ‘professionalism’” (p. 124). As Zembylas astutely observes “if anything, the belief that teachers have a ‘teacher identity’ because of their profession highlights the fact that teachers are produced as *particular kinds of professionals* [italics in original]” (p. 124). “The challenge,” he offers, “is to show how these identities . . . are produced by, and in turn produce, teachers, and to do so in ways that subvert the normalizing assumptions that underlie the notion of a common ‘teacher identity’” (p.124).

I echo Zembylas’ (2003) proposal for conducting future research in this area. There is a need for continued exploration of and about the discourses and their inherent

power relations that construct teachers' work through universities, teacher organizations, and schools and classrooms and those individuals, including teachers themselves who create, sustain and exacerbate these discursive regimes should be a priority of researchers, particularly those whose interests include teachers and their work. Similarly, continued research is needed which examines the nature of and various ways in which teachers (and others) respond to these discourses. How do teachers resist these discourses? Which discourses do teachers accept? What are the effects of such resistances and acceptances on teacher identity? on the evolution of the teaching profession?

In the case of teachers' unions, for example, what extent, do teachers' unions knowingly perpetuate those discourses that sustain essentialized teacher professional identities? If they do, to what end? What are the inherent power relations embedded in these discourses? In whose interests is this power wielded?

The Ontario College of Teachers' *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, *Ethical Standards* and the *Professional Learning framework* can be understood as a series of interrelated official policy (as text/discourse) statements about Ontario's teachers and the teaching profession. Entrenched in the College's bylaws and purporting to answer the question "what does it mean to be a teacher?" in Ontario, these *standards* and *professional learning framework* can be viewed as an official legitimization of a particular teacher professional identity. Teachers and others who support teaching should be encouraged to interrogate and scrutinize the assumptions about teaching and teachers embedded within the *standards* and *professional learning framework* for the ways in which they limit and set boundaries on teaching. For example, while the *standards* acknowledge that teachers construct knowledge about their practice,

they do not acknowledge the role that this knowledge can and should play in the teacher performance appraisal process. By not identifying and acting upon the incongruities between the discourses that construct teachers as active agents in the practice of teaching and the administrator-conducted teacher performance appraisal process, the College constructs highly ambiguous positions with which teachers are expected to identify. Future research could explore why the College has so little impact on the construction of teacher professional identity and or how widespread this little influence is. Research could also examine the extent to which the College of Teachers knowingly perpetuates discourses that sustain essentialized teacher professional identities. If it knowingly engages in this perpetuation, why does it do this? What are the inherent power relations embedded in these discourses? In whose interests is this power wielded?

Other areas of inquiry include continued exploration of the ways in which teachers themselves produce and sustain discourses and associated practices that construct essentialized subject positions. Finally, a potentially rich area of inquiry might be found through an examination of the ways in which administrators' understand their roles in the construction of discourses that contribute to the perpetuation of essentialized teacher identities and, by association, essentialized administrator identities.

Conclusion

As a final note to this conclusion, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that writing this chapter has forced me to reconsider my position with respect to the findings in this study. I admit that an earlier version of the chapter seemed rather pessimistic in its outlook and I seemed determined to leave teachers 'suspended in

perpetuity' negotiating their professional identities as teachers. I am fully aware that as a contribution to the construction of its own discourses about teachers and teaching, this dissertation creates subject positions with which and through which teachers may or may not identify. In an early draft of this concluding chapter, I inserted a colon after the main title of this study—suspended in perpetuity. Upon reflection, I realized that this study, as my own discursive construction, had potentially removed considerable agency from teachers. Subsequently, I have changed the colon to a question mark suggesting I am open to the possibility that teachers may not be suspended in perpetual negotiation of their identities.

This said, I end the study being mindful of the comments of several individuals whose observations resonate strongly with me. The first of these is from Stronach, et al. (2002) who contend that professionals “walk the tightrope of an uncertain being” (p. 13). Consequently, they suggest, “it is important for theories of professionalism to hold on to these notes of ambivalence and contradiction” (p. 13), rather than try to reduce or resolve them in ways that result in essentialized unities. It is in the living of these tensions and contradictions of the dilemmas of practice, Stronach, et al. suggest, where teachers experience themselves as professionals.

The second comments are those made by Foucault (1983a) who elaborates the importance of retaining a healthy scepticism. He writes:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper- and pessimistic- activism.

(pp. 231-232)

Lastly and somewhat prophetically I suppose, I am reminded of the motto from my high school English teacher's classes. Throughout my four years of being in his class and engaging with the motto in a variety of ways—on bulletin board displays, on the chalkboard, in the extension of warm wishes on the bottom of final examinations in June—I never truly grasped its significance until my relatively recent encounter with the ideas contained within poststructuralism and the work of Michel Foucault and others. Although the motto was presented as anonymous at the time, I have since discovered it to be authored by Thornton Wilder and it appears in his 1942 play, *Skin of the Teeth*. The motto is ". . . Every good and excellent thing in the world stands moment by moment on the razor-edge of danger and must be fought for." As a teacher, a bureaucrat, a policy shaper/analyst, an academic, and as a citizen of the world, I resonate more strongly with this motto now than I ever have before.

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APPENDIX A

SCRIPT FOR TELEPHONE INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

“May I please speak with _____.” Good morning/afternoon. My name is Fred MacDonald. I am a doctoral student at OISE/UT and am currently conducting research towards my thesis. I am wondering if you would be interested in participating. My general research question is: How do teachers construct their professional identities in contemporary Ontario?

I will be asking questions regarding how teachers see themselves as professionals in Ontario and where this understanding/perception comes from. My intention is to meet with you at an agreed upon location (either my home, your home or some other mutually convenient and appropriate location) and spend an hour to an hour and a half in conversation with you. Interviews will be taped at your agreement and you will have the opportunity to edit the transcripts before they are analyzed.

Would you be interested in participating? . . . [answer any questions].
Which is a more convenient location for you? [my home, your home, other?]
What is a convenient time for you?

Thank you very much and I look forward to meeting with you then.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

August, 2002

To the participants in this study,

The purpose of this present study is to explore how teachers construct their professional identities in contemporary contexts. Specifically, it attempts to examine how teachers in one secondary school in the province of Ontario understand themselves as professionals. It seeks to understand how these teachers respond to explicit and implicit images, statements and ideas about them and the nature of their work (as professional work) as they make sense of their teacher identities. In all, seventeen teachers have been asked to participate.

This study will be carried out under the supervision of Professor James Ryan, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. The data are being collected for the purposes of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles and publications.

Your involvement in this study will consist of participating in a face-to-face interview of approximately one to one and a half hours. During the interview, you will be asked questions about how you see yourself as a teacher in Ontario, your perception of how others present teachers in Ontario, and what relationship, if any, you see between these perceptions and your day to day work as a classroom teacher. As the interview proceeds, I may ask questions for clarification or further understanding, but my part will be mainly to listen to you speak about your views, experiences, and the reasons you believe the things you do. After the interview, I will write brief notes that will be used to assist me in remembering the surroundings of the interview (i.e., characteristics of the interview site). I may request a follow-up discussion, either via telephone or in person, to clarify aspects of the first interview or to make further inquiries.

It is the intention that each interview will be audio taped and later transcribed to paper; you have the choice of declining to have the interview audio taped. You will be assigned a number that will correspond to your interviews and transcriptions. Your transcript will be sent to you to read in order for you to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. The information obtained in the interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location in my home. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons, the school, school district and community cannot be identified. All raw data (i.e., transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

You may at any time refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process. You may request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be

eliminated from the project. At no time will value judgments be placed on your responses nor will any evaluation be made of your effectiveness as a teacher. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it and request a summary of the findings of the study.

If you are agreeable, please read and sign the consent form below. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Fred MacDonald, PhD Candidate
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By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions outlined above.

Name: _____ School: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please initial if you agree to have the interview audio taped: _____

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion:

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General Research Question

How do teachers construct their professional identities in contemporary contexts?

Background

1. Could you tell me a bit about yourself, your personal and academic history as a teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching, etc.?
3. Why did you become a teacher?

