SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE

by

Mika Damianos

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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0-612-33929-7
Abstract

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This thesis examines the views and perceptions of substitute teachers regarding their employment in the elementary schools of several public Boards of Education in various urban cities and regions, within and beyond the Metropolitan Toronto Area. The narratives that emerged from semi-structured interviews of ten substitute teachers of both sexes, and of diverse ethnic backgrounds, educational accomplishments, and years of teaching experience reveal similar perspectives of their work as substitute teachers. The pattern of common beliefs and experiences that became apparent throughout the interviews is presented and examined against the vast body of literature in teachers’ careers, cultures, communities and work.
Acknowledgements

I would first wish to express my sincerest gratitude to the ten substitute teachers whose participation in this study made this thesis possible, and who offered their time and expressed their views on their work. To Dr. Sandra Acker, I extend my deepest appreciation for her encouragement, support and patience shown at all times. As thesis supervisor, her unflagging care and understanding has been immense. To Dr. Brent Kilbourn for his appreciation of this study at its initial stages and for his understanding throughout, I am also indebted. Finally, I wish to acknowledge my family, whose unconditional love and support transforms the appearance of daunting tasks into realities.
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CHAPTER ONE

The Substitute Teacher’s Role

Every teacher, at some point, is absent from his or her classroom and this reality confirms that teachers, in addition to being educational pedagogues, are also individuals possessing their own subjectivities, life histories, personal and professional duties and interests. In fact, Lightfoot (1983: 242) presents a popular image of the teacher as lacking any temporal space beyond the present and occupying no external reality beyond the classroom; however, the occurrence of teacher absences disclaims such assumptions. Perkins and Becker (1966: 9) had earlier and succinctly stated that “classroom teachers are humans, and like other people become ill or have to be absent for other reasons.” Furthermore, although being a teacher may come to define one’s professional or occupational identity (Nias, 1985), the lives of many teachers outside the classroom indicate how diverse and multidimensional their many roles and responsibilities may be. This is particularly true for female teachers who are faced with a double day: teaching, with its many demands and intensified conditions (see Apple, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Ozga and Lawn, 1981; Woods, 1990, 1995) and the domestic chores of housework and child care. If these teachers are absent from their classrooms in order to attend to domestic and familial responsibilities, a substitute teacher is required to replace the permanent classroom teacher during this absence and frequently, although not always, a female substitute teacher takes the place of a female educator in a primary classroom. This contention is supported by the literature that reveals
the predominance of female teachers in primary school settings (Acker, 1992, 1995) and the presence of mainly women in the “marginal, low-status position[s] [of] temporary, supply or part-time teacher” (Acker, 1992: 153). A brochure produced by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, which represents all substitute teachers of one school board, describes over two-thirds of its labour force as female and this situation is paralleled in the British system where 98 per cent of substitute teachers are females (Buzzing, 1994: 129). This gendered component was further validated during the course of data collection, as most of the participants with whom I came into contact and who were interviewed as participants for this research were in fact female substitute teachers. Making a link between gender and substitute teaching encourages us examine the socio-economic perspectives of labour and work, as well as various stereotypical constructions, and while this interconnection will be discussed further in later chapters, the contributions of male substitute teachers should not be deemed less worthy of recognition or affirmation.

Whether male or female, substitute teachers operate under similar structural conditions by providing a continuation of classroom practices and processes during a teacher’s absence from the classroom. The reasons for teacher non-attendance are varied and diverse, including illness, medical/dental appointments, domestic obligations, religious holidays and observances, jury duty, professional or academic pursuits and responsibilities, etc. A planned absence requiring supply cover is frequently due to the classroom teacher’s attendance at a professional development session, in-service training, or due to a medical appointment, in contrast to an impromptu leave of absence resulting from sickness or accident, thereby necessitating substitution at short notice. Regardless of the reason the absence occurs, substitute teachers are required to assume the responsibilities of the regular
classroom teacher which calls for the use of professional skills and strategies to ameliorate effectively the disruption of the regular teaching and learning environment. Buzzing (1994: 135) remarks that “if there is a notion of an integrated service supply teachers are an integral part of it.” During the time of their writing, Perkins and Becker (1966: 9-10) had also acknowledged the significant contributions made by describing them “as vital parts of the school system.” Substitute teachers, therefore, play an essential and necessary role for educational continuity and it is the value of their work which instigated this study.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how substitute teachers in public elementary schools define and respond to the nature of their working conditions and how they evaluate their teaching experiences in comparison to permanent or long-term teaching. Ten substitute teachers devoted their time and shared their voices to express their stories and views on their employment. Their dialogue contributes to the field of pedagogy as this study will bring their discourse into focus with the existing literature on teachers’ careers, cultures, communities and work, in addition to expanding the range and depth of substitute teaching literature.

The particular intent of this research is to facilitate a more broad and encompassing knowledge of the substitute teacher’s role in the overall functions of primary schooling. In deconstructing the popular image of their work as peripheral and less meaningful to the learning and teaching environment, this study aims to explore the various issues which provide a more complex and differing interpretation than this commonly held belief and attitude about substitute teaching. By bringing the articulated perspectives and experiences of substitute teachers into comparison with deeply entrenched assumptions, I examine and present alternative meanings and definitions regarding their educational function, pedagogical contribution and occupational identity.
The key questions which give direction and scope to this study include the following:

How do substitute teachers’ working situations shape and influence self-images and professional identities? What do they see as the common features of substitute teaching? To what extent do their conditions of employment affect their identification with teachers and students? What are the perceived benefits and disadvantages of substitute teaching in comparison to full-time, permanent teaching? What role has occupational choice played in determining substitute teachers’ present position? Although these major issues of investigation encapsulate the study’s primary focus, several other significant aspects will also be discussed in this thesis, including the factors influencing continued substitute teaching employment, or conversely, a desired career change; the gendered component of this type of work; and finally, the emotive responses to being a substitute teacher.

Examining the professional identities of substitute teachers as these constructions are influenced by and reflective of their working experiences suggests the usefulness of a particular model that reveals an organizational segmentation of this labour market into two distinct categorical domains. This core and periphery model, as presented by Atkinson (1984), will be discussed further in Chapter Two, at which point the educational labour of substitute teachers will be viewed alongside the interests and functions of permanent teachers’ employment. This analysis of educational policies and structures inferred by this model serves to introduce the wider review of literature on substitute teaching. Moreover, the range of views and theoretical stances and the type of literature available on the subject will reveal various issues and concerns specific to substitute teaching, as well as suggest the need for further theorization and study. This review will stimulate questions, expose paradoxes and
demythologize stereotypical beliefs regarding the substitute teacher’s role and working conditions.

One uniform and consistent descriptor of substitute teaching would fail to encompass the multiplicity of teaching positions that incorporate the overall work performed by a substitute teacher. A substitute teacher is defined in The Education Act as “a teacher employed to teach as a substitute for a permanent, probationary or temporary teacher who has died during the school year or is absent from his regular duties for a temporary period that is less than a school year and does not extend beyond the end of the school year” [Section 1(1)31] Education Act R.S.O. 1988 Chapter 129. In the most general terms, a substitute teacher is not bound to an employment contract and this occupational feature distinguishes such temporary employment from full-time, permanent teaching. In his macro-level analysis of substitute teaching, Lindley (1994: 167) discusses the ambiguity of any simple definition for substitute teaching by stating the following: “Regular part-timers and temporary full-timers on long-term contracts are grouped together with temporary staff on short-term contracts (sometimes a succession of contracts with the same employer if not the same school) and temporary staff employed at such short notice for such a short period correspond more to a form of casual worker.” For the purposes which serve the aims and intents of this study, a differentiation between two distinct, yet interrelated, occupational types warrant elucidation. A substitute teacher may work as a casual employee, which usually denotes the individual’s availability on a daily basis, or may occupy a long-term occasional teaching appointment that becomes effective after a casual substitute teacher has completed sixteen consecutive days within one classroom. The primary distinction between these two teaching assignments is the duration of time that is required for the completion of teaching
responsibilities and duties. While a casual substitute teacher is not committed to one particular classroom and school for an extended period of time, the long-term occasional teacher occupies a more permanent position, albeit as a replacement teacher.¹

At this point, a clarification must be made concerning the myriad of occupational titles used to describe both the work and its linkage to the self-image of intermittent educational workers. Morrison (1994b: 143) elucidates this interconnection by drawing from Hughes’ (1951) theory of occupational labels and the label’s relevance to the workers’ sense of self, referring to it as “a price tag and a calling card.” He argues that workers’ attempt to solidify the usage of one particular term over another is dictated by a desire and need to present themselves in a positive manner that is reflective of their “collective power” (Hughes, 1951, as cited in Morrison, 1994b: 143). What is noted is the lack of any power for substitute teachers to redefine their employment in relation to more permanent teachers or to students. Morrison states that “flexible incentive-holders, multi-skill curriculum coordinators, cross-phase specialists, educational trouble shooters, could be alternative titles for those persistently described as casual cover, time-sheet supply, the supply pool or teacher substitutes” (143). Her aptly titled subsection *What’s in a Name?* exposes the various terms which may be laden with certain messages and implications, functioning to either implicitly enhance or devalue the nature and content of work. My choice of using the term “substitute teacher” as opposed to “occasional” or “supply teacher” was determined by one central factor, irrespective of any other consideration, as all three titles refer to the same type of teaching position and employment and are frequently used interchangeably. In written documents,

¹ Herein the term “substitute teacher” refers to a teacher who works on a casual, daily basis as a substitute teacher rather than one who holds a long-term occasional teaching position (unless specified otherwise).
each Board of Education may employ a different term, as may teachers, students and substitute teachers themselves. To provide some uniformity, I have referred to the literature on the subject wherein the term “substitute teacher” appears with the most frequency, therefore, throughout the thesis, this signifier will also be used to describe this segment of the teaching force. Furthermore, in Jardine’s and Shallhorn’s (1988: 10) resource booklet, the authors assert how substitute teachers opt for the usage of this terminology, stating how “it seems too, that substitute teachers prefer this nomenclature.” Now, however, an examination of substitute teachers as a work force is necessary to provide some insight into their occupational status.

Substitute Teachers as Marginal Workers

Unlike the stability of employment characteristic of full-time, permanent teaching, substitute teachers are required to be available for teaching assignments while receiving in turn no guarantee of work on a continuous basis. Instead of the daily assurance of work throughout an academic year, there are periods of steady employment, in addition to periods of sporadic work. As the substitute teachers’ discourse will reveal in full detail in Chapter Five, uncertainly about constant work typically occurs at the beginning of a school year, and prior to and directly following a holiday.

Lacking a classroom and students of their own, substitute teachers do not occupy the same occupational hierarchy as permanent classroom teachers. The continuity of employment and stability of teaching a classroom of students on a daily basis for the duration of an
academic year is not characteristic of their employment. The duration of an occasional teaching assignment within a classroom can be as short as thirty minutes to offer coverage for teachers attending in-school meetings or working elsewhere on the preparation and planning of curricular content, school activities or on the evaluation of student progress. Under these circumstances, a substitute teacher “floats” from one classroom to another, and consequently may be exposed to many different teaching situations within one working day. Other positions within one specific classroom may last for a longer period of time: a half-day, full-day, several days, or several weeks at one time. The absence of any contract binding one to a particular classroom for a specified duration of time permits a variety of possible developments such as the prolongation of one day of substitute teaching into a few days or of five days into several weeks. What is common to all these situations is the substitute teacher’s lack of ownership over one classroom and its students, as the nature of their employment entails the replacement of the “real” teacher with a temporary teacher for the required period of absence. Both students and the substitute teacher are cognizant of the situation and as a result of the transitory element inherent within it, the dynamics of the classroom are significantly altered and thus different from those that are played out under the direction and presence of the permanent classroom teacher. An examination of substitute teaching inevitably entails an analysis of the particular classroom environment and pupil-teacher rapport that becomes characteristic of this employment. These pedagogical constructions will be elaborated on in further detail in Chapter Five, at which point the social and interpersonal dimensions of teaching and learning will be discussed in order to explicate the means whereby substitute teaching deviates from permanent classroom teaching.
Substitute teacher vignettes will also provide a context for embedding their positions and arguments into the larger framework of teachers’ careers, work, cultures and communities.

In addition to the structural conditions of the job, which exclude substitute teachers from long-term identification with one group of students and one school, substitute teaching does not provide the extrinsic rewards of job security and salaries commensurate with full-time teaching. The daily rate of pay for substitute teaching is significantly lower than the salary of a full-time, permanent contract teacher who receives an average based on one hundred days of employment of $45,000 as opposed to the average annual pay of $12,300 earned by a substitute teacher. Advanced degrees, additional qualification courses and years of teaching experience place a full-time teacher on a higher earning level on the pay grid and increase the opportunities for assuming positions of added responsibility, such as head of a primary or junior division, vice-principal, principal or superintendent; however, substitute teachers receive fewer monetary increments for accumulated yearly experience and the attainment of advance academic or professional qualifications do not present promotional and advancement opportunities. Moreover, substitute teachers do not receive the medical and dental benefits nor the long-term disability and accumulated sick leave benefits that are made available to full-time, permanent teacher, thereby limiting their accessibility to these essential services.

These differentiations in occupational status, employment mobility, financial security and allocation of benefit packages should not be interpreted as an affirmation that teachers emphasize external rewards, nor that there occurs an equitable distribution of such rewards to all regular teachers. Instead, research into the occupational issues of teaching affirm the dearth of extrinsic or auxiliary rewards of this work which are rarely distributed according to
the determinants of merit or continuous effort (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Jackson, 1986; Lortie, 1975). As Lortie remarks "[t]he culture of teachers and the structure of rewards do not emphasize the acquisition of extrinsic rewards", and later adds how "[t]he service ideal extol[s] the virtue of giving more than one receives: the model teacher has been 'dedicated'" (102).

As intimated earlier, however, substitute teachers are marginalized from mainstream teaching in terms of working conditions, salaries, benefits and professional and occupational mobility. In the theoretical literature of the sociology of work and industrial labour, attempts have been made to understand workers’views and adaptations to a labouring process characterized by subordination, specialization of tasks and inequitable status and treatment (see Krahn and Lowe, 1988, 1993; Rinehart, 1987, 1993). These studies reveal workers’ choice of employment to be based on the material considerations of money and security despite the oppressive conditions of their performed labour and the low prestige associated with their job. The exploration of work values and orientations which define how workers perceive and respond to their labour conditions and the meanings they attach to their labour is particularly relevant to a study of substitute teaching. If this occupational groups lacks the motivational rewards of job security, financial returns, and opportunities for advancement which Krahn and Lowe (1988: 156) define as “instrumental work orientations” than attention must be directed to the factors determining their occupational choice.

The question of occupational selection was raised and interrogated in Waller’s (1932/1965) classical study entitled The Sociology of Teaching that was pivotal in articulating the effects of teaching upon the individual. In the chapter which sought possible explanations to the influences propelling one to choose teaching as a profession, he dismissed “the objective
considerations which determine the attractiveness or unattractiveness of a given occupation” (378). Instead of the “rational consideration[s] of pay, opportunity and the nature of the work” the determining factors of a chosen vocation were “dictated by the family pattern, the supposed conformity of an occupation to class tradition, [as well as] the social experience of the individual” (378). During the time of Waller’s writing, teaching was not deemed a lucrative profession as it failed to provide financial security, advancement opportunities or high social status; however, these occupational features are not particular to the historical period as the earlier discussion of substitute teaching brought these same components of this work into view. Drawing on Waller’s suggestions, substitute teaching may be chosen as a preferred type of employment for reasons that are unconnected with extrinsic advantages and these diverse and subjective choices will receive further discussion in Chapter Four of the thesis.

To be marginalized and hence, excluded from the working conditions and material benefits associated with full-time, permanent teaching is suggestive of yet another relational dimension, specifically, the process of alienated labour. The applicability and relevance of alienation to substitute teaching will be introduced in the following section in light of related literature and subsequently revisited throughout the thesis.

Substitute Teachers and Alienation

An earlier and influential critique of estranged or alienated labour is found in Marx’s (1844) Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 which proposed and explicated the
various components of alienated work and its effects upon the wage labourer. His usage of the term “alienated” referred to various aspects of an intricate process which Zeitlin (1987) articulates in his analysis of sociological theory as follows:

There are several senses in which Marx employed the term alienation; and the meanings he assigned to the concept may best be grasped from the two German words he used most frequently to describe the phenomenon he had in mind: (1) entäußsen (verb) or, in its noun form, Entäußerung; and (2) entfremden (verb) and Entfremdung (noun). The first of these mean “to part with,” “to give up,” “to deprives one’s self of,” “to divest one’s self of,” and, as noted by the translator of these manuscripts, it also implies “making external to one’s self”. The noun Entäußerung is also explicitly defined as alienation (of property). The second German word, also rendered in English as “to alienate,” connotes primarily two people becoming estranged from each other. (73)

This observation reveals the several means by which alienation was defined and examined by Marx to postulate his theory of the oppressive and dehumanizing effects of capitalism upon the industrial proletariat. The sources of alienation within the capitalist production involved the workers’ separation from the produce of his labour, from the labouring process, and finally, from other workers. This third feature concerns the interpersonal and social aspects of work that became stifled and repressed under the capitalist mode of production. As Marx poignantly stated: “An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life-activity, from his species being is the estrangement of man from man” (Tucker, 1978: 77). The workers’ isolation from others experiencing similar labour conditions mortificated the human relations of social integration and association, thereby robbing man of his essential character and producing instead a class of deformed and debased labourers.

The appropriation of a Marxist analysis to the labour process of teaching delineates the means whereby the nature of teaching approximates the deskill work and routinization
of tasks characteristic of manual or industrial labour. Specifically, arguments propounding the deprofessionalization in teachers' work reveal the processes of deskilling resulting from an increasing dependence upon externally mandated, prescribed curricular and teacher-proof materials (Apple, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Ozga and Lawn, 1981; Woods, 1990, 1995). The predominance of these prespecified textual materials containing outcome-based assessment and evaluation strategies and executed through step-by-step instructional methods may deprive teachers of the emotional and intellectual scope of their work, creating in turn feelings and conditions of devaluation and alienation. To paraphrase Apple (1986), the imposition of mandated curricular content and objectives which reduce intricate procedures to small tasks impact upon teachers' skills and autonomy by devaluing their professional expertise and curtailing their control over the planning and execution of knowledge content and assessment strategies. Teachers' alienation from meaningful participation in the decision-making process is one consequence of prescribed programs and systems management imposed on them by legislative requirements. Another, no less significant consequence of this phenomena is the intensification of teachers' work due to the increasing reliance on externally produced and dictated standardized curricula with their various heightened demands and pressures of accountability systems, assessment procedures and behaviour-based objectives (Apple, 1986). The intensification thesis identifies the continuous and acute work load that diminishes the quality of, and time for various interpersonal relations, primary among them being pupil-teacher rapport and teacher collegiality. Arguments advocating guaranteed preparation time for elementary school teachers highlight its importance for ameliorating the isolation endemic with teacher culture (Hargreaves, 1994). As Hargreaves remarks, "[o]ne of the most consistently mentioned obstacles to the
elimination of individualism and the development of more collaborative working relations among teachers has been the shortage of time for teachers to meet, plan, share, help and discuss with the regular school day” (120). Alienation has been documented as a pervasive feature of teachers’ work and described via the Marxist theoretical argument examines the various forms alienation is manifest in teachers’ cultures and working conditions.

These issues lead to a further interrelated reality of isolation and individualism, appearing as a recurring and prominent theme of elementary school teaching (Acker, 1991). The most obvious expression of isolation takes its form in the physical layout of the school that positions a teacher within one classroom, hence limiting the extend of collegial interaction. The social alienation experienced by teachers is not solely imposed upon them by the external factors of physical location but also intrinsically dictated by teachers themselves, as “most prefer to work alone with a class of pupils” (Acker, 1991: 302, quoting Hargreaves, 1990: pp. 141-142). Acker further extends her discussion of this issue to incorporate other divergent yet insightful theoretical explanations: Feidman-Nemser and Floden’s (1986) position reveal how classroom dynamics and processes produce complex situational occurrences exacting teachers’ complete attention, while Grumet’s (1988) and Erdman’s (1990) rationalization of teacher isolation veer towards considerations of teacher autonomy, power and professionalism; the former viewing teacher’s enclosure in the classroom as the sole means to alter and deviate from externally mandated programs of study and the latter, postulating teachers’ withdrawal into the classroom as an expression of their perceived powerlessness to exert any effective control over policy decisions. While Acker argues against these quotations by proposing the possibility of collaborative teachers’ cultures, and
thus not assumed realities of all schools, isolation still may define the specific working
conditions and relations of certain teachers in specific schools.

Such theorizing on the themes of alienation, isolation, individualism among teachers
and the consequential effects of intensification on their workloads provides the necessary
groundwork for understanding the employment relationships and teaching conditions of
substitute teachers. If such arguments reflect the problematic features of full-time, permanent
teaching, then temporary and fleeting substitute teaching periods would exacerbate many of
these processes. In fact, the recurrent themes of alienation, isolation and individualism,
illuminate, in the most accurate terms, the substitute teaching experience. Standing on the
margins of the permanent work-force, substitute teachers’ interactions “are not infrequently
ill-defined, and neither symmetrical nor regular” (Morrison, 1994a: 45). Unlike the isolation
and alienation experienced by permanent, full-time teachers, substitute teachers’ physical and
social isolation is acute, lacking as they do the stability of one primary location to develop
more continuous and personal relationships with either colleagues, administrators, students or
parents. The anonymity of interactions is, therefore, enacted with various individuals and at
the micro-level of the classroom, is readily apparent through the absence of any personal
identification with students or knowledge of individual names, academic abilities or
behavioural traits. To extend this further to the wider arena of school structure, organization
and policy, the substitute teacher’s transient employment provide minimal opportunity for
knowing the continuous functions and expectations of a particular school, which adds yet
another dimension to their experienced reality of alienation. Although their work relations
and conditions of employment are characterized by increased isolationism, the intensified
workload accompanying full-time, permanent teacher is substantially decreased. The
teaching responsibilities which require ongoing, curricular planning, student assessment and evaluation procedures based on the attainment of specific learning outcomes and objectives and feedback to parents (as one of various accountability systems) are not requirements of casual employment, thereby freeing substitute teachers from the demands and duties expected of their full-time colleagues. Ironically, these lessened expectations produce characterizations of mediocrity because what is achievable in the classroom during a teacher’s absence is questioned and frequently discarded upon the teacher’s return (Morrison, 1994a). This scepticism and neglect of substitute teachers’ accomplishments and achievements with a group of students brings to the forefront the concept of “invisibility” as a predominant theme of substitute teaching (Galloway and Morrison, 1994). Any ingenuity or creativity exemplified by substitute teachers is oftentimes either negated or undervalued and this response consequently relegates them to an invisible world where their contributions are suppressed and their voices are silenced. To extricate their experiences and views from the margins of the permanent teaching force to a more central position forms the general objective of this study, which will now be examined with reference to its specific aims and intents.

**Purpose of the Study**

Although there exists a substantial body of literature addressing the diverse issues and concerns of teachers labouring in their profession, there exists, in stark contrast, an obvious lack of comparable interest in teacher substitution. The work of Galloway and Morrison
(1994) has begun to acknowledge and respond to this apparent absence by articulating the various issues that are integral to the day-by-day teaching employment of substitute teachers. In fact, their edited volume occupies a central position as the only literature in book format on this subject within the British educational context. Aside from this groundbreaking contribution, research into the substitute teacher's work remains limited to its interconnections with teacher absence (Brown and Earley, 1990) and hence, on its impacts regarding the functions and experiences of permanent teachers and students rather than being considered a study of interest in its own right. Furthermore, with the exception of the work noted above, minimal research has examined the views and perceptions of substitute teachers themselves as significant contributors to the teaching and learning process. This is particularly reflective of the North American experience where current research is neither extensive nor directly concerned with the individual substitute teacher's primacy and importance to the teaching profession.

