UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN SIDE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:
IMPROVING TEACHER MORALE, EFFICACY, MOTIVATION,
AND COMMITMENT

By

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Abstract

Finding a clear connection between principal actions and student achievement has proved remarkably difficult for educational researchers. Recently, a strong base of evidence has emerged suggesting that principals working indirectly through their teaching faculties can lead to improved student achievement. What constitutes the most effective sort of humanistic and supportive leadership - how exactly principals might lead more effectively through others - has become the research agenda. Recent empirical work illustrates that principals who lead through humanistic approaches can have a positive impact on student achievement in their schools. But what is not clearly known is exactly what ‘leading with teacher emotions in mind’ might actually look like; how can leaders ensure that faculty are emotionally well-served, possessed of a sense of efficacy, and committed to classroom success? The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the effects principals have on teacher emotions. What do teachers themselves report leaders do that improves teacher morale, commitment, and efficacy? To the extent that these questions retrace some of the emerging work of the field, they are confirmatory; to the extent that they elicit new responses, they are exploratory.
The research was based on interviews of 20 teachers working in secondary schools in Southern Ontario, Canada. Teachers reported that principal behaviours were central to their emotions, and often shaped their morale, efficacy, stress, commitment, and motivation. Key principal behaviours include: showing professional respect for teachers; encouraging and acknowledging teacher effort and results; providing appropriate protection; being seen; allowing teacher voice; and communicating principal vision. The thesis concluded that these behaviours suggest a natural path for school principals to work through the teachers in their school, and represent a meaningful indirect impact of leadership. Further research was recommended to establish the effect size of these principal behaviours, and determine if they apply across jurisdictions, school settings, and different age panels.
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I did not quite make it on time to have my mother read this. It would have been nice had she lived to see this project completed, but then I don’t think she doubted it would be done, and like most parents, was happy enough knowing that I found a passion to follow. My father deserves credit for listening to stories that were sometimes beyond his interest; a task not every father is suited to.

And Jennifer. Calvin Trillin, longtime contributor to the New Yorker, having lost his wife Alice, dedicated his next book her with these simple lines: “I wrote this for Alice. Actually, I wrote everything for Alice.” Well, I wrote everything for Jennifer, including this. It is no New Yorker, and that is entirely my fault, but if history is any guide she is likely to look past that. All due respect to Alice, but I cannot imagine she was ever as
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Finding a clear connection between principal behaviours and student achievement has proved remarkably difficult for educational researchers. The review of educational leadership studies by Hallinger and Heck (1996) - possibly the most commonly cited paper on the topic - showed, in the words of Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006), that “little or no direct relationship exists between principal leadership and student achievement” (p. 426). Yet, the K-12 schooling systems of Canada and the US assume that school principals are important in achieving improved student outcomes. Principals are largely responsible for teacher selection, retention, and dismissal; they drive the instructional agenda, selecting school priorities for faculties to pursue; they allocate resources within the school in order to achieve the kinds of change initiatives important in the district and system. In short, while teachers do most of the “heavy lifting” in schools - they are the front line workers - much hope and responsibility has been invested in principals to lead the kinds of improvements policymakers and parents alike want to see.

Since Hallinger and Heck (1996), the range of questions has shifted to indirect principal effects. The thinking: even if research eliminates the possibility of principals having any direct effects on student outcomes, principals might still be able to improve the performance of the students in their schools by working through their teachers. As Hallinger and Heck (1996) put it, “… achieving results through others is the essence of leadership… Understanding the routes by which principals can improve school outcomes through working with others is itself a worthy goal for research” (p. 39). Other researchers
echo this conception of school leadership. Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger (2003), argue that the conception of leadership as “mediated by teacher practices and attitudes” (p. 418) has the most empirical support. The view that has come to encapsulate the field is “principals helping teachers helping students” (Mascall, 2003).

What constitutes the most effective sort of leadership has become the research agenda; how can principals more effectively lead through others? Recent empirical work by Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) illustrates that, of the aspects of school performance under the influence of principals, principals who lead through humanistic approaches can have a positive impact on student achievement in their schools. In what is sometimes called transformational leadership by researchers like Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), principals operate “by creating a shared sense of direction, clear goals and support and encouragement for peoples’ work” (p. 185). This form of leadership is supportive in its emphasis on understanding the emotional and affective needs of teachers and students. It sustains and encourages, providing the necessary motivation to meet the many, sometimes exhausting, challenges of teaching (Addison& Brundrett, 2008). And even detractors of the softer side of school leadership (like Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008) who argue empirical support for transformational, supportive, humanistic leadership is lacking), concede that “the types of motivational, collaborative, and interpersonal skills that are emphasized in transformational leadership research are essential to leaders’ ability to improve teaching and learning” (p. 666). Leithwood (2007) is clearest in his endorsement of leading in emotionally supportive ways when he argues “this may be the most powerful, ‘natural’ path through which principals contribute to student learning” (p. 628), declaring that:
A compelling body of evidence suggests that principal leadership has a large influence (through conditions they help to create in their school organizations) on how teachers feel about their work and the subsequent consequences of those feelings on teaching and learning (p. 628).

Yet, as Leithwood et al. (2010) note, the field is gripped by “a relatively confusing body of empirical evidence” (p. 695). A variety of domains of principal influence have been identified, but only recently have researchers begun to test these conceptions; this project is only recently underway, and one hopes it will be sustained.

Research Objectives

The purpose of the study is to understand the effects principals have on teacher emotions. If the emotional, internal states of teachers are important to teacher commitment, motivation, morale and a sense of efficacy, how can leaders ensure that faculty are emotionally well-served, possessed of a sense of efficacy, and committed to classroom success? How would teachers describe their internal states - their emotions? What do teachers themselves report leaders do that improves teacher morale, commitment, and efficacy? To the extent that these questions retrace some of the emerging work of the field, they are confirmatory; to the extent that they might elicit new responses, they are exploratory. (For an example of a similar study rationale, see, Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002; Leithwood, Straus, & Anderson, 2007.)

This study builds on some important work already done to understand the effect principals have on teachers in their schools. It aims to extend and deepen an emerging understanding about emotionally responsive and responsible school leadership through the consideration of what Leithwood (2007) and Leithwood and Beatty (2008) argue are the
central elements: job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; a sense of individual and collective self-efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement; and a willingness and motivation to improve their practices. As well, the study is guided by Leithwood’s (2006) study of teacher working conditions for the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario.

The specific research question and sub-questions addressed by this study are:

**What impact do the actions (or inactions) of leaders have on the emotional lives of teachers?**

1) What principal actions influence teacher emotions?

2) How do these actions shape organizational commitment, sense of self-efficacy, motivation, satisfaction, morale, stress, and burnout?

3) How do these actions and subsequent emotions affect how teachers approach their work?

4) What principal actions do teachers believe will emotionally support their work?

**Significance of the Study**

Given the resources invested in the principalship, and the role it plays in our current conception of the mechanisms of school improvement, both practitioners and researchers have an interest in the findings from a research project such as this. District and system leaders would benefit from a clearer, more precise, and more empirically valid understanding of the ways principals are likely to improve schools. As well, principals themselves would be well-served by knowing precisely where their energies are best spent. As Earl, Freeman, Lasky, Sutherland and Torrance (2002) argue, “Learning for capacity in schools depends on believing in success, making connections, attending to motivation, experiencing emotion, being a community, engaging in inquiry, fostering creativity,
encouraging practice, and finding time” (p. 75). Yet, what needs further exploration is the set of specific practices associated with these capacities. While there have been several meta-analyses of leadership effects (Hattie, 2012), the number of studies to address the question of indirect leader effects is still fairly spotty. Leithwood and Sun (2012) argue for studies that understand in deep ways the most fruitful leadership practices:

All but the largest and most ambitious of future studies, in other words, should use “deeper” measures of fewer variables so as to produce more robust evidence about a smaller number of associations than is possible with the more complex designs required for indirect effects leadership studies… future research inquiring about how leadership influences student learning should also be “practice specific” (412).