Specific Research Questions

1. How do you see yourself as a teacher?
2. How do you see yourself as a professional in Ontario today? Are you a professional?
3. Do you think others see you as professional? How do others see you?
4. Are the various representations of teachers fair?
5. Do you accept or reject these representations?
6. Where do these representations come from?
7. How do they influence how you and other teachers see yourselves?
8. Do they influence the way you do your work? If so, how?
9. Do you think that they influence the way your colleagues do their work? If so, how?
10. Do you think these influences affect or impact (on) your identity as a teacher? If so, how? If not, can you elaborate?
11. Do these representations about teachers and their work imply anything about teacher professional(ism, ity)? If so, what do they imply or suggest? If not, can you elaborate?

APPENDIX D

“IF ONLY TEACHERS WOULD LEARN A THING OR TWO”



Nov. 12, 10:55 EDT

If only teachers would learn a thing or two

I NEVER HAD a single teacher who made a difference in my life.

Not one educator who inspired or challenged or provoked.

No mentor, adviser, guide or friend.

A dozen years in the Ontario public education system and everything I know I taught myself.

The Corn Is Green was a stirring book (that I discovered on my own) and To Sir With Love a popular teen flick when I was a pre-adolescent. But those types of dedicated teachers existed only in fiction or on the movie screen, in my experience.

In all the schools I attended, the teachers were lazy, bored, stupid beyond belief, rigid, disliked children, hated teenagers and seemed to resent every moment they spent in the classroom.

Harsh? That's the way I remember it. And I liked school, because at least it wasn't home. But I was so intellectually deadened by my instructors that I began taking all my class notes backwards - mirror writing, a habit continued to this day - just to keep myself engaged.

Perhaps I was just unlucky. Maybe there were scads of wonderful teachers at Clinton Public School and King Eddie and Central Commerce and Wilson Heights Junior High and William Lyon Mackenzie, only I never ended up with them. But my instincts, and my recollection of conversations with friends, say otherwise.

So, yes, I do have my biases towards teachers. Frankly, I've had a bellyful of 'em. Teachers, I mean. Enough that, if someone were to put a gun to my head and make me choose between teachers or the Mike Harris government, I'd have to . . . ach, take the bullet.

This is what rankles the most: You can't pretend to have a vocation, some sort of altruistic calling as an educator, then behave like a unionized widget-maker who lives by the punch of the clock. In any event, teachers aren't widget-makers or textile factory workers - there's not a victimized Norma Rae in the bunch - making \$6.85 an hour. They're well-compensated professionals, ostensibly, with paid summers off, and a couple of weeks at Christmas and another in March - rather nice perks, but it makes teachers crazy whenever such details are mentioned, as if three-plus months vacation each year should not be considered part of the job package.

In the past several years, as teachers and their unions have gone to the mattresses with the Tories at Queen's Park, these same "professionals" have disgraced themselves with the torrent of crocodile tears they've shed on behalf of their beleaguered students, kids whose education has been disrupted on an all too frequent basis by the disputes between their teachers and the government. God spare us all any more letters to the editor from high-handed educators who write about themselves as if they were nuns ministering to the poor in Guatemala or Canadian peacekeepers venturing into the Congo. Shall we pin a medal of valour to their breasts?

Honest, with the exception of newspaper columnists and professional basketball players, never have I met a

group of people with such a high opinion of themselves.

I know, everyone knows, that the Tories slashed educational funding in order to shore up their coffers for the tax cuts they promised (and gave) Ontario voters. It was a hateful scheme and maybe they'll pay for it at the polls some day, but they weren't roused last time 'round and so they've every right to wield that majority as they see fit, heaven help us.

Meanwhile, high school teachers - the sorest losers since Mike Tyson bit off Evander Holyfield's ear - have taken their grievances out once again on their charges by removing, since September, their services from nearly all extracurricular activities in further objection to the increased workload specified by Bill 74. The application of the union-initiated work-to-rule campaign varies from one school district to another, although it's particularly mean-spirited in Toronto - affecting 300,000 students - where it was formally initiated just recently.

Personally, I would sooner have driven needles in my eyes than participate in any after-school activity, be it music or drama or sports, all of which I considered, at that age, strictly for geeks. Not for me any sepia-toned memories of varsity football or a student-production of *The Glass Menagerie*. But I do appreciate that these activities were of central importance to many, many students, particularly those who had very little reason to go home after the 3:30 bell, and the life lessons learned therein stayed with them long after they forgot how to conjugate French verbs.

In particular, I recall the girl students from strict immigrant families who were permitted no social life at all beyond the afternoon tea dances in the school gym or the art class field trips to the museum or band practice. In the year 2000, the originating countries of those immigrant students have changed - they now hail from Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, hardly any at all from white Europe - but their culture and religion often makes it impossible for these young people to have a life outside the home except for school.

It's true that supervision of after-school activities, or coaching of sports teams, has never been specifically included in a teacher's job description. But it sure as hell has always been understood to be part of the faculty's responsibility. Without a teacher/supervisor, those gymnasiums and classrooms are no longer available, even for students who would like to continue on their own. Libraries are not always open outside class time, teachers pitifully unavailable for extra tutoring. And impoverished families can't possibly afford the fees for their children to play in community-run sports programs, especially if we're talking about hockey house leagues, where parents pay for ice time, registration fees and expensive equipment.

The teachers and their unions insist this is all necessary because of the Education Accountability Act; that there's no time for the school-oriented extras, not with high school teachers having their workload increased by all of one half-course. The original version of the bill made participation in extracurricular activities mandatory, but that part was dropped. The government hoped, quite inanely, that teachers would continue with the status quo voluntarily. They have not.

I never needed teachers, never wanted extracurricular diversions. And there must be lots of students just like me, still out there. We're the ones who'd come out okay in the end - indeed, in spite of our teachers - because we escaped the bonds of the classroom, gained our knowledge, and whatever wisdom, by other means.

But most kids do go to school to learn, I'm told.

If only it were possible to teach those teachers about honouring their profession.

News | Greater Toronto | Business | Sports | Entertainment | Life | Weekly Sections

THE TORONTO STAR

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APPENDIX E

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF

“IF ONLY TEACHERS WOULD LEARN A THING OR TWO”

As pointed out in chapter three of this study, the constitutive force of discourse and discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions (Davies & Harre, 1990). A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in. Among the products of discursive practices are the very persons who engage in them (p. 46).

Although some of them are created by herself and others have been created for her, *Toronto Star* reporter, Rosie DiManno occupies several subject positions as she writes her column entitled “If Only Teachers Would Learn a Thing or Two.” She is a female reporter of Italian descent who writes four times a week as both a news and a sports writer for one of the largest newspapers in North America. Based upon responses to her articles and the comments made about her by the *Toronto Star* in its defence of her article before the Ontario Press Council and the council's endorsement of her right to write what she has, DiManno has been legitimized as someone who can speak with some authority. Furthermore, it seems, based upon one respondent who implied that she had

written about her culture, her church, her politics, her social life and her personal love life, that DiManno has assumed herself an authority in any number of areas. When the public reads her columns then, they, too, may position themselves in a variety of ways depending on their familiarity with DiManno as a columnist. Readers can also be, and are, positioned by DiManno.

In addition to these positions DiManno creates new positions for herself when she begins the article. Here, she becomes a student who has few fond memories of her schooling experience in the Ontario education system and she also becomes an education critic who claims to be able to speak with authority about the ways in which education policy is enacted by government and understood and responded to by individual teachers and by teacher unions. Throughout the remainder of the article, DiManno vacillates back and forth among the various positions available to her.

The reporter opens the opinion piece with the following four sentences, each being separated by a double space:

*I NEVER HAD (capitalized in original online version) a single teacher
who made a difference in my life.*

Not one educator who inspired or challenged or provoked.

No mentor, adviser, guide or friend.

*A dozen years in the Ontario public education system and everything I
know I taught myself.*

In these opening lines, DiManno presents a summary of her school experience with teachers. She uses single declarative sentences, punctuated by double spaces between them to emphasize their impact. She conveys her experiences with teachers

using the negatives “*never had,*” “*not one,*” and “*no*” and in so doing, she reveals her image of the perfect teacher, perhaps inadvertently, as one who is someone who makes a difference, someone who inspires, challenges and provokes, someone who is a mentor, an advisor, a guide and a friend. Her last declaration of having spent “*a dozen years in the Ontario education system and everything I know I taught myself*” is made emphatic by both its summative and all encompassing nature as well as its dismissiveness.