To illuminate and enhance the understanding of the meanings and definitions attached to their labour demands a comprehensive examination of substitute teachers' experiences and functions. This study aims to address the working lives of these professionals who labour on a daily basis within schools, yet have received scant attention in previous accounts of teaching and schooling. Having acknowledged the lack of substantial interrogation into this particular domain of teaching, the desired objective is to contribute additional insight into its occupational features, providing in the process a focus on the Ontario context. The elementary division was selected for several reasons, the first of which relates to methodological considerations of gaining accessibility into the field of inquiry. My current employment as a substitute teacher of primary schools permitted frequent interaction with
fellow colleagues, whose narratives constitute the basis of this study. Directly related to this aspect lies another subjective concern of exploring and articulating issues that speak to me personally, while also being reflective of and relevant to individuals employed in a similar capacity. Finally, the primary school setting entails the education of young children whose early socialization and learning is incumbent upon the teacher’s guidance and explicit expectations. Britzman (1986) notes the significance of establishing and maintaining classroom order, as well as controlling children’s behaviour lest the children usurp this disciplinarian role and assume control of the teacher. Similar arguments proposed by Nias (1988) in her study of primary school teaching reveal teachers’ “felt personal need to control their lives and environments” (203). Although these issues are not particular to the elementary school, secondary school students encounter on a daily basis various subject teachers, in contrast to primary school students who develop an association with primarily their own classroom teacher. Therefore, teacher absence may receive different interpretations and responses by younger children, as opposed to intermediate or senior level students, thereby eliciting an increased emphasis on classroom management concerns, as well as on the teacher-student dynamics specific to the primary classroom.

Looking Forward

To this point, the emphatic themes associated with substitute teaching employment were introduced to provide a necessary framework for outlining the study’s general objective and particular aims. In the following chapter, I provide a more thorough and detailed
discussion on these and other relevant issues through a review of the literature. Subsequent to
this, Chapter Three will address the methods of conducting this research project, explaining
the process of acquiring substitute teachers’ consent to being interviewed with respect to
personal views of their employment. This chapter, in discussion of qualitative research
approached via an interactionist orientation, will describe the methods of data collection and
analysis used in the study. The two chapters which follow will focus on the responses
extracted from the interviews as grouped according to the common narrative threads
interwoven throughout their discourse. Finally, the thesis will conclude with an interpretative
dimension of assessing its limitations, as well as suggesting possible extensions of study for
further study into the occupation of substitute teaching.
The literature on substitute teaching is largely dominated by prescribed lesson plans, classroom management and discipline strategies, as well as an array of activities designed to facilitate a teaching situation less ridden by possible difficulties and problematic situations. The direction or focus of such material is laden with the acknowledged reality of substitute teaching as a difficult and disorienting experience. In fact, many guidelines outline effective suggestions to diminishing the negative aspects commonly associated with this type of teaching employment. What is absent almost entirely, however, is the individual perspectives of substitute teachers themselves, whose very occupational position gives them an authority to speak on a personally intimate level and to present perspectives from within the formal systems and structures of this labour market. This perceived gap in the literature speaks to the purpose of this thesis as an examination into the various dimensions and components facing substitute teachers in their work. The result is a more diverse and rich body of material that enhances understanding of both permanent and substitute teaching. Towards the realization of this goal, I interrogate the existing literature to provide an insight into the various issues discussed in the research.
I first turn to an examination of a labour market view, drawing in the process a distinction between types of teaching labour, as well as an interconnection between two separate yet interdependent worlds. In following subsections of this chapter, the major themes made explicit in the literature of substitute teaching will be presented and critiqued. Following this, a discussion of the use of children’s literature in the classroom will throw into light its implications for teachers (both permanent and temporary), as well as for students.

Although the various issues articulated throughout the chapter speak directly to the experiences and reflections of substitute teaching, the significant consequences for everyone with an investment in the educational system should not be overlooked. Substitution incorporates concerns regarding teacher absence, as well as children’s continued learning processes, and thus, touches upon other facets of a larger, more encompassing picture. Substitute teaching, therefore, cannot be viewed as an isolated and vacuous procedure but rather as a larger process affecting every aspect of a school’s practices and policies, and of life beyond the classroom. The review will delineate a plethora of themes and issues, accentuating the various educational and sociological issues associated with substitute teaching.

Core and Periphery

An image of substitute teachers occupying a position of lesser financial and educational importance to that afforded their permanent colleagues is explicitly acknowledged in both research material and in generally expressed perspectives regarding
their work. In the literature of British research, Atkinson (1984) perceives the labour market of teachers being constitutive of two distinct spheres, which she refers to as core and periphery. This model operates under the premise of required work-force flexibility, which is particularly necessary during periods of recession, labour instability and alterations in the production process. As Atkinson further notes, the changes in the labour market and economic fluctuations can be transcended by workers willing to exercise the “functional flexibility” of adapting to transformed conditions of labour. The continued functioning of an organization is also dependent upon a second component of “numerical flexibility” that determines the amount of workers employed or the required time of labour needed to satisfy any changes in demand. Finally, financial flexibility is needed to bring costs into relation with the rates of pay existing within other external organizations. The realization of the combined flexibility results from the organizations’ separation into two distinct spheres: the core, permitting functional flexibility and the periphery, providing numerical flexibility. With specific reference to this model, Morrison (1994b: 154) elucidates the continued presence of permanent teachers as a core group only in so far as they “accept that their functional flexibility will be subject to ongoing reassessment and appraisal over a wide range of prescribed activities.” She suggests that alternative solutions to teacher absence, which include limiting the employment of external substitution (due primarily to financial considerations) may intensify the working conditions of permanent teachers. Consequently, “the increase[d] pressures on the core for flexibility over an even wider range of teaching and non-teaching duties” may link their labouring conditions to those experienced by the periphery groups of educational employees (154). Morrison concludes that contrary to any
perceptions of permanent teachers comprising a stable and secure core, their positions are rather subject to similar occupational features experienced by their peripheral colleagues.

An examination of this paradigm leads to another interconnected dimension of two separate worlds of teaching, frequently viewed in direct opposition to one another. A periphery location implies marginal or hidden connotations that merit less study or relevance, whereas permanent teachers are posited as the primary educators, thereby necessitating and deserving substantial study and concern. Substitute teachers, therefore, inhabit an invisible world where their interests, concerns and contextual structures of employment are deemed of secondary significance to the highly visible world of their permanent teaching colleagues. As occasional employees, they are separated from the formal organizations and functions of each school, or as Shilling (1991: 4) remarks “are not full members of a school organization and cannot realistically be expected to be treated as such.” The differentiations between these two domains of teaching are marked by the frequency and extent of personal contact and the regular physical movement exemplified by teachers. Galloway (1994: 91-92) observes how “[t]he concepts of visibility and invisibility are central to the employment relationships that links supply teachers with schools. As teachers in permanent employment move in and out of the school setting, their activities are essentially visible. However the pool of inactive teachers...remains an invisible population.” Furthermore, an additional discrepancy distinguishing these two hemispheres from each other is quickly evidenced in the substitute teacher’s address to a new class of students that frequently exposes a lack of knowledge regarding classroom procedures, student names, reason for teacher absence, etc. Entrance into the “dominant”, more acknowledged teaching environment by substitute teachers occurs on an ephemeral basis, as they leave behind their inactive teaching status for a brief period to
assume teaching duties and responsibilities. Completion of their day's activities, however, signals a re-immersion into temporary employment and a departure from "the premises means a return to invisibility" (Galloway, 1994: 92). As the personal narratives of substitute teachers will reveal in Chapter Four, this concept extends behind theoretical abstractions into practical occurrences and individual experiences.

Existing in a different realm of experience, substitute teachers' interests and practices are frequently perceived in different and often conflicting terms to those concerning permanent teachers. A fuller understanding of the contradictions and conflicts existing between these two groups of educators must address issues of power and control. A generally assumed and acknowledged characteristic of their employment is their lack of any power to determine policy initiatives or to contribute their voices to any decision-making process. By way of comparison, permanent teachers are perceived as one of several primary stakeholders in education, thus assuming a more prominent position in influencing macro-level policies and micro-level decisions. Despite their restricted, individual power, Galloway (1994: 85) delves deeper to reveal an element of control available to substitute teachers as "they collectively have the potential to jeopardize educational initiatives by choosing to be unavailable." This recourse for power reveals the conflict that is central to the teacher absence and substitution paradigm, since demonstration of such power would render substitution a less viable solution to teacher absence. Galloway acknowledges the differentially located positions of permanent, full-time teachers and substitute teachers, and she argues that contrary to only opposing concerns, there is actually a "congruence of interest between them...[questioning further] how far there is conflict or contradiction between these two worlds, and how far the interests of the parties do coincide" (86). Continuity of learning
as an intended purpose of substitution remains fragile and precarious if the option of unavailability is actualized. Although the discussion thus far exposes potential control available to substitute teachers, who can consciously problematize and disturb the smooth functioning of the system, I would argue this power to be limited and perhaps financially abnegating, as this would most frequently translate into lost wages for missed employment. The notion of interdependence, therefore, is clearly invoked by Galloway, as these two distinct worlds of permanent, full-time teaching and substitute teaching are reliant upon the services each renders the other: substitute teachers gaining employment, while providing in turn, a remedy to teacher absence through required classroom coverage.

Relationships

A prominent theme of teacher substitution recurring throughout the literature and alluded to in Chapter One is the interpersonal dimension of teaching which has been articulated as problematic and significantly different from that characteristic of permanent, full-time teaching. Drawing from a paper co-authored with Sheila Galloway and presented at the British Sociological Association Conference, University of Essex, Morrison (1994a: 45) captures the essential features of the substitute teacher relationships when she describes them as "sometimes fleeting and transitory, and enacted in the presence of strangers." In light of this reality, interconnections with others are ephemeral in nature and function on the various levels of the individual classroom and the school, each of which will now be respectively examined.
A common assumption of teacher substitution is the disruption to the regular classroom practices and processes it entails, suspending and altering in the meanwhile the student-teacher relationships specific to the teaching environment. Without any previous knowledge or familiarity of the regular student-teacher dynamics and classroom routines, substitute teachers enter an unknown terrain within which they are expected to assume and sustain control, while interacting with students on a temporary basis. Consequently, their involvement with students’ learning can only be partial and limited, considering both the foreign situational contexts and the time constraints under which they operate. An additional consequence of substitution upon students is directly related to their behavioural deportment, defined by Newton (1994: 75) as “problematic...some of whom will be unsettled simply by facing a different and, possibly unknown teacher.” This transition is often marked by conflict-ridden sessions between substitute teachers and pupils, each vying for their own space in an attempt to legitimize their “right” to claiming ownership of the classroom. From the perspective of the students, any intrusion into their world produces disorienting experiences, while also advantageously positioning them as knowers of established rules and expectations. While the substitute teacher’s entrance into a new classroom may also be characterized as dislocating and foreign, the structures and routines that are familiar only to the students may assist the substitute teacher, as well as increase the sense of vulnerability and exposure. This is pointedly expressed by Schötte (1973) and notwithstanding his gendered reference, encapsulates the paradoxical aspect of substitute teaching:

The occasional teacher reinforces the values and norms the school system adheres to and is at the same time influenced by and confronted with the consequences of the socialization and structural processes in a class. This makes it difficult for him to function as a substitute for the regular teacher. The association that has developed between the regular teacher and his students through instructional activities and socialization processes can be
an assist[ance] to the substitute, in that there are established routines and structures in class he may follow. However, this particular routinization of classroom life can at times be a liability. (15)

As the author suggests, previously defined routines provide a guide to aid the substitute teacher in approximating the classroom’s daily, regular practices; however, this occurrence is also highly dependent upon the students’ assistance in directing the substitute teaching according to classroom procedures. If such information is withheld or is incorrectly conveyed, than the implementation of new and differing behavioural and academic expectations may be met with student resistance and defiance, thereby exacerbating tensions, confrontations and crises. Students challenging the authority exemplified by a substitute teacher may not only be an expected response to a new and unknown figure, but may also become increasingly problematic as the directives instituted by the substitute teacher deviate significantly from the management of the classroom practised by the regular teacher. Moreover, the specialized needs and abilities of certain students, requiring clearly defined and consistently maintained individualized programs and socialization strategies, may further disrupt the workable environment desired of the classroom. As a substitute teacher herself, Pronin (1983: 44) acknowledges the potential difficulties inherent in these situations when she writes, “Also, it is precisely this type of child...[with] [b]ehaviour[al] problems that result from physical or emotional disorders...who finds it most difficult to accept a substitute teacher or any change in his routine. His ordinarily difficult behaviour may become even more outrageous in [the] presence [of a substitute teacher].” In a similar vein, Knight (1994: 116) draws from her own personal experiences to validate the belief that “young children, and particularly those who may be experiencing difficulty in the home, will find it difficult to adjust to their own class teacher’s absence.” In sum, the literature reveals how the evolving
dynamics between substitute teachers and students are influenced by a variety of factors, producing in turn, volatile and fragile interactions.

In addition to student relationships, substitute teachers' association with full-time colleagues and school administrators are similarly described as temporary and hence, less substantive and more alienating than might otherwise develop in more permanent employment conditions. Although assigned to a particular classroom or perhaps several throughout the course of one teaching day, the substitute teacher's occupational functions are more encompassing than their classroom's pedagogical responsibilities may suggest. In reality, the services rendered by substitute teachers are not solely restricted to the continued educational needs of students, but are rather extensive and include the advantages they proffer to absent teachers by releasing them from their classroom duties to attend to other personal and professional concerns. In the case of a planned absence due to professional development training, substitute teachers provide the necessary cover while ironically receiving few opportunities for adequate training that addresses their unique needs and experiences as temporary educational workers (Brown and Earley, 1990; Earley, 1986; Galloway and Morrison, 1994). Perkins and Becker (1966: 3) have described substitute teachers as "forgotten insofar as training and orientation are concerned." Therefore, their contributions to the educational system transcend the level of classroom and become enmeshed with a larger picture involving the training and development of permanent, full-time teachers. Despite such significant occupational operations, their work is frequently suspect, undervalued and deemed irrelevant by the teachers and administrators into whose classrooms and schools they enter to provide continued educational services. Such responses are linked to the isolating situations that prevent ongoing and supportive relationships within which successful and meaningful
classroom occurrences could be discussed, acknowledged by others and praised. Instead, as Morrison's (1994a: 51) study reveals, expectations and roles of substitute teachers are often associated with issues of student discipline and classroom management, perceiving them “as essentially a holding exercise” and valuing their work if control is so effectively maintained that others, particularly administrators are not even aware that they are in the school at all. A smooth organizational functioning of the classroom is reflected in the substitute teacher’s ability to maintain order and stability without any assistance and this withdrawal into the classroom renders an invisibility to the substitute teacher. These expressed perceptions of substitute teachers’ work as effective when problems are avoided or at least handled individually and thus, requiring no collegial or administrative assistance “le[aving them] too much to their own ingenuity and devices” (Perkins and Becker, 1966: 3), reinforces their occupational conditions as isolating and their role as that of lonely practitioners.

An antidote to the common feature of isolation defining substitute teachers’ relations with other educators is envisioned as a symbiotic relationships between schools, schools systems and individuals. Newton suggests that “[p]artners in a good i.e., productive working relationship have expectations of each other [and] [i]f schools expect certain qualities and types of behaviour from supply staff working for them, it is only reasonable to expect schools to do what they can to enable a supply teacher to function as successfully as possible” (1994: 77). He offers a range of suggestions intended to ease the substitute teacher’s transition into the school environment: welcoming substitute teachers through reception and briefing procedures, in addition to providing sufficient resources and information enabling a familiarity with the physical surroundings and access to required materials. The latter, Newton proposes, “might take the form of a standard ‘Welcome pack’ for supply teachers,
containing, in addition to their timetable for the day, the timing and organization of the school day; the name, role and location of each member of staff, with key contacts/personnel highlighted[,] essential routines[,] spare plain and lined paper, together with a set of pens and pencils” (77-78). Although only a condensed list of his originally stated suggestions, the underlying assumption that substitute teachers’ physical and professional isolation requires remediation is clearly evoked. In like manner, Perkins and Becker (1966: 19-24) had earlier outlined various means to improve the occupational conditions experienced by substitute teachers, several of which include the following: “Handbooks and guides to assist substitute teachers in better understanding their relationship to schools and staff members, superintendent’s message of a welcoming nature to increase their sense of morale and worth, individual and system wide orientations designed to familiarize substitute teachers with school functions and policies, procedures and philosophy, and to provide ongoing training on the specific themes and issues relating to their work.” The overwhelming inference of all these suggested strategies is the recognition of alienating features that necessitate a partnership based on clearly defined expectations, roles and services.

Desired Qualities of Substitute Teachers

Building on the recognition that partners seeking the development and sustenance of working relationships hold various expectations of one another and discussed above with reference to schools and school systems encouraging greater inclusivity of substitute teachers, what still remains to be addressed are the qualities schools seek in substitute teachers.
Morrison's (1994a: 62) study involving the shadowing of a substitute teacher throughout the course of her day, leads the author to conclude "that teaching, including supply, in not a monolithic art or set of skills [but rather] [i]t is created and adapted to the needs of different children, different schools, and a variety of teaching situations." This points to a frequently stated quality required of substitute teachers, whose situational contexts demand continuous adaptability and flexibility. Writing from her own experience, Pronin (1983: 48) validates this as an essential requirement, recognizing that "being open-minded and flexible with regard to class structure" will produce greater occupational enjoyment. Newton (1994: 77) similarly addresses the effectiveness of substitute teachers expressed through this trait, when he writes, "many of the personal qualities which schools welcome in supply teachers will be apparent from what has already been said, particularly the need for flexibility." In her other study investigating how the use of language creates and sustains the marginalization and objectification of substitute teachers, Morrison (1994b: 142) questions whether "the practice of supply teaching demand[s] levels of competence, confidence and flexibility more complex than those needed by permanent teachers." The dominant perception and acknowledgement of substitute teaching as "one of the most challenging and difficult roles a teacher can face" suggest an affirmative response to this query (Porwoll, 1997: vi).

Other qualities believed essential for successful substitute teaching practices and most welcomed by schools and schools systems during recruitment and assignment procedures are numerous, yet integral for dismantling the problematic aspects associated with this type of teaching employment. Newton (1994) once again sheds light into this aspect by listing the personal characteristics that not only enhance the sense of occupational fulfilment but also the learning and teaching environment.
In addition to flexibility, punctuality and reliability are key features; together with a predisposition to say "yes" rather than "no" when invited to come into school to cover. Resilience and stamina are also important: it takes a particular kind of strength, for example, to cancel over breakfast one set of arrangements for the day in favor of meeting eight groups of thirty children in a variety of rooms for a variety of subjects within the next five hours or so, a combination which can generate (whether or not one is familiar with the school) an infinite numbers of unknowns, and a consequential drain on energy and confidence. A sense of humour is an overworked phrase, but as apposite here as elsewhere. A sense of initiative is equally valuable: a contingency lesson "in the bag" in case of an emergency; adhesive name tags to help address pupils personally; a willingness to look for solutions to, rather than simply accept the consequences of, the organizational hiccoughs that happen in the best run establishments from time to time when temporary arrangements are in place. (77)

Although this outline makes refers to the secondary school's organizational operations, Newton's discussion is also echoed by other theorists and practitioners which elucidate how relevant these features are to all situational contexts of substitute teaching. The terms "flexible", "resourceful", "adaptable" and "in control" frequently appear as vital qualities expected of substitute teachers (Morrison, 1994a: 48). Acknowledging the foreign and unknown teaching situations to which substitute teachers are exposed, Pronin (1983) discusses yet another skill considered vital to their work, specifically "be[ing] alert to the climate of a class, to its mood or general ambience" (48-49). The ability to be perceptive to the classroom's program, the students' behaviour and to respond quickly and effectively to disruptive occurrences defines successful teaching practices. Reinforcing this professional quality, Newton (1994) also states how "a supply teacher needs to be alert to the needs of a group, and active in responding to them, moving around the classroom as necessary rather than remaining stationary or seated for long periods. How she or he responds to challenging
behaviours is also important: a repertoire of graduated responses, all of which are controlled, reasonable and firm, is one description of good practice” (75).

An additional aspect of invaluable attributes is the personal qualities shaped by life’s experiences that substitute teachers bring to the classrooms and consequently may enrich and optimize the learning environment. This diversity of experiences is viewed as a broad and limitless reflection of substitute teachers’ individualities and characteristics, which Knight (1994) acknowledges when she state that “supply teachers come in all shapes and sizes” (115). She reveals how the personal qualities of diverse individuals contribute many new and fascinating dimensions to the classroom: “[A]mong the more interesting have been an artist specializing in Islamic pattern teaching part-time at the Victoria and Albert Museum, a young man on a bike who brought as preparation for thirty lively 7-year-olds some card and rubber bands (we never really found out what he did with these), several very lively overseas teachers (especially from Australasia) whose enthusiasm and knowledge of their home countries helped us cover many attainment targets in geography, and several travellers who paid for their exciting trips by teaching in the summer and then escaping to warmer climates during the winter” (115). By framing their unique individualities as integral to students’ growth and development, Knight dismantles the traditionally inscribed belief of substitute teaching as less valuable to the learning process. Instead, she acknowledges that “[q]uality in supply teaching may not necessarily be the same as in permanent class teaching” as replacement teachers “will not necessarily be able to provide the differentiated activities expected of regular class teachers[;] [h]owever, this does not mean that the children are not provided with quality learning experiences which are also enjoyable” (116). Similarly, Pronin (1983) addresses the
significance of an individual’s skills and interests which can stimulate the teaching and
learning processes.

If you speak a foreign language, play a musical instrument, or direct a local
glee club, your services may be very much in demand. These talents relate
to specialized areas of teaching for which substitutes are very hard to find.

Similarly, if you know sign language, are adept at calisthenics or at staging
theatrical production, or have any other distinctive areas of expertise, the
school district may need you more than you know.

If you have travelled extensively or have an unusual hobby or collection, you
have much to share with your students. Can you draw? Sew? Use a jigsaw?
Teach a jig? If so, you have a built-in advantage. (35)

This citation suggests, therefore, that the unique abilities, interests and experiences of
substitute teachers are desired for their pedagogical value and reveals the extent to which
classrooms are shaped by an individual’s personal traits. In this regard, Morrison (1994a: 62)
asserts that “the personal qualities of supply teachers are part of the total activity known as
supply work”, that coupled with professional expectations, produce the holistic substitute
teaching experience.

Gendered Component

Gender constructions embedded within stereotypical assumptions were introduced in
Chapter One of the thesis. A common perception of substitute teachers as primarily female
employees links this analysis to economic issues. Galloway and Morrison (1994) find that
“[i]n a profession which is still male-dominated at senior management and administrative
levels, yet where women predominate numerically, the supply teacher can be said to typify
socio-economic features of a gendered profession even more markedly than the teachers in permanent full-time employment" (7). The authors further discuss how family responsibilities prevent female substitute teachers from seeking and obtaining more secure teaching positions and their research validates women's concerns assuming a significant place in their lives. They refer to various examples that affirm the obligations demanding teachers' time and commitment such as that “of a woman teacher returning home in the lunch hour to care for an elderly parent, a single parent balancing earning money during term-time against spending summer days with her pre-school child, a mother of a handicapped child whose attempt to return to teaching is constrained by the state of his health” (7). An examination of substitute teaching then, involves an emphasis on women's experiences and the specific issues of their intersecting professional and personal lives. Moreover, the incorporation of substitute teaching into other domains of their lives continuously reinforces part-time, or casual employment as mainly a female labour market. Ironically, differentially situated female teachers are categorized by their level of professional responsibilities, thus averting potential solidarity among them. As Chessum (1989: 87) notes, the “gendering process [of intermingling work with domestic concerns becomes veiled behind] a language of professionalism” [that functions to] separate [full-time female teachers] from their part-time sisters”, although the former group may have occupied a similar marginal place in the past or may find themselves so positioned in the future.

In articulating the observation of gender to the occupational features of substitute teaching brings to the forefront related issues of professionalism and perceptions of work. The commonly held view of substitute teaching as “‘women’s work’” is intricately connected to “terms like commitment, involvement and confidence” (Morrison, 1994a: 46). In this way,
the negative images of substitute teachers childminding a classroom and thus exerting less involvement with students become crystallized into recurring gender references. The dominant perceptions of full-time teachers towards casual, or part-time employees is frequently imbued with stereotypical assumptions of women lacking sufficient confidence to assume more intense teaching responsibilities (Morrison, 1994a). The (re)production of such adverse perceptions are connected to the career breaks of female teachers, whose entrance into the work force is oftentimes suspect and devalued. Green (1994: 16) states how “[c]areer breaks are frequently referred to as times of breakdown in confidence and skills” and substitute teaching as a path back into the labour market becomes, therefore, an area of teaching viewed from a particular gendered perspective. Earley’s (1986) categorical scheme of substitute teachers involves four groups, one of which is married women desiring an return to teaching subsequent to having reared their children. For women with current domestic commitments, intermittent teaching permits greater flexibility for concentrating on family concerns, and although such arrangements are ideal for these very purposes, they “suggest a stereotype of the woman teacher who is primarily occupied in domestic and child-care responsibilities” (Morrison, 1994a: 53).