This study contributes to the growing recognition of the importance of teacher emotions in teacher performance (for example, Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood, 2010; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Hargreaves, 2001) and better describe the kinds of practices leaders should adopt to improve the functioning of their schools. In that it describes the best practices of leading through others, the study sheds light on what the literature of the educational administration field has largely decided is the mechanism for principal effects. In the short run, this study offers insights about the nature of leadership and practical suggestions for leaders to improve their practice. (While school leadership that is sensitive to the emotions of teachers is humane in its own right, the possibility of this kind of school leadership improving student outcomes should not be overlooked.) As such, it fulfills the wishes of researchers like Leithwood who has recently worried about the gaps in the reform efforts underway in places like Ontario:
Another one of the challenges in our large-scale reform efforts right now, which focus on capacity building, is to bring emotions out of the shadows and say ‘this is part of capacity building too’. We have to nurture the way our staff is feeling about their work if we expect them to be resilient and sustain their efforts. The work has to be something that’s meaningful. It needs to feel like we’re making progress, and it needs to be something teachers are confident about being able to do (Leithwood, 2010, p. 2).

This study keeps the research agenda focused on this central question.

Furthermore, this study would, to the extent that qualitative research can, confirm the findings of previous studies (Beatty, 2000a; Beatty, 2000b; and Leithwood & Beatty, 2008, especially). Those studies, and those of Hargreaves as well (Hargreaves, 2001) rest on the same data set of 53 interviews conducted over a decade ago. The evidence basis for the conclusions about emotionally savvy leadership needs to be more substantial for the field to have confidence in the conclusions.

To the extent that this study is exploratory, it suggests new directions for the development of more comprehensive quantitative measurement tools with the eventual goal of widespread quantitative testing. The most recent quantitative work testing the effectiveness of the “emotional path” of school leadership found a strong correlation between emotionally savvy leadership and school performance. But even that work rests on a small evidence basis. First, no study has brought together all measures currently identified to test them in a single study (the most recent work that comes closest, Leithwood et al. (2010), uses only two - teacher trust and collective teacher efficacy - of five possible measures); and second, the field is plagued with the same sample size and
replication problems that has been the source of much criticism in educational research generally. An example: the work by Leithwood et al. (2010) to test the effectiveness of leading through the Emotions Path gathered data from 199 schools - but collected an average of only six teacher surveys per school, and included data from schools where as few as three teachers had participated.

Thus, two major elements of significance exist for this study. First, some early results exploring the role of humanistic leadership would benefit from confirmation and a richer description of the phenomenon. And second, to the extent that quantitative tools emerge from the inductive work of qualitative studies, the field would benefit from another round of theory generation - in doing so, it is hoped that more accurate and comprehensive survey tools could be developed to assess the impact of emotionally responsive leadership strategies across many hundreds of schools. It is unlikely the phenomenon has been adequately captured in the existing quantitative measurement tools; before better tools can be developed, more inductive work is needed.
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Review of the Literature

Nearly anyone who has ever been in a school will be struck by the powerful emotions that exist there: children show joy, sorrow, regret, guilt, ecstasy, and boredom; parents have anxiety, pride, anger (sometimes even rage), and worry; and teacher faculty rooms are often filled with helpful, supportive interactions, or frustration, anger, and sniping about this reform measure, the difficult student or parent, and - of course - the administration. Schools are emotional places. Yet, most reform efforts have tended to be at the level of the technical or rational - the development of rubrics, or of learning teams, or of the application of cognitive theories on learning.

In 1991, Hargreaves and Tucker wrote, “studies of teacher feeling as compared to teacher thinking have been relatively neglected” (p. 491). Seven years later, Hargreaves (1998) would write with even stronger language, “many of those who initiate and manage educational reform, or who write about educational change in general, ignore or underplay one of the most fundamental aspects of teaching and of how teachers change: the emotional dimension” (p. 835). And again, Hargreaves (2001), inspired partly from Hochschild’s (1983) work, The Managed Heart (and work by Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993), complained that the reform movements of the age ignore emotional issues central to educational administration: “standards-based and largely cognitive-driven reforms do not capture all of what matters most in developing really good teaching. They do not quite get to the heart of it” (p. 1056).

Perhaps Hargreaves is correct: despite the obviousness of emotions in schools, phrases like “teacher emotions” are quite uncommon in the literature. His quarrel rings true - at least when put in his terms - that “we have no systematic understanding of how
teachers’ emotions are shaped by the variable and changing conditions of their work nor of how these emotions are manifested in teachers’ interactions with students, parents, administrators, and each other” (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1058). And yet over the past two or three decades there has been a steady development of the importance of teacher emotions, if we consider the search in broader terms. Researchers from within the study of education, and from the fields of organization studies, psychology, and business outside it, have developed a rich understanding of how front-line workers experience their work, gain satisfaction and morale or lose it, leave their professions or stay, build value or destroy it. Starting perhaps as early as social psychologists like Sarason (1971), and organizational theorists like Schein (2010), notions of culture have been seen as central to organizational improvement. Work on self-efficacy, burnout, morale, motivation (going back to at least as early as McGregor in 1960), and commitment, have also added to our understanding of how organizations can function most effectively - what Evans (2001) calls the “human side of school change.” This area of research, then, is both well-established and novel: well-established because in its various elements it has been studied for fifty years, and novel because it has only been in the last five years or so that researchers have started to develop satisfying conceptual models to bring together the various threads involved. Perhaps, as Leithwood (2007) and Leithwood and Beatty (2008) have done, we have an opportunity to synthesize a variety of other well-studied measures into one - teacher emotions - and use this concept to develop leadership along these lines to improve the function of our schools.

**Conceptual Framework**

It is true that many factors influence the quality of student outcomes in a school. Going back to Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, and York
(1966) the role of a student’s socioeconomic status was understood as the most important factor in explaining student schooling outcomes. Add to that the oft-debated role of school facilities, broader social trends and influences, labour issues, and a long list of other factors affecting student achievement. Researchers are forced to concede that the activities of the school and its actors do not have perfect control over student outcomes. But to the extent that they do, some schools perform better than others - and the reasons for this are becoming clearer and clearer.

The model of indirect leader effects below reflects the work of Leithwood et al. (2004), as well as Leithwood and Beatty (2008). It concedes, as Leithwood et al. (2004) do, that leadership effects are not immediate to the student, nor do they supersede those of the classroom teacher. But leaders can influence a broader set of positive relationships throughout the school community by working through others, as Hallinger and Heck (1996) emphasize.
The model above suggests that leaders work through teachers to create better schools, and that in doing so the soft skills of diplomacy and emotionally savvy leadership are central to the endeavor. There are other ways of understanding the relationship between teacher performance, leadership behaviors, and student outcomes, but there is evidence that this particular chain of effects is one that has research support. The literature establishes this in fairly broad terms, with some degree of confidence, in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Leithwood et al, 2010; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Walhstrom (2004); Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Leithwood, 2007). What is not exactly clear - or studied well enough to warrant endorsement - is a rich understanding of what elements of humanistic leadership, according to teachers, have the most meaningful impact on their practice. (While the conceptual framework used here acknowledges that improving student
achievement is the focus of teachers’ professional practice, the current study will not explicitly add to evidence of this relationship.) There are other ways of understanding the relationship between teacher performance, leadership behaviors, and student outcomes, but there is evidence that this particular chain of effects is one that has research support.