In the next paragraph of her article, DiManno recalls how she had discovered, on her own, “*a stirring book*” entitled The Corn Is Green and when she was an adolescent, To Sir With Love that she describes as “*a popular teen flick.*” In DiManno’s experience, she writes, “*those types of dedicated teachers existed only in fiction or on the movie screen.*” In contrast, she says that in all the schools she attended, the teachers were “*lazy, bored, stupid beyond belief, rigid, disliked children, hated teenagers and seemed to resent every moment they spent in the classroom.*” Because this declaration encompasses “*all the schools [she] attended,*” readers are invited to make a generalization to consider their own schooling to have been similar to DiManno’s.

By drawing upon two works that portray romanticized and fictionalized notions of the ‘teacher,’ DiManno sets herself an opportunity to contrast these romanticized versions of teachers with the teachers of her school days. The parenthetical insertion that she “*discovered on [her] own*” the book The Corn Is Green emphasizes the point made earlier that her teachers taught her nothing. By acknowledging that she watched To Sir With Love when she was a pre-adolescent, DiManno unknowingly perhaps, positions herself within a discourse about the nature of relationships between teacher and student and by doing so, she suggests that is acceptable and normalized behaviour for pre-

adolescent school girls to be enamored, infatuated or otherwise preoccupied with their male teachers.

Anticipating that her readers might find her comments “*harsh*,” she justifies her opinion by writing “*that’s the way I remember it*” and adds that “*and [she] liked school because at least it wasn’t home.*” But, DiManno says, she was “*so intellectually deadened by [her] instructors that [she] began taking all [her] class notes backwards—mirror writing, a habit continued to this day—just to keep [herself] engaged.*” By inserting the interrogative “*harsh?*” DiManno employs a rhetorical device that enables her to re-position herself as a student again and justify her view by remembering herself as a student who liked school only because it was not home, thereby suggesting that not only had she an unsatisfactory home life but also opening up spaces for the introduction of new discourses about, for example, the homeless, latchkey children and abused children, among others. In doing this, DiManno also introduces discourses about the purposes of schooling and education; however, although these spaces are opened up, there are no opportunities for readers to engage directly with DiManno, hence the discourses she calls forth silence any resistance or contestation. In the sentence where DiManno reveals she was so “*deadened by her instructors*” that she began taking all of her class notes backwards, the columnist re-positions ‘the teacher’ so that he or she now becomes ‘an instructor.’ In doing so, DiManno again opens another discourse about teaching suggesting that the task of the teacher is to impart knowledge and ‘instruct,’ but not to engage the student.

Again acknowledging that she might be making a generalization, she concedes that “*perhaps [she] was just unlucky*” and that “*maybe there were scads of wonderful*

teachers” at her former schools and that perhaps it was just her misfortune to have “never ended up with them.” She then adds that although this may have been the case, “[her] instincts, and [her] recollection of conversations with friends, say otherwise.” In this instance, DiManno mobilizes another common discourse about teaching: one gets one’s teachers because of luck. This discourse is most prevalent at the beginning of the school year for elementary children and the beginnings of semesters for secondary school students when comparisons and reports are made to one another, parents and others who express an interest about whom they have received as a teacher. ‘Oh, I have Mrs. Brown for chemistry, who do you have?’ or ‘I have Mrs. Brown for chemistry but I’ve heard she is hard so I am going to guidance to switch’ are common refrains heard at this time of year. Although her comment opens up the possibility that “wonderful teachers” existed when she was in school, she immediately closes off this possibility and thereby limits the “wonderful teacher” discourse when she says that “[her] instincts and [her] recollections of conversations with friends, say otherwise.” These recollections are illustrative of the ‘luck of the draw’ conversations had among students identified above.

The next part of her article begins with a direct acknowledgment of her bias towards teachers. She writes,

So, yes, I do have my biases towards teachers. Frankly, I’ve had a bellyful of ‘em. Teachers, I mean. Enough that, if someone were to put a gun to my head and make me choose between teachers or the Mike Harris government, I’d have to . . . ach, take the bullet.

What “rankles” DiManno the most about teachers is that she feels they “can’t pretend to have a vocation, some sort of altruistic calling as an educator, then behave like a unionized widget-maker who lives by the punch of the clock.” “In any event,” she writes,

teachers aren’t widget-makers or textile factory workers—there’s not a victimized Norma Rae in the bunch—making \$6.85 an hour. They’re well-

compensated professionals, ostensibly, with paid summers off, and a couple of weeks at Christmas and another in March—rather nice perks, but it makes teachers crazy whenever such details are mentioned, as if three-plus months vacation each year should not be considered part of the job package.

Further, DiManno writes that

in the past several years, as teachers and their unions have gone to the mattresses with the Tories at Queen's Park, these same "professionals" have disgraced themselves with the torrent of crocodile tears they've shed on behalf of their beleaguered students, kids whose education has been disrupted on an all too frequent basis by the disputes between their teachers and the government. God spare us all any more letters to the editor from high-handed educators who write about themselves as if they were nuns ministering to the poor in Guatemala or Canadian peacekeepers venturing into the Congo. Shall we pin a medal of valour to their breasts?

To make her point clearer and perhaps to provide levity to her seeming heavy-handedness, she continues, *"honest, with the exception of newspaper columnists and professional basketball players, never [has she] met a group of people with such a high opinion of themselves."*

There is no question that DiManno is direct about her prejudices about teachers, admitting that *"frankly, [she has] had a belly full of 'em."* Because she is aware of the ambiguity of the antecedent for *"em,"* she adds *"Teachers, I mean."* In doing this, DiManno accomplishes several things. She acknowledges that she has expressed biased opinions previously about many things and she strengthens the focus of this piece by reinserting the topic, 'teachers.' This also enables her to begin to set up her central argument and it is here that we begin to see how DiManno understands who teachers are and what teaching is. Her bias about teachers is so strong that *"if someone were to put a gun to [her] head and make [her] choose between teachers or the Mike Harris government, [she'd] have to . . . ach, take the bullet."* Here, by inserting the phrases *"put*

a gun,” “*choose between,*” “*Mike Harris government,*” and “*take the bullet,*” DiManno inserts multiple sets of discourses that she invites readers to associate with one another in the way that she has. DiManno positions herself as someone who feels violently compelled to choose between teachers and the provincial government but remains unable to do so for undefined reasons and so she chooses instead to accept the violent consequences. Although undefined, one presumes that the compulsion she feels is socially induced and the phrase “*ach, take the bullet,*” a widely used comedic technique, seems to suggest that it is others, not she, who makes her make the decision to abstain from siding with either the teachers or the government. Her reference to the dispute between teachers and the government also repositions herself as an expert interpreter of educational policy.

DiManno suggests that, in her view, teachers want things both ways and that they cannot occupy multiple subject positions. On the one hand, she suggests, they want “*a vocation, some sort of altruistic calling as an educator,*” and then they “*behave like a unionized widget-maker who lives by the punch of the clock.*” Here DiManno draws upon several discourses that include the view of teaching as a altruistic profession where teachers are “*called*” to their “*vocation*” and the view of teachers as “*unionized widget-makers*” who live by the “*punch of the clock.*” Although teachers behave this way, DiManno negates the view that teachers are “*widget-makers or textile factory workers*” and she draws upon the familiar film character Norma Rae who earns \$6.85 an hour to negate and limit the possibility that teachers are victimized. In DiManno’s view, teachers are “*ostensibly,*” “*well-compensated professionals*” with “*paid summers off, and a couple of weeks at Christmas and another in March*” which are “*rather nice perks.*”

DiManno adds that mentioning details such as these “*makes teachers crazy*” as if “*three-months vacation each year should not be considered part of the job package.*” In this portion of the argument, DiManno draws upon many of the same discourses that have been identified as being commonly held public perceptions about teachers and teaching; however, she adds several other discourses including the discourse of the teacher as a professional.