Paradoxically, gender specific traits are linked to appropriate qualities deemed necessary to the teaching of children. Paralleling the teacher to a mother has been critiqued for reinforcing the interconnections of teaching responsibilities with those of mothering (Acker, 1995; Delhi, 1994); however, the literature points to a continuous perpetuation of these problematic assumptions. With particular reference to substitute teaching, gender occupies a central position in invoking effective teaching practices and their consequential effect on students, as evidenced by the following teacher’s remarks:
I remember a man...who was one of the world’s incompetents...they occur everywhere, nice gentle teachers who can’t cope, men, they’re often men, nice man he was...As soon as he walked through the door...the children ran him ragged. We managed to get him through a couple of days but he found it very hellish but I don’t think they learnt anything...At least he got out of it alive. Well, they did learn something, that they can run a teacher ragged. (Morrison, 1994: 47)

Contradictions arise as a result of the conceptualization of teaching with traditionally “female” traits, positioning women as “natural” and “experienced” caregivers, which is actually discrepant with the previous stated assumptions characterizing them as less confident and committed substitute teachers.

Stereotypes

Located outside of formal educational systems and structures, substitute teachers are perceived in stereotypical terms, that disassociate their work from that of their full-time, permanent teaching colleagues. While some views celebrate their valuable contribution to the education system, expressed through such terms as “‘gold dust’ and ‘saviours’”, other perceptions reveal this type of employment as antithetical to teaching (Morrison, 1994a: 48). Several preconceived ideas regarding substitute teaching include their work as primarily child-minding, or baby-sitting, thereby revealing minimal teaching practices and hence, insufficient learning opportunities for students. Buzzing (1994: 130) addresses schools’ uncertainty in clearly defining and articulating professional expectations of substitute teachers, observing how “[s]ome schools saw the supply teacher role simply as ‘baby sitting’- a containment role which had to do with control and amusement rather than education and
challenge. Others expected the supply teacher to produce continuity of learning, taking up the baton from the teacher who was absent and returning it after the absence was over.”

The contradictory definitions and expectations of the substitute teacher’s work are clearly evident through such statements, divesting them of any meaningful role, on the one hand, while also assigning to them significant educational contribution on the other. Throughout the literature, however, the negative implications associated with various terms result in the devaluation of any professional status or personal morale. In contradiction to their required services during teacher absence upon which schools depend, Porwoll (1977: vi) writes, “[y]et some persons contend that substitute teachers provide little more than a costly baby-sitting service and serve more as an interim keeper-of-the-peace than educator.” Professional identities and images of substitute teachers are dominated by a language of unfavourable meanings and intuitions that pervade every stage of their working lives. For example, Morrison (1994b) notes that hiring procedures for substitute teachers mirror the prevailing perceptions of their personal and professional qualities. She writes, “[i]n the choice of vocabularies used by some respondents there is something of an ‘as-long-as-they-can-walk-talk-and-breathe’ flavour about recruitment which reflects some of the wider images of supply teachers. This was particularly evident in relation to ‘casual’ workers in central registers, described intriguingly by several authorities as ad hoc teachers” (149). Furthermore, a publication by the Ontario Teachers’ Federation, written by Jardine and Shallhorn (1988: 9) defines substitute teachers as individuals requiring proper certifications and qualifications, yet whose professional status and importance is frequently eroded by several negative descriptors, viewing them as:

Baby Sitters—implying they aren’t expected to do any ‘real’ teaching;
Cannon Fodder—like lambs to the slaughter, the substitute is often seen as expendable, thrown to the lions (the students) as some sort of sacrificial offering;
Stand-Ins—replacing the ‘star’ performer when s/he is unable to perform;
Spare-Tires—sitting in the trunk until needed in an emergency;
Outsitters—a form of ‘alien being’ from some strange planet unable to fit into our world;
Chameleons—old lizards with the uncanny ability to alter their appearance.
When [substitute teachers are] encountered they are usually addressed thusly:

"Who are you today?" (their emphasis)

This points to yet a further articulated perspective of substitute teachers as subsidiary educators whose temporary teaching assignment create and sustain images of them as not being “real” or “proper” teachers.

These perceptions often become pragmatized into particular teacher responses that intensify substitute teachers’ alienation from the formal functionings and procedures of the school. Buzzing (1994: 127) refers to the “culture of double standards” whereby two types of behaviours and work apply to substitute teachers and their permanent teaching colleagues. In this way, Knight describes the process of assigning responsibility to substitute teachers for adverse student behaviour even after sufficient time has elapsed since the absence.

Furthermore, prevalent views of substitute teachers as outsiders are reflected in the dismal support extended to them, evidenced in the following teachers’ behaviours as refusing to permit them access to required resources, providing limited information and responding in an unwelcoming manner.

The research also leans towards conceptualizing substitute teaching as a problematic solution to teacher absence. In direct opposition to the praise and commendation of their essential role to classroom continuity, there exists alongside these positive perceptions alternative theories revealing various quandaries. In this vein, Morrison (1994a: 48) remarks
how substitute teacher are “also viewed as part of the problem, expressed in terms of availability, quality, administration, and cost.” Unable to procure consistency of cover arrangements, schools and school systems therefore draw from a pool of reserve teachers that neither facilitates guaranteed availability nor quality of teacher replacement. From the substitute teacher’s perspective, the benefits derived from a commitment to regular schools are numerous, and relate to the increased sense of occupational fulfilment. Newton (1994: 73) acknowledges the advantages of these arrangements, stating how “[f]amiliarity with policies, procedures and practice, with the physical layout of the school, and with department idiosyncrasies for example, together with some acquaintance with members of staff and knowledge of classes and pupils, tend to make for a more manageable, satisfying and productive day.” The availability of a constant and known body of substitute teachers inevitably entails several obvious advantages, the opposite of which increase disruptive occurrences and challenging situations; however, dependence upon a stream of familiar substitute teachers is neither secure nor guaranteed, but is rather subject to various fluctuations and movements. Knight (1994: 114) discusses the difficulties in schools maintaining and relying upon a permanent list of available substitute teachers, as many eventually secure permanent positions, “[o]lder teachers retire, and so their availability is constantly changing [while] [g]ood supply teachers are probably on the lists of several schools, and so are not always available.” Moreover, recruiting and assigning substitute teachers involve administrative responsibilities which are distributed throughout the system and thus, range from the central office to the micro-level school involvement. Whether substitute teachers’ placements are centrally controlled or directed through a more
decentralized system of operation, the substantial costs involved in utilizing substitute teacher services evoke this usage as a problematic response to teacher absence.

In view of the involved procedures and practices that aim to facilitate the organization of cover, many complex and critical issues are raised and interrogated. The question arising from this discussion may be expressed as follows: Is substitute teaching a viable and effective answer to the continued reality of teacher absence? Newton (1994: 81) responds with an emphatic “yes” as he asserts that “attending to supply systems and relationships pays educational dividends”. Similarly, Knight (1994: 119) attributes the difficulty of amassing a group of qualified and committed substitute teachers to the schools’ negative perceptions of them as less competent and valuable educators, and referring to her own experience, she asserts “that effectively used and properly trained supply teachers can be enormously beneficial.”

Substitute Teachers’ Manuals

By far, the most prevalent literature on the subject exists in the form of teaching manual and handbooks aimed towards facilitating a more positive and productive experience of substitute teaching. The production and dissemination of such material is therefore predicated on the widespread belief of substitute teaching as a difficult and laborious type of employment which requires specialized attention to the deliverance of specific lessons and activities for classroom use. Towards this end, the compilation of effective teaching strategies, categorized according to the various levels of teaching, attempt to provide
pre-packaged lessons considered successful instructional tools during teacher absence. By way of example, Haskins' (1974) book of accumulated mini-lessons for use at the high school level and divided into ten disciplinary areas offers numerous suggestions for executing simple and quick lessons. Similarly, Logan's (1978) handbook consists of twelve lesson plans designed for science classes entailing a detailed focus on the promotion of inquiry skills. Still other practical recommendations concentrate on the elementary school level with its obvious interest in the primary students' needs and abilities, as reflected in such works as Beaman's (1972) assemblage of children's activities for expanding cognitive development. Following this same area of interest is Seddon's (1972) accumulated techniques intended to promote imaginative exploration and encouraging skills development among students in primary grades. Common to all these earlier collections of recommended classroom lessons is the acknowledged need to assist the substitute teacher in creating a more constructive arena within which productive teaching and learning can occur.

More recent publications also address the means of ensuring more productive relations and working conditions for substitute teachers, by providing ideas and strategies into the various significant domains of their job. A handbook produced by the Ontario Public School Teachers Federation (1995) and aptly entitled *Answering the Call* is concerned with "classroom practice, management strategies, lesson preparation, and a multitude of things that an occasional teacher, such as yourself, should know when you 'answer the call'" (forward). First acknowledging the essential role assumed by substitute teachers and the lack of substantial direction available to them, whose numbers it records as in the thousands in Ontario, the handbook proceeds to cover a diverse range of issues and concerns, including, but not limited to employment and career advice, managing classrooms, understanding
learning needs and styles and establishing rapport. Moreover, the inclusion of several “survival kits” containing activities designed to create and sustain student interest, and conveniently grouped according to divisional areas, purport to prevent or rectify potential behavioural difficulties, thus “increas[ing] the likelihood of a successful day” (26). Another resource booklet, published by the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation and co-authored by Jardine and Shallhorn (1988) is similarly organized into issues pertinent to substitute teachers’ professional lives, offering a myriad of suggestions and providing skills to successfully encounter the challenges and demands associated with their work. These guidelines extend across a wide spectrum of relevant issues, from classroom management and discipline techniques to the union services available to substitute teachers.

Ironically, some proposals for consideration by substitute teachers appear to exacerbate and further entrench the stereotypical perceptions discussed in the previous section. For instance, one described advantage of substitute teaching is the free time it provides while students are busily engaged in their assigned tasks, at which point, once classroom control is maintained, the substitute teacher “might consider some of the following activities: complet[e] the report for the absent teacher[,] writ[e] articles for journals in your discipline[,] writ[e] letters [and] read novels (make[ing] sure the book is appropriate for a school setting)” (Jardine and Shallhorn, 1988: 15). Although the absence of contractual agreements does permit a greater degree of flexibility for determining the frequency of employment and for pursuing external interests beyond the working day, the above mentioned suggestions are invested with particular messages that only seem to reinforce the substitute teacher’s role as primarily that of disciplinarian and overseer of assigned work, rather than that of an active and involved educator. Nevertheless, the primary objective of guidebooks
such as these is to make available to prospective substitute teachers or individuals employed in such capacities the necessary skills and techniques to function as effectively as possible, as well as offering assistance, advice and support to substitute teachers.

Alluded to earlier as vital requirements for ensuring instructional continuity are the lessons and activities designed to contribute to students' academic experiences during the teacher's absence. Based on the premise that daily plans may not be supplied for the substitute teacher, that predetermined lessons left by teacher may not last for the allotted time, or that equipment needed for a lesson is either unavailable or non-functioning, these teaching ideas provide alternative assignments when such occasions arise. Pronin (1983: 107) refers to these essential supplementary and impromptu exercises: "Like a magician who pulls a rabbit out of the hat, every sub must have on hand a bottomless bag of tricks, a variety of bright ideas and activities for filling in the odd moment or unplanned block of time." She proceeds to share her personal repertoire of activities listing appropriate grade levels, approximate time periods and extent of preparation required. Of particular appeal to substitute teachers is the diversity of subject areas explored and the limited resources and planning involved for the execution of each lesson. Curricular areas covered throughout the various sections focusing on classroom activities include math, language arts and crafts, creative play and physical education. Similar rationalizations for providing assemblage of exercises are voiced in other substitute teachers' handbook, as noted in the following excerpt:

Occasional teachers need to have the same lesson planning skills as regular teachers. However, planning time is one aspect of your work that is not controlled by you. In some situations, when your assistance is requested at the last minute, you have very little time to plan your teaching day. This section provides ideas, activities and strategies that are particularly useful for days when you are not allowed much time to prepare. "The Emergency Lesson", "The Time-to-Spare Lesson", "The OT's Survival Kit" and "The Treasure Chest Reward System" are practical suggestions to a successful
day. (Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, 1995, *Answering the Call*: 23)

While this particular publication intends to supply a broad selection of instructional information, others may contain a more narrow disciplinary focus. One such example is well illustrated by an accumulation of classroom-tested activities for the promotion of English language usage and skills development. Compiled by the National Council of Teachers of English, *Substitute Teachers' Lesson Plans* (1989) were chosen for inclusion on the basis of the following criteria: "[E]ducational soundness of the activities, manageability by a non-specialist substitute, appropriate time (usually, a single class period), adaptability to various grade levels, and variety in content and format" (v). Moreover, the pedagogical value of these activities ensure that meaningful and productive learning experiences continue during the teacher's absence and thus, if implemented in English classrooms, assist in dispelling any belief that merely "busy work" (of little or nor educational value) is employed by substitute teachers. The practical approach inherent in the activities is exposed thereby eschewing the formulaic jargon of learning objectives and their constituent parts. Indeed, this methodological consideration of unproblematic applicability and experiential usefulness defines the approach characteristic of most manuals, handbooks or guides, as they are informed by the situational contexts and time constraints facing substitute teachers.

**Children's Literature**

The stereotypical beliefs and traditional assumptions regarding substitute teachers are transmitted to primary school students through the medium of literature. An examination of
children’s books on the subject, therefore, leads one to question what implicit messages are being conveyed that further feed these rigid perceptions of the substitute teacher’s role and character traits. In one book simply entitled *The Substitute*, Lawler (1977) depicts what initially appears to be a typical occurrence of a substitute teacher’s entrance into a classroom, whose greeting positions her as a replacement teacher: “‘Good morning boys and girls,’ she said, ‘Miss Niles is absent this morning and I am here to teach you instead. My name is Mrs. O’Mallyho”’ (1). Illustrated as a commonly dressed woman in a long, shapeless dress, (including cuffed sleeves and full-buttoned neckline), large hat adorned with a flower, plain, flat shoes, and glasses, the substitute teacher conforms to the image of a simple and homely individual whose disruption to the regular classroom routines is immediately evident through the “bang[ing]” of the door and “panting and puffing” that signals her arrival (1). Moreover, her name, suggesting a married status is clearly juxtaposed with the classroom’s permanent teacher, *Miss Niles*, whose name in contrast, implies a single status and a probable youthful demeanour and appearance (emphasis mine). This description falls in line with Morrison’s (1994a: 53) reference to substitute teachers being frequently described as simply “Mrs-so-and- so.” Mrs. O’Mallyho’s unconventional behaviour, however, is exemplified through an enormous bag she drags into the room from which she extracts “knee socks, a sack of potatoes, a striped beach umbrella and a blue parakeet in a bamboo cage” (3-5), and eventually to the complete amazement of the children, she locates and withdraws the desired object, a baby grand piano. Despite the students’ initial protestations, she invites them to dance and act out the movement of birds, and as the wondrous, melodic music penetrates the room, the children become entirely enraptured in this activity. Eventually, however, “there began to be picking and clawing, scratching and squawking” and Mrs. O’Mallyho cried,
‘Stop it. Stop it at once!’ But it didn’t stop” (13). To restore order, she alters the musical selection, this time, playing cat music while the children begin to mimic the sounds and movements of these animals. Once again, the classroom environment degenerates into unruly behaviour and chaos, and Mrs. O’ Mallyho repeats the same beseeching statement, but to no avail. At each consecutive behavioural change, she offers a new and exciting program of music that becomes accompanied by the appropriate physical actions, of hippopotami, monsters, and finally “sitting-down-at-our desks music” (25). By this time, the students’ exhausted but contented states are readily perceived by Miss Niles, whose sudden entrance into the classroom provides yet another instance of direct comparison. Mrs. O’Mallyho’s odd and eccentric appearance is now visually depicted through the parakeet that has perched itself atop her hat while Miss Niles, positioned beside her, appears vastly different. Her curly, blonde hair is adorned by a bow and her exposed neck reveals a necklace, all illustrations that function as foil a to the substitute teacher’s more common semblance. To the teacher’s inquiry, Mrs. O’ Mallyho responds: “WERE THEY GOOD CHILDREN?’...‘Why, they were as busy as birds, as clever as cats, as happy as hippos. And,’ she added, backing toward the door, ‘they did a monstrous amount of work’” (29). Her witty remark, made in reference to the morning’s occurrence speaks of the real happenings known only by herself and the students.

Despite the remarkable classroom environment created and perpetuated by this fictional substitute teacher, a closer examination of the story’s content exposes additional problematic characterizations. Firstly, although Mrs. O’ Mallyho’s innovative strategies occupied the students’ attention and immersed them in merry and playful activity, this raises questions as to the value of the educational program offered in substitute teaching
arrangement. In fact, Lindley (1994: 173) notes with regard to continued training, that the “case of dynamic change, where the supply teacher body is continually behind in adjusting to the needs of the jobs to be covered, two things can happen: the job can be temporarily de-skilled sufficiently for the supply teacher to cope with it or the quality of the service to the pupil can be lowered temporarily.” The radically different activity provided by Mrs. O’Mallyho suggests that the classroom teacher will resume with the regular program upon her return, thus mirroring Lindley’s postulation that “[t]he supply teacher...can be allowed to follow a less demanding schedule on the assumption that ground can be made up by the regular teacher later” (173). Secondly Mrs. O’Mallyho’s manner of conducting classroom practices, as she alters her musical performance to settle the students, reflects the dominating stereotypes of substitute teachers assuming particular roles. Lindley’s insight again brings this implicit connection into perspective by stating the following: “The supply teacher operating the educational machinery on automatic pilot or acting as child-minder/occupier/entertainer are two extremes with deeper implications; they provide threatening images which the profession rejects as infeasible in the first case and wholly unacceptable in the second case” (173). Any of these descriptors poignantly capture this substitute teacher’s functions, hence disclosing how this type of literature, aimed at a young audience, falls prey to the discursive assumptions of the substitute teacher’s role and efficacy in the classroom. Finally, a consequence of such materials is the covert yet suggestive message it transmits to students regarding conventional and deeply entrenched characteristics of substitute teachers.

Other related yet divergent presuppositions of substitute teachers are documented and conveyed through the dramatic representations found in other children’s books. In Allard’s (1977) story Miss Nelson is Missing, the author relates the classroom teacher’s discontent
with her exceptionally misbehaved students, illustrating this disruptive and chaotic environment within which Miss Nelson experiences difficulties of management. To remedy this situation, she devises a plan of assuming the guise of a substitute teacher, appearing before the students as a hideous and threatening presence, appropriately called Miss Viola Swamp. As a distinct antithesis to Miss Nelson, the substitute teacher’s physical appearance elicits dark and sinister images, traditionally associated with witch folklore, complete with black hair, dress, painted finger nails and a long, crooked nose. Her severe and strict manner demands student compliance, and coupled with an unrelentless emphasis on work allows no occasion for frivolity or pleasure within the classroom. The students “could see that Miss Swamp was a real witch. She meant business. Right away she put them to work. And she loaded them down with homework. ‘We’ll have no story hour today’, said Miss Swamp. ‘Keep your mouths shut’, said Miss Swamp. ‘Sit perfectly still’ said Miss Swamp. ‘And if you misbehave, you’ll be sorry’ said Miss Swamp” (pp 12-14). With the passage of days the students’ increasing unhappiness leads them to seek their regular teacher, fearing in the meanwhile that possible explanations, created by the children’s fanciful imaginations, prevent Miss Nelson’s return. Eventually, however, Miss Nelson relinquishes this character and a “sweet”, and unexpected voice is once again heard in the classroom, to the ultimate delight of the students, who welcome her back by displaying transformed behaviours (26).

In similarity to the previous story, this synopsis also reveals the juxtaposition between the regular teacher and the substitute, the former presented in a more physically appealing light than the described characteristics of the latter. Moreover, by casting the replacement teacher as an exceptionally oppressive presence who imposes a rigid system of control, the view of substitute teachers as primarily disciplinarians is evoked and sustained. The negative
student-teacher relations frequently linked to cover arrangements is also indicated in this story, mirrored in the students’ disgruntled attitudes towards the substitute and their fervent longing for the return of their permanent teacher. The underlying intimation, therefore, is that substitute teachers are merely to be tolerated during the period of absence, perceived in the meantime as an intrusive and disturbing presence.

Conclusion

The issues examined thus far illuminate the identifiable foci of interests associated with the occupation of substitute teaching that have led to questions of its efficacy and beneficial returns. Indeed, extreme scepticism has found expression in the complete abrogation of substitute teaching. Robb (1979) for example, had earlier and explicitly advocated for the discontinued use of substitute teachers based on the conjecture that temporary teacher replacements offered no advantages to student learning, caused the dissipation of school district’s finances, and devalued the individual employed in such a position. Other theorists explored throughout this chapter have been less drastic and more inclusive in their critical evaluation of the needs and realities of substitute teaching.

The content of this chapter has served to reveal the recurring and prominent themes of substitute teaching, illustrating the paradoxes and contradictions embedded within the literature on the subject. Furthermore, the complexities of the issues discussed to this point illustrate the diverse perspectives and theoretical stances that have contributed to a more encompassing and distinct comprehension of the substitute teaching work force. Highlighting
these integral features will be extended further throughout the thesis, with the specific intent of interconnecting them with the individual narratives.

To redress the lack of the substitute teacher's voice acknowledged in the literature requires an inclusion of personal views and experiences of the men and women whose contributions represent the intricacies and nuances of their work as best conveyed by them. This thesis proceeds with that specific purpose, and aims to gain this insight by incorporating the voices of substitute teachers themselves as they reflect and relate their individual stories. The thematic issues discussed through this chapter will be examined further in subsequent chapters, functioning to ground personal reflections upon the theoretical components of this chapter. The overall intent of these proposed orientations is to provide a more in-depth and holistic view of substitute teaching.
CHAPTER THREE

Building Bridges: Research Methodology

The exploratory nature of this research project that aims to ascertain and present the views and perspectives of substitute teachers could be most accurately and faithfully captured through a qualitative method of inquiry. Without a clearly definitive hypothesis or question(s) to be tested that might necessitate a large and random selection of subjects and produce a body of measurable data, quantitative research methods were deemed inappropriate. In contrast, qualitative research lends itself to the collection of “soft” data that elucidate, through descriptive details, the idiosyncrasies of people, places, and dialogue, not easily represented by statistical means (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 2). To yield the results that could not be meaningfully acquired through the observation or questionnaire approach, the decision to conduct open-ended interviews was therefore readily reached as the most viable and appropriate type of procedure for providing the participants with an opportunity to express themselves from their own frames of reference. This flexibility of responses and divergent, yet significant information was facilitated by avoiding a highly formalized and structured set of questions that might constrain and restrict the participants’ views, experiences and perspectives. Instead, the prearranged questions were employed as a general guideline, functioning as “a means of ‘making things happen’ and stimulating the flow of data” (Woods,
Personal biases entering into and influencing the collected data is a consideration with this methodological approach. This concern, I believe, was particularly relevant to the research project due to my own position as a substitute teacher that provided a familiarity with numerous issues and facets of the occupational type being explored (see Spradley, 1979: 50-51). Could an objective, detached stance be possible under these conditions of intimate knowledge and personal experience? Ely et al. (1991: 16) acknowledge this very concern and shed necessary light by stating how “being too familiar is less a function of our actual involvement in the setting than it is of the research stance we are able to adopt within it.” Moreover, the authors caution against an excessive familiarity that would entirely bias the study’s findings, permit one to anticipate the answers, or discredit the researcher’s role in the eyes of the participants. In their own words, they state how “we are too familiar when we cannot make the familiar unfamiliar” and further avow how “it is increasingly important to study the familiar, but without the blinders that familiarity often attaches to us” (16-17). The conscious effort to assume the perspective unfettered by preconceived ideas and personal beliefs was occasionally frustrated by the participants’ knowledge of my positioning, which, when expressed through responses such as “Well, you know how it is”, required redirection and further probing to elicit their own perspectives as opposed to my own. Interestingly, a plethora of new and unforeseeable information was divulged throughout the interviews which provided additional personal insight into the intricacies of the substitute teaching profession, and thus became interrelated with my own professional development as a teacher. An essential purpose of ethnographic research according to Woods (1986: 113) is its interconnection with a “personal quest” which aids in identifying and describing the
biographic components of one's existence. John Forconi illustrated this point by writing that "the aspect of human life you are about to study will most likely be your own" (as cited in Ely et al., 1991: 108).