**Leadership Effects**

While it is commonly believed, at least by some principals themselves, that school leadership has a powerful and direct effect on student outcome, the research has not always shown this. A thorough survey of the research by Hallinger and Heck (1996) cast doubt that any direct relationship between principal leadership and student performance existed. Witziers et al. (2003), who revisited this question, largely echo “earlier research findings on the limitations of the direct effects approach to linking leadership with student achievement” (p. 398). Given the model of school organization in modern school systems - the district hires principals to run schools at their best, using the principal as at least one important lever of improvement - the question of what effect school leaders actually have on student achievement is critically important. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Walhstrom (2004), in a landmark study of school leadership, argue that school leaders are important, and that “the total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a quarter of total school effects” (p. 5). And one can grant a lot of limitations before giving up on the importance of school leadership; while it is true that schools do not have absolute control over individual student achievement, and leaders do not have absolute control over the functioning of the school, it is reasonable to say that while our view is necessarily limited by the complex nature of the enterprise, high-functioning schools with the most-capable leaders are the only things likely to improve
schooling outcomes. To the extent that change *can* happen, which may be limited, this is likely the only way. Space does not permit full elaboration on this extensive literature, but how *exactly* principals shape school achievement has become the research agenda (see, for example, Leithwood, Menzies, Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leitwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004; Witziers et al., 2003; De Maeyer, Rymenans, Van Petegem, van der Bergh, & Rijlaarsdam, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

The move away from looking for direct leader effects, then, has begun, but it should not be lamented. While it might be satisfying to find many clear direct effects of school leadership, perhaps it is too much to hope for. After all, schools are collaborative places where the success of students is owed to many—from teachers to custodians, to principals themselves. But what can leaders do? Many researchers have pointed to the powerful role principals can play in having *indirect* effects on student performance. Hallinger and Heck (1996) offer solace in the same article that cast doubt on the role of principal in improving schools:

> The fact that leadership effects on school achievement appear to be indirect is neither cause for alarm or dismay. As noted previously, achieving results through others is the essence of leadership… Understanding the routes by which principals can improve school outcomes through working with others is itself a worthy goal for research (p. 39).

Witziers et al. (2003) also argue that the indirect model of understanding leader influences, those mediated by teacher actions themselves, is the one that most accurately represents the reality of schools.
There are reasons to be optimistic about this way of conceptualizing school leadership and its effects. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) have advanced a rich understanding of transformational leadership, centered on supportive, emotionally savvy leadership practices, mindsets and dispositions. It is humanistic, in that it considers the needs of teachers and students. It is not merely technical or transactional, nor concerned with external rewards and close management. It is this style of leadership that Leithwood, in particular, but many others in the field, believe is the most productive style of leadership (see, for example, Leithwood, 2004) - while not discounting the utility of transactional leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). It has as its core several leader objectives: setting directions, helping people, and redesigning organizations (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005), and the recently added, managing the instructional program (Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

What does it mean to do these sorts of things as a leader? We now return to the issue of teacher emotions. For as this line of thinking understands it, for a leader to be able to have a positive impact on teacher performance, a principal needs to understand the teachers and the culture of the school; understand the motivation behind the desire to teach; the various beliefs and feelings behind self-conceptions of teachers; and what makes them commit and what makes them disengage. Recently, Leithwood (2007) has brought these elements together into a compelling model of leadership effects though teacher emotions, arguing that one of the central roles of the school leader is to improve teacher performance through a consideration of teachers’ emotional needs. The rest of this review will examine the evidence base for this strong endorsement of emotionally-responsive and responsible school leadership through the consideration of what Leithwood (2007) and Leithwood and
Beatty (2008) argue, as indicated above, are the central elements: *job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; a sense of individual and collective self-efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement; and a willingness and motivation to improve their practices*. Many of the sources that follow were reviewed by Leithwood (2006) as part of his working conditions survey for the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario. As well, see Hirsch (2004) and Dibbon (2004) for similar jurisdiction-wide surveys of teaching workload and conditions.

**Job Satisfaction and Morale**

If we include studies from the larger body of research on job satisfaction and morale, there is a very mature set of findings. Though not always consistent, they do often point to a satisfaction-performance relationship, the tendency of dissatisfied teachers to leave schools (or the profession), and the importance of the principal in creating the best work environment to ensure performance and retention (Angle & Perry, 1981; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; McKenzie, 2005; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004). It stands to reason that teachers who dislike their work will not perform it well, or perhaps leave altogether. Baylor and Ritchie (2002) were bold enough to say that “Teacher morale influences all aspects of the teaching and learning environment within the school setting” (p. 410).

Several studies warrant attention - and while some do, not all firmly establish the importance of school-based dissatisfaction. In a relatively large survey of teachers in Australia, New Zealand, and England, Dinham and Scott (2000) showed that teacher dissatisfaction was not caused primarily from in-school factors: “dissatisfiers are largely out of the control of teachers and schools, and found within the wider domain of society,
governments, and the employing body” (p. 389), and teachers were “somewhat ambivalent about school-based factors which, in part, are a product of the leadership and decision-making processes and styles existing in their particular school” (p. 390). In a survey of 681 teachers in Newfoundland, Dibbon (2004) found that a lack of preparation time was “the strongest predictor of teacher job satisfaction” (p. 16) - though, even here 63% of teachers responded that “I would still choose to be a teacher,” and 89% assented to “Overall satisfaction with my job as a teacher” (p. 17). Rhodes et al. (2004) in their study of English teachers’ satisfactions and dissatisfaction found that many factors that school leaders have some control over were centrally important. Ninety-six percent found the workload deeply dissatisfying, the same number held true for proportion of time spent on administration, and 98% disliked the “performance management” policy. And yet even here some nuance exists: 85% answered, “managers provide effective support for teachers” (p. 72).

Ingersoll (2001) uses one of the largest data sets available - the US national School and Staffing Survey (SASS) - to echo many other researchers when he argues that teacher dissatisfaction is a major cause of turnover - and by far the most important school-level reason for leaving is “inadequate administrative support” (see p. 521 for a chart of the major predictors of turnover). Stockard and Lehman (2004) also used the SASS data and found that “the most important influences on satisfaction involve variables related to social support and school management, and that the most important influence on retention decisions is job satisfaction” (p. 742). Similarly, for morale: when morale is low, performance suffers. Zigarelli (1996) found that high teacher morale was among the strongest predictors of school success – and yet, the phenomenon is not well understood (for a similar paper, see Black, 2001). Zigarelli’s study, contrary to other studies cited here,
reported that “No evidence was found that teacher empowerment... (or) most principal influences, and quality of relations between the administration and the school are related to student performance” (p. 103). As well, Bascia and Rottman (2011), grant that while “teaching conditions do seem to affect teachers’ emotions…” (p. 797), their research “suggests a reciprocal relationship between conditions that influence the quality of teaching and conditions that influence students’ opportunities to learn” (p. 795). School leaders might be quite limited in what they can do to improve the performance of teachers through an emotional mechanism if the causal relationship is the other way around, or at the very least, dynamic; perhaps teacher satisfaction “as a reflection, rather than a driver, of the quality of conditions for teaching and learning” (Bascia & Rottman, 2011, p. 795).