By qualifying this discourse with the word “*ostensibly,*” DiManno highlights the tenuous nature of the subject position ‘professional’ that is available for the teacher to occupy. While she acknowledges that teachers have available to them the positions of teaching as an altruistic vocation or calling as well as unionized-widget maker, she negates the latter and substitutes it for the position of “*well-compensated professional, ostensibly.*” By doing this, DiManno re-positions the teacher in an ambiguous way and perpetuates the very discourse about teachers that “*rankles*” her most—that teachers want things both ways.

DiManno’s argument suggests that teachers play an active role in the self-selection of these positions and it ignores the possibility that these subject positions have been created through the discourses that she and others, including teachers themselves, perpetuate. These assumptions ignore and limit the possibility that the “*unionized widget-maker*” discourse, for example, has been constructed by and through, among other things, the *Education Act*, the *Labour Relations Act*, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and publicly held philosophies about the purposes of schooling. DiManno’s assumption that teachers are professionals is expressed ambivalently while at the same time negating the possibility that teachers are workers with the same rights as other workers. The data in

this study on teacher professional identity have shown that teachers often challenge the assumption that teachers accept the altruistic discourse and despite DiManno's negation and limitation of the teacher as worker discourse, this study has also shown that teachers willingly adopt this subject position for themselves.

In her comments about teachers and their unions who *"have gone to the mattresses with the Tories at Queen's Park,"* DiManno reinforces the tenuous position she has created for teachers by placing quotation marks around the word professional. Here, DiManno limits the availability of the subject position professional because teachers have been engaging in disgraceful behaviour by using their students as pawns in their dispute with the government, the implication being that a professional teacher does not and is not permitted to have disputes that refer to or draw upon students to make their case. To emphasize her point, DiManno asks, on behalf of all readers who read the *Toronto Star*, for *"high-handed educators who write about themselves as if they were nuns ministering to the poor in Guatemala or Canadian peacekeepers venturing into the Congo"* to spare them any more letters to the editor while wondering if these *"high-handed educators"* would like her and others *"to pin a medal of valour to their breasts."* Again, by making the comparisons she does, with nuns and peacekeepers, DiManno reinforces the altruistic, religious subject position for the teacher to occupy, but again, she then immediately and forcefully negates and limits it, re-positioning the teacher in a highly ambiguous way. This ambiguity is reinforced in the next paragraph as well when she compares teachers to newspaper columnists, herself perhaps, and professional basketball players, again perhaps a self-referential comparison given her other reporter role as sports writer, noting that with these as exceptions, she had never met "a group of

people with such a high opinion of themselves” clearly implying that teachers are arrogant and conceited.

In the next part of her piece, DiManno acknowledges that she and everyone else knows that *“the Tories slashed educational funding in order to shore up their coffers for the tax cuts they promised (and gave) Ontario voters.”* She adds that doing so was *“a hateful scheme”* and that *“maybe they’ll pay for it at the polls some day,”* but she notes, the Tories *“weren’t roused last time ‘round and so they’ve every right to wield that majority as they see fit, heaven help us.”*

While this is the reality, she writes, high school teachers who she describes, using a sport analogy, as *“the sorest losers since Mike Tyson bit off Evander Holyfield’s ear”* have

taken their grievances out once again on their charges by removing, since September, their services from nearly all extracurricular activities in further objection to the increased workload specified by Bill 74. The application of the union-initiated work-to-rule campaign varies from one school district to another, although it’s particularly mean-spirited in Toronto—affecting 300,000 students—where it was formally initiated just recently.

In this portion of her column, by drawing upon the discourses that she does, DiManno again both creates subject positions for the teacher and then just as quickly removes them, leaving the teacher in an ambivalent position. By referring to students as *“charges,”* teachers are positioned as guardians, as caretakers, and indeed as some might connote, parents. The use of this word reinforces the altruistic notion of the teacher. Then by using the word *“services,”* DiManno unknowingly perhaps, opens up a subject position for the teacher as an entrepreneur or, at least, as a service-provider, an increasingly frequently-used designation in educational discourse generally.

DiManno also acknowledges that teachers have had their workload increased through legislation and this recognition reinforces the reality that teachers do and necessarily occupy the subject position of worker because this position has been created for them through government legislation. Despite there being little that teachers can do to change this positioning, DiManno and others seem reluctant to allow teachers to occupy this position or, if they do, there are limits placed upon how a teacher can be a worker. She notes *“the union-initiated work-to-rule campaign . . . is particularly mean-spirited.”* Here, DiManno acknowledges that teachers are unionized workers but, just as she is hesitant in granting teachers ‘professional’ status, she is equally condemning of their ‘work-to-rule’ campaign suggesting that such actions are un-teacher-like. She attempts to explain her ambivalence by noting that while

it’s true that supervision of after-school activities, or coaching or sports teams, has never been specifically included in a teacher’s job description . . . it sure as hell has always been understood to be part of the faculty’s responsibility.

Without a teacher/supervisor, she opines, *“those gymnasiums and classrooms are no longer available, even for students who would like to continue on their own.”* She adds that *“libraries are not always open outside class time”* and *“teachers [are] pitifully unavailable for extra tutoring.”* Furthermore, she writes,

impoverished families can’t possibly afford the fees for their children to play in community-run sports programs, especially if we’re talking about hockey house leagues, where parents pay for ice time, registration fees and expensive equipment.

Without attending to the repositioning of the teacher as *“faculty”* in this excerpt, it is significant to note that with this admission, DiManno presents the essence of the thing that *“rankles”* her most about teachers she noted earlier. Contrary to what she identifies as teachers wanting to have things both ways, it is the subject positions that are

set up for teachers through DiManno's and others' assumptions that this or that aspect of teaching "*sure as hell has always been understood to be part of the faculty's responsibility*" that frustrates, negates and limits the subject positions open to teachers where they are, as teachers themselves have expressed, "*damned if they do and damned if they don't.*"

For DiManno personally, she says that when she was in school, she hated participating in any after-school activities, whether they were music, drama, or sports, all of which she considered to be activities for geeks, noting that she would have rather "*driven needles in [her] eyes than participate.*" Repositioning of herself as a student, she reinforces her earlier claims that her schooling was not a pleasant experience when she writes,

Not for me any sepia-toned memories of varsity football or a student-production of The Glass Menagerie. But I do appreciate that these activities were of central importance to many, many students, particularly those who had very little reason to go home after the 3:30 bell, and the life lessons learned therein stayed with them long after they forgot how to conjugate French verbs.

To emphasize her point, DiManno then draws upon discourses of race. Recalling how girl students from strict immigrant families were permitted "*no social life at all beyond the afternoon tea dances in the school gym or the art class field trips to the museum or band practice,*" DiManno notes that

in the year 2000, the originating countries of those immigrant students have changed—they now hail from Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, hardly any at all from white Europe—but their culture and religion often makes it impossible for these young people to have a life outside the home except for school.

In her understanding of the dispute between teachers and the government, she writes that the reason teachers are not engaging in after-school activities like those she

mentioned above is that because of the changes to the *Education Accountability Act*, “*there’s no time for the school-oriented extras, not with high school teachers having their workload increased by all of one half-course.*” She notes that

the original version of the bill made participation in extracurricular activities mandatory, but that part was dropped. The government hoped, quite inately, that teachers would continue with the status quo voluntarily. They have not.

In this portion of the column, DiManno acknowledges that she and everyone else knows that the government has slashed educational funding in order to meet its promise of tax cuts, which she notes, it gave Ontario voters. She also acknowledges and agrees with, one presumes, others *as well as* teachers, that the government’s action was a “*hateful scheme*” and that maybe it will pay for it in the next election, but she notes the government was not defeated in the last election so, she writes, “*they’ve every right to wield that majority as they see fit, heaven help us.*” In this portion of her column, DiManno seems to suggest that teachers have some justification for feeling the way they do and she seems to be in agreement by her insertion of the phrases “*hateful scheme*” and “*heaven help us.*” But she also draws upon a discourse about democracy and suggests that in Ontario’s electoral system, there is little or nothing one can do to change government policy until the majority of the population votes and elects another government. DiManno’s employment of discourses about democracy to make her case against teachers does not acknowledge that democracy is a problematic concept for many both in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada, including for many teachers. She assumes that there is a shared and unified understanding of the concept despite the often-noted problem that during recent Ontario elections (for example, 1995, 1998) only a minority of

the population has been voting. By ignoring this, DiManno perpetuates a fallacy that the majority of Ontario's population is in agreement with the government's policies.