The Participants

As the central objective of this thesis is to elicit the perspectives of substitute teachers regarding their unique and differently situated positions within the educational system, I determined from the onset that a broad representation of participants would most effectively capture the depth and inclusiveness of the various issues being explored. The only stipulation outlining participation was current employment as a substitute teacher, irrespective of any other considerations. Various other possible criteria, such as affiliations with specific Boards of Education or minimum period of employment were considered less significant determinants than the absence of concise requirements which would ensure a diverse range of experiences and views. Consequently, both males and females of various ages and ethnic backgrounds were solicited for participation in order to evoke the complexity and richness of responses stemming from these different positionalities. Although this aim towards inclusivity defined the study's guideline, the group of participants, as discussed in Chapter One, was comprised primarily of women, reflecting their predominant numbers within the substitute teaching work force. The reasons and consequences of this reality will be examined further in the following chapter, as the participants' voices will be brought to the forefront to expand on these issues.
Contact with potential participants was made by two means, one of which has already been introduced in the opening chapter with reference to the methodological considerations of gaining entry into the field of study. My work as a substitute teacher enabled frequent exposure to colleagues employed in the same school(s) and thus, served to provide the setting for initial contact and often for interviewing sessions. Introductions of myself and the nature of the study were conducted at various locations within the schools such as the main office, the hallways, or the specific classroom in which the substitute teacher worked for the duration of his/her temporary teaching assignment. Following this brief introduction and depending upon a verbal affirmation for involvement, a time and place for further discussion, including the interviewing session, were determined by the participants. At that point, the letter of consent was presented to request their written approval for participation, based on their understanding that an interview of approximately one hour would be required, and with their permission taped and transcribed, and outlining the assurance that all attempts to maintain anonymity would be honoured (see Appendix A).

The solicitation of participants was thus more easily facilitated due to my frequent attendance at schools as a substitute teacher. Conducting research in a familiar terrain, which Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 23) define as “backyard” studies entails the dilemmas mentioned earlier, but also provides the advantages of accessibility and familiarity with surroundings, organizational procedures, and functions. Moreover, in his discussion of ethnographic research, Woods (1986: 2) refers to the roles of “teacher educators” and “teacher-researchers”, both of which are circumscribed “within their own sphere, with all the attendant boundary problems” leading him to question the following: “Can researchers or teacher educators really appreciate teacher practice without continual experience of it
themselves? Can teachers or other professionals, without much more generous provision of free time, engage in any worthwhile research?” My employment and experiential knowledge of the study’s focus of interest draws me into intimate association with the individual participants and their expressed beliefs, while also permitting the incorporation of work with research pursuits that offset potential time constraints. The amalgamation of these two roles created obvious benefits, functioning, in Woods’ terms, to enable “the production of knowledge and the demonstration of its applicability to educational practice—within the same person” (2).

The other research technique employed for solicitation of additional participants functioned via a networking approach whereby friends employed as substitute teachers were contacted to request their participation in the study. In several instances, they would refer me to other individuals whom they believed would express an interest in the research project and would thus consent to an interview. Although this method entailed the advantage of readily locating prospective participants, it also raised the concern of enlisting participation from friends whose association with me extended beyond that typically characteristic of the researcher’s objective role. Despite this initial hesitation, these interview sessions proved to be, I believe, a positive and beneficial experience, which resulted in a more relaxed environment for fuller disclosure and ease in responding to the various questions posed. In all cases, and regardless of which means was used to select participants, the consent letter requesting written confirmation was an essential component as it outlined pertinent information of which all participants needed to be cognizant prior to being interviewed.

Most substitute teachers who were approached at schools consented to participate with the exception of two whose reasons for refusing to participate in the study differed but
nevertheless shed light on the complexities of the research aims and processes of this study. One woman who initially offered verbal consent having heard the study’s intents and means of data collection, determined the time and place for subsequent discussion; however, at this point she declined participation, expressing concerns about recorded comments that may perhaps jeopardize her employment and stated how her preference for a questionnaire would have ensured greater anonymity and a lesser need for self-disclosure. As noted earlier, only through an interview format could I successfully acquire and present the participant’s beliefs, values and perspectives in their own language as they assign meanings and interpretations to them. The multiplicity of realities are most faithfully captured through a constructionist framework which incorporate all views, both varied and oppositional, and encompass the orientation of this thesis (see Gergen, 1985, on social constructionism).

Finally, in one other case, a participant who provided oral and written consent also withdrew from the study having explicitly voiced concerns regarding substitute teachers’ marginalized and hence, lessened occupational position, which he believed sanctioned little administrative, collegial or public acknowledgement and support for their role. Ironically, the study’s aim to make central teacher substitution and to place its related issues on the educational agenda intended to compensate for this continued silence and subordination of the substitute teaching experience. Scholars such as Galloway and Morrison (1994) have acknowledged this need, stating in the preface to their edited work that “[i]f there is a voice this is underrepresented, it is the direct voice of the supply teacher herself or himself. That body of information require[s] a different book.” In seeking to capture the nuances of substitute teachers’ narratives, it is hoped that this study addresses a particular area of required research and exploration.
The eventual group of participants was comprised of ten individuals, eight women and two men, who varied with respect to age, ethnic and racial backgrounds, teaching experiences, educational qualifications, career prospects and/or preferences, but all shared the same occupational positions as substitute teachers affiliated with a particular public Board of Education within the city of Toronto or outlying regions. This small group permitted a more in-depth exploration of each individual’s expression and thoughts on specific issues, which Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 3) explain thusly: “Because of the detail sought, most studies have small samples”. This relatively small number should not be taken as a representation of all substitute teachers; however, their individual voices speak of a depth and fullness regarding their occupational positions, thereby addressing the study’s exploratory nature. Furthermore, in keeping with the originally stated intent of maintaining the participants’ anonymity, further references may only reveal personal descriptions which may violate this agreement; therefore, I have carefully omitted this possibility by limiting the type and depth of information conveyed. Suffice it to say that the participants’ generous granting of their time and their willingness to discuss their thoughts and experience, at oftentimes short notice, added a cumulative richness to the study in general, and to the interviewing process in particular.

The Interviewing Process

As interviews were thought the essential tool for understanding and describing the culture of teacher substitution, they were intentionally devised as “unstructured” (Maccoby and Maccoby, 1954, as cited in Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 2) or “open-ended” (Jahoda,
Deutsch, and Cook, 1951, as cited in Bogdan and Biklen, 1992: 2) in order to allow for a fuller portrayal of responses. To develop a sense of rapport and trust which Woods (1986: 62) describes as “major attributes required in interviewing” each individual was informed at the onset that their right to abstain from answering particular questions or to request that specific information be kept “off the record” would be honoured. This practice aided in establishing the degree of comfort and the confidence for participants to discuss their perspectives in a non-threatening and benign environment. As a further effort to create an open and informal forum for discussion, rather than an official and rigid interviewing procedure, I requested each participant to being by talking about themselves with respect to their individual story. From this emerged questions which aimed to elicit the participants’ background in substitute teaching, areas of qualification and current teaching positions, and the frequency and location of employment (see Appendix B). Furthermore, the participants were invited to share one favourable experience and one negative experience most vividly remembered during their work as a substitute teacher. While most responses varied, they nevertheless shared similar thematic underpinnings which aided in the analysis and organization of data. Participants were also asked to respond to questions concerning the perceived benefits and disadvantages of substitute teaching as well as the emotive interpretations associated with their work. Concluding questions focused on future career directions and potential preferences for occupational change, while the very final issue for additional elaboration was reserved for the participants to voice their beliefs on any area they believed received little or no recognition throughout the interview. What is important to reiterate is the function of the interview schedule towards structuring the research as opposed to it defining and limiting specific topics of exploration. Consequently, the participants were
encouraged to direct their own path of inquiry into the suggested issues which frequently resulted in a two-way and open conversation less dictated by prescribed and outlined questions.

As interviewer, I was aware of my familiarity with teacher substitution and attempted to critically examine my own predetermined beliefs lest they influence and distort the interview's course or the amassed data. With additional interviews, personal presumptions were more easily subverted, producing a clearer focus on the participants' words and voices and a greater valuation of their stories rather than an effort to draw out interconnections and comparable experiences with my own. Occasionally, when participants' responses were brief and concise, based on their articulated belief that my knowledge precluded a more detailed exploration, I expressed my interest in gaining their views and perspectives. Although this investigation into familiar terrain posed various quandaries, the gathering and subsequent reflection of information highlighted, challenged and redefined previously held ideals and beliefs.

The time and setting of each interview was determined by the participant, which was in turn, affected by several factors such as time constraints, scholastic obligations and familial responsibilities. The convenience of conducting interviews within schools where both myself and the participants work led to more quiet locales such as empty classrooms during recess and lunch breaks, where the absence of students for that period of time freed us both from teaching duties to discuss and explore various issues. Despite this relatively quiet environment, the impromptu return of a student and the eventual ringing of the school bell signalling the continuation of the day's activities also marked the termination of the interview to be resumed at a later time, such as the afternoon recess. In some instances, a local
restaurant or coffee shop at lunch time served as a more preferred location where the physical distance from the school appeared to create a greater degree of comfort and less hesitancy to express oneself openly and directly. Nevertheless, here, numerous visual and aural distractions impeded the continuous flow of conversation. Perhaps the most optimum setting for uninterrupted discussion occurred in my home or upon invitation, within the home of the participants, where distractions could be controlled and limited and the officiality of a school's procedures were absent, hence producing a more relaxed environment within familiar surroundings.

The length of interviews also substantially varied, ranging from one rather hurried discussion of 20 minutes in duration (due to the participant's desire to optimize the school's recess breaks as his own personal time) to the other end of the spectrum, where several interviews continued beyond an hour. The more lengthy interviews occurred within a domestic setting, which I perceived to be a reflection of the more intimate association permitted within such a location and were undeniably for me, the most enjoyed interactions occurring outside of the more rapid pace of the school day. The majority were concluded within 60 minutes, leaving an open space at the end for participants to voice any additional thoughts or to clarify previously expressed views. In all cases, the interviews were tape recorded and although an assurance was made that the recorder would be turned off upon request, no participant expressed the wish to do so. Immediately following our discussion, I transcribed the interviews, substituting names of both individuals and schools with pseudonyms and eventually, upon the accumulation of all recorded and documented data, I proceeded to organize and analyse the information.
Analysis of Data

Once all ten interviews had been transcribed, the data was organized and coded in accordance with emergent cultural themes and subsumed under initially broad categories. All transcripts were infused with a wealth of responses that deserved full consideration, and to honour the participants’ voices, conducting several readings and reviews of the material was fundamentally important. The process of imposing a system of categorical analyses to the vast body of data was carefully conducted to prevent any familiarity with the issues from being interpreted as assumed knowledge and thus, afforded less primacy in the findings (see Spradley, 1979: 50). As a further safeguard against this occurrence, a large range of codes was generated without the attempt to impose on the collected data preconceived themes. With subsequent readings, these codes were more selectively chosen to adhere to the commonalities among the narratives which appeared with the most frequency. Contrasting views were also deemed significant additions that shed a different light to the concepts and were perceived as alternative meanings, rather than deviations from the apparent interconnections. In many instances, a participant’s responses did not follow a straight line of consistent or uniform beliefs but were rather quite varied, offering different perspectives on the same issues. Differing or variegated beliefs helped construct a holistic and broad examination of substitute teaching, thereby incorporating nuances and idiosyncrasies of this employment that may not be have been captured had contrasting viewpoints been excluded from consideration.
The codes represented the common themes that appeared to resonate throughout each individual narrative, while alternative or divergent expressions added additional insight to each topic. Eventually, eleven codes were identified as most reflective of the accumulated material, and although they are not meant to be regarded as restrictive of further interpretative possibilities, they nevertheless do convey the themes that occurred repeatedly within the interviews. Furthermore, various codes paralleled the issues introduced within the body of existing literature, whereas others offered more current and detailed material to these themes and in several instances, produced substantial interrogation into an area to which only brief allusions were made within the literature.

One of the eleven major codes that emerged addressed the situational contexts and personal conditions which instigated each participant’s employment as a substitute teacher and were incorporated under the code of *positionailities*. This code reflected the subjective experiences which led to their current occupational status, and the participants’ comments revealed the means whereby such employment was consciously considered as a viable alternative to regular teaching, or in stark contrast, was accepted in the absence of other teaching options or occupational fields deemed more desirable. Consequently, the inclusion of these two further sub-themes that emerged under this broader code were identified as *self-direction* and *imposition*.

The emotive experiences connected to substitute teaching often referred to the diversity of classroom environments, different student behaviours and collegial responses, all of which formed and affected the emotional interpretations substitute teachers assigned to their work. Due to the many and disparate feelings expressed throughout the interviews, all reflections related to this issue were indicated by the code *emotions*. Another source of these
prevalent feelings was linked to the structural conditions characteristic of substitute teaching, primarily the limited time duration that prevented the development of stable connections with others. This reality encompassed a myriad of responses which also reflected positive perceptions of freeing oneself from the many responsibilities of full-time, permanent teaching and thus, a separate code, labour conditions, was developed to address each component of this theme.

As teachers working within the educational system, substitute teachers’ vignettes were largely comprised of reflections on classroom processes and practices that became subsumed under the code pedagogy. Additional categories were also created to accommodate remarks made in connection with the operations and functions of the classroom. The interpersonal aspects of teaching that focus on the relations existing between the educator and the students were amassed under the code of teacher-pupil rapport. Beyond contact with students, participants reflected on their associations with others and such related comments were simply coded under others. Remarks made in reference to substitute teachers’ usage of prearranged lesson plans were identified by the code guidelines. This code included observations of alleviating the need to develop one’s own programs as routines and rules already established within the classroom could be followed, as well as the realization that the absence of any clearly defined and accessible planner, outlining the day’s activities necessitated the need for substitute teachers to quickly develop and present their own teaching and learning strategies. A number of interviewees expressed their concern on a related issue of lost or atrophied teaching skills resulting from the implementation of another’s planned activities, as opposed to one’s own and the code teaching craft served to identify all comments expressed on this matter. Finally, a very common and repetitive theme readily
emerged throughout all interviews which concentrated on the particular students' attitudes and behaviours requiring the imposition of a system of consequences for inappropriate student conduct. Frequently, substitute teachers addressed the need to immediately establish the tone of the classroom by outlining the expectations of the students and in so doing, to hopefully ameliorate the potential occurrence of problematic and undesired situations. These considerations pertaining to a substitute teacher's disciplinary practices were classified under the code *discipline/classroom management*.

As discussed earlier, these eleven codes were developed subsequent to several reviews of all interview transcripts and were determined on the basis of prominent themes appearing frequently throughout the discussions. While a deliberate aim towards classification of the materials was essential for a systematic organization and analysis of the data, it is nevertheless important to reiterate the value and acknowledgement each remark and view received during both the interview process and the following categorization of prevalent issues. Such an inclusive method provided, I believe, a broader and more encompassing reflection of the material and hence, permitted the extraction of as many meanings as possible from the collected data.

The following chapter explores the diverse and multidimensional experiences of substitute teachers which have undeniably influenced their perceptions of their work and themselves as educators. These reflections are rooted in personal and occupational knowledge that is examined and presented through the voices of substitute teachers. Chapter Five elaborates on the juxtaposition of substitute teaching with permanent, full-time teaching and does so, once again, by presenting the articulated perspectives of all interviewees, as they understand these differentials and upon which future career directives are frequently based.
This chapter will aim to integrate the analysis of the data by examining the consequential effects of these discourses on the professional role and identity of substitute teachers and the underlying complexities associated with their work. As a conclusion, the final chapter of this thesis will examine substitute teachers’ emotions experienced throughout their work, future career considerations, a general overview of the study’s findings and a look forward to continued research developments in this area.
CHAPTER FOUR

Speaking from Experience:
The Complexities of Substitute Teaching

In this chapter, the diverse and varied experiences of substitute teachers are documented and presented by bringing their voices forward as they were expressed throughout the interview sessions. The conditions operating upon the individual’s life, in so far as they influenced the occupational position currently held are first examined and thus form the introductory section of the chapter. Following this background material, specific teaching assignments are discussed and interpreted thereby revealing both the pleasures and the pains inherent in this type of work.

One of the methodological practices of the study entailed the preservation of the participants’ anonymity and to honour this condition upon which participation was based, any biographical information is purposely limited and presented only in situations where it is essential to enhancing the proposed arguments. Furthermore, I have decided that individual descriptions of each participant, albeit through the use of pseudonyms, would nevertheless sacrifice the desired confidentiality aimed at throughout the study, therefore, except in the cases in which personal depictions are relevant to understanding the subjective contexts of substitute teaching, no such further references are utilized throughout the chapters examining the research findings. In order to present in the most accurate terms the participants’
expressed beliefs and frames of reference, I have refrained from editing any words, although this may have provided a more uniform and consistent description throughout the analysis. As an example, although participants may use various occupational titles to denote their employment, I continue to employ the term substitute teachers for the reasons outlined in Chapter One. In not editing participants’ statements, I retain their individual nuances and original voices.

Substitute Teaching as Choice or Necessity

The interviews demonstrated the development of two distinct patterns of occupational status, one, a self-directed decision to undertake the work of substitute teaching, the other, antithetically, an orientation towards this employment resulting from external labour market constraints. The first stance frequently applied to women, who, after an intermittent lapse of employment for the raising of a family, returned to teaching through the gradual reintroduction provided for by substitute teaching. Viewed from this perspective, substitute teaching permitted the combination of occasional employment with the various duties and responsibilities associated with childbirth and rearing. One woman expressed this connection in terms of its applicability and relevance to her own family.

When I graduated from the Faculty [of Education], it was the only way into the Board, and then, with having children, it was a convenient occupation. It allowed for flexibility and it still does, such as being able to take a day off if the children are sick, or to go on school trips with them. That is important to me too, to stay in contact with their school as well.
Often, the move from a full-time teaching position to that of substitute teaching was judged to be a more preferable working arrangement for these same concerns. As the following comments reveal, the desire to have a family of one’s own could be realized without an absolute departure from the teaching profession by incorporating the reduced occupational pressures of substitute teaching into these plans:

I made that decision after one year of a long-term contract, when I got pregnant. I just felt substitute teaching would be best for me at this point in time, because the first year [of teaching] was just so stressful for me. This is my first child and I thought I couldn’t handle the workload and be pregnant at the same time... My pregnancy was one of the factors for deciding to do substitution.

These remarks bear upon the references to gender in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, particularly allusions to the career breaks of female teachers for domestic and familial obligations. This is not to suggest, however, that substitute teachers constitute one homogenous assemblage of similarly positioned individuals, specifically women returning to work via the route of substitute teaching or women choosing to undertake such employment for the conveniences it allows them to begin their own family. In fact, contrary to this view, decisions to work as a substitute teacher are more varied and taken by individuals located at different stages of both their personal and occupational lives. A retired principal framed his move toward substitute teaching in financial terms.

I returned to substitute teaching because of the money. Our pension is great, but I only have a single salary, so it gives me extra, for example, if the car breaks down and if there are many payments to face. So, it helps with the income a little bit and prevents you from always withdrawing from your savings.

The decisive step to assume the position of a substitute teacher was frequently based on a person’s desire to pursue external interests and additional goals outside of the teaching environment, and in these cases, substitute teaching was deemed the most ideal employment
for accommodating these arrangements. This view was expressed by several participants, as evidenced in the following remarks:

I came to be a substitute teacher because I had taken a leave of absence [from full-time teaching] and thought it would be a good way to support myself while I did my Masters degree.

I worked full-time and then one of the professors at the University who I wanted for my Masters was retiring the following year, so in order to get my Masters under this professor, I had to get back that year. I quit my full-time job and concentrated on getting my Masters. I started with the Board [of Education] as a supply teacher just to keep me in teaching and to give me money while I was getting my Masters.

Just as the previous narratives revealed the possibility of combining teaching positions with domestic concerns, these comments also show the potential of substitute teaching to support other personal goals. For these unmarried individuals who have no dependants to support, substitute teaching permitted the luxury of stipulating which days they would be available to work while focusing on academic pursuits. For example, reflecting on her inability to accept a longer teaching assignment, one woman stated, "I could not have taken a long-term occasional position because I was working just on my 'off' days from school [University]. So I was going to school Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and supplying Wednesdays and Fridays." Thus, substitute teaching was also perceived as a suitable form of employment by people who wished to remain in contact with teaching (frequently for financial purposes) while primarily concentrating on advanced graduate degrees.

The willingness to view substitute teaching as an accommodating or convenient arrangement and hence, to choose such employment based on various extrinsic concerns, exists in direct opposition to another perspective: accepting such employment due to the lack
of alternative and/or more favourable options. In several cases, this sentiment was expressed by recent University graduates desiring entrance into the labour market, and subsequently encountering few teaching opportunities and scarce employment possibilities for advancing or beginning their careers. Such dismal prospects were not always an acknowledged reality of Ontario’s teaching markets. McIntyre and Smith (1997: 6) explain, in their article regarding teachers’ employment forecast, how “[d]emographics, public policy and the health of public finances have created a roller coaster ride of boom and bust in the market for new teachers.” The authors discuss the financial restraints imposed upon the educational system by all governmental levels since 1993, which have had dramatic implications for teacher graduates between the years 1993 through to 1995. Previous to these critical years, a brief teacher shortage occurred which as one substitute teaching remarked, meant an abundance of employment offers, “When I graduated from the Faculty, it was the last year that they were desperate for teachers, and they were hiring unqualified teachers. That was 1990, and anyone in my year who wanted one, had a job, even without an interview, [and] many had offers by Christmas time.” Among the more recent teacher graduates interviewed, however, such teacher shortages did not reflect their reality, but rather teacher surpluses intensified their competition for limited positions. Consequently, faced with such bleak prospects, the opportunity to substitute teach was viewed as a welcomed chance to begin working. Even the chance to do substitute teaching, however, was not granted freely. For several interviewees a substitute position was not attained immediately, but after having volunteered their services at local schools:

I was looking for work and there was no work available, so it was discouraging, and I kept plugging in and volunteering in a school, and during my volunteer experiences, they recommended me for supply teaching for the Board.
I volunteered at a school for a year after I went to the Faculty of Education, to gain experience, and my family allowed me to stay at home and not have to worry about financial situations, so I could get the experience that I needed. During that time, I’d seen an advertisement for supplying in special schools with handicapped and disabled children, so I went for an interview. I wasn’t accepted for that but then they put my name into the Board for substitute teaching.

Another recent graduate echoed similar views and extended this thought by describing his ability to secure substitute teaching as a fortunate occurrence during a difficult period of gaining employment as a full-time teacher.

I came to be a substitute teacher, just out of sheer luck. I applied to the Board but I was told through a friend that it’s better to apply through the area offices. So I ended up applying to two area offices. The area office that I went to the first time, it was the last day there were accepting applications for supplying teaching...I had an interview three days later and it went really well and they told me right then and there that I’d be on the supply list.

Some participants took up substitute teaching in order to sustain themselves economically, although their true desire lay outside of teaching and in other occupational fields. Frequently, the inability to secure financial security in a preferred occupation acted as a compelling force towards gaining employment as a teacher, for which they were also qualified. From their perspective, teaching was a second career that could be utilized if necessity compelled them to take that route. One participant, after having worked many years in a lab, found it precarious “going from grant to grant, and then counting on getting a new grant for research, which didn’t happen.” This unforeseen circumstance led her then to reconsider teaching as an alternative, for which she had been initially educated prior to becoming a laboratory technician. An unanticipated event signalling the termination of
employment in a first career also led another women to enter the teaching profession. She told her story as one featuring “fate”:

It was through that old fickle-finger fate. I had worked at [a] library for fifteen years, and my mother was dying and I had asked for a compassionate leave of absence [which] was denied. I went home to be with my mother, and after she died, I came back to Toronto and at that time, there was a freeze on hiring at most of the libraries, so in order to earn a living and because I did have my teaching certificate, I signed up to become a substitute teacher.

As these comments reveal, the path towards substitute teaching was directed by situations that either signalled limited occupational possibilities or necessary career changes. Whether the participants were young hopefuls trying “to get their foot in the door” of the teaching profession or individuals forced by circumstances to change their line of work, they all nevertheless shared one similar characteristic: they had taken up substitute teaching as a matter of necessity rather than of choice. These accounts suggest that substitute teaching was regarded as an acceptable occupation only in the absence of more viable alternatives.