Nonetheless, there is widespread evidence linking teacher performance and their satisfaction, and that relationship deserves continued attention. Leithwood and Beatty (2008), argue the evidence “places the practice of leaders very near the centre of the factors that account for teachers’ job satisfaction and morale” (p. 29). Perhaps on the topic of teacher morale, Acker (1992) puts it best: “Teachers' perceptions and interpretations are clearly a major component of any approach to career… They have to believe that they have some power to shape their own destinies; otherwise, schools would grind to a halt under the weight of demoralized teachers” (p. 159). At the very least, there is a considerable amount of study supporting the commonsense notion that happy teachers, satisfied teachers, teach with greater passion and engagement than those who are the opposite (Hirsch, 2004; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). And many studies point to the part for the school leader to play in improving the lives of teachers in order to improve the learning of students (for example, Black, 2001; Mascall, 2003; Schmidt, 2010; Ozcan 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004).
Stress, Anxiety, Burnout

The term burnout was coined by Freudenberger in 1974, in an article about work in a clinic, but it sounds remarkably similar to what might be overheard in a faculty lunchroom:

The dedicated and the committed. Now that may sound foolish. But just think for a minute... . We would rather put up than shut up. And what we put up is our talents, our skills, we put in long hours with a bare minimum of financial compensation. But it is precisely because we are dedicated that we walk into a burn-out trap. We work too much, too long and too intensely. We feel a pressure from within to work and help and we feel a pressure from the outside to give. When the staff member then feels an additional pressure from the administrator to give even more, he is under a three-pronged attack (Freudenberger, 1974, p. 161).

Closer to the world of the classroom, Cunningham (1983) wrote that teacher burnout results from “stress related to inordinate time demands, inadequate relationships, large class sizes, lack of resources, isolation, fear of violence, role ambiguity, limited promotional opportunities, lack of support, etc.” (p. 37). The results of burnout, which can grow when unmoderated by school leadership, can be profound, suggest Blase and Greenfield (1985):

Burnout has significant negative effects on teachers, their schools, and their students. Teachers suffering from excessive stress or burnout tend to demonstrate increased absenteeism and a decline in classroom performance, as well as poor interpersonal relations with colleagues and students. These teachers are less sympathetic toward students, and less committed to and involved in their jobs. They
have a lower tolerance for classroom disruption, are less apt to prepare adequately for class, and are generally less productive. Burned-out teachers can have a chilling effect on the morale of new teachers (p. 46).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) created a tool called the Maslach Burnout Inventory to assess burnout, arguing that burnout occurs in three ways: feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced state of personal accomplishment and esteem. This tool has been used in studies of school settings, specifically Sava (2002), to assess the impact of student burnout from harsh control measures, and Friedman and Farber’s (1992) survey of 641 Israeli teachers pointed to the possible roles school principals can play in mediating teacher stress and preventing burnout:

... reform efforts that reduce classroom size, permit teachers to choose their own texts and design their own curricula, provide additional services for students with learning difficulties, facilitate parent-teacher collaboration – efforts that have as a common basis the related goals of increasing the probability of classroom success and the intrinsic rewards of reaching students - are considerably more likely to make a difference to teachers in terms of their vulnerability to burnout (p. 33).

There have been several Canadian examples of the discussion of teacher workload and burnout (see, for example, Belliveau, Liu & Murphy, 2002). The summary of teacher burnout literature from Leithwood et al. (1996) is perhaps the most comprehensive to date, and it is repeated and added to in his 2008 work with Beatty, Leading with Teacher Emotions in Mind, the inspiration for much of the review here, as well. Through the “provision of support and the creation of an ethic of openness to being influenced about decisions” (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008, p. 41), school leaders can impact the very internal
states that can either sustain the emotional labour of teaching, or undermine it through burnout.

**Self- and Collective-Efficacy**

There are few matters so studied as teacher self-efficacy - there are hundreds of studies from many nations across many areas of teaching that establish its importance. Beginning with the work of Bandura (1977) to establish the field, the work has since been carried on by many others (for example, see early studies like Armor, Conroy-Oseguera, Cox, King, McDonnell, & Pascal, 1976; Ashton, Buhr, and Crocker, 1984; Gibson and Dembo, 1984; or through surveys of the field like Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) to establish the centrality of this concept in explaining teacher effectiveness. Put simply, efficacy is something like individuals believing in their ability to complete a task. The importance of teacher efficacy was stumbled on in a 1976 study by Armor et al. for the Rand Corporation; the magnitude of the effect was surprising. The study found no impact at all from teacher background (including level of education, race, teacher training, graduate degrees, or undergraduate major). But, teacher efficacy was found to have a major role in reading improvement. By correlating data from a teacher efficacy survey to student performance results, the study found that, “The more efficacious the teachers felt, the more their students advanced in reading achievement. This measure was strongly and significantly related to increases in reading” (Armor et al., 1976, pp. 23-4). Anderson, Green, and Loewen (1988), in a study confirming the Armor results, found data that “suggested that teachers’ personal efficacy beliefs at the beginning of the year do affect student achievement” (p. 148). What teachers believe matters. The teacher who views the task as impossible will likely - and predictably - fail.
There has been much more work in the intervening years to add to the discussion, like the addition of internal and external elements (Guskey & Passaro, 1994), distinctions between personal and general teaching efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and many others. But perhaps the most salient to the ideas of this paper is the addition of the notion of collective teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Bandura (1993) explains the concept like this:

Schools in which the staff collectively judge themselves as powerless to get students to achieve academic success convey a group sense of academic futility that can pervade the entire life of the school. School staff members who collectively judge themselves capable of promoting academic success imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere for development (p. 141).

It is not enough that individual teachers believe they can have an impact on the achievement of their students; whole schools must believe they are capable of greatness.

Here, too, Leithwood and Beatty (2008) make a case for the leader to take a central role in the development of teachers’ individual and collective notions of efficacy: “The role of the leader in setting the scene for continuous improvement is a powerful one that depends on strengthening beliefs, such as self-efficacy, among teachers” (pp. 59-60)...

“What we see is the value of encouraging teachers to see themselves as having agency, potency, and the ability to direct their own professional learning” (p. 59 - italics in the original). In fact, this sounds familiar to the reader of efficacy studies. In 1976, Armor et al. argued in language that is reminiscent of more recent studies that, “It is possible that an improvement in teachers’ morale and commitment could be produced by school policies
that support teachers and help them solve their classroom problems, and that their sense of efficacy might improve as a result” (Armor et al., 1976, p. 24).

**Organizational Commitment and Engagement**

Outside of education, there has been much study of organizational behaviour and commitment. An early study by Angle and Perry (1981) found that commitment was a predictor of employee retention and speculated it “may also be a predictor of employee effort and performance” (p. 2). Yet, given the results of their data were mixed, the authors cautioned against researchers “assuming a simplistic relationship between commitment and positive performance outcomes” (Angle & Perry, 1981, p. 12). Indeed, others have cautioned, the relationship between commitment and performance might actually work the other way around (Bateman & Strasser, 1994). Yet there persists both an intuitive sense and empirical support for the connection between employee attitudes and their working behavior – and a belief that “Supervisory behavior - especially that generally described as ‘supportive’ or ‘considerate’- could represent a common cause” of organizational commitment (Bateman & Organ, 1983, p. 593).