DiManno concludes her article by restating the fact that she "*never needed teachers*" and "*never wanted extracurricular diversions*" and she surmises that "*there must be lots of students just like [her], still out there.*" She notes as well that they are "*the ones who'd come out okay in the end—indeed, in spite of [their] teachers—because [they] escaped the bonds of the classroom, gained our knowledge, and whatever wisdom, by other means.*" Her final words in the article are again, like the opening, single declaration sentences separated by double spaces:

But most kids do go to school to learn, I'm told.

If only it were possible to teach those teachers about honouring their profession.

By reiterating that she never needed teachers and never wanted "*extracurricular diversions*" and by assuming that there are others like her out there, DiManno appeals to the reader to agree with her argument. Finally, she reinforces and makes available the altruistic subject position for teachers, not by appealing to teachers directly but by appealing to readers generally by wishing that "*if only it were possible to teach those teachers about honouring their profession.*" By referring to teachers as "*those teachers,*" DiManno re-objectifies the teacher and reinforces many of the discourses she has drawn upon to construct, frame, deconstruct, and then to re-frame teachers throughout her article.

APPENDIX F

“MY THOUGHTS ON TEACHERS SPARK MAIL GALORE”



Nov. 15, 01:07 EDT

My thoughts on teachers spark mail galore

Rosie DiManno
COLUMNIST

“I do not believe that all your high school teachers hated teenagers. It is my opinion that they probably just hated you and with good reason.”

- Rosemary Miller

OH YES, IT'S all coming back to me now - why I disliked most of those teachers I endured through 12 years of public school education in Toronto and North York.

If my memory had grown fuzzy - because, to be honest, I remembered very little about those men and women, none of whom made any impression on me whilst growing up - I was provided with ample reminders while plowing through the e-mail Monday night into Tuesday morning.

Up till 5 a.m., I was, answering more than 400 e-mails - about half from aggrieved teachers (off with her head!), giving me a firm F (which didn't necessarily stand for Fail but for a familiar Anglo-Saxon epithet); the other half from students and parents (yeah Rosie!) who were delighted that I had, in their view, teed-off on those damnable teachers in my Monday column.

Technically, it's not part of my job to read and answer all this e-mail. Nobody pays me to go home after a full shift on election night and spend another six hours responding to rather unpleasant correspondents. But it's, well, an extracurricular kinda thing for columnists. Just as nobody pays me any extra for doing two full-time jobs, writing news and writing sports, seven days a week, without earning one penny of overtime, ever. But, see, I consider it a privilege. I love my job(s).

But I do wish you could all read my mail because the tone - both pro and con - is very different from what you'll see in the coming days on the Letters to the Editor page. Those who resent what teachers are doing in this province right now - particularly withholding involvement in extracurricular activities - are terrified of speaking up. Parents fear any criticism they express will result in their children being targeted by spiteful teachers. Educators who disagree with the union-mandated work-to-rule feel they have little option but to grudgingly go along with it or risk being ostracized and worse by their colleagues. One student wondered why his teacher had spent 45 minutes - almost the entirety of class time - berating Mike Harris and yours truly rather than teaching the curriculum.

Mail directly to me on this issue has been a lot nastier, more vitriolic and, frankly, more honest than the self-censored letters that make their way to the letters page. But whether dripping with sarcasm, venom or wounded self-pity, they all served to remind me of some basic truths, as prevalent now as two-plus decades ago, back in my own (apparently sad and pathetic and lonely) youth: As a group, teachers are just about the most bossy, most superior, most patronizing, most vain, most sanctimonious and most potentially dangerous professionals (I use that term loosely) I've ever encountered.

And here's something else that hasn't changed: If you disagree with teachers, then you are either ignorant beyond redemption or in need of therapy. And that was always their ace in the hole, wasn't it? Fly right or you'll get labelled as delinquent and delusional. Just as, all these years later, my recollections couldn't possibly be accurate, therefore rendering them invalid, therefore denying my reality.

Read for yourself and see what I mean. Remember, these are the men and women teaching your children:

"Dear Rosie: Loved your teacher-bashing article. Please take a few more swings at them; there's still a few that haven't left for other countries and other professions. I thought I was gonna die when I read the part about 'if someone were to put a gun to my head and make me choose between teachers or the Mike Harris government, I'd have to . . . (ach, take the bullet).' You've always made good decisions, Rosie . . ." - Mike Trites

"Dear Rosie: All my professional life, I have been demeaned by ignorant people just like you. Quite frankly, it doesn't faze me one single bit. I am proud of who I am and the job that I do. But you know what's really sad Rosie? You honestly believe, according to your article, that you turned out okay in the end. That would make those poor school-educated types laugh. To think you've been operating on the fallacy that you are okay. You are a vicious and mean-spirited person, quite oblivious to the reality of what really goes on in the normal world. You've got real issues Rosie. There isn't a school or teacher that could have helped you, but maybe a good psychiatrist . . ." - Laura Rodney

"Too bad you didn't have a teacher that made a difference. It shows." - Dan de Souza

"I made the mistake of reading your column and as a teacher I have to say it made me furious. I couldn't believe what I was reading. As I continued to read my anger turned to sorrow. I can only feel sorry for you. You must obviously have had a terrible home life (as you mention in your column), you even mention that you would choose suicide (what a great choice of words, and you even give a suggestion on how to do it, realize of course that young students have access to The Star at my school). You must have had very few friends when you were younger since you didn't want to become involved in anything at your school. What a sad lonely life you must have . . . Although you obviously need counselling I still can't believe a reputable paper like The Star would allow you to write such drivel . . . As a regular subscriber to The Star educational programs you can rest assured I will never have anything to do with them again. Vindictive? Yes. Taking away from the program I teach? Never. You, not me, made this a decision that will be easy to live with." - John Shewfelt

Listen up, boys and girls. I'm not a student any more.

"Thank you Rosie. You have given me reason to never buy another Toronto Star. Perhaps if you had learned a little in school, you wouldn't have to write such vitriol and garbage, article after article, 4 days a week . . . I am also not surprised that you have never been inspired or challenged or provoked. It takes intelligence for this. Lucky for you that The Toronto Star editors tolerate your dribble. I won't have to anymore." - Tamar Harkness

"Ms Dimanno: I am a high school teacher in Toronto, of 10 years experience. I just read your article and would like to make a few comments: 1) Your taste in films resembles your prose style: maudlin at best. 2) I wonder, while you were sitting in class, bored and disdainful, were the greasy little wheels in your brain obsessing (sic) over how hard done you were by your ignorant Italian parents? It must be hard growing up when all of the adults around you are so ignorant. I guess they just didn't encourage your particular brilliance. So sorry, Rosie. 3) You did not mention the last time you were in a classroom. Interesting omission. Like Mike and his ilk, you spout a politics of begrudement (sic). I can only guess from your superficial and spurious analysis of the current debate that your comments are reactionary, not bourne (sic) out by any research into the current realities of the classroom practice. 4) I've spent 10 years of my teaching career inside and outside the classroom; in the school auditorium

directing plays. The kids I direct are not 'geeks.' Do you honestly expect anyone to have respect for a columnist who filters her opinion through the lens of a disgruntled and misspent youth? You're an adult. Write like one. 5) This article confirms what I've felt for a long time. On matters of education, you are clearly not in the same league as your colleagues: Barclay uses satire and wit, Coyle solid arguments, Urquhart a balanced analysis. Wonder why they don't write sports columns? Hmmm, perhaps they don't whine as loud as you." - Sheila Gatenby

"Hey Rosie, your parents, your culture, your priests, your politicians, your drinking companions, your lovelife? and now your teachers (and you must have had more than your share at all those schools) . . . the therapy is not working! Find another therapist(s) or are they next on the hit list? Or better still send him and/or her back to high school! Hope they can meet your standards. p.s. Did you graduate? You want boring? Try starting and finishing one of your articles! Is there any section of the paper you are competent in? You seem to have tried all of them!" - Nick Loberto

"Dear Miss (Mrs?) Ms Dimanno: . . . Your article is vain, shallow, and in the end, a testimony of jaded, lonesome adolescence which only now has caught up to you. Your only self-perceived redemption was to rest all your successes on your own laurels and insulting anyone else who might have had an influence on your life. I guess it must have been hard to learn that life isn't a movie or storybook after all. When you grow up, we'll gladly welcome you back to the real world after your 12 year hiatus to Dimanno land. Well Madame, you are an adult now. Deal with it." - P. Marcolla

"Your pompous, self-serving, egotistical ramblings would be enough to make anyone sick to their stomach. If you were forced to make the choice between teachers and Mike Harris, it would be my profound hope that you would, indeed, take the bullet. It would at least save me from having to read yet another diatribe from an uninformed hack who has never walked a mile in a teacher's shoes." - David Wallace

Anyway, that's just a taste of it. But listen up, boys and girls. I'm not a student any more. I'm a grownup.