In summary, although the personal situations determining each participant’s current positions may have varied, two distinct routes, one of which may be termed a predilection, and the other, a requirement, appeared to subsume all responses concerning occupational direction. Having immersed themselves within the world of substitute teaching, the participants came to interpret their work according to their experiences, and the meanings they have attached to them will now be explored with particular reference to both their positive and negative implications.
Interpreting Substitute Teaching Experiences

Enjoyable Moments

What comprised pleasurable recollections were frequently attributed to the behaviour and responses of students towards substitute teachers. Participants who expressed such sentiments directly connected enjoyable experiences to positive teacher-student relations and productive learning processes. In the words of one substitute, the most affable teaching situation was remembered as follows:

I was in a Grade 1-2-3, class and I just loved it. I really enjoyed it. The students learned all kinds of things and I really had them going. I had a rapport with them that worked out very well, and at the end of the week, I was almost sad to leave because I enjoyed it so much.

Other, similar reflections feature smooth transitions into the classrooms, which produced little or no disruption to established routines and expectations. Even while acknowledging both the perception and possibility of substitute teaching to upset the classroom’s equilibrium, they interpreted successful teaching days as those where their presence in a new classroom produced no discernible disturbance to the usual functions and operations of the classroom. One substitute teacher fondly recalled the continued cohesiveness and organizational properties of one classroom, despite her presence, paying tribute to the regular teacher in her response.

I can remember one day, it was a Friday and I went into a Grade 5 classroom, I believe, and it ran smoothly. I believe it reflected the teacher’s ability to organize the classroom because although the students themselves were a nice group, they really knew the routines. It was quite clear that once they had finished their activity, they knew what choices they had after to make, and they went and they did it, nor a lot of times when the students were off task and being disruptive. I remember thinking what a nice day it had been because of how organized it was and the students seemed content with knowing what they were supposed to be doing. I didn’t really interrupt, because as a supply
teacher, you feel as though you’ve come in and the flow has been interrupted, but this day actually went according to probably what they would have done when the regular teacher was there.

Most frequently, substitute teachers directly attributed fulfilling experiences to the behaviour and responses of students. From this perspective, the students define and control the definitions of each teaching situation, thus influencing the content of the day and how substitute teachers perceive it. In contrast to Waller’s (1932/1965: 384) advice that “[t]he teacher must not accept the definitions of situations which students work out, but must impose his own definitions upon students”, these contemporary substitute teachers’ narratives reveal, rather, how the students come to influence teachers’ working conditions, and ultimately the meanings they attach to their work. Many comments drew connections between the students’ conduct and enjoyable experiences, such as those by one substitute teacher who remarked that her more gratifying days occur “usually [in] the schools where the children are well-behaved, and you just tend to enjoy them because you don’t have to raise your voice, and it’s not draining on you.” Similarly, several individuals’ narratives support what Metz (1993: 104) calls “teachers’ ultimate dependence on their students”, elaborating on how “students can confirm or destroy such teacher’s pride of craft.” Metz is specifically referring to teachers, who lacking extrinsic rewards, value instead the intrinsic rewards of their labour that imposes upon them a vulnerability to their students who, in turn, can either validate or negate teachers’ efforts. To extend this argument into the world of substitute teaching, the absence of auxiliary rewards, as discussed in the introductory chapter, would suggest that this dependence on students would also characterize their employment as educational workers, and this view is in fact supported by various participants’ comments. As one substitute
teacher stated, the fulfilment she gained is associated with students’ actions that display esteem and regard to her as a temporary teacher in their classroom.

It’s very enjoyable when the students have made something for you: they’ve made a little flower out of construction paper and they’ll write your name on it and say you’re nice...I was at one school and the students were working at making structures...This one group of girls would cover up their work each time I walked by and I realized they were creating something for me. About half an hour later, they called me over when they had finished and it was a scene of palm trees, real bridges, and they had written, “To Miss D. You are very nice.” They made me some origami swans because I had expressed an interest in them and that I remember.

Following this line of thought, other substitute teachers directed their comments to this reciprocal relationship but extended it further to include not only the effect students have on teachers, but also, the assistance offered to students, which constituted for them meaningful practices. One substitute teacher noted the sense of fulfilment and worth he experienced when he could offer direction and academic assistance to students, and when with his guidance students managed to grasp a particular concept:

Sometimes, I’ve gone to Special Education classes and [have] see[n] students understanding things, getting it and smiling. I really like students when they are smiling. I’m thinking of one incident in a Special Education class, a student did not understand something and I must have spent forty minutes explaining it to him, going over it and asking him to try and do the work. He finally understood it. It was very basic and once he got it, it was “Sir, I understand it! I understand it!” and he got all excited. When you make a difference for one student, it makes [substitute teaching] more pleasurable for you. You’re not always going to touch every student, but if you touch one every so often, it makes it worthwhile.

Still other substitute teachers considered positive situations as those which affirmed themselves as educators, usually expressed in the form of student’s congenial attitudes and specifically, their warm reception of the substitute teacher within the school. In this vein, one substitute teacher articulated the pleasure in working at specific schools where her presence
was acknowledged and accepted as a stable reality to many students: “In most schools, I know most of the students by name, the schools that I frequent regularly, I know the students and they get all excited if I’m in their classroom, and if I’m not in their classroom, they want me to be in their classroom.” In a similar mode, another substitute teacher spoke of the connections and associations she had developed at specific schools where the veil of anonymity so often attributed to a substitute teacher was lifted, and she could therefore be received and perceived as a teacher, rather than as a foreign and unknown individual.

I’ve gotten in with two schools that I would say I got to about seventy per cent of the time and they are smaller schools, so I basically know all the kids, all the staff, the students know me. I really enjoy going there because you’re treated as a teacher there in those schools, and the kids are happy to see you, they say “Hi” to you, they know your name, they know what you’re all about and you know who is who in those schools as well.

Interestingly, these examples equate pleasant recollections of substitute teaching with opportunities to approach the interactions and practices of regular teaching.

Other satisfying experiences of substitute teaching did not focus on one or several memorable incidents but were rather described in terms of general reflections of children’s growth and development. For example, a substitute teacher extracted pleasure from her immersion with children, thereby allowing her to see and hear the idiosyncratic processes involved with young children’s unconstrained expression, as she offered this interesting anecdote:

I’m very interested in psychology and I love watching the children, hearing some of their spontaneous comments, seeing some of the problems that they’re having and seeing what they’re like through it. Art Linkletter was an American television personality and he had a show for many, many years in which he would interview the young children and he wrote a book entitled Out of the Mouths of Babes, and I think that’s why it’s so much fun. You never know what kinds of comments are going to come out of the mouths of babes. I like the spontaneity and the fact that they are very natural.
From this perspective, substitute teaching presented opportunities to observe the creativity and impulsiveness associated with children’s natures and thus, afforded substitute teachers a glimpse into the many facets of teaching that their regular, full-time colleagues experience on a daily basis. Such reflections suggest that temporary employment in less stabilizing and consistent conditions does not necessarily symbolize an exclusion from the pedagogical processes of growth, learning and developing. Another substitute teacher referred to her frequent employment in several schools which positioned her in a unique situation where she could see the students moving through stages of maturation:

Most of the schools, especially the ones that I go to regularly, it’s very comfortable being in a place where you get to know the students, and the nice thing is you get to see them grow up. I’ve been substitute teaching six years, so I know students who I knew in Kindergarten, and I’ve been in their class every year, so it is nice [because] I have that experience of seeing them growing, whereas their own classroom teacher only has them for a year. When the students are out of the classroom, they don’t them after that.

When recalling and expressing the contextual factors which influence their perceptions of fulfilling experiences, several participants highlighted the effects other individuals beyond students had upon them, which directly impacted on their sense of acceptance and belonging. As this example reveals, the administrative and collegial support extended to one substitute teacher shaped her favourable impressions of this particular day.

I was at this one school which is absolutely exceptional in terms of its staff... The kids were challenging, the teachers were aware of that and supply teachers had been in before and had some problems. But I found in this school, before classes started, the teachers came into my room and said, “If you have trouble with so-and-so, send them to me, if they have work, that’s fine, if not, I can get them some. They can stay with me for the rest of the day.” It was nice to know that back-up was there, and I have never seen a staff so friendly. The principal was very much like this himself, and I’m sure he inspires this in the staff.
The participant further imagined how pleasant such a work environment would be for a permanent or long-term teacher who could feel a member of a cohesive and integrated team of colleagues. This observation reflects those of Nias (1988: 200) whose interviewees, when remarking on the subjective interpretation of themselves as primary school teachers, discussed the importance of "work[ing] in an environment characterized by unity, not division." These close and connected associations also impact on other individuals, such as speech pathologists, physiotherapists, social workers and child-youth workers, who like substitute teachers, may not occupy a continuous position within the school, but are nevertheless welcomed, offered assistance, and sense the community ethos which the staff has cultivated and continues to maintain. It is in this type of congenial atmosphere that difficulties or problematic situations can be collectively addressed and resolved. As the substitute teacher who expressed the above remarks further added, "no matter what challenges you have with the school community, with the parents and the children, when you’ve got a supportive work environment, it’s a nice place to go. I’ve been in other communities where the children face fewer challenges but the staff has been so divided that I dreaded going into work." Instead of facing the challenges and trials of the day alone, in a new or unknown locale, the comfort of additional support dispels the anxiety a substitute teacher may experience if left to one’s own resources and devices.
Difficult Moments

The satisfying experiences of substitute teaching were embedded in the notions of teaching, learning, interconnections with students and colleagues, while problematic occurrences, on the other hand, were also frequently attributed to these same factors. If the good behaviour of the students could determine a smooth and fulfilling work day, then disruptive conduct results in the opposite experience. One substitute teacher articulated how the physically harmful behaviour among students, which she witnessed in a classroom, produced a most difficult day, and also led to a decision to decline further teaching assignments at this specific school (reminding us of Galloway’s (1994: 85) concept of exerting power by choosing unavailability).

I was at one school, it was a late call, and as result, I got there late. Within the first five minutes that I was there, a fight broke out, a physical fight, being pushed and things like that. The fight was between a boy and girl. That was the longest day that I ever lived through, and on a number of occasions, teachers from other classrooms had to come in because there was a physical fight in this classroom. I never wanted to go back to that school. I never wanted to work that hard for my money again.

Such unsettling incidences produced alternative, less benign conceptualizations of substitute teaching, which were caused by immersion into unknown situations. Lacking any prior knowledge of the classroom’s composition not only created anxiety and apprehension of upcoming challenges, but also prevented effective measures being taken to address problematic occurrences as they materialized. One substitute teacher offered her observations of this happening during one class teaching assignment:

The worst experience is being thrown into situations that are difficult to handle, for example being in a classroom where there are children who need special help and the teacher knows these children need special help, but you are not aware of
what options are available to you, so if you have a student with behavioural problems, for example, you can send him or her to a resource room. This happened to me at one school with a group of students who had behavioural problems, and there was a resource room next door but I was not aware that I could send them there during periods of the day till the day was finished. The teacher later said, “You did a very good job, you did not send anyone to me”. If I had known then I probably would have because these children were very disruptive at times. Oftentimes, you have no control over the situations you’re in.

Only with retrospective knowledge does a substitute teacher realize what options could have been pursued to produce a more harmonious and undisturbed teaching and learning environment. If such fundamental advice is not explicitly defined then the substitute teacher may proceed to deal alone with the day’s challenges or in the words of another participant, be left “to either sink or swim.”

Frequently, references intermingled the conceptions of control, order and respect with distressing and destabilizing experiences of substitute teaching. The ability to maintain control over the environment and specifically students’ behaviour has been documented as a significant component of a teacher’s practices and identity (see Weber and Mitchell, 1995: 308). Substitute teacher narratives were also suffused with these concerns, which for them appear even more pervasive considering the often foreign situations in which they entered. The classroom balance achieved by the regular teacher, whose ultimate knowledge of the students’ abilities, skills and conduct allows for a certain understanding based on negotiations and expectations, was often disrupted by an unknown adult in the room. Consequently, substitute teachers described their precarious position of achieving any authoritative stance in the absence of any knowledge of classroom dynamics and when encountering alien and potentially menacing situations. On the issues of control, order and respect, one substitute
teacher described a difficult event where all three interrelated components were brought to the forefront:

The worst experience was in gym, a Grade 7 class, and that was the first time I could not control the class. They were playing volleyball, they were hitting me with the ball. They were not listening. I was screaming. Eventually, I had to be rescued by the homeroom teacher. Two boys left on their own initiative to call the teacher. I just could not control them. They were not listening to me.

Although the lack of students’ esteem towards this substitute teacher was not explicitly stated, their behaviour nevertheless exemplified a complete disregard of her authority, which resulted in an environment of intolerable conditions. Other comments revealed the extent to which the students’ resistance to any other person outside of their own teacher claiming authority became enacted in the classroom, and described in the following incident as a physical violation:

I think overall, it’s the lack of respect for what I have to say, and when I ask students to do something, I find I’m constantly repeating myself over and over...One particular incident was with a student who had a detention and when they showed up, there were extremely rude and sarcastic, and it got to the point where it got almost violent because something was thrown at me. When I asked them to return the pen to me that I had loaned them to write the assignment, [the pen] hit me in the face and I remember feeling violated.

Another participant related his inability to initiate and sustain order to the apparent lack of this essential element even with the regular teacher: “I was in a senior school, a Grade 7/8 class and I had to fill in for the music teacher, and the music teacher didn’t have too much control in the class, the students viewed music as a time for fooling around rather than working. So when I came in, I found the hardest thing was keeping order and the lack of respect they gave a person they did not know, all this coming from a group of Grade 7 and 8
boys and girls. I found that difficult to deal with.” Although most participants readily
recalled specific events which illuminated these issues, one substitute teacher offered more
general musings reflecting these very concerns:

I’ve never had any really nasty experiences, but there are days when the defiance
and negative attitude they give you before you even have a chance to do anything
really frustrates me. Also, there’s total disrespect, and I know some kids do that
with everyone, but I have students say to me, “I don’t like supply teachers so I’m
not going to treat you nicely.” They say it and you can try to talk to them and
ask them “Why? Who am I to you right now? You don’t know me. Why are
you treating me in such a manner?” Basically, it’s the general attitude of the
students towards supply teachers that’s frustrating.

Closely connected to the expressed lack of power and control within the classroom is
the difficulty of finding much empowerment outside its confines. Considering the unknown
dynamics of classrooms, several substitute teachers discussed encountering professionally
threatening situations where administrators failed to affirm their positions. Drawing on
Piaget’s (1932/1965: 196) assertions that “apart from our own relations to others there can be
no moral necessity” and those of Lyons (1982, 1983, 1985, 1987) which suggest that morality
defines relations among and between people, reveal the importance of ethical issues infusing
interpersonal relations. Two substitute teachers expressed various personal dilemmas in
which the ethical dimensions of conflict resolution were clearly salient. In one rather lengthy
narrative, a substitute teacher described a distressing incident which was interpreted as a
“scary experience” from which he extracted several painful lessons, the most central being his
inability to procure collegial understanding and support when facing an occupational impasse.
During his first month of employment as a substitute teacher, he was teaching a Grade 8 gym
class, and during the game, a female student was inadvertently hit in the face with a ball. To
comfort the student, who was obviously upset, he “went up to her, and did not put [his] arm
around her, but put [his] arm on her shoulder and asked her, ‘Are you Okay?’” When this happened a second time with another girl, he proceeded to do the same and thought nothing of these occurrences until he was requested to speak to the principal at the end of the day, whom he believed would offer him encouragement as a new, aspiring teacher. To his complete surprise, however, he received words of advice to refrain from ever touching a student, and he described this conflict as one which was not resolved properly due to administrative inaction:

[The Principal] told me he believed I had done nothing wrong but that he was expecting some calls from some angry parents. He was telling me he was not blaming me but he was putting the blame on me. He tried to back me in a corner. I apologized to him if he was to receive angry calls, but I had done nothing wrong. I suggested he bring the student in for us to discuss it but he did not believe that to be necessary... At the same time, I was totally distraught the whole weekend and I went to talk to a principal I know, I talked to a couple of teachers and what came out of it was that I had put my hand on a student’s shoulder; however, if there was a stronger principal, he would have brought that student into the office to discuss it with us. If I had done something wrong than I would have apologized, but if I hadn’t, than the blame should not have been placed on me.

The research of Lampert (1985) points to teaching dilemmas whose very nature precludes solutions and instead can only be managed; however, had different strategies been utilized in this situation, perhaps an understanding many have been reached among all concerned individuals. From the perspective of substitute teaching, this vignette raises a further quandary: How reflective is this situation of the anonymity shrouding substitute teachers’ selves, teaching practices and beliefs? In other words, the absence of established and ongoing relationships upon which personal knowledge of a teacher’s identity is based may prevent a substitute teacher from seeking and receiving commensurate support as that afforded a full-time, permanent colleague.
An unsettling experience described by another participant also revealed the precarious and vulnerable position of substitute teachers in effectively seeking and receiving administrative support when facing a classroom dilemma. Echoing the previous narrative, this depiction involved a conflict between a student and the substitute teacher which highlighted the very issues of power, control and conflict resolution. While floating from class to class, the substitute teacher discussed how a limited time in the classroom does not necessarily preclude the possibility of adverse situations disrupting the flow of learning. Required to provide coverage for a minimal period of half an hour in one classroom, she had only to enter to discern how one student’s defiance in complying with behavioural and academic expectations would undoubtedly pose a problem. Here, she describes the unfolding of events, each layer revealing the eventual recourse to administrative appeal:

I told [the student] that if he’s not doing his work, he can do whatever he wants to do, as long as he wasn’t bothering other people. I didn’t care if he was drawing on paper and not doing his math. It didn’t matter to me, as long as he was keeping himself out of trouble. All of a sudden, he’s opened the teacher’s desk and he’s started to go through things inside her desk. I told him not to go through the teacher’s desk, because it’s not your property, and I asked him to close the desk drawer. He said he was allowed to go through the things. I said that loudly so that everyone in the class could hear and see, as well, “Could you please move your hand so I could close the desk drawer?” Finally he moved his hand, I close the drawer and about two minutes later, he decided to react and say that I had caught his hand in the desk drawer. He started complaining, as if he was really hurt, however, there was no mark on his hand because he did move his hand out of the drawer in advance of my closing it. He went outside for recess, I went to a different class, and when the principal finally got around to taking him out of the classroom, because the assistant had previously asked for him to leave, then the student decided to tell him that the supply teacher had slammed his hand in the drawer.

Expressed in the previous excerpt and reflected here again is the problematic situation of encountering student discontent towards the substitute teacher’s perceived actions, interpreted in these two instances as a physical violation. If the argument made earlier is applied to
students, then they as well, lacking any particular knowledge of an unknown substitute
teacher, may either readily perceive the teacher's practices as potentially malign, or may even
misconstrue the situation as one intending harm, thus signalling their disassociation with an
adult who is not their teacher. When principal involvement is sought, the substitute teacher's
self image may be dealt a demoralizing blow. Mirroring the previous narrative, this next
incident and subsequent interaction between principal and substitute teacher reinforces, once
again, the teacher's sense of powerlessness and feelings of entrapment:

At lunch time, the principal spent half an hour grilling me, saying, "You hit
a kid" and I said "I did not." He was trying to make me admit it, and he said
that maybe I could have done it by accident without realizing it, and asked if I
would admit that. I said "No, I would not admit that." By mistake, I may have
sometimes stepped on a student's foot, then I apologize, but I would never
do anything purposely and I would certainly not do that. Anyway, he said he
would have to write a report to the superintendent. That was really upsetting
to me, but nothing was done because I ran into [the student's] teacher in the
hallway and she said, "This student said this about you and I'm really sorry
this happened to you, but he has done this several times before." What bothered
me about that situation is not the fact that the student was lying, but the fact that
the principal knew [the student's] behaviour to start with and knew that [the
student] had pulled this trick before on several teachers, even on his teacher, but
[the principal] hadn't supported me. Even if he was legally responsible to send
a letter to the superintendent, saying this happened and it has happened before,
to me, he was behaving as if I was the bad person, and I was responsible, when
I knew I wasn't and I think he should have known I wasn't.

With astounding similarity, the overwhelming sensation of being coerced into admitting and
accepting responsibility for one's alleged actions is overtly evident within this excerpt as well.
In the absence of any supportive administrative initiatives, the speculation and readiness to
rush to ascribe blame creates within the substitute teacher confusion, distress and the betrayal
of not having been provided with the necessary backing and treated according to the
principles of due process. Interestingly, these substitute teachers offered their ideas of how
effective resolution strategies were not implemented, which produced this atmosphere of
defence-offence positionalities. Finally, common to both narratives is the ultimate sense of
disappointment and professional/personal infraction suffered mainly through the
administrative handling rather than through the students' actions.

While these examples point to specific incidents that reflect the subjective viewpoints
of what constitutes disturbing experiences of substitute teaching, some remarks did not refer
to particularities but rather to possible difficulties envisioned, as in this case, in terms of
safety: "I've never had a bad experience in the elementary classroom. I've been fortunate to
never have had a real problem. The only thing that I could think of that could be problem and
I hope this never happens, is if someone is seriously injured and for some reason, help would
not come right away." As this comment revealed, not all interpretations are grounded in
concrete, lived experiences but when imagined, take the form of worst case scenarios which
also draws attention to the most basic requirement and need of any school's organization: the
well-being of all individuals, both students and staff.

In summation, a polarization of pleasant and distressing experiences of substitute
teaching as extracted from the interviews exposed how the factors associated with each
construction are opposite sides of the same coin. Specifically, the nature of staff and
administrative practices, types of student behaviour, classroom-management concerns, and to
all these, the associated issues of respect, power and control can either form productive and
stimulating experiences of work or conversely, have the opposite effect. While each
participant drew from their own array of experiences, these themes surfaced with regularity to
portray a holistic picture of both rewarding and negative conceptions of their work as
substitute teachers. This finding then leads to the question of how these narratives are created
and influenced by the conditions of this type of work in contrast to the more stable aspects of
full-time teaching. This juxtaposition will be addressed in Chapter Five of this thesis. In the final section of this chapter, I address the general ideas the participants hold of substitute teaching, as they are constitutive of their diverse and varied experiences.

Defining Substitute Teaching

Through discussion in the interviews of what entails both pleasurable and troublesome experiences, the participants came to define what constitutes the nature of substitute teaching. When delineating their ideas and constructions of substitute teaching, some comments evoked the common beliefs of providing a necessary continuity of learning. In this regard, substitute teaching was seen to offer, as much as possible, a progression of learning opportunities rather than a disruption of classroom processes. The responsibility of substitute teachers lies, then, in ensuring that any sense of dislocation is minimized by following the teacher’s prescribed outlines and routines.

I think the best a substitute teacher can do is to continue the regular teacher’s schedule and make sure that there is continuity in, so far as the students feel that there is a structure and they are learning, so that you are there and that your are going to be teaching them something that day. I think that is very important.

Another participant articulated similar views, indicating the importance of attempting to maintain consistency in classroom programs, while expecting the same degree of esteem from students regarding her position as a teacher.

My view is that you are a visiting teacher in the classroom, and I hope to keep the day running like the teacher would. I would like the same respect that the regular teacher would have. I can understand that I might do things differently-
for some children it's very upsetting and distressing when routines are broken and things are handled in a different manner. I think it is the substitute teacher's job to keep students busy and on task as much as possible, to handle problems in a fair and consistent way.

Although she acknowledged an inevitable interruption to the regular operations of the classroom, she nevertheless asserted the significance of easing the transition for the students by attempting to keep the flow of the day progressing in a manner similar to what the regular teacher would do.

These comments refer to a dilemma facing substitute teachers in that, as individuals they possess their own distinct character traits and teaching styles; however, to provide some degree of stability, they are to some extent, confined to the pre-existing parameters outlined and established by the regular teacher. To deviate substantially from these borders and impose one's own methods and practices with limited regard to daily practices would only augment the sense of dislocation and disruption experienced by the students and thus cause undesired effects of discontent and disobedience to a foreign set of criteria. One participant also expressed this procedure of following prescribed guidelines but perceived this task in light of student empowerment rather than as a personal or professional liability. "In the lower grades, you give them responsibility to tell you the routines. One of my weakest areas is teaching the calendar [day, month, year] in Grade 1, because it is so long and because the children participate in it, it's very easy for this thing to just collapse and for everyone to do what it is they want to do. So what I do, I get someone to tell me, [by asking] 'What's next? What do we do next?' So they take the teacher's role, because I'm not here, I don't know [how it is done]." Similarly, this substitute teacher attributed some responsibility to the students when physical movement from the classroom to another part of the school was
required by asking them if “the teacher takes you down normally, or do you go down on your
own?” Her reliance on students, however, takes a cautionary note. “I’m very careful what I
ask students to guide me through the activities because some may not be responsible enough
for you to ask that question and they may try to pull the wool over your eyes. It’s an attempt
for me to try and understand how it is usually done.” Whether the substitute teacher entreats
the students to either explain the routines or actually permits them to take a lead in guiding
the him or her through the various steps of instruction, there occurs a suppression of one’s
own particular preferences and propensities.