More recently, Wright and Bonett (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of 27 studies, involving 3,630 participants, that showed decisively that commitment tended to decay with time. During the honeymoon phase, they argue, “the likelihood of maintaining a high level of commitment and performance during this initial period may well be enhanced” (p. 1187). And when the honeymoon phase ends, it “may lead to a decrease in both commitment and performance levels” (Wright & Bonett, 2002, p. 1187). In what is one of the most thorough surveys of teacher commitment, Dannetta (2002) argues the literature:
...reveals that the principal can be directly responsible for as many as eleven of the twenty-three factors that influence teacher commitment to student learning. Principal preparation initiatives should assist principals in appreciating the significance of a teacher's commitment to student learning and fostering the development of such commitment by identifying those factors that influence a teacher's commitment to student learning that they have control over. Of particular note was the skill of “buffering” their staff from tedious paperwork, and the management of new initiatives; these proved to influence negatively a teacher's commitment to student learning (p. 166).

Leithwood and Beatty (2008) point to Datnow and Castellano (2000) who, when studying the implementation of whole school reform, found teachers were willing to persevere with a difficult teaching job if it meant better student achievement. And Leithwood's (2006) most comprehensive survey of teacher working conditions offers yet more clues on what disengages teachers. The following list represents over a dozen studies and summarizes nicely the reasons teachers left their school or district of profession:

- low salaries, especially relative to other nearby districts
- employment opportunities outside teaching
- leadership style of principal/lack of support from school administrators
- lack of autonomy
- lack of influence on school decisions
- inadequate facilities
• student characteristics, for example, race, ethnicity, apathy, indiscipline, and low achievement
• lack of access to professional development
• low status of the profession in the community
• poor relationships with parents and the community
• negative images of teaching in the popular media
• class load including average class size
• teaching outside one’s area of certification
• burden of non-teaching duties
• government policies (erratic and unresponsive) creating confusion and uncertainty
• accountability and increase in use of high-stakes tests (Leithwood, 2006, p. 43).

While not all these factors are under the control of the principal, many of them are.

The conclusion Leithwood and Beatty (2008) draw from this and other research (like Blase & Blase, 2001, whom they paraphrase here) is this: “Leaders build commitment and engagement when they share governance and foster collaborative, learning-focused cultures that are resilient and adept at solving problems” (p. 74) – what Austin and Harkins (2008) call “post-bureaucratic practices” (105). Leaders need to be aware of the threats to commitment and reduce them wherever possible. Part of a principal’s job, the literature suggests, is to keep his or her staff free to do their best work, to nurture their passions, be democratic and collaborative, while freeing them from the tedium of administrivia.
Motivation

The notion of what drives any employee to produce better and better work has a long history of debate. Intuitive notions abound, theories reproduce, but a systematic understanding of motivation - specifically teacher motivation - has not yet been arrived at. That said, much of the early work in motivation, such as that in Douglas McGregor’s (1960) *The Human Side of Enterprise*, is repeated and validated in the empirical research under review here. McGregor wrote of motivation:

> In engineering, control exists in adjustment to natural law. It does not mean making nature do our bidding. We do not, for example, dig channels in the expectation that water will flow uphill... In the human field, the situation is the same, but we often dig channels to make water flow uphill. Many of our attempts to control behaviour, far from representing selective adaptations, are in direct violation of human nature. They consist in trying to make people behave as we wish without concern for natural law. Yet we can no more expect to achieve desired results through inappropriate action in this field than in engineering (pp. 8-9).

In surveying the field of failed reforms, it appears like principals and school systems have often asked teachers to “flow uphill.”

Many reform efforts have tended to view merit pay or performance pay as the solution to educational disappointments. The logic is not obviously false: pay people more, increase their ability to satisfy one of their interests (money), and see a better result. The evidence, though, does not bear this out. Granted, pay is sometimes a motivator - teachers do want “salaries that would allow them to live comfortably” (Ozcan, 1996, p. 33; see also Shen, 1997) - as granted by McGregor (1960) and the more recent popular work by Pink
(2009). But intrinsic rewards are greater for teachers than extrinsic ones. Perhaps one of the more interesting studies that illustrates the point comes from Heneman (1998) who investigated the effects of a rather complex performance-pay model of school reform in Kentucky. Teachers who were able to meet certain criteria for improvement received bonuses. According to Heneman (1998), “Bonuses were viewed as appropriate and an appreciated form of recognition, though of too small an amount. Helping students learn and seeing them meet achievement goals were reported to be more potent motivators than the bonus per se” (p. 43). And indeed, teachers reported that “The possibility of earning a bonus itself motivates me to improve student achievement” at a low frequency (Heneman, 1998, p. 53). This finding is remarkable given that at the time the average salary in the district was $30,654 (Heneman, 1998, p. 47).

Addison and Brundrett (2008) find from their mixed-methods study of schools in Britain that “The schools (under study) divided equally into two groups: those where the staff appeared generally motivated and those where they appeared demotivated” (p. 92). They argued that the motivation of the teachers was both a major consideration for school- and system-wide improvement, and that it was also something under the control of the school leadership:

The main conclusion was that the differences which arose related to the strengths and weakness in the leadership and management of the schools themselves and that although there are many decisions over which a school has no control, much can be done locally to manage the motivational and demotivational impact of the challenges facing schools at the beginning of the twenty-first century (p. 92).
School leaders, according to Addison and Brundrett (2008), have perhaps the central role to play in regulating the level of motivation of the faculty in any given school, especially given the pace of change coming from system-reform efforts, echoing other researchers cited here that the “importance of leadership in relation to motivation, having found that school-specific circumstances such as the quality of leadership of the head teacher, insufficient feedback and efforts not being recognised, have a far greater impact on morale than national issues” (p. 82).

Leithwood and Beatty (2008) argue: “Motivation is the source of energy that sustains improvements in our schools” (p. 85). This notion seems obviously true, as it would be in nearly any organization. What is unique about schools, though, is the particular motivation of teachers: to do the best possible job at “reaching” students. In the face of the failure of extrinsic rewards (and punishments) to achieve better results, school leaders would be wise to turn to other forms of persuasion. Relationships and emotional connections - between the principal and the staff as well as among the staff themselves - seem promising motivators to improve practice; formal control does not. Sarason’s (1971) words seem as true today as they did then: “The power to legislate change is no guarantee that change will occur - a principle the principal learned when as a teacher he was confronted with changing the behaviour of children” (p. 120).

The survey of studies above paints an emerging, if yet unclear, picture: while the technical elements of school reform and improvement are important, so too are the interpersonal, emotional, and relational aspects. It is transformational (though not only) in the sense that “transformational leadership theory emphasizes emotions and values, attributes importance to symbolic behavior, and conceptualizes the role of the leader as
helping making events meaningful for followers” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 178, paraphrasing Yukl, 1989). Engaging in the culture of the organization is important as Deal and Peterson (2009) and Schein (2010) emphasize. And advocates of this kind of leadership, Leithwood in particular, have argued this kind of emotional consideration is a powerful - maybe the most powerful (Leithwood, 2007) - path to student improvement.

What is left to do?