You can't make me stand in the cloakroom, you can't whack a ruler across my palms, you can't make me write I WILL NOT TALK BACK 100 times on the blackboard.

Push me, I'll push you right back.

Rosie DiManno usually appears Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. E-mail: dimanno@hotmail.net

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THE TORONTO STAR

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APPENDIX G

“WE. ARE. THE. PROUD. STUDENTS. OF. MIKE. HARRIS.”



Feb. 15, 09:51 EDT

We. Are. The. Proud. Students. Of. Mike. Harris.

Linwood Barclay
STAR COLUMNIST

GOOD. DAY. We. Are. The. Elementary. And. Secondary. School. Students. Of. Ontario. We. Would. Like. To. Take. A. Moment. Of. Your. Time. To. Tell. You. About. All. The. Improvements. That. Are. Being. Made. To. The. Ontario. School. System. We. Think. You. Will. Be. Very. Impressed.

The. System. Has. Undergone. Many. Changes. In. The. Last. Few. Years. A. Great. Deal. Of. Work. Has. Been. Done. By. The. Mike. Harris. Government. And. His. Education. Minister. Janet. Ecker. To. Ensure. That. All. Children. Are. Treated. Equally. This. Has. Made. The. System. Fairer. For. Everyone.

Now. All. Across. The. Province. Children. Take. The. Exact. Same. Courses. We. Are. All. Using. The. Same. Lesson. Plans. All. Of. Our. Courses. Have. Been. Drafted. At. Central. Command. So. That. They. Are. The. Same. Everywhere.

We. Are. Also. Being. Tested. On. Our. Subjects. On. A. Regular. Basis. Everybody. Gets. To. Write. The. Same. Test. Regardless. Of. Whether. We. Live. In. Downtown. Toronto. Or. Up. In. Thunder. Bay. And. All. Of. Our. Tests. Will. Be. Marked. The. Same. Way. Regardless. Of. Whether. We. Live. In. Downtown. Toronto. Or. Up. In. Thunder. Bay. And. The. Results. Will. Be. Assessed. The. Same. Way. Regardless. Of. Whether. We. Live. In. Downtown. Toronto. Or. Up. In. Thunder. Bay.

Fortunately. Our. Schools. Are. All. Being. Funded. In. A. Similar. Manner. Every. Student. In. Ontario. Is. Allotted. The. Same. Amount. Of. Money. Even. Though. Our. Needs. Differ. Widely. Across. The. Province. But. Soon. We. Will. All. Have. The. Same. Needs. And. Goals. We. All. Want. To. Work. In. The. Exact. Same. Jobs. In. The. Exciting. New. Economy.

Those. Of. Us. Who. Used. To. Be. A. Bit. Different. And. Wanted. To. Pursue. Interests. In. The. Arts. Have. Come. To. Our. Senses. We. Now. Understand. That. Music. And. Literature. And. Philosophy. And. Sculpture. And. Theatre. Arts. Are. A. Waste. Of. Valuable. Learning. Time. Like. We. Need. To. Know. About. Shakespeare. To. Supersize. Your. Order.

There. Are. Other. Changes. Coming. That. Will. Make. Our. Schooling. Even. Better. Soon. We. May. All. Be. Wearing. Uniforms. The. Boys. Will. All. Wear. The. Same. Thing. And. The. Girls. Will. All. Wear. The. Same. Thing. We. Will. All. Look. Pretty. Much. The. Same. This. Will. Allow. Us. To. Focus. Our. Attention. On. Our. Studies. And. Help. Us. All. To. Think. The. Same. Way.

In. A. Few. Years. We. Will. All. Graduate. Knowing. The. Exact. Same. Things. We. Will. Be. Interchangeable. This. Will. Put. Us. At. A. Great. Advantage. In. The. Global. Marketplace. If. Our. Parents. Come. To. School. To. Pick. Us. Up. And. Grab. The. Wrong. Kid. By. Mistake. It. Will. Not. Really. Matter.

Oh. Sure. We. May. Not. Have. After. School. Activities. Any. More. There. May. No. Longer. Be. Football. Or. Basketball. Or. A. Drama. Production. And. The. Music. Programs. May. Be. Going. Down. The. Toilet.

But. At. Least. When. We. Graduate. We. Will. Take. With. Us. The. Memories. Of. Participating. In. Endless. Provincewide. Testing. Together. And. Who. Will. Ever. Forget. The. Excitement. That. Comes. From. Receiving. A. New. And. Improved. Report. Card. This. Is. What. School. Is. All. About.

Fortunately. For. Our. Teachers. They. Are. About. To. Become. All. The. Same. As. Well. They. Are. All. Going. To. Be. Tested. Too. Soon. They. Will. Know. All. The. Sections. And. Sub-sections. Of. All. Aspects. Of. The. Curriculum. And. Be. Able. To. Recite. Them. Verbatim. These. Will. Be. The. New. Great. Teachers. Even. If. They. Do. Not. Give. The. Ass. Of. A. Rat. About. Their. Students. As. Human. Beings.

Thank. You. For. Letting. Us. Share. All. Of. Our. Exciting. News. With. You. We. Remain. The. Elementary. And. Secondary. School. Students. Of. Ontario. Resistance. Is. Futile.

Have. A. Nice. Day.

Linwood Barclay's column appears Monday, Friday and Saturday. E-mail him at life@thestar.ca.

News | Greater Toronto | Business | Sports | Entertainment | Life | Weekly Sections

THE TORONTO STAR

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APPENDIX H

TEACHERS MOB WITMER

'Differences cannot be resolved successfully with disrespect, rudeness or violence,' says teachers' leader Phyllis Benedict after Toronto melee

Teachers mob Witmer



Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer is surrounded by protesting teachers, some with bags over their heads, as she leaves a teachers' meeting yesterday.

Education minister pushed, badgered at union convention Tory government policies vilified by angry members

TESS KALINOWSKI
EDUCATION REPORTER

Ontario's education minister was punched, jostled and heckled by an angry mob of Catholic teachers yesterday as she was leaving their annual convention.

As Elizabeth Witmer tried to board an escalator outside the downtown convention hall, shouting protesters, some wearing paper bags over their heads, rushed after her. One man pushed her and another threw a glass of water at her as sides

tried to steer Witmer through the crowd.

Witmer, who later said she was punched but didn't know if it was deliberate, and her staff were unhurt.

She called the incident "unfortunate", but said she had been

concerned about the safety of the people around her.