Closely aligned to this phenomena is the acknowledged lack of initiative and control
in determining the substance and content of lessons. Teacher’s curtailed powers to devise and
implement curricular material due to mandates and legislated curriculum of predetermined
outcomes and behaviours and standardized assessment procedures have been documented and
interrogated by several authors, as noted earlier. For substitute teachers who are dependent
upon the lesson plans devised by the regular teacher, the professional component of creating
instructional material is almost entirely effaced. In discussing this consequence of substitute
teaching, several participants referred to the difficulties associated with this reliance on
prepared outlines. Virtually all substitute teacher emphasized the necessity of familiarizing
themselves with the plans; however, this process was not always smooth and uncomplicated.
This substitute teacher’s remarks are suggestive of the problems inherent within this activity:
“ I find it difficult at times because you don’t know what the expectations are and they ask
you to mark something and it’s unclear. So you walk in, and there could be a lesson plan that
makes perfect sense to the teacher but it makes no sense to me, and it’s hard to decipher what
the intentions and objectives are.”
Beyond the initial task of assigning meaning to the plans lies a deeper consequence of how this inevitable dependence on pre-specified outlines impacts on a teacher's abilities as a curriculum planner and developer. To the substitute teacher, whose conditions of employment exclude this vital and integral facet of teaching, the outcome is defined as an erosion of pedagogical skills. This substitute teacher succinctly summed up the effects on his teaching craft in the following manner:

The problem is you lose your creative abilities as a supply teacher after a while because you are not using your teaching skills, so you start losing your creativeness after a while. I know it's difficult because you are only going in there for the day or for three days, and the regular teacher has his or her own program. [but] you lose a lot of your ability.

He continued to draw a clear differentiation between the teaching requirements of regular teachers and those of substitute teachers, which brings this problematic issue and its related effects into full view.

You start losing your teaching abilities, your creativity, because they are not being practised. I speak to my friends and we talk about teaching and they'll talk about certain aspects and I'll think, "That's a good idea, I hadn't thought of that." As a supply teacher, you really don't think about creating lesson plans and creating a whole different classroom environment. As a regular teacher, you have to create lesson plans everyday. You have to come up with techniques that maybe the students will enjoy and you'll enjoy, to get them to reach the outcomes of the lesson. As a supply teacher, you don't have to do that, so you start to lose these skills.

While viewed from this vantage point, the proposed argument sheds discerning light on the negative results of teaching from within defined structures in which a substitute teacher becomes immersed rather than creating anything. From another perspective, however, the execution of another's activities and lessons gives the substitute teacher a unique position of surveying and evaluating the content and objectives of a broad range of curricular materials.
and specific lessons. This can mean positive responses to perceived activities, as this participant’s comment reveals: “Very often in a class, I’ll see something they’re doing and I’ll say, ‘I’d love to be able to do that with a class’”, or negative interpretations, as when this substitute teacher comments on seeing teaching material that “I might not agree with and in some cases, even feeling sorry for the students,” thus pointing to what she perceived to be the futility and dullness of various lessons.

Substitute teachers also extended their interpretations of the work they perform to encompass questions regarding the extent and content of actual teaching that occurred in the absence of the regular teacher. Several descriptors are directly related to the stereotypical image of substitute teachers, discussed in the literature review section of Chapter Two, which categorized them as mere child-minders. This reference was expressed by several participants, although, as this excerpt reveals, the work left behind by the regular teacher often influences whether substantial teaching occurs, or simply distribution of a prepared assignment.

Some days give you more of a chance to do teaching. If the teacher knows you’re coming in, they’ll give you something to do, so that can be a little more fulfilling, if you’re actually doing something with the kids rather than just baby-sitting or giving busy work.

Such comments appeared frequently throughout the interviews which show how pervasive these concerns of teaching and learning were to substitute teachers. As teachers, they wished to impart knowledge to students; however, the conditions under which they operate often curtailed such endeavours and instead impelled them to accept the realities they face, for as one participant observed, “The work is challenging, it can be very demanding at certain times, and other days, I feel the work is simply baby-sitting and very little is accomplished in the
way of learning; it's simply keeping them busy, hoping nothing will happen, and ensuring the students are all right.” Similarly, this substitute teacher emphasized how the lack of collegial affirmation of one’s teaching abilities could result in feelings of devaluation, defined here again in terms of merely supervising rather than teaching: “Once in a while, you’ll get teachers who tell you that you did a good job and they’ll thank you for coming in, and that builds your self-esteem. There are days when you don’t get that and than you think, ‘Is this worth it? Am I baby-sitting here, or what am I doing?’”

When exploring how their experiences of substitute teaching have shaped their beliefs of their work, several participants defined the necessary personal qualities required of an individual to manage successfully the demands of the job. This participant emphasized the need for patience: “It is challenging and you’d have to be a very patient individual to do it. It demands more than what is demanded of a full-time teacher, because a full-time teacher can set the tone of the class, and the students know what to expect from a full-time teacher. This might take a couple of weeks or the first month of the year, but as a supply, sometimes it can be chaotic.” Another, no less significant personal characteristic required of a substitute teacher who encounters a broad and diverse range of situations is the need to feel the inner conviction from which one can exert control over the environment. This substitute teacher expressed the necessary criteria in these terms: “I think you have to have confidence in yourself. You cannot let the students sense your vulnerabilities. You have to be strong, you have to be consistent, you have to speak with authority.”

A further quality considered essential to this specific work of continuously encountering unpredictable teaching situations and different classroom dynamics is the absolute necessity of being organized and prepared, that could be best facilitated by ensuring
early arrival at each school to familiarize oneself with the guidelines for the day. All substitute teachers emphasized the importance of leaving adequate time for reading day plans, and assigning meaning to each prescribed activity, so as to gain a mental outline of how they are to organize the day. This excerpt encapsulates a procedure expressed by most participants:

I definitely like to get there early. I don’t like getting there at the last minute. I look over the teacher’s plans assuming I have time. If I’m in a rush, I will just look over the morning and realize that I can deal with the afternoon at lunch time. I make sure all the materials she says I need are where she says they are. I consider whether or not the activities are going to cause any behaviour problems and try to anticipate how I can avoid these problems.

In the words of another substitute teacher who “internalizes the teacher’s plan”, the emphatic sense is that of assigning meaning for themselves to the information provided by another teacher. The previous passage illuminates yet another feature so vital to substitute teachers, which is the ability to predict or imagine possible disruptions and to modify or adjust lessons in order to prevent such occurrences. To substitute teachers who depend upon a teacher’s pre-written day plan, its absence, or what they believe to be inappropriate material to be taught in their presence (due mainly to potential difficulties with student responses) means they must make alternative arrangements. Being flexible and intuitive to classroom interactions also involves the need to draw from their own resources in order to either offer material that has not been provided, or to enhance and enrich the existing plans.

What I’ll do then is find a way, even though she hasn’t left me a lesson, I can make a lesson out of the work and get some involvement with the students, get them speaking. If it’s something that involves speaking, comprehension, questions, we’ll read the piece together and I guess explore it further. This is the good thing about being a supply teacher. I find that if I have word puzzles, crossword puzzles, word searches, scrambling words, whatever, in French or English, when children have finished their work, it helps to keep them focused on something, keeps
them from misbehaving and for a lot of them, it gives them a goal. They want to get their work done so they can show it to me and get one of these because they enjoy doing these puzzles.

As seen in Chapter Two, what was referred to as “a bag of tricks” is discussed by substitute teachers as required arsenal for their work. They suggested how pertinent it is for them to be able to adjust plans, at short notice, and occasionally, to provide their own materials, resources, and ideas when required. To offer variations or new activities is also contingent upon the needs and abilities of the students, which refers back to the substitute teacher’s aptitude for quickly sensing and interpreting the specific make-up of each class.

I don’t have any routines. I just sort of wing it. It just depends. Usually, the teacher leaves good notes, but if there’s no note to go on, I just invent something from the top of my head, because I find that a lot of times, I’ll be called for a certain grade and end up in a different class, not the ones that request but the ones I just get by chance. I don’t really prepare. I’ve been doing it long enough so I know what the students should be doing at that level, so I come up with some activities. I don’t really carry a bag of tricks. I have a brain of tricks and invent things. It depends on the class too, because you have to feel out the students first to see if they would be good at a certain activity or not good at this. You have to see what they like doing before you tell them to do something, that is, if the teacher doesn’t have plans left behind.

Such interpretations of their work are interconnected with characteristics and traits deemed necessary for substitute teachers, who interestingly, echoed the prerequisites expected by schools in their recruitment and selection procedures previously explored in Chapter Two.

Participants also extended their interpretations of substitute teaching to encompass the unpredictability of teaching situations and consistently, the adjective “challenging” was frequently used as a descriptor of their work. The following statements reveal how embedded within these very conditions is the sense of fulfilment and pleasure:

I think substitute teaching is challenging because you never know the situation you are going to end up in. You might end up in Kindergarten one day and
Grade 8 Behavioural the next day. That is why I enjoy it, because it is a challenge, and it’s so varied and so diverse.

The work is challenging, it’s interesting and unpredictable but it can also be rewarding as well. You go somewhere and do a good job and receive feedback from the children and the school, such as when the children say they want you back again, which makes it very rewarding.

Facing the unknown need not be a menacing abyss but rather an opportunity to experience a plethora of different situations, diverse classrooms and students. Freed from the routinization of work, substitute teachers continuously faced new and various environments from which personal and professional fulfilment had been derived.

Conclusion

In examining the factors influencing an individual’s current position as a substitute teacher, two distinct patterns emerged, which were most adequately represented by a binary opposition of choice and necessity. While each participant’s personal circumstances could be grouped into one of two categories, the perspectives of what constituted pleasant and rewarding experiences, in contrast to difficult and painful situations, were diverse and attributable to various factors. What emerged was a complexity of issues that validated the multidimensional realities of substitute teaching from which one single, uniform story was supplanted by many streams of thoughts, experiences and views. In interpreting and assigning meaning to the work, substitute teachers expressed both the joys and the pains, the rewards and the frustrations of being a teacher on the margins of their profession. In so doing, a whole, more balanced portrayal of their work was developed, illuminating both the commonalities and the idiosyncrasies of their perspectives. In the next chapter, I move
towards an analysis of the differentiations between substitute teaching and regular teaching as they have come to be understood and interpreted by substitute teachers.
CHAPTER FIVE

Studying Differences

This chapter has as its primary focus a comparative analysis of substitute teaching with regular, full-time teaching, thus examining how substitute teachers have understood and worked within these distinctions. An essential element of this exploration is the perceptions and views held by others of substitute teachers, primary among them being teachers, administrators, parents and students. A discussion of how substitute teachers believe they are conceived and treated by these significant others will form a substantial component of this analysis, because, as will be seen, these responses often continue to sustain and intensify differences between these two groups of teachers. Furthermore, the benefits and drawbacks of substitute teaching will be presented in light of those typically associated with regular teaching. Several themes and issues introduced in the first two chapters will be revisited and discussed in further depth throughout these sections, as they speak to the concerns examined herein.
Freedom and Constraints

With astonishing regularity, the most commonly expressed and most welcomed feature of substitute teaching was the benefit of working with students without the intense workload and demands associated with full-time, regular teaching (for more on the intensification of teaching see Apple and Jungck, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994). Virtually all participants’ views were imbued with the freedom of working only for a specified period during the day, and then leaving it behind at the day’s end, a benefit not afforded full-time regular teachers. When articulating this primary distinction, this participant referred to “the level of the work. With day-to-day work, you’re finished at the end of the day. At 3:30 p.m. you’re done, unless you’re coming back the next day. Usually, that is it, your evening is your own, and the next day, you start over again.” Still, other substitute teachers delineated the exact nature of work from which they are exempt, thus freeing time for themselves. This comment on the ongoing need for planning and preparing curricular materials as a vital and essential component of regular teaching, yet a non-requirement for substitute teaching was unanimously believed to be a benefit. “The number one advantage is that you go home early, and there is no time involved in preparation. That is the key, the number one advantage. You don’t have to spend time preparing.” This sentiment is continuously reiterated throughout the interviews, as substitute teachers expressed the value of being relieved of the many demands and expectations placed on their full-time colleagues. In all cases, this substantially reduced workload is acknowledged as a primary advantage of substitute teaching.

One of the things I like is that at the end of the day, you don’t have all of the pressures that are involved with regular classroom teaching, such as planning and thinking of things. If you’re there for a longer period of time, there’s usually planning to do but other than that, it’s already been set-up and you just
follow through. So one of the advantages is that you don’t really have too much homework.

These diminished requirements of their positions freed substitute teachers from not only the amount of work associated with teaching that extends beyond the actual day, but for many, perhaps more importantly, permitted them time to pursue some combination of personal, professional and/or academic interests. This substitute teacher advanced such beliefs by directly contrasting two radically different situations.

I think [substitute teaching] can be something that is flexible, helping someone incorporate other things into their lifestyle. As a full-time teacher, and especially as a new full-time teacher, you don’t have a lot of time to yourself. Working how many hours per day and then taking work home. Being a substitute teacher, time is your own beyond the time that you are expected to be at the school, and for me, that meant a big difference. When I was working in my own classroom, I was staying till 9:00 at night on a regular basis, making visual aids, trying to figure out what I was supposed to be doing. I would spend half an hour preparing something for Math. Math and Language were obviously my major foci. We still had to put time into planning, phys-ed, art and all the other things too. If you had never done it, reading through the manuals for the first time is very time consuming.

The most predominant noun which suffused each such related comments was “flexibility”, describing the substitute teachers’ ability to choose the frequency of employment, and relatedly, the incorporation of other pursuits. Depending upon each individual’s station or phase in life, these external interests varied. For those without familial obligations and domestic concerns, opportunities that emphasized personal growth and development were often connected to foreign travels. For example, one participant referred to “being able to move around, and having the flexibility to book off a week or two here to go on holiday. I do that a lot. Someone will say, ‘I’m going to Europe. Do you want to come?’ and last minute, with a couple of weeks notice, I can book off for two weeks or I can book off a week and go
somewhere else. I do that, so I think the flexibility is the greatest benefit of it.” In a similar vein, another substitute teacher emphasized this very issue but extended it further to include a wider array of options permitted by the pliability of her work.

I like the fact that is flexible so you can take a day off when you need it. I, myself, being single and hav[ing] no family to worry about at the time, no sick children or what have you, [can focus on myself]. So if I have to book a doctor’s appointment, if I need to run errands or just take a day off for any reason I can do that. This year, I took a week off, attached it to the March break and went on a lovely holiday, which is something I enjoy doing and I have that flexibility as a supply teacher, which you don’t have as a regular, full-time contract teacher. I like the fact that at the end of the day, if I’m not going back to the class, I don’t have papers to mark and I can continue with my own studies, and have my own homework to with additional qualification courses, or hobby courses, without having to worry about preparing for classes and marking.

For individuals with families, the structural conditions of substitute teaching afforded no less time to concentrate on their own specific needs and concerns. Alternatively, in addition to the opportunities already discussed, this work can be mingled together with another job or business venture. Regardless of each particular interest or need, substitute teaching was seen from this perspective as a lucrative and inclusive position for alternative undertakings.

This commonly expressed feature is attributed to the amelioration of the many demands of teaching which extend beyond the need for planning and preparing classroom programs to include student assessment procedures and parental associations. In several comments, the excessive and relentless pace and nature of teaching figured predominantly in the substitute teacher’s conceptions of their advantageous position as teachers without these many obligations and responsibilities. In the following excerpt, this substitute teacher formulated a response which incorporated a more multifaceted role of a teacher, preferring her situation in this regard. “You don’t have to do the planning, so you don’t have as many
responsibilities as the regular teacher: meeting with parents, making sure children are attaining the learning objectives and structuring the curriculum so you fit everything into these objectives that they should be learning, so from these perspectives, it’s preferable.” What appears in this remark is a reference to accountability systems such as ministry mandates and parental expectations ensuring an achievement of learning outcomes to which a substitute teacher, as a temporary replacement, is not as liable. Another substitute teacher described a similar partiality for these lessened needs to be and feel answerable to others, stating that “With supply, you don’t have the parents to deal with, which is a positive in some cases.”

In terms of assessment and evaluation procedures, the same argument was forwarded by substitute teachers, who again felt eased of implementing particular students’ goals and monitoring their development over a longer period of time. “When you’re a regular classroom teacher, if you have a student that has a learning disability, it’s challenging and you have a goal and your challenge is the gap between his or her current reality and that goal. As a supply teacher, you’re not there for the long-term, so the challenges are very light to long-term challenges.” These accumulated aspects of teaching connected to concerns of responsibility and accountability are therefore relatively minimal in the work required of substitute teachers permitting them, as a result, a greater degree of laxity and lessened occupational pressures.

Such freedom from various forms of obligatory procedures and practices, however, comes at a price for substitute teachers. In other words, although they gain a reduced workload and lessened accountability pressures, they lose meaningful interaction with and immersion in the various domains of the teaching culture. One deprivation experienced by substitute teachers was the lack of forming bonds and relationships with students over a long
period of time. In fact, Nias' (1988: 201) study of primary school teachers points to the reality of “establishing relationships with children” as a significant aspect of teacher identity, thus, helping to comprehend how removed substitute teachers are from this essential nature of teaching. Describing a primary differentiation between regular, full-time teaching and substitute teaching, this participant lamented the absence of interpersonal relations with the students, saying that “the number one difference is the rapport you have with the children. That kind of bond which allows you to see them progressing and that is very great [is missing].” Similarly, another substitute teacher succinctly summed it up by stating that “the interaction with the students is just not there because you’re there one day and gone the next.” The only type of interaction possible under these conditions is one that lacks deeper significance, and meaningful content beyond the present, or as expressed by this substitute teacher, doesn’t enable “you [to] get to know the children, they don’t get to know you, so the relationship tends to remain superficial.” To sense this apparent lack, so necessary to a teacher’s pedagogical purpose and personal fulfilment, implies for substitute teachers a fragmented and disassociated state in both professional and personal terms.

Another feature of their work which constitutes interpersonal relations is the lack of connections and bonds formed with parents. Frequently, when exploring this issue, substitute teachers also referred to the isolation they experienced from this group, as well as from students. In juxtaposing her current position as a substitute teacher with past work as a full-time teacher, this participant emphasized the supportive and encouraging role of parents in assisting with their children's social and academic progress:

As a substitute teacher, you don’t have the contact with parents. In my own class, there were a number of parents that I called on a regular basis, especially if they were concerned about some aspect of the child’s education, for example, behaviour, but if the parents were concerned about something, I would often
keep in touch with the parent, let’s say, the student did not do well on a test, then if the student did well, I’d mark the test right away and call the parent on that Friday and say so-and-so did amazing. He got ten out of ten. The student would go home and the parent would let him or her know that I had called and it would set a tone for a nice weekend.

This comment reveals how parents can assist in affirming and sustaining positive work habits and attitudes and in so doing, continue the teacher’s program and initiatives beyond the classroom. As partners in education, this group, which can provide additional support and validation of educational objectives on an ongoing basis has little or no contact with substitute teachers, therefore its effective possibilities can only be realized by teachers employed on a permanent or long-term basis. For substitute teachers whose presence in the classroom is frequently of a short duration, sources of support and encouragement are limited.

Beyond pupil-teacher interactions and communicative relations with parents from which substitute teachers are generally excluded, there is the entire culture of the school, comprised of various components of which they are also denied. Referring to his return to substitute teaching upon the completion of a long-term occasional position, this participant nostalgically recalled the many events that form and shape a sense of community within the school and whose absence in his current work he clearly acknowledges. “I miss the daily environment of the school, because you’re only there for one day and then you’re gone, even if it’s for one week, it’s still transitory. It’s not the same as being there for a month, or a year, so you’re not involved in extracurricular activities, you’re not involved in assemblies or presenting at assemblies, all the little things that make school life wonderful. You’re not a part of it, so that is what I miss.” Complete immersion in all functions and events whose accumulation creates the entire ethos of school life is not possible as a substitute teacher, and consequently, such exclusion affects the degree of allegiance to any one school. In divulging
her perspectives on these issues, this substitute teacher expressed how transient employment, with its related features, significantly impacts on the sense of commitment towards one specific work site.

As a supply teacher, you don’t obviously have the staff meetings, extracurricular things. One difference between substitute teaching and regular teaching is that I don’t feel the same commitment to the school. I did my job and I wasn’t really thinking about the fact that next year, I’d be at the school heading this committee or running this club. When the day is finished, it is finished. Things are different when you see yourself staying there.

The encapsulation of all these exclusionary procedures defining the work of substitute teaching is extreme isolation from both the process of work and from others. Introduced earlier in Chapter One, alienation was examined on various levels as a condition applicable to full-time regular teachers but more pervasive and intense for substitute teachers who lack the one, central environment within which to create and sustain more stable relations. Adding further credence to this reality, all substitute teachers discussed how the loneliness they experienced was a commonly perceived disadvantage. “You do feel alienated, because you go to a new school where staff have already formed bonds amongst themselves, and you’re aware of that, they are aware of that, that your time there is brief.” Echoing these very views, this substitute teacher expressed it like this:

I have been in staff rooms where I’ve sat there and no one has said anything to me. I think you’re invisible, like you’re not going to be going back, they assume. In the staff room, sitting there, I see an area in the conversation where I can say something, a one-liner or include me in the conversation. A number of times I’ve been shocked, when I would actually say something and they would all look at me and continue their conversation, and I’d be left out for the remainder of the conversation. Again, it’s like I’m invisible, except for that one little second.

Another substitute teacher described similar sentiments by referring to staff and administration that understand the challenges of his work, and “help you out, but then you get
the odd teachers or schools that don’t even acknowledge you and I get that a lot.” Like the
teacher quoted in the previous excerpt, he continued in his remarks to employ the term
“invisible” in defining not only personal feelings, but also how other staff members
appropriate this concept to illustrate the constitution of good substitute teaching practices:

There was a saying that a principal told me once. I don’t remember the
exact saying but he was basically saying that if they know that you’re
not in the school than you’ve done a good job, so if there are no
problems, then they know that you’ve done a good job. If you remain
invisible then you’ve done a good job and that is sad because they don’t
really get to know you.

Harking back to Galloway’s (1994) earlier elucidated model of the two distinct worlds of
teaching, one characterized as the visible realm, the other, the invisible, the above comment
clearly asserts the predominant sense of invisibility that pervades the role of substitute
teaching; however, in adding to Galloway’s depiction, the sense of occupational and personal
obliteration occurs within the school’s actual environment and thus, entrance into the school
does not necessarily mean a sojourn into the visible and acknowledged world of teaching.

In explicating the reasons that produce such isolation, participants drew distinctions
between the established community of the school, and themselves as temporary workers
within that setting. The following comment is enlightening in so far as it portrays two groups
of workers who are both teachers, yet nevertheless removed from one another.

The biggest disadvantage is that you could be really lonely. You could be going
to different schools and if you’re not an outgoing person, it could be very
isolating. I don’t find teachers going out of their way to make you feel at home,
so it could be very lonely by yourself. You go into a staff room and you end
up sitting by yourself and nobody comes to sit next to you, nobody talks to you.

In this sense, an individual’s personality would determine whether to approach others in an
effort to align oneself with teachers, and in so doing, penetrate the barrier that divides regular
staff from others. Furthermore, if the hesitancy to accommodate substitute teachers is
perceived as a response of staff members, justification for such actions lies in the ambiguity
surrounding that foreign person amidst a gathering of known colleagues.

Sometimes, I think they may not even be aware you are a supply teacher. You could be anybody, a parent volunteer, someone selling books, whatever, and you just happen to be sitting there. You could be a teachers’ college student on practicum. Until they’ve come to see you on a regular basis, some of them will not speak to you.