First, the evidence is not as satisfying as one might like. It is not always clear, and frequently central claims of this emerging idea are contradicted, as indicated throughout. Part of the story is certainly a methodological one; given that the school is the main unit of study, and that schools are complicated places with histories, cultures, and intervening factors of all sorts, finding the effects of principal leadership is quite a challenge, indeed. Responding to the disquieting finding from Coleman et al (1966) that the individual qualities and characteristics of schools mattered little in student outcome (at least in comparison to socioeconomic status), Hoy et al. (2006) put it nicely:

It is one thing to identify high-performing schools in neighborhoods of low socioeconomic status (SES) and attribute their performance to leadership characteristics or climate or an orderly environment, any of which may be present at those schools. It is quite another matter to demonstrate a priori that school leadership or other school properties will be directly and systematically related to student success in a controlled study involving a large sample (p. 426).

Also, reducing studies from a variety of fields and nations, with differing conceptual assumptions, is a challenging task indeed.
As Witziers et al. (2003), point out, “What is needed is more insight into the role of school leaders in developing and sustaining these cultures” (p. 416). While there is a large volume of work from the past decade connecting leading to learning, much more work needs to be done to identify the specific levers principals can use to lead in this fashion. And these studies need to be of a higher-quality than many that have come before.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) have pointed to the sometimes unreliable nature of educational research: “When it comes to maintaining a research focus long enough to actually learn something with a reasonable degree of confidence, the field of educational leadership studies is a notoriously unstable one” (p. 194). This is a more polite way of describing the many failures of educational research to produce confidence in results that has been articulated elsewhere, humorously by Richard Feynman (1974) when he calls much of the field “cargo cult science,” and more recently by Walsh (2001). Some of Walsh’s concerns are at play in this research - small sample sizes, sometimes questionable international comparisons, and the inclusion of a lack of peer-reviewed results.

Witziers (2003) “plead” (p. 417) for longitudinal and intervention studies, and this appears to be the future on this topic - we could also add to the list more mixed-methods and qualitative studies. While quantitative studies are important, they only “typically contribute to our understanding with a snapshot” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 242). What is needed is a long-term sustained research effort, longitudinal, perhaps interventionist or experimental, qualitative and quantitative, to put flesh on the bones of this important area of research, and to test empirically the hypotheses involved.

Leithwood’s (2007) synthesis - along with his work with Beatty (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Beatty, 2000b) - provide the most compelling attempt thus far to bring
together these various strands in one satisfying account of “soft” leader impacts. If
teaching is infused with emotion, in order to build the best schools we ought to know what
drives teachers to commit and persist, and what disillusions them and weakens their
practice. At both the school and system level (Levin, 2008), these are likely important
considerations, and given the restrictions on leader influences, perhaps the most important
levers we have. What might be at stake is nothing less that the quality of our system of
schooling. What is left is to test this conception of understanding school leadership and its
effects on student achievement.

On the quantitative side, there has been much promising work. In at least five
domains (collective teacher efficacy, individual teacher efficacy, teacher burnout, teacher
trust, and academic optimism) researchers have found important connections between
teacher emotions and student performance (Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010; Leithwood
& Beatty, 2008; Hoy et al., 2006). Yet, the story appears incomplete. These five domains,
possible mechanisms for positive leader effects on teachers, are not very well understood in
school settings. On the qualitative side, while some meaningful work has been done
(Beatty, 2000a; Hargreaves, 2001), the data sources for these works, and those that cite
them, rest on only 53 interviews completed approximately a decade ago. What is needed,
then, is new research to understand more clearly what effect leaders are having on the
emotional states of those teachers under their management. As a natural part of theory
formation, inductive research at this stage will be necessary to expand the range of inquiry
possible through the existing (and limited) conceptions measured by the current slate of
quantitative tools. Yet, there is also the need to confirm findings from this young field.
While qualitative research cannot “verify” or “replicate” existing findings in the
quantitative, further work is needed to increase confidence in what was a small, and as yet unrepeated, set of findings.

**Emotions: A Brief Survey of the Landscape**

Uncovering emotional processes is not an easy task. Philosophers and their modern-day counterparts in psychology have struggled to understand exactly what emotions are, how they originate, and their effects, since at least the time of Socrates. A cursory glance through works of the humanities shows a dedicated and sustained concern for our emotional lives. Only in the last century and a half or so has that inquiry become systematic. And while the fruits of this inquiry are still tentative, it makes sense to consider them here as part of the literature review of this study.

For our purposes, the major question is this: who causes, as it were, the emotional response in any given person? Is it true that the person who feels the emotion has had that emotion *caused* by someone else? To use a clichéd example: has the jilted lover had their heart broken by the object of his affection? Or does the person experiencing the emotion have responsibility for it? Do principals cause teacher emotions, or do teachers cause their own?

There is a long tradition in both philosophy and psychology of understanding emotions in both of these ways. Two schools of thought bear highlighting. The first is that which originated in the ancient age and that has been influential to this day: Stoicism. The ancient Stoics, like Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and Seneca, argued that we have control over our emotional states (Irvine, 2009). They emphasized that the actions of others do not “make” us feel any which way at all; we have the choice to control our emotions and direct them as we please. Aurelius puts it best using language typical of Stoics:
All is as thinking makes it so – and you control your thinking. So remove your judgments whenever you wish and then there is calm – as the sailor rounding the cape finds smooth water and the welcome of a waveless bay (Aurelius, 2006, p. 119).

This line of reasoning was picked up by two of the most prominent psychologists of our own age (Smith, 1982; Talbot, 2002), Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck. Finding the Freudian modalities ineffective in their clinical practices, they drew on their undergraduate studies of philosophy and began to develop a theory of counseling that rested on Stoic notions of our capacity to dictate our own emotions. The results were a collection of therapies including Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), now regarded as perhaps the central evidence-based psychiatric response to negative emotional states (Freeman & Power, 2008). These therapies stress that we are in some ways in control of our emotions. To use the language of Ellis (2001), when we are upset we are “self disturbed.” We can change our thoughts and our judgments, and in so doing, holds CBT (and related practices), we can improve our emotional states. Major mental health initiatives across the world use this model to improve the lives of countless sufferers of mood and anxiety disorders.

If CBT (and its antecedent, Stoicism) have enjoyed such influence and are have such stable research findings in support of them, does a study of ways principals shape teacher emotions have any merit? This study takes the view that it does. While it is certainly true that all people have some control over their emotions, it does not stand to reason that teachers are immune to the actions of their superiors. CBT has been shown to be an effective therapy for those who suffer mood and anxiety disorders, but surely we can grant that it would be hard to imagine many practitioners in any field who would report
complete indifference to the behaviours of their superiors. Furthermore, the other main alternative would be to suggest that teachers’ emotional states are their own business, and that school and system leaders have no interest or responsibility in improving the internal states of teachers. (At best, this alternative seems counter-productive if our aim is the improvement of schools and school systems.)

Yet, the last hundred years of psychology has produced evidence, replicated in study after study, that humans have a remarkably predictable set of responses to various kinds of human interactions. The entire field of social psychology rests on the notion that we respond in predictable ways to others and to our interactions with them. Notions of social influence, attraction, and group dynamics are all understood as being, at least to some meaningful extent, phenomena that can be understood through observation, theory formation, and empirical testing. These fields have produced admirable results operating on the assumption that actions of others can have a predictable effect on individuals. One recent development in particular merits highlighting: the works of Daniel Kahneman, the Nobel prize-winning psychologist, has reinforced this view in his wildly influential work on human behaviour. By bringing together hundreds of empirical studies, Kahneman (2011) weaves a synthesis that suggests humans have, in the main, two systems: System One, our automatic, reflexive natures, and System Two, our deliberative side. He argues these systems have their origin in brain structure and chemistry, and that as such they behave with some regularity.