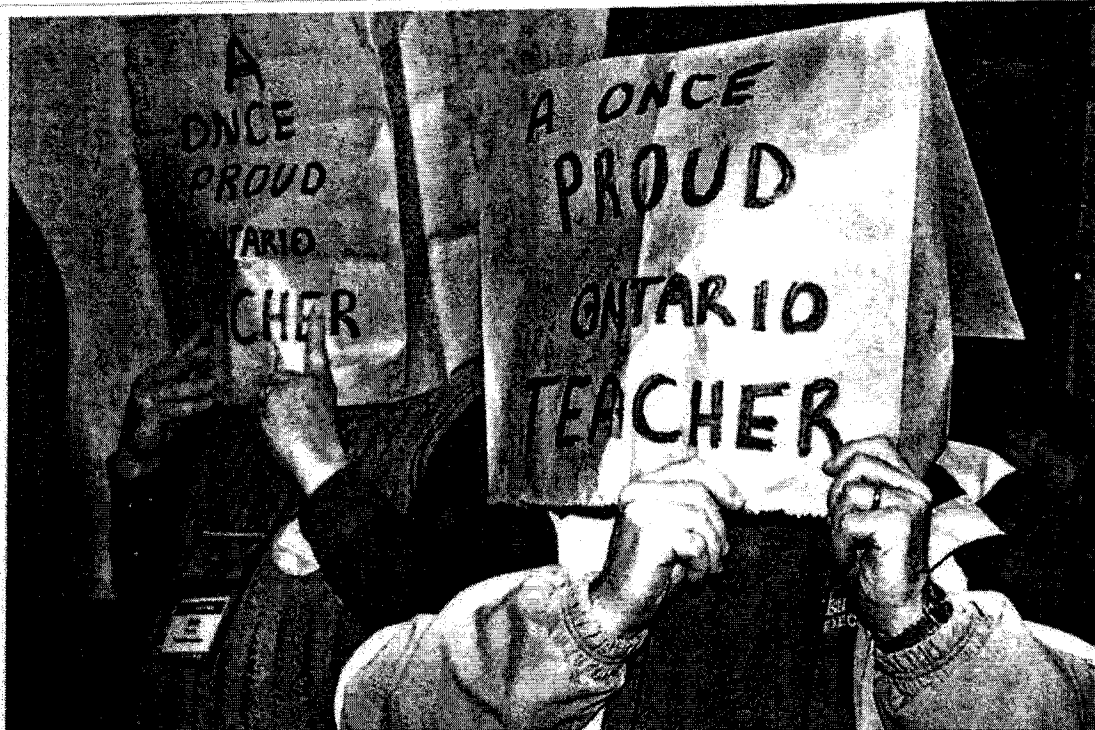
The minister had been invited to speak to the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. But in a move she later called surprising, Witmer was greeted at the door of the Sheraton Centre Hotel by the union's president and told the teachers didn't want to hear her speech. Instead, she was asked to give

opening remarks and answer questions.

Witmer said yesterday's incident "certainly doesn't reflect the behaviour of the teachers I've met throughout the province of Ontario in the past few months."

"This was unlike what I have been encountering," she said.

► Please see Witmer, A6



COLIN MCCONNELL/TORONTO STAR

Members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association show their displeasure yesterday with Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer and her government's policies: "What they say and what they do are two different things," protester Bill Doyle said.

Union investigating allegations

► **Witmer** From A1

The union, which represents 36,000 Catholic teachers across the province, would not allow members of the news media inside the convention hall and only permitted Witmer to be accompanied by one staff member.

Over the weekend, the Catholic teachers heard speeches from Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty and NDP Leader Howard Hampton, with media in the room.

Union president Kathy McVean, who called the incident "regrettable," said the union is investigating what she considered "very serious allegations" about the protesters' behaviour. While she didn't witness what happened after Witmer left the room, McVean said the union did not endorse the behaviour of some of the protesters.

The president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation said she was "deeply disturbed" to hear of the incident.

"Differences cannot be resolved successfully with disrespect, rudeness or violence," Phyllis Benedict said in a news release. Benedict said Witmer

has made a genuine effort to rebuild relations with teachers and she hopes those efforts continue.

Yesterday's events suggest the Conservative government's softer approach to teachers isn't hitting home. In August, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario cancelled a speech by Witmer at its annual meeting, claiming disgust at the Conservative government's education funding policies.

The government and the province's 140,000 teachers have been at odds since the Tories came to office in 1995 under former premier Mike Harris with an agenda of tax and spending cuts. They also implemented a tough new school curriculum that has been criticized.

Since becoming Premier last April, Eves has announced millions of dollars in new funding ahead of a provincial election expected this spring.

A protester, who wore a bag over his head with the slogan "A Once Proud Ontario Teacher," said he was waiting for Queen's Park to properly fund education.

"What they say and what they do are two different things," Bill Doyle said.

"Clearly the teachers of Ontario are angry with the province of Ontario and its policies," said the Catholic union's president-elect, Donna Marie Kennedy, who added there was "no question emotions were running very high." Witmer took less than half a dozen questions before an aide whispered something to her and they left the room, she said.

Kennedy, an Ottawa elementary school teacher who begins her new job on July 1, said union delegates were lined up 10-deep at the microphones. "There's no question some of the questions were a little rancorous, but the speaker had control of the meeting," she said.

The union excluded the media so the minister couldn't use the convention as a platform for her government's policy, she said.

According to Kennedy, the minister arrived at the podium about 15 minutes late because she was outside the convention hall answering questions from the media.

She said she thought Witmer appeared upset about a Sunday news release from Liberal education critic Gerard Kennedy, who alleged the government was clawing back millions of the

\$250 million it promised in December for special education. "Her voice cracked at the podium," Kennedy said.

But a spokesperson for Witmer said the minister did not flee the meeting; she simply didn't have more time to answer delegates' questions.

Convention delegates crowded computer terminals outside the convention hall yesterday afternoon, reading Internet news reports of the morning's protest.

"We wanted answers, not political jargon, and we wouldn't accept her political jargon and she exited," said delegate Allen Judd, who said water was spilled in the jostling crowd, not thrown.

Another delegate said many of the 500 union members were offended when Witmer told them they must consider children. Dorothy Marchesan said the government had failed to consider children in its child-care, housing and social welfare policies.

"All of the things that are in our society as a result of this government, we see the result of that,"

WITH FILES FROM CANADIAN PRESS

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EDITORIAL TUES. MARCH 11/03
The wrong message

WHAT ABOUT THE ARTICLE?

That was quite a civics lesson provided yesterday by the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association.

Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer was booed and jeered as she left the group's annual meeting.

A mob of delegates, some of them wearing brown paper bags over their heads, shoved her. One person threw water at her. A Witmer aide claims the minister was punched.

What kind of message do teachers think this sends to students? If you disagree with someone, about them down, rough them up? Any student who behaved in such a manner would be expelled from school.

Check others?

Teachers are obviously angry. They have a right to be. Years of budget cuts and sloppily executed reforms by the Conservative government have exhausted everyone.

Frustration has mounted in recent months. Hopes were raised, only to be dashed, by the government's failure to act on a task force report recommending that billions of dollars be put into schools. Little of real substance has been delivered to date.

But the teachers blew a chance yesterday to hold Witmer to account.

did they?

Witmer had been scheduled to deliver a full speech, with a following

question-and-answer session. But at the last minute, the union only allowed her to deliver a few remarks. And Witmer answered only a couple of questions before leaving.

Clearly, the teachers should have allowed her to deliver her speech.

The union also should have allowed reporters to cover Witmer's appearance. The public deserves to hear what the minister has to say about her plans for, say, special education.

To her credit, Kathy McVean, the president of the association, was swift to say she did not condone the teachers' behaviour. She also added her concern about cutting the lines of communication with the minister.

This is not the first time teachers have given an education minister a rough ride.

Last summer, the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario rescinded an invitation to Witmer. Witmer's predecessor, Janet Ecker, was alternately ignored and badgered at annual meetings.

Teachers have gained the moral high ground in recent years as the public learns more about what has been happening in our schools.

But bullying a minister only harms their cause.

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APPENDIX I

AN EXCERPT FROM THE 1999

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS' WEBPAGES

“The College Puts Responsibility for Teaching Profession in Teachers’ Hands.”

The Ontario College of Teachers was established to regulate and govern the teaching profession. . . . The Ontario College of Teachers gives teachers the professional recognition and status they deserve. Teachers play a lead role in shaping the future of all aspects of their profession. In fact, the majority of the College’s Council is made up of qualified teachers elected by their peers. The College, established by legislation proclaimed in July 1996, assumes responsibility for developing standards of teaching practice, regulating on-going teacher certification and professional development and accrediting teacher education programs.

The College also makes the teaching profession more accountable to the public. Teachers and members of the public will serve together on the Council and all committees of the College. Council meetings and disciplinary hearings are open to everyone.

For more than 25 years, various commissions and other bodies have recommended that teachers be given authority to regulate their own profession. One of the most recent calls for such regulatory status was presented in the Royal Commission on Learning (1994) which stated that:

The complexity of contemporary education in Ontario, and the best professional interests of educators, dictate a transfer of governance issues to a newly created provincial professional body. Giving teaching full professional status is a logical extension of trends in education and developments in the teaching community... As long as these crucial areas of governance in teaching remain outside the control of teachers, the profession of teaching will remain in a state of limited development.