The staff room is not only the central site where social relations can flourish away from the confines of the classroom, but also, as Kainan (1994) observes, is the place where professional identities are established and played out. Ironically, for substitute teachers, this is the one location where they felt the greatest estrangement from their teaching colleagues and where their professional role was questioned and thus, simultaneously subverted.

Addressing this problematic component so evident in their dialogues requires a view into the various means whereby substitute teachers respond to these alienating conditions. One way, referred to by this substitute teacher, involved a self-initiated effort where “you could choose to be more forward, say ‘Hello,’ sit down with them. Sometimes, I do push myself [to do that].” Another means, however was the reverse practice of keeping aloof and distant rather than seeking communication and although it may be preferred to risking dismal responses, remaining silent nevertheless assures the continuation of one’s perceived alienation as an incontrovertible condition.

Now that I’ve been substitute teaching for three years, I’ve changed. At first I’ve tried to talk to people, now I just go in, do my job and go home. I don’t really talk to many people anymore. A lot of people know me because I’ve been doing it for three years; however, if I’m at a school and they are just not really making the effort, I won’t make the effort as well. That is difficult.
If substitute teachers’ vignettes expose the freedom of their work alongside the constricting and limiting elements, a further marked differentiation between regular and substitute teaching involves the availability of work and distribution systems currently in place for allocating positions of employment. The stability of being employed at a central and consistent location associated with regular teaching is distinct from the changing environments characteristic of substitute teaching. A participant described this experience as one akin to “being thrown into situations” while another expressed this uncertainty thusly: “One drawback is not knowing where you are going to be everyday and not knowing if you are going to have a job.” A third substitute teacher also concurred by offering this concrete example: “Once, when it wasn’t my fault, they made a mistake and called two substitute teachers for the class and it just seemed that when I said I would go any classroom to help out or whatever, the principal said, ‘Why don’t you go to the staff room and I will tell you what to do when I have time.’ I felt reprimanded as though I were a child.” Feeling uprooted and relegated to positions based on the needs and demands of regular teachers also verges on the issues frequently examined in industrial labour studies and the sociology of work literature. Reiter (1986), Rinehart (1987) and Krahn and Lowe (1988, 1993), for example, study the labour process of alienation and oppression under the capitalist mode of production and emphasize the dehumanizing effects on the wage labourer. The eradication of individualism and the interchangability of worker skills examined in this research as it applies to the industrial or service worker can also be used to describe a similar process experienced by the substitute teacher. In references to the instability that arises from the loss of control over where one is to be placed for the day, the dispensability of employees is clearly evoked:

If I had people to support or if I were in a more stable environment where I needed structure in my life than I would be very frustrated by this job too,
because you sort of get kicked around a lot. Even if you think you’re going to go to such and such a school or if they call you for a Kindergarten class, but then when you get there, they tell you that the person who is supposed to be in Grade 8 isn’t too great so we’ll switch you and put you in Grade 8 where they’re supposed to be, that’s not fair. That’s not fair to me. It happens to me a lot because they know I’m one of the better ones of the ones they’ve seen. One can’t speak English, or whatever, so they put them in the easier situations and put me in the tough positions, and we’re all getting paid the same amount of money for it. Then it’s frustrating.

This sense of dislocation results from the absence of a constant work site as well as from the fluctuations of available employment. This substitute teacher expressed this reality as suggestive of lessened power and control since “you’re at the whim of how many people need an occasional teacher that week. You cannot go out and get work if it’s not available. If it happens to be slow, it’s slow.” To gain work, substitute teachers are, therefore, dependent upon the employment patterns of the regular teaching pool, which tends to follow along a certain continuum, the commencement of the school year being particularly slow, as well as the period following a major holiday such as Christmas or Easter. In addition to availability, the distribution of work is also a cause of discontent in some cases, as the procedure of contacting a substitute teacher at specified hours restricts the individual’s movement and limits the time to pursue personal interests. In the following passage, the process by which substitute teachers are contacted to distribute work was described as a form of imprisonment:

I don’t like having to wait by the phone and being a slave to my phone for two hours at night, couple of hours in the morning, if I don’t know in advance, and just not having that time free. I could have that time free in the evening, except I know I’d be missing out on work, so I try to be at home during the two hour call-out period. It stops me from doing other things during that period. I adapt my life around that. I think that is a drawback because you are on call for two hours every night when you could be doing something outside the home if you wanted.
In effect, the numerous sources of lessened expectations and increased freedoms examined throughout this section are counterbalanced by several practices and conditions that appear to impose restrictions and constraints on individuals employed as substitute teachers.

One final area of concern expressed by substitute teacher as a major difference between their work and that of regular teacher revolves around the extrinsic rewards of their labour. These basic differentials first introduced in the opening chapter of this thesis find additional affirmation in the discussions of the participants, the majority of whom believed themselves to be severely disadvantaged with respect to their earning potential. By way of example, one substitute teacher described her work as having “no real benefits and low pay. These are drawbacks. You are prorated, but still, you are living at a very impoverished level.”

A second substitute teacher expressed similar sentiments by emphasizing the financial constraints and lack of adequate benefits associated with her work: “Also, I think they can have more benefits than they actually have now. The income you earn as a substitute teacher is way below the poverty line. If you’re a working mother or a single mother, or anyone who has dependants to support, it’s extremely difficult.” Acknowledging this decreased salary and its related effects on living standards leads to a belief that this type of employment is substantial only when supplemented by other sources of additional income. For this substitute teacher, the earnings gained through her work would be insufficient as a sole income.

“Luckily for my family, it’s a second income, so basically, if you don’t get the call, there’s no way to go out and get a job that day. If it’s slow, it’s obviously less pay for that pay period.”

Along similar lines, another substitute teacher offered his considerations of the circumstances which would make a substitute teaching salary feasible.

I think substitute teaching is great if you have another job or a business, and this is what you’re doing as a second income. On its own, it’s definitely
not enough to survive. If your wife wants to do it for a while or whatever else the circumstances may be, that's fine, but if it's a full-time income job, it's not very good. I think a lot of people use it as a stepping stone to try to get into full-time teaching. People also do it because they have kids. I've met a few ladies who will only work two days a week, or they'll work everyday, knowing full well, they are finished at four, so they can be home with their families. I can see their point, and it's good money from that aspect; however, if this is your first income, it's a tough life to live, especially if you're living by that phone call, day in and day out. It's tough.

In this example, several key issues converged, among them being the predominant view of substitute teaching as particularly relevant and accommodating to women's needs as they pertain to family obligations and responsibilities. Such comments around gender corroborated the findings of Galloway and Morrison (1994), Morrison (1994a) and Chessum (1989); however, the sexist connotations in this previous passage continue to perpetuate beliefs, even among substitute teachers themselves that this work is most suitable for women.

By way of contrast, several substitute teachers interpreted their present salary in entirely different terms to those already discussed. The first view focused on the nature of work performed by and expected of a substitute teacher, whose earnings are definitely not commensurate with a full-time teaching salary, but are nevertheless perceived in a more positive light.

Not having a full-time salary is a drawback. I don't have a problem with it. I don't think it's bad. In fact, I think we're overpaid for what we are expected to do, and I enjoy doing it, so I think it's great being paid a lot of money to do something that I like to do.

Despite this more affirmative assertion, the continuation of this particular discussion still revealed a clear demarcation between the benefits provided a full-time teacher and the lack thereof for substitute teachers.

I think the salary is fine, the only thing is that when you add it up at the
end of the year, if you have taken time off or if you have been sick, you obviously end up not making the salary you’d make as a full-time teacher. It’s half the salary. What annoys me is that you don’t get paid for sick days and that does make a difference because teachers get twenty sick days a year and that would make a big difference in our salary if we were paid twenty days a year. I move around a lot and because I teach French, and use my voice in different ways, and tend to speak louder because students might be a little more unruly with you than with their regular teacher, I get laryngitis and I’m off quite often because of that. As a full-time teacher, I wouldn’t mind because I’d get paid for it, and somebody else would get paid to take my place. Now, if I’m sick, it’s a wasted day.

Regardless if there is personal contentment of the substitute teacher’s wages, there is nevertheless a clear acknowledgement that the many benefits enjoyed by their regular teaching colleagues are absent in their work. A second substitute teacher also drew interesting comparisons that encompassed the intensified workload involved with regular, full-time teaching, to propose the following correlation: “As a supply teacher, it’s a good job because on an hourly basis, if I figured out what I was putting in [as a full-time teacher] I was getting paid less on an hourly basis than I do as supply teacher, if that makes any sense.”

As outlined in the introductory segment of this chapter, one area which adds to the formation of distinctions between full-time teachers and that of their more peripheral colleagues involves the perceptions of others towards substitute teachers. In the next section, substitute teachers give voice to their beliefs of how they believe they are viewed by others and in so doing, divulge the processes that maintain occupational divisions.
Through the Eyes of Others

Students

The construction of professional role and identity are influenced by the views, attitudes, and responses towards substitute teachers, and the majority of participant beliefs exposed the different conceptions of substitute teachers as opposed to those of regular teachers. One substitute teacher likened her presence in the classroom to that of a non-instructional day, where students believe they can behave as they wish, with impunity, in their teacher’s absence. Here she explains these practices and their impacts by offering an example of extremely injurious behaviour perpetrated on a substitute teacher.

Students see substitute teachers as a day off, and wander what they can get away with, and it’s unfortunate, because I believe the majority of the students see it that way. They think you don’t know the rules so you’re not going to try and figure them out. So, I think there’s a great lack of respect. At the Professional Activity day we had for supply teachers, one woman said she’s been kicked on, spit on, as some students feel they can do that, while others believe they can do that with anyone.

Employing a similar image, a second substitute teacher expressed the significance of utilizing a specific pedagogical practice in an attempt to control the potential polarization of these student attitudes.

Students feel substitute teachers are radically different. They see a substitute teacher walk into the classroom and they think, “Party Time!” That is the the students’ view so you have to make sure you can gain control of the classroom very quickly so they realize, “No, this is regular class day and we are going to continue as if your teacher was here.” It’s important to set the tone immediately or else they’ll be chaos and bedlam. It doesn’t matter, it’s from Kindergarten to Grade 13. It’s amazing how Kindergarten students have that same attitude. That’s routine and this is the law of a substitute teacher.
One frequent verb used to describe students’ reactions to the substitute teacher is “test”, as students see how far they can transcend the limits of appropriate classroom behaviour and find out what the substitute teacher will accept or reject. “Students, typical of all children, try and test you, and try to see what your limits will be. If the students find somebody who hasn’t had too much experience dealing with children, and haven’t got the control and the techniques, they’ll take advantage of it. There’s not doubt about that.”

Laying ground rules at the onset was one method frequently implemented by substitute teachers to offset the students’ beliefs that daily expectations and rules of proper classroom demeanour no longer apply, or as humorously stated by one substitute teacher, to deter them in their quest to “sink the sub.” The practice of asserting oneself in this manner also implied the need, at times, to assume quick and consistent disciplinary strategies: “Students are usually happy to see me although with a few children, I tend to be strict at times and they really can’t ‘goof-off.’ Some kids see me more as a disciplinarian, but generally, I prefer the primary grades and they are always happy to see me.” In contrast to these classroom management tactics, this substitute teacher’s means of addressing and handling a new classroom of students varies considerably:

The majority of students are fine, but there will always be a few students who want to test you a little bit and challenge you. If you deal with it badly, or in the wrong way, then it will be a rough day. I think if you smile a little bit and joke around with them, they’ll relax. If you go in with the attitude that you’re going to change them or you’re going to impose too much discipline or structure, they’re going to walk all over you. If you go in with more of a laid back attitude and be more adjustable to what they offer you, than you’ll be fine. 

(emphasis mine)

The use of humour, however, was not always perceived as a safe and appropriate technique to deflect attention away from problematic occurrences. Indeed, one substitute
teacher expressed concerns about comical elements being misinterpreted and thus, failing in their intended effects. "Beside establishing some guidelines at first, if it looks like it's necessary, if I can, I try to use humour just to soften any rough edges I sense with the students, and to help them feel that I'm working with them, not against them. But the humour thing is difficult to predict when you don't know the class. I think sometimes it may not be understood." Still another substitute teacher felt strongly that permitting oneself the use of humour depends on whether the situation warrants it. Describing her strategy in terms of donning alternative "personas", she explained how the classroom dynamics determined her teaching style.

When the students enter, I sit back and watch what they do, and observe their interactions with one another and I get a sense of how I have to be that day: whether I should be strict, what sort of persona I should take one, whether I should have a sense of humour, and you can just tell that. So, I sit back and watch what they do, and some of them come in and they take their chairs down and follow the routines and others see you there and run out of control and that is when you have to tell them, "Okay, this is what we are doing, and explain to them that their regular teacher is away, but I am here and you can't get away with anything."

During these discussions, all participants acknowledged the same perceptions and responses of students towards the substitute teacher, who as a new and unknown individual is believed to be excluded from the understood agreements that permit the classroom to operate within tolerable boundaries. Consequently, techniques necessary for dismantling these behaviours varied, as has been outlined in the above passages. One further mechanism used by this substitute teacher involved an attempt to bridge the gulf between anonymity and familiarity, which suggests a rapid learning of students' identities as a means of preventing undesirable disruptions: "Even though you're going to have the students who are going to say, 'Oh, I'm
going to pull the wool over this teacher’s eyes because she’s only here for a day or she doesn’t know us’, I get to know the students within five minutes and I know all their names, so they can’t really pull the wool over my eyes and can’t really trick me.” Establishing a quick association with the students and an awareness of their individualities, even if only for a temporary period, enables the production of an atmosphere where a degree of teaching and learning can ensue as a result. Otherwise, control is usurped by students or as described in absolute terms by this substitute teacher, “the students know what they can get away with, they’re not stopped, so they run the school.”

Still another assurance of divesting oneself of the problematic issues associated with students’ responses to a new adult in the classroom is seeking steady employment at certain schools, which aids in erasing the substitute teacher’s unknown status. Although some participants preferred the diversity of working in many different schools and areas, most spoke favourably of establishing themselves as a regular presence in specified schools for reasons of increased intimacy and knowledge between the students and themselves.

I prefer to work in certain schools, because I think you get to know the staff, you get to know the students a little better. When you get to know the students, they know what you’re about and you know what they’re all about, your expectations, their expectations, so you’re no longer classified as a “supply teacher”, or an “occasional teacher”, because they know you since you’re a frequent face at that school. They know what to expect, since it’s not a big shock to them.

Expressing the same sentiment, another substitute teacher also justified her preferences along similar lines: “If you’re at a school more frequently, you get to know the students, they get to know you, so you’re less of a supply teacher for them. They don’t perceive you in quite that way.” Finally, the sense of being accepted and welcomed into a school frequented on a
regular basis alters the perceptions of others towards the substitute teacher, assigning him or
her a new status and emerges once again in this passage:

I've gotten in with two schools that I would say I got to about seventy per cent
of the time, and they are smaller schools, so I basically know all the students,
all the staff, the kids know me. I really enjoy going there because you’re treated
as a teacher in those schools, and the students are happy to see you. They say
“Hello” to you, they know your name, they know what you’re all about and
you know who is who in those schools as well.

Repetitive contact with a school, therefore, appears to lift the veil of anonymity and
approximate the closer interactions of regular teaching. Under such conditions, students
come to associate them as named teachers rather than as “The Supply”, that also aids in
dismantling much of their acute isolation, as well as providing great consistency of coverage
to these schools. While an association with one school may also assist the substitute teacher
in gaining a position there if a vacancy occurs, this familiarity may also work to further
solidify the individual’s commitment to providing consistent coverage and thus, in the words
of one participant, making it difficult “to remove that label.”

Teachers and Administrators

Another group with which there is both professional affiliation and social interaction
is the regular teaching body, and administrative staff, and in their dialogues, substitute
teachers expressed various divergent yet also intersecting perspectives of how they believed
they’re viewed by their regular teaching colleagues. Many of the study's participants reached
the same conclusions, which seemed to follow along the themes of alienation, invisibility and
professional devaluation as recurring threads interwoven throughout their narratives, and

mirrored here in the following individual excerpts:

For the most part, because you're there for a short period of time, you're more or less deemed irrelevant. You're just there to fill in the void or the gap, and this is how you're perceived, as someone transitory, and they see so many other substitute teachers, so really why should you be any different? They see so many others who come and go, so you're the same. You come and go.

Nobody looks at it as a profession, nobody looks at it as a career, nobody takes you seriously. The belief is that if it was a career, if you were valuable somehow, you'd have a full-time job. One of the most common questions is if I'm receiving enough work and they assume that I'm looking for work and they're sort of rooting for me, "Gee, I hope you get something soon." Well, it's not worth going into a big, long story every time they say that. So, I think they look at it as something you're doing to pass the time until you get a better offer. Whereas, for me, it's actually the better offer at this point in my life, because it allows me to do other things.

There emerged an expressed concern that their positions as substitute teachers were considered less worthy of recognition or affirmation by regular teaching employees, whose views incorporate assumptions that this is only a temporary situation to be undertaken in the absence of more favourable options and until the eventual attainment of "purposeful" full-time teaching. Describing these constructions as they relate to the stereotypical views reviewed in sections of Chapter Two and Chapter Four, this substitute teacher voiced the effects of such perceptions on her teaching capabilities and self-worth, stating that "in addition, it can be frustrating because you feel you are not a teacher. You're simply viewed as someone who goes in and baby-sits. So, as well as the low income and no benefits, you have to contend with a low self-esteem, that you're somehow not good enough, otherwise you'd have a full-time teaching position."
In some instances, participants gave particular examples of how staff beliefs and views of them as substitute teachers became manifest. This substitute teacher explains how her work is not "the best job in terms of how you're treated by the staff and administration. They usually just jostle you around." Another described the process that operates to perpetuate negative perceptions of substitute teachers. Here, she elaborates further details of one case, which points to the transference of teachers' beliefs to students:

Unfortunately, I think substitute teachers get a bad reputation due to the children’s lack of respect. I think teachers also don't correct children, in the sense, than in some situations, they also don’t respect substitute teachers. For example, once, I was in a classroom and the following day, I came into the classroom, and the teacher said, "Oh, the kids are going to be really bad today because they had a substitute teacher yesterday and you know—with those substitute teachers." I, apparently, was that substitute teacher, so I was a bit offended. The substitute teacher seems to be the scapegoat and the children pick up on that kind of attitude from the teacher, and so, it's a P.A. day when the substitute teacher comes in. You don't necessarily have the backing, which is unfortunate.

Picking up the final point in the quotation, the lack of support and encouragement in either verbal and physical terms also appears to be a contentious issue for several substitute teachers. The above passage refers more to spoken utterances, whereas the following comment suggests a general absence of collegial assistance, leaving one entirely on one's own in a new and/or difficult situation: "In some situations where you need assistance and help, you're sort of on your own. If you're in a classroom that is infamous and know to have an uncooperative group of students, you go in there and you're on your own."

To solicit assistance in the event of a disruptive or problematic occurrence within the classroom is however, not always deemed a safe method, as several substitute teachers expressed their reluctance to resort to such actions lest they be perceived by school staff as incapable teaching practitioners. The conscious need to control the classroom environment is
not only a requirement for the sake of teaching and learning, but also, as commented in the following excerpt, for being perceived and acknowledged by others as a competent teacher:

You are trying to discipline the kids, you’re trying to do your best, and some of them don’t care, and you feel it’s a no-win situation. You could easily develop the attitude, “Well, I’m only here for one day,” especially if they’re giving you a hard time. I was in [the school I have previously worked in on a long-term assignment] and I had to send two children out, one to the vice-principal and one to the behavioural class. I think that the only reason I did that was the fact that I knew the principal, I had that experience of one year, so I felt comfortable in doing that. But in a situation where you don’t know the principal and you feel it will be reflected [badly on you], in that you can’t control the class, you tend to turn a blind eye and that is very defeatist because you want to feel that you are a good teacher, that you’re in control.

This awareness of being continuously monitored by others to assess whether or not one is capable of asserting authority and controlling the classroom environment figured prominently in remarks made by another participant. She also expressed her reluctance to seek external support when a situation dictated such an action for fear that this attention would be misinterpreted as a failure on her part to successfully manage the classroom, this in keeping with Blase’s (1988: 123) assertion of “the political strategies used by teachers [in] acquiescing to the principal’s expectations.” A concern with these adverse perceptions implies a concerted effort to deal with situations on one’s own, instead of risking the loss of professional integrity in the eyes of others. This substitute teacher, focusing on these concerns, asserted that “the way you control the classroom, classroom management is important as it influences their perceptions of you, because if there’s chaos in the classroom, that reflects negatively on you. So, you are very conscious of being judged, because you’re someone new there, and they don’t know you and the work you do, so you tend to be very conscious of being judged.” In this manner, participants adhered to Nias’ (1988) finding of classroom control being a major determinant of a teacher’s identity. While these issues are
characteristic of regular teachers’ formulations of their professional selves, some substitute teachers believed this reality to be more pervasive for themselves for reasons which hinged on the need to continuously validate oneself, when often there is only one opportunity to do so. By referring to the above mentioned phenomena of being evaluated or “judged”, this substitute teacher elaborated on this process:

With supply, it can be very lonely, the teachers don’t talk to you and you don’t know them to make jokes, to release stress or gain advice. You can’t because you feel you’re being assessed. With regular, full-time teachers, they get second and third chances to prove themselves, as opposed to a supply who goes in for one day and if your day goes badly, you’re perceived as incapable.

A retreat into the classroom, where difficulties are frequently silenced, is preferred to the risks of exposure, functioning to further intensify the invisibility of their work.

Not all substitute teachers’ dialogues, however, revealed a general consensus of staff perceptions regarding their positions of employment. Diverging significantly from these previously stated beliefs, some substitute teachers emphasized how understanding others can be with respect to the particular challenges they encounter in their work: “The staff and the principal, I think they know how difficult the job is, and most of them help you out.” In a similar vein, another substitute teacher asserted the importance their colleagues placed on their work, as it afforded full-time teachers the opportunity to devise appropriate course material for their students. She stated that “teachers think substitute teachers are important because they need them. In order to have a good classroom, you need time to prepare. Preparation is a major part of teaching, and so I think teachers are very grateful to have that time, so they can prepare a good lesson for their students.” As demonstrated by these statements, positive sentiments were expressed, thus revealing a possible sense of solidarity
and unison between these two groups, based on a common ground of acknowledging the
travails of the other. Yet another substitute teacher concurred, extending this argument
further by disclosing teachers' ability to relate to them, while also lacking experiential
knowledge of the work of a substitute teacher. "Teachers realize that the nature of our work
is difficult and there's an element of sympathy, but also unfamiliarity with it, because in the
schools I've been to, many have not supply taught. For those who have, I'm sure they
understand and realize the work you do is necessary. So for the most part, you are treated
with respect." Some substitute teachers believed their line of work should be a pre-requisite
experience for all regular teachers prior to securing a full-time contract, as it provides an
all-encompassing knowledge of pedagogical skills and instructional functions. One of the
substitute teachers interviewed related this appreciation of her work, which she believed
would be invaluable experience for any teacher:

So much comes with experience. You go into different classes, you experience
different things. You see how you deal with some things, if it works, you use it
again, if it doesn't you know you don't use it again. That is the good thing about
supplying. It's the best way of learning. What I have learned in how many months
of supplying, I did not learn in that long-term contract [position], because you are
exposed to so many different systems, how the schools are run, about the
procedures. You are always absorbing. I think every teacher should supply.

The preceding information extracted from the substitute teachers' dialogues reveal no
one general consensus of beliefs regarding staff (both teachers' and administrators')
perceptions of their separate, distinct status as substitute teachers. Instead, some common
characteristics were juxtaposed with other alternative and opposing views, and as will be seen
in the final section which follows, the same is true of participants' beliefs about parents.
Parents

The nature of substitute teaching evidently precludes the more constant and regular contact with parents that occurs for full-time teachers; nevertheless, there were references made that exposed links between them. Some substitute teachers found themselves to be encouraged and valued as pedagogues by parents, as suggested in this comment: “For the most part, I’ve had more positive experiences [since] parents have wanted me to stay in the class when the teacher has been away on maternity leave, or what not. They’ve requested me, taken me aside and said they’ve really liked what I had been doing. I was in a class for a week, and a couple of parents approached me with encouraging, positive feedback.” Another substitute teacher presented one occasion where a parent extended support to her, and offered her a factual account of the impending situation: “The parent thing is interesting. One student was dropped off, realized there was a supply teacher and was disappointed and his mother said, ‘You’ll be okay. She’s not mean, she’s going to be nice’ and whatever, and this student had a reputation in the school for misbehaving. The mother knew this and was pretty realistic about it.”