It is tempting to say that this study is in line with Kahneman’s System One – that teachers react in emotional ways, instinctive and somewhat regular, to their principals’ behaviour. And while that way of thinking likely has merit, and might hold up under
enough empirical investigation, such a claim is not necessary. What is necessary, and quite
reasonable, is to point out that the preponderance of evidence – from community and social
psychology, from behavioural economics, and replicated lab experiments – suggests that
we react in emotional ways to the behaviours of others (for example Kahneman, 2011;
Sarason, 1971; Gilbert, 2006; Pink, 2009). The best evidence suggests that humans act
with remarkable automaticity to the stimulus provided by the world – including by their
nominal superiors. Teachers, like all practitioners (especially in a caring profession) are
likely to be influenced in profound ways by the actions and inactions of those around them.
While it is true that with dedication and persistence, teachers might be able to overcome the
emotional influence of their principals, why place such a burden on them?

This study aims to shed more light on ways in which teachers’ emotions have
indeed been shaped by their principals. This is not to ignore entirely the view that emotions
emerge from the person who experiences them, because in real ways they do. Marcus
Aurelius, Aaron Beck, and Albert Ellis must all be at least partly right; we do get to choose
to some extent how we respond to the actions of others. But this study approaches the
question with the best evidence in mind; that, while people have some capacity to control
their emotional states, the behaviours of those around them carry important influences. In
the case of this study, when these influences come from principals (those in a position of
power and authority) directed at teachers, they bear special weight. And if districts and
systems ignore this important aspect of teaching, the internal states of teachers, they miss
what might be an important opportunity to produce the best outcomes for students.
Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological approaches to this research, including the design of the study, the population and sample, the data analysis, and the ethical review that was undertaken to ensure that participants were protected appropriately.

Design of the Study

This study investigated teacher perceptions of leadership in an effort to understand better the kinds of leadership practices that contribute to, or detract from, leadership that works for teachers. In that this study asks "teachers to describe particular episodes of positive and negative emotion" with administrators, it parallels some of the important work done in this field by earlier researchers (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 816). As such, the teacher is the unit of inquiry. This decision is in keeping with much of the research on principal practices; teacher perceptions of leader actions count more than leader intentions. Data was gathered during semi-structured interviews designed to understand the kinds of emotional and relational effects leader actions and behaviors have had on teachers. In other words, finding an answer to the question: what kinds of indirect leadership effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008) have been important in helping to produce the best performances of the teachers, as understood by teachers themselves? While one-time interviews cannot provide a totally complete picture "they do surface new topics and themes in previously unexplored areas, and they enable initial patterns and variations in teachers' emotions to be identified across different school contexts, and different kinds of teachers" (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 816).
Population and Sample

The selection of a sample population presents opportunities to use fruitful purposeful sampling techniques. One such opportunity exists in determining the appropriate panel in which to set the study. The difference between leadership in elementary and secondary sites is not perfectly clear. Leithwood and Sun’s (2012) recent meta-analysis found no significant differences between elementary schools and secondary schools on the frequency or effect size of the most important supportive leadership practices. Nonetheless, the prevailing view that the tenor of principal actions and the atmosphere of school sites differ between elementary schools and secondary schools remains strong. For example, Walhstrom found significant differences between these two panels in leadership actions in leading the instructional program (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). There are important differences between panels: elementary schools are generally smaller, with more intimate connections between faculty and leadership, and less discipline balkanization. However, in order to ensure a meaningful sample of teachers, finding variation in the domains most important (SES in particular), this study selected teachers from the secondary panel. To add variation across panels - to select from elementary and secondary schools, in addition to the other kinds of variation - would likely have diminished the ability to draw transferable conclusions. And given the concern over secondary school graduation rates, keeping to the secondary panel seemed reasonable. Another important area of variation is in socioeconomic status. The survey of the literature suggests that this might be an important differentiating factor in the experiences of leaders, teachers, and students. Of the many references to the importance of socioeconomic status in educational settings, perhaps Leithwood and Jantzi put it best when they say that it is
“almost always an important predictor of differences in student achievement” (in Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 17). And the importance of SES in the emotional climate of the school has been explored by researchers (Hoy et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 2010), particularly in relation to teacher self- and collective-efficacy and notions of optimism. Socioeconomic status, then, emerges as the leading potential variable and so formed the basis of the variation in the study. As well, to gain the widest possible range of teacher experiences with school leaders, effort was taken to interview teachers from as many different schools as the sample allowed.

In order to ensure participation of adequate participants in the appropriate teaching sites, a snowball sampling strategy was used. Based on the considerations above, the “seed” participants came from secondary school teachers in the southern Ontario area across schools representing a range of socioeconomic status (see Merriam, 2009). The intention was to achieve maximum variation across the secondary panel. The study achieved this variation by ensuring that the starting points for snowball sampling were highly varied from the start. Principally, due to the importance of SES in student and school performance, the initial participants were chosen to ensure representation from schools serving students from a diverse set of socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, by selecting teachers from geographical locations and school boards, a wide variety of school settings were sampled (see Table 1 below). This strategy, gathering teachers via a snowball sampling method, ensured a useful variation in sampling to produce results that are, to the fullest extent allowed by a study of this kind, transferable to a wide array of teaching settings (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013). While the reliability and generalizability of qualitative studies cannot rival those of quantitative inquiry, confidence in the findings
demands a relatively large sample of respondents from a wide range of teaching backgrounds and experiences. If the results are to have any effect on the practices of leaders, or future research agendas, a variation strategy as defined above is most appropriate.

After an initial pilot study of three teachers, 20 teachers were interviewed and comments from these participants form the data of the study (see Table 1 below). Teachers in this study came from a diverse set of sites, ranging from relatively small alternative settings, to large, composite schools. (For the purposes of classification, teachers were asked to describe the SES of their school sites; their description of student SES was used to define the school as low, mixed, or high SES.) As well, the participants’ experience included rural, suburban, and urban settings. And in line with the strategy above, they represented a broad range of socioeconomic statuses. In order to achieve a meaningful response rate, the study offered respondents a $20 gift card for participation in an interview. The inclusion criteria were: a) working in a high school as a teacher; b) interested in sharing their thoughts on the research questions; and c) from a variety of schools representing a range of socioeconomic statuses. There were no special exclusion criteria. The only personally identifiable information sought was the participants’ basic demographic information, and the school they teach in. All of this personally identifiable information was anonymized in the research results and kept confidential in the research process.
Table 1

*Participant Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years Taught</th>
<th>School SES</th>
<th>School Size</th>
<th>Urban/ Suburban/ Rural</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1000</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>Urban</td>
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The principal investigator recruited initial interview participants through the attached information letter/flyer (see Appendix B). The principal investigator displayed the information letter/flyer at OISE, and distributed it through professional networks and the graduate student listserv at OISE. Interested participants contacted the principal investigator directly to indicate interest in participating. When they did, the principal investigator explained the purpose of the study to all potential participants and what participation in the study would involve. As well, the principal investigator answered any questions potential participants had, and set up a time and location for the interview convenient to the participant.

Subsequent interview participants were recruited through a ‘snowball sampling’ technique, whereby interview participants suggested peers or colleagues as potential interview subjects. Specifically, interview participants were asked to forward the details of the study on to their peers. The peers, if interested, contacted the principal investigator directly. As with the initial recruits, the principal investigator also explained the purpose of the study and what participation in the study would involve. As well, the principal investigator answered questions potential participants had, and set up a time and location for the interview convenient to the participant.