The establishment of the College elevates the status of the teaching profession to that enjoyed by 31 other self-regulated professions in the province of Ontario. The Ontario College of Teachers will be the largest self-regulatory body in the country.

Roles and responsibilities: A mandate to deliver

The Ontario College of Teachers is a professional college with authority to license, govern and regulate the practice of teaching. The College’s primary functions are to set out clear standards of practice, ensure sound professional learning goals and co-ordinate and monitor career-long, accredited professional learning for teachers.

The College has authority to:

- Regulate teaching qualifications;
- Set membership criteria, enroll members and create a provincial register of teachers;
- Investigate complaints involving members, conduct hearings into allegations of professional misconduct and take appropriate disciplinary action.

College of Teachers benefits everyone

The College of Teachers provides teaching professionals with a strong voice in the development of standards of practice for teaching and the design and content of teacher education programs. For the first time in Ontario, teachers are directly involved in the accreditation of the programs in faculties of education and other agencies that deliver professional development. The College will help teachers obtain the appropriate programs to meet their individual needs.

Students, parents and taxpayers also benefit from a more accountable teaching profession. Members of the public are represented on the College's Council and work closely with teachers to develop new standards for teacher performance and to coordinate and monitor career-long, professional learning. Accrediting professional development programs and tracking teachers' participation in career-long learning will improve the availability and quality of professional development, while recognizing the learning in which many teachers are already involved. Regular professional development will also ensure that teachers have appropriate training to successfully implement new policies introduced by the Ministry of Education and Training. Of course, the ultimate beneficiaries of this emphasis on professional development will be Ontario's students!

Public accountability is key to teacher discipline

It is important to have a clear separation of responsibilities between the College and the Ontario Teachers Federation (OTF) and its affiliates, which provide representation, collective bargaining and protective services for teachers. The College will set standards of practice and ensure the competency of its members. To ensure public accountability and to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, responsibility for teacher discipline has been transferred from the OTF and now rests with the College. The future role of the OTF and its affiliates in the College disciplinary process will be to act on behalf of their members. The Disciplinary Committee of the College of Teachers will take responsibility for the processing of complaints. Responsibility for the removal of a teaching certificate has moved from the Minister of Education and Training to the profession.

It is important to emphasize that all teachers' unions continue to have the right to represent their members in all areas and, particularly in disciplinary hearings. Teachers' rights under their collective agreements are not affected by the creation of a professional

college.

In most cases, the cost of disciplinary hearings will be assumed by the Disciplinary Committee of the College. Members called before a disciplinary panel will be responsible for their own legal costs or will have recourse to their affiliate for assistance.

APPENDIX J

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE OF THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

According to Part II, Section 3(1) of the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the College has the following objects:

- to regulate the profession of teaching and to govern its members
- to develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the College
- to accredit professional teacher education programs offered by post-secondary educational institutions and other bodies
- to issue, renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke and reinstate certificates of qualification and registration
- to provide for the ongoing education of members of the College, including professional learning required to maintain certificates and qualification and registration
- to establish and enforce professional and ethical standards applicable to members of the College
- to receive and investigate complaints against members of the College and to deal with discipline and fitness to practise issues
- to develop, provide and accredit educational programs leading to certificates of qualification that are additional to the certificate required for membership, including but not limited to, certificates of qualification as a supervisory officer, and to issue, renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke and reinstate such additional qualification
- to communicate with the public on behalf of the members of the College
- to perform such additional functions as are prescribed by the regulations

APPENDIX K

EXCERPT FROM “FACTS ABOUT SELF-REGULATION IN ONTARIO” (Taken from the 2001 Orientation Manual for Council Members)

What is the purpose of the self-regulation of professions?

Self-regulation is a covenant between a profession and the public. In return for being granted the power to regulate itself, the profession has covenanted to place the interests of the public ahead of its professional self-interest. The main purpose of self-regulation, therefore, as with all regulation, is to promote and protect the public interest, not to advance a profession.

While there is often concurrence between the interests of the public and the self-interest of the teaching profession or teaching professionals, there must be a clear separation of the function between the regulatory body and any union or professional association.

The regulation of professions protects the public from unqualified, incompetent or unethical practitioners. Professional regulation usually prescribes what constitutes best practice in a given profession and the qualifications needed to practise that profession.

A profession can be regulated by the government or the profession itself. This latter option—self-regulation—involves government delegating the responsibility of protecting the public to the profession itself, so that is practitioners regulate the profession.

APPENDIX L

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED TERMS USED IN THIS DISSERTATION

OAC

An acronym for Ontario Academic Credit, OAC is part of the curriculum (curricula) codified by the Ontario Ministry of Education in *Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior* (OS:IS) and its revisions. In common parlance, the term is used to describe the fifth high school year (also known as Grade 13) that used to exist in the province of Ontario. It can also refer to the courses offered at the OAC level, or the high school credits that are associated with these courses. Finally, it can refer, rather vaguely, to students who were in their OAC year (OACs). Ontario Academic Credits and its related curriculum have been phased out and were last offered for the 2002-2003 school year. (Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OAC>).

ISO 9000

ISO 9000 is a designation that symbolizes world-wide recognition of quality assurance in industry standards. The ISO stands for International Standards Organization; the 9000 refers to the basic standards for quality systems—from concept to implementation—whatever the product or service.

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

According to the Ontario College of Teachers' document entitled *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* (1999), the standards of practice were developed to answer the question "what does it mean to be a teacher?" The document notes further that "the standards of practice are descriptors for the teaching profession. They will also serve as a catalyst for discussion, debate and movement toward a consensus about what it means to be a teacher" (p. i).

Teacher Leadership

A 2001 review of the literature on "teacher leadership" and the "teacher as leader" conducted by a national task force on teacher leadership in the United States has suggested that "the literature on the teacher as leader is thin." While this may be the case, there is some agreement that has been made concerning the definition of the term(s). For example, Lord and Miller (2000) cite Moller and Katzenmeyer's (1996) and Libermann, Saxl and Miles' (1988) contention that "teacher leader" is a generic term that applies to individuals in a variety of roles. Lord and Miller (2000) observe that the concept most frequently refers to those teachers who assume a full-time position outside of the classroom in "some kind of leadership role in promoting change in classroom practice

among large numbers of teachers” (p. 1). Such teachers may have a variety of responsibilities across a school district and they may be located in one or more school buildings.

Lord and Miller (2000) note as well that the term “teacher leader” can also refer to teachers who remain in the classroom and assume, in addition to their full-time teaching responsibilities, some role in promoting change. More infrequently, the authors write, “teacher leader refers to teachers who have a reduced teaching load” that enables them to teach for part of the day and “act in a leadership capacity for the balance of their contracted time” (pp.1-2).

While I concede that such definitions of “teacher leadership,” “teacher leader” or “teacher as leader” are likely to be accepted by the majority of those in education, it is my contention that the concept of teacher leader should be made problematic. I would argue that such concepts can and do contribute in significantly unhelpful ways to the perpetuation of discourses that devalue teachers and teaching.

Teacher Recertification/Teacher Testing

In 2000, Janet Ecker, the Minister of Education announced a teacher recertification program titled the “Ontario Teacher Testing Program.” Under this program, the government proposed that all classroom teachers would be re-certified every five years after they successfully completed a number of required courses, including written tests and other assessments. The program also included a requirement that new teachers pass a test before they could qualify to teach in Ontario. The Ontario College of Teachers was given a mandate to implement and manage the re-certification aspect of the program which later became known as the Professional Learning Program (PLP). The management of the new teacher qualifying test which became known as the Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test (OTQT) was awarded to the Educational Testing Service (ETS), a United States-based testing design, development and implementation service. After much opposition from teachers and their unions and with a change of government in 2004, the legislation governing the PLP was repealed and the OTQT was temporarily suspended with the announcement of plans to replace it with an alternative program. It is worth noting that from the inception and continuing on through to this particular reform initiative’s eventual cancellation and/or modification, the government, the media, the public and teachers themselves (individually and collectively) frequently conflated the concepts of teacher recertification, teacher testing, teacher professional development, teacher learning and teacher performance appraisal.