As mentioned above, however, personal experiences upon which beliefs were based varied substantially, and occasionally contained contradictions within one individual’s frame of reference. For example, although the previous quotation offers a fairly optimistic interpretation of this specific occurrence, the same substitute teacher discussed another, less positive event:

Some mothers aren’t [realistic]. They assume their child is really good and the school makes up all these things. One mother said “I hope he behaves for you. I know what it was like when I was a kid in school, supply teacher!”
Let's have fun!” And I’ve had a number of parents tell me, when they
see me as a supply teacher, that that is how they’ve remembered supply teachers.
I think, “Great, are you passing this attitude on to the child?”

What also emerges from this example is a concern amongst substitute teachers that negative
portrayals of their status are transmitted to students, thereby perpetuating these cycles of
incessant beliefs. She also mentioned, however, her own earlier views of substitute teachers
as a child, thus aligning herself to these same perceptions, while simultaneously departing
from them to depict changes over time:

I suppose that’s [also] how I remembered supply teachers. I’d like to think things
have changed now, because there are some highly, highly qualified teachers who
have not got work [as full-time teachers]. People who are in the supply pool are
highly qualified and proficient. In the past, that may not have been. I remember
supply teachers who did not even have University degrees when I was in school.
In fact, classroom teachers did not even have degrees, but times have changed.
I think supply [teachers] are more professional but parents are caught up in
that attitude.

Despite these assertions, the underlying belief is that substitute teachers are perceived as
somewhat less competent practitioners, in whose presence normal classroom practices and
functions are disrupted and often degenerate into chaos.

A corollary of these views is the sense of disregard and invisibility substitute teachers
have described in their associations with parents. A depiction of lessened professional
valuation and acknowledgement of a substitute teacher’s presence in the classroom is evoked
in this example, which again relates to the continuous surfacing of respect as a recurrent
theme throughout the narratives:

Once, I was in a Grade 1 and the class had gone very well, and all of a sudden,
this parent came in without even telling me “Good Afternoon”, went directly
to the child’s desk, started going through the desk, and finally I said, “Can I
help you?” and the response was “Oh, no, no, I’m just looking for something.”
She looked around for a while, then she went out, couldn’t find what she was
looking for. Two minutes later, her husband came in and did that exact same thing. He did not acknowledge me, walked right by me and into the classroom, continued to look in the desk for a pencil for the child. There’s no respect for supply teachers. This is not the case for all schools, obviously, but you’d think, we are teachers, and we are just as qualified, we just don’t have a regular classroom. (her emphasis)

In likeness to the previous response, here too this substitute teacher appealed to professional qualifications and training to offset any beliefs which may suggest otherwise.

Some substitute teachers’ remarks rested on neither positive nor negative experiences but rather on neutral positions of how they believed parents viewed substitute teaching arrangements generally. In this regard, the regular teacher’s absence is a deemed a temporary disruption from the regular proceedings of the classroom, explained by this substitute teacher as such: “I think parents on the whole, of course, would want the regular teacher to be there all the time.” Faced with the reality of teacher absence, however, parents, in additions to the groups examined earlier, appear to demonstrate an entire range of responses, all of which influenced substitute teachers’ regard of themselves and their work.

Conclusion

In terms of advantages and drawbacks, substitute teachers’ discussion focused on the conditions and factors which fostered and facilitated an enhanced state of freedom from the demands and duties expected of their full-time colleagues while also emphasizing particular constraints and absences characteristic of their work. Essentially on the margins, yet still in contact with others, they expressed the paradox of being both appreciated and devalued,
invisible and visible, freed and inhibited. In effect, these opposing positions revealed a
dichotomous identity, continually (re)formed by others—students, teachers, administrators and
parents, with whom they interact. Like the conclusions of Chapter Four, so too here is there a
clear indication that no one view or experience prevails over others. Instead, a more general
and broad exploration can do justice to the many different voices and lived realities of
substitute teachers. In closing, what can be safely avowed is that all subtleties and nuances
need to be explored to uncover not a definitive response, but rather the complexity and
richness inherent in many accounts. As remarked by one woman, “of course, there are
benefits to teaching full-time, or being a supply-teacher and there are bad sides to both those
jobs, too”; in other words, there is no one clear position, rather several sides, and numerous
views. In the last chapter, I turn to the emotive aspects of substitute teacher, and present an
array of feelings as expressed by the participants regarding their work. The reasons for
continuing this employment or seeking alternative occupational arrangements will also be
examined in the closing chapter.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

In the previous chapter, I have extracted data from interview sessions to explore the many dimensions of substitute teaching as known and experienced by the individuals most knowledgeable about its elements—substitute teachers themselves. The findings suggested a fragmented or dualistic reality rather than one firm, concrete presentation of their work. As it became apparent throughout the chapter, participants grappled with issues that left them at times, elated, and at others, depreciated, which brings forth the entire gamut of emotions, only intimated earlier. In this final chapter, I examine these feelings in greater detail as they encapsulate the subjective, intrinsic states of being, initiated and shaped by the external realities discussed throughout this thesis. I then turn to the participants’ visions of future career paths, since these comment on their present state of fulfilment or discontent with certain aspects of substitute teaching, and in so doing, revisit the themes explored throughout earlier chapters. Finally, I conclude this study by defining its limitations and offering suggestions for other possible research pursuits connected to this topic.
Feelings

In the literature of work, there appears two main streams of thought that incorporate the labouring conditions and the workers' positions with them. The first, referred to as the "structural perspective" focuses on the organization and its structure whereas the second, described as the social-psychological interpretation, is concerned with the emotive responses to labouring conditions (Krahn and Lowe, 1988: 171). Clearly, the latter analytical method best describes the substitute teachers' discourse since they reveal overt, subjective interpretations of their work. In other words, instead of looking for objective circumstances independent of the worker's perceptions, this study has been based on the substitute teacher's internal responses to the external conditions they encounter. A component of this, to which only brief allusions were earlier made, is the various feelings experienced throughout their teaching assignments and expressed in their interview sessions. In disclosing their emotions, they also connect back to the pedagogical issues emerging repetitively throughout this study.

One substitute teacher described the entire emotional terrain experienced on the job:

Satisfaction, sometimes laughter, happiness. There [have] been a lot of good times that I can recall. There have been frustrating times, very frustrating. I don't think I've really become angry as a supply teacher. I know I've never become really mad or really raised my voice to a class, but there have been times when I've been very frustrated and I've come close. It depends on each individual, so things don't bother me that much; however, there have been times that I've come close. I've become frustrated because students aren't listening sometimes. You have to tell the class on several occasions to concentrate on their work. You have to deal with one individual more than any other. I wonder sometimes if they behave this way with their regular teacher. (his emphasis)

While acknowledging the enjoyment derived from his work, he also attributed a significant portion of his comments to the lack of control and esteem by students which together created
the potential for expressions of anger and exasperation. Another substitute teacher’s remarks, also included these differential feelings, but extended them even further to describe the vulnerability she experienced in extremely difficult situations:

Well, I have been extremely frustrated at times, feeling I’ve not been taken seriously. I don’t always feel validated. Sometimes, I feel they don’t treat me a a real teacher. I constantly have to justify myself by saying that I’ve gone to University, I’ve done this, even to the students, at times, which I feel I shouldn’t have to do. I sometimes feel scared when I’m in a situation where I don’t know the students and how violent they can be, or if they are, especially in some behavioural classes and because, I’m not familiar with them, and when violent outbursts take place, it’s hard to know how to deal with that effectively, for example, if the police need to be involved. I’ve been in a couple of situations where it’s actually been scary and upsetting. I’ve also had pleasant emotions where I have felt some joy when you’ve seen a student who has struggled with something and I may have shown them a different way of approaching a problem and the light bulb goes on and they understand. That’s nice—going to different students and trying to help them with reading, or math or with different subjects they are struggling with. You can go through a range of feelings. You’ve had some days, at the end of the day when you just want to cry, it’s been so frustrating and difficult, and there are days when you walk out and you feel content that the day went smoothly and that it was a pleasant outing for that day.

Other substitute teachers echoed similar sentiments but assigned different reasons to the involvement of their emotions. This participant focused on the actual material left behind for her as an inducement of both frustration and stress, stating that “unfortunately, there’s a lot of frustration. I think [it’s] because of the attitudes you encounter. You can come into a classroom and have these beautiful plans laid out, which are always helpful and makes things less stressful. If you go in and the teacher’s been away for three days, yet there are only plans for one day, and the kids have been doing busywork, the stress goes up right away [and that] can be frustrating.” She nevertheless assigned positive emotions to the same causes expressed earlier, which are those of student-teacher connections, saying “when you’ve had a good day with kids, when you go in the next day and they are glad you’re there, it makes you feel
good.” Another substitute teacher concurred, recalling how she “felt really good when a
connection [could be made] with the kids because that’s not something that’s easy to do when
you’re there for a short period of time and they know that.” She continued to express the
more extreme feelings of aversion, due to the students’ often complete lack of respect towards
her position in the classroom, explaining these attitudes from a larger sociological
perspective:

With day-to-day supply teaching, I have felt disgust with kids who have been
misbehaving, and you’re trying to help them, say giving them seat work and
guiding them through it, explaining what it means, doing a few examples they
may not know, and they’re not even listening and they’re making it difficult
for me to carry on and then I get to the point, and I’m referring to a specific
example, this happened several weeks ago that I said, “I’d like to help you
with this, if you’ll allow me to carry on, I will, if not, I’m just going to tell
you to do it.” But the lack of respect made me feel disgusted. I did the best
that I could and all that was necessary and if that kind of respect is lacking
to that degree, it was lacking before I got there, it did not have anything to
do with me. And you can’t really blame the school. The school can do all
it can do, but beyond that point, [it] can’t control the lives of the kids. I’m
sometimes really disappointed that schools are expected to totally socialize
children. It’s like they’re dropped off at the door of the school and their
whole socialization process is left up to the school, for some children and
some families.

While these attitudes posed insurmountable obstacles to the teaching and learning processes
in the classroom, there were counteracted by feelings of contentment, accomplishment and
happiness in the completion of a successful and productive day.

In contrast to these conflicting emotions of pleasure and frustration, several substitute
teachers capitalized instead on one primary feeling. For example, this participant recalled her
subjective state when she first began her work as a substitute teacher, stating how “at the very
beginning of substitute teaching, I was very anxious. The first time, I was called, I was called
for a portable class, and I had never been in a portable before. It was a grade 5, at a school I
had never been to before and the children were rowdy but they were okay." Another also reflected on the fulfilment gained from her immersion in diverse classrooms and the students’ reactions to her presence, believing that “excitement is the main emotion because I like going [and] meeting new students or coming back to students that I do know, having them excited to see me, and I truly am excited to see them, and remember[ing] their names and their hobbies. I think it’s great seeing the students again, or else learning something new about a new classroom of students that I’d never met before.” The binary opposition of pleasant/unpleasant emotions is clearly not symptomatic of all individuals’ narratives, as some substitute teachers forged a different path where one more dominating feeling appeared at the forefront of their discussions. Still, the metaphor I use to depict the most commonly reiterated emotions is that of a pendulum swinging back and forth, from one class of emotions to another, its direction determined by a myriad of factors outlined herein.

**Future Directions**

As seen in Chapter Four, the various factors influencing occupational direction towards substitute teaching were grouped under the two categories of choice and necessity, and in examining the individual career visions, two main components emerged as well, those being a clear and definite path each had conceptualized for themselves or alternatively, an uncertainty of probable future orientations. In the former category, several substitute teachers articulated a desire to withdraw from this line of work entirely, and to seek a new direction, sometimes in the hopes of securing a more stable teaching position. This substitute teacher looked forward to imagine the following:
I would like a more permanent teaching position. That is my goal. I don't
know if I'll be supply teaching next year. I'm looking into becoming a teacher’s
assistant or educational assistant. I'd prefer to do that because I think it's a better
way if getting into the Board. It's more stable knowing that you're going
to work everyday. You're dealing with kids, so you're getting the interaction
with them, you can help them and vice versa, they can help you. You're not
the teacher, but you still have to create learning strategies and techniques for
them. I think I prefer to do that and that is what I am looking into now. I don't
really want to do supply teaching anymore.

In accordance with these views, a position of lower status and responsibility is thought
preferable to the current substitute teaching situation, since it would present greater stability,
more meaningful teaching practices and an enhanced sense of control in the classroom. These
very issues propelled others towards considering full-time teaching as a more gratifying
alternative to substitute teaching. Expressing her wish to experience the regularity of
full-time teaching, this substitute teacher also invoked the self-determination involved with
planning and executing one's own curricular materials and thus, being the classroom's sole
designer and practitioner. In this regard, she stated, "I'd prefer a more permanent teaching
position because of the security in knowing where you are going every single day. The fact
that you plan your themes and have that control is great." In fact, the reiteration of these
individual views suggests a displeasure with current teaching conditions and a belief that
regular teaching could help transcend the obstacles they presently face in realizing greater
occupational satisfaction. Repetitively, a distinct pattern emerged, as full-time teaching
became the embodiment of all that appeared preferable and unattainable with substitute
teaching. This consensus of opinions was evident in the aforementioned passages, and
appeared once again in this excerpt: "I'd prefer a more permanent position because of the
income and there would be that stability and knowledge of where you'd be the next day,
you'd get to know the children, get to plan and organize on your own, so the lessons and
activities that you would do you would have more control over instead of executing another’s directives” (for more on judgements and control in the classroom, see Metz, 1989; Hargreaves, 1984).

To another substitute teacher, a complete extrication from the teaching profession is desired in order to fulfill true occupational goals, asserting that the “desire is to return to library and not a school library but a research library, a University library, a business library, or a law library. That is my true desire.” Still further, a break from public school teaching was envisioned in order to aspire to other, higher echelons of the educational system. This substitute teacher emphasized these aspirations in light of her current financial needs: “Right now, I’m approaching this as a way of supporting myself until I can prepare myself for another career that I can go into full-time. Assuming that all goes well, I would like to teach at a University.”

If these future projections were directed by concrete desires, other individuals were less firmly rooted in specific career conceptualizations. Instead, they preferred a wider array of possible options so as not to limit themselves to one area and hence to the exclusion of other possibilities. One substitute teacher framed her response to incorporate considerations of monotony and routine, disclosing the following interesting depiction of substitute teaching:

Because I’ve been doing supply for six years now, I think because I’m getting older, I would like a more permanent position, but not necessarily in teaching. I’d like a job where I knew where I was going, I knew where I was going to be at certain times, and even if there were different I would like to know what I’m doing. This was good for a few years, but I’d like to move on, whether that’s going to be in Education, I don’t know, so I’m keeping my options open. I have a background in different areas. I could go into science, I could go into translation, or I could just stay in teaching. I don’t know if it’s going to be in teaching or not, but I think I would like to get out of supply teaching one of these years, one of these days, because it’s been a job that has been really interesting for me, but it does become boring after a while, seeing different kids everyday. It does get to be the same old routine, even though it’s no routine.
Only slightly distinct, this second observation also encompassed a diverse range of potential directions but differed in its overarching focus on the teaching profession, as opposed to considerations of other unrelated fields. Although she “hope[s] to continue working with children, [she] doesn’t see [her]self in a public school setting.” Instead, she increased her scope of vision to encompass what she described as “an alternative setting, [such as] in a private school, a hospital, etc.” She presented additional available options to these just offered: “I may set-up my own day care, if charter schools come into Ontario, I can see myself working in a charter school, or starting up a place of my own, although I’ll need a lot of help, but not necessarily in the public schools system. I’m not limited to that, since I want to keep all of my options open.”

In all cases, substitute teachers who were invited to reflect on future career paths did not imagine themselves carrying on in this line of work indefinitely. Interestingly, they considered the shortcomings of substitute teaching, while conceiving of more favourable conditions permitted by either a more secure teaching position or a complete transfer into another field of employment. In almost all cases, the remarks made by those considering a permanent teaching position, focused on what Metz (1989: 205) describes as “the importance of intrinsic rewards for teachers: [a] sense of pride of craft, of efficacy in their work, [as being] crucial to teacher’s occupational identity and their sense of satisfaction with their work.” Their approaches on this matter pointed to the prominent themes of professionalism, pedagogical practices, security and control so paramount in their discourse of substitute teaching.
The Way We Are

The perspectives of participants in this study indicated the complexities of immersion into two spheres, which simultaneously function to relegate substitute teachers to the margins of a reserve pool of employees and compels them forward into the visible world of teaching. Not entirely rooted in either domain, they are expected to transport themselves effortlessly from one to another, assuming classroom responsibilities during a teaching placement and leaving it behind at its closure, frequently without the full realization of their competencies and capabilities as "teachers." Consequently their experiences, and the self-identity they create and sustain illustrate a schismatic reality, as they live within a culture of contradictions and paradoxes: employed as teachers yet not often regarded as such, working with children but lacking at times meaningful bonds, members of a professional body, though occasionally ostracized by their full-time teaching colleagues. In certain instances, they embraced the pleasures extracted from their work, and in other cases they reacted quite forcefully to the upsets and disappointments. In other words, they embraced their marginal status while also expressing a desire to extricate themselves from the inequalities and subordination of their positions. What became apparent in Chapter 5 was that in freedom there are still constraints, and perhaps this description reflects most faithfully the realities of substitute teaching. In the absence of one school community and its associated stable relations, substitute teachers struggled to find meaning and validation both for themselves and their work. This often implied a battle against deeply rooted stereotypical assumptions which threatened to undermine their sense of work and importance to the prolonged functioning of the educational
system. As suggested in an earlier chapter, a retreat into silence as an expression of their alienation in actions permitted them the power to maintain their integrity rather than risk the consequences of further social and professional devaluation. This study aimed to suspend their continued silence and to bring their voices forward, granting them in the meanwhile the space to verbalize what has hitherto been repressed.

In conformity with the literature that studies the gendered component of teaching, the majority of participants were women, hence validating their large concentration in what Acker (1992: 148) describes as a "shadowy world of part-time posts and temporary posts, most of which are held by women." To this, I would add substitute teaching, and as the narratives bore out, this type of employment was still largely perceived as a woman's position, affording her the freedom to work intermittently while attending to domestic and familial obligations. The deconstruction of these interrelations, however, also emerged, as individuals expressed the viability of this teaching position for reasons that extended beyond traditional considerations of home and family. Instead, in times of economic disparity and reduced employment options, and in light of personal circumstances, substitute teaching was undertaken for diverse reasons and by various individuals, and thus, could not be seen simply as a strategic alternative for women with families first entering the profession, or returning after an extended absence.

The structures of these narratives reveal a politics of discourse characterized by dichotomy and rupture. There is no one consistent story, but rather dissenting views, and frequently, the only means of interpreting conflicting images and experiences is through reconciliating them in one’s own identity. The consequences of this assimilation means
surviving with fractures and accepting contradictions. To substitute teachers, this intrinsic state of being captures the very essence of themselves as temporary and fleeting employees.

Closing Remarks

The use of qualitative research methods for this study has brought to the forefront the many voices of substitute teachers largely unexplored and subjected to silence. In utilizing this means, their contributions to the teaching profession are validated and hence, take their place amongst the vast body of literature dominated primarily by studies of regular, full-time teachers. Saying this, however, does not suggest a conclusive ending to future research and continued learning, since the study's limitations point the way forward to potentially address these shortfalls. For example, if teacher absence and teacher substitution is presumed to continue in the absence of other acceptable alternatives, then how might the challenges and difficulties substitutes encounter be effectively ameliorated to affect a greater degree of personal satisfaction for the individual and successful organizational practices for schools and school systems? Although several solutions to these inquiries were briefly examined in the literature review section of this thesis, such direct questions were not posed to participants, resulting in a gap of personal perspectives and views in this area. Continued research and study of teacher substitution may serve to redress this absence.

Furthermore, the study's participants were drawn from a homogenous region of urban cities, and thus what went untapped in this thesis were the experiences of substitute teachers working in rural areas. Perhaps a larger study, incorporating this apparent lack, might reveal
new and enlightening finds, and thereby provide an analytic comparison of geographical disparities. Still another unexplored resource was the separate school system, whose own distinct religious base might have also offered stark contrasts to the issues arising from the public school domain. Although this study was relegated to the world of elementary teaching, a possible future examination might incorporate the experiences of substitute teachers in secondary schools and explore their own issues, concerns and interests as they diverge and echo those expressed by elementary substitute teachers in this thesis. Other possibilities may include relating substitute teachers’ experiences to the type, size and/or ethos of the school and determining how their beliefs are shaped by the school’s particular characteristics.

An apparent absence in this study was the inclusion of interviews with full-time teachers, students, administrators and parents, as they themselves have come to experience the consequences, and realities of teacher substitution. Again, this would require a much more extensive research endeavour which transcends the purpose of this thesis. The primary focus of granting full examination to substitute teachers has, I believe, been realized and remained in conformity with my original intent. Moreover, different methodological methods such as participant observation or a longitudinal study of following the “careers” of substitute teachers may also be considered as alternatives for future research.

Finally, the time of this writing coincided with the Ontario government’s sweeping educational reform as stipulated in Bill 160, that met with a province wide strike and a two week stoppage of the educational system. Substitute teachers’ experiences of this occurrence, and their projections of how these changes would impact on them specifically (who, coincidentally, received little attention during the debates) would have inevitably proved fruitful and offered additional insight to the issues already examined.
In closing, I reiterate the significance of opening the channels of discovery deemed quite scant in the literature, and in so doing, provide new vistas that allow the incorporation of non-mainstream teaching views and experiences to be heard and acknowledged. As I am similarly employed, the participants’ voices touched personal chords, which functioned at times as a cathartic process of expunging my own feelings and beliefs. The study’s conclusion, therefore, also signifies the end of a personal quest. It is hoped that the issues addressed throughout this thesis promoted and engendered a greater appreciation and understanding of substitute teaching, in all its intricacies and complexities.
Appendix A

Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Madam/Sir:

As a student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, I am currently working on my Masters of Arts thesis in the Department of Sociology. The title of the thesis is “Substitute Teachers in Elementary Schools and their Professional Discourse.”

My research aims to examine the teaching experiences of substitute teachers. In particular, I am interested in looked at what the work of substitute teaching involves, and how substitute teachers define and evaluate their work. In an interview, I would be asking you questions such as your ideas about substitute teaching, what your experiences have been as a substitute teacher, your past teaching career and future career aspirations. I would be grateful if you would assist me in this study by agreeing to be interviewed about these issues.

With your permission, the interview will be about an hour in duration and will be tape recorded and transcribed. There is no intent to evaluate the work or views of individuals. You can request that particular information be kept “off the record” or withdraw your participation at any time. Your name and identity will not be included in any written or oral reports. Raw data will be kept locked up in my possession.

At your request, I will provide you with a transcript of your interview/or a summary of the study. If you feel your views have not been accurately represented, you may contact me to request changes or modifications.

Please sign below if you have read the above and agree to participate in the study. I thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Mika Damianos

I have read this letter describing the research being conducted by Mika Damianos, understand the procedures and safeguards, as outlined, and agree to participate.

Date:______________________________

Name:_____________________________

Signature:__________________________
Appendix B

General Interview Questions

Can you tell me a bit about yourself: your age, ethnic background, place of birth, marital status?

Can you tell me how you happened to get into teaching?

What is your educational background?

Could you tell me how you came to be a substitute teacher?

How long have you been a substitute teacher?

What grade levels are you qualified to teach?

What other additional qualifications, if any, do you hold?

What are you currently teaching?

How often do you get called in to substitute teach?

Do you work at certain schools on a regular basis or in many different schools?

Do you prefer to work wherever you are requested or only at certain schools? How do you account for this preference?

What routines do you normally follow when you enter a classroom?

Can you tell me what has been the most enjoyable or pleasant experience you have had as a substitute teacher?

Can you tell me what has been the worst experience you have had as a substitute teacher?

What are your ideas about substitute teaching?

Can you tell me what you believe to be the benefits of substitute teaching?

What do you believe are some drawbacks of substitute teaching?

Could you describe some of the emotions you have felt while substitute teaching?

How would you describe the work of substitute teaching?
How do you find others see you as a substitute teacher—students, teachers, administrators, parents?

Can you tell me if you have ever worked as a permanent teacher or held a long-term occasional teaching? If you have, how did that work differ from your work as a substitute teacher?

Would you prefer a more permanent teaching position? Why or why not?

Can you tell me about your future career plans?

Is there anything that you would like to add or anything you feel was not asked regarding substitute teaching?
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