Participants in the study represented a range of experience, from relatively new teachers (two years in the profession), to those with much experience (28 years) (see Table 1 above). They represented urban, suburban, and rural schools. But most importantly, and the intention of the stratification, they taught in schools with a range of SES conditions, serving families with the widest range of incomes and opportunities possible.
Data Collection and Analysis

The data was gathered in approximately 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews – a timeframe within the range of similar studies (see Beatty, 2000a; Hargreaves, 2000; and Leithwood, et al., 2007). The interviews began with basic demographic information before addressing the study’s main research questions. In order to ensure consistency across respondents, the same basic set of questions was used in each interview (Patton, 1980; see Leithwood, et al., 2007, for a similar study and methodology) (see Appendix A). However, in keeping with the semi-structured interview style, where appropriate, questioning sequences were allowed to enter new areas of discussion. Teacher perceptions of leadership behaviours involve stories of teachers’ pasts, and aspects of their lives and careers that are highly individual. Questioning sequences were therefore approached with flexibility in order to create the most fertile conditions for understanding these complexities.

The investigator asked questions about teachers’ experience with principals, and the impact the principals have had on their emotional state – especially with reference to their motivation, organizational commitment, burnout, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Teachers were asked to describe instances where principal actions had an influence on these domains in order to gain an understanding of how principals affect teacher emotions – and indirectly, their performance. Teachers were not at a loss to identify principal behaviours that, in their opinions, had important impacts on their emotional states, for good and bad. Furthermore, participants were often able to thoughtfully find long-lasting effects of these principal behaviours in their teaching practice. The interviewer took notes during the session to record observational data on body language and tone, as well as any key
themes. The interviews took place in a location convenient to the participant – a café, library, residence, or some other place chosen by the participant.

The interviews were transcribed and the respondents’ identities were anonymized. The transcripts were then coded using computer software (Dedoose), and broad categories or themes were identified using an inductive method. In order to understand the initial research questions (the role principals play in shaping teacher job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; a sense of individual and collective self-efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement; and a willingness and motivation to improve their practices), transcripts were coded using the language of the literature review. In order to highlight new and emerging themes, however, codes reflecting the unique qualities of the data were applied to the participants’ comments. For example, data in which a teacher recalled an emotionally difficult experience with a principal involving student discipline might be coded as “stress, anxiety and burnout,” as well as “student behaviour.” In this way, the coding process allowed the researcher to organize teacher experiences in ways that reflected the previous work on this topic highlighted in the literature review, while still being alive to the unique stories and experiences of the participants. The process of research design and interpretation follows those identified by Merriam’s (2009) *Qualitative Research*, which is itself heavily indebted to Glaser and Strauss’s 1967 work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. As such, the development of categories was “in response to the purpose of the research... mutually exclusive... conceptually congruent” and as sensitive to the data as possible (Merriam, 2009, p. 185-6). Once it was clear during the interviews that the data had become saturated, when new and unexpected information became scarce, the interviews were concluded. Further rounds of reviewing the interview
data allowed a refinement of the codes. As well, these further rounds of code reviewing allowed a more precise understanding of the similarities and differences between the participants’ experiences and therefore the key themes emerging from the study.

**Ethical Review**

This research involved human subjects, and so ethics approval from the University of Toronto was required. No special risks were foreseen in the carrying out of this research, and the respondents were not drawn from a vulnerable population. All audiotapes and transcripts were securely stored. All data remained confidential, and pseudonyms were assigned to all respondents. The researcher is not in a position of authority towards the participants, and the data was not shared with anyone in a position of evaluation or authority over the participants.

All respondents were informed of the study’s aims and objectives, as well as the requirements of their involvement (see Appendix C). Respondents were required to sign the consent forms prior to involvement in the study. Participants were informed they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were at no time judged or evaluated and at no time were they at risk of harm. Participants were informed that no value judgments would be placed on their responses. Finally, their information was retained in a secure location, in the personal locked files of the principal investigator, and kept confidential. Participant names will not be used in the study in reports, publications and presentations.
Chapter 4 – Findings

The data from the interviews are presented in this chapter to address the research questions. The chapter is divided into five sections, reflecting the domains of emotion suggested by the literature review: teacher morale and job satisfaction; anxiety, stress, and burnout; organizational commitment and engagement; teacher efficacy; and motivation. The respondents’ own words form the backbone of the findings.

The research questions that guide the presentation of findings are:

*What impact do the actions (or inactions) of leaders have on the emotional lives of teachers?*

1) What principal actions influence teacher emotions?
2) How do these actions shape organizational commitment, sense of self-efficacy, motivation, satisfaction, morale, stress, and burnout?
3) How do these actions and subsequent emotions affect how teachers approach their work?
4) What principal actions do teachers believe will emotionally support their work?

The findings are presented below in categories that represent the strongest and most consistent themes as reported by the participants. The primary coding related to the themes of the literature review: job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; self- and collective-efficacy, organizational commitment and engagement; and motivation. A secondary code was added to define more precisely, within that code, the common themes reported by the teachers in this study. These secondary codes used to pinpoint specific leader behaviours under the categories identified in the literature form a major finding of the study. Up until now, there have been very few “deep” descriptions, to use the language...
of Leithwood and Sun (2012), of specific leadership practices that create nurturing and supportive environments for faculty.

**Morale and Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction and morale has been connected to improved school performance in a variety of ways (for example, Baylor & Ritchie, 2002; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). The findings of this study suggest that principals have an influence over this domain of teacher emotion by acknowledging faculty, promoting social interaction, appropriately disciplining teachers, allowing teachers to be heard, providing principal presence, keeping order, showing empathy for teachers, and generally through support, encouragement, and professional respect. The commentary about this domain of the emotional life at work was most clearly and passionately articulated. One participant summed up the connection like this:

I think that administrators, in general, have forgotten or been required to forget the link between morale and efficacy. A motivated staff is an effective staff. A beleaguered, bored, and bludgeoned staff is a less effective staff. They check if they punch the clock… How do I define an effective school? I think high quality instruction is number one. I think staff morale is essential (8).

Participants’ commentary repeatedly suggested a link between their emotional states and their principal’s actions or inactions. In some cases, the link appeared profound, offering a vast terrain of possibility for leaders to positively affect the emotional climates within their buildings.
Acknowledgment by principals. An important finding of this study was the participants’ desire for acknowledgement. The teachers in this study frequently felt unacknowledged, even unknown, by their principals. When discussing her last principal, one teacher remarked, “There was very little positive reinforcement. Individual, genuine, positive reinforcement. Large, sweeping statements about how amazing the school is but nothing that really suggested that she understood exactly what we were doing as a faculty” (20). For participants who perceived their principals as adept at acknowledgement, the gesture appeared genuine, and more importantly, specific not generic:

They told us why they appreciated what we were doing, not thank you for the “magical things you do with our students,” which we hear all the time to the point where it’s a joke. They said, “Hey thank you for taking the course. I really appreciated the fact that you are learning for us and you’re going to come and talk to us [about it],” or “Thank you. I can’t believe what you did with those kids that you turned them around. That was amazing. Thank you for working with this club.” I don’t think she [the current principal] knows. She could even just know. I don’t care if she gave me a little Tim Horton’s gift card or a pat on the back, but just to know that she actually knows what we’re doing (16).

A few participants discussed the importance of principals understanding the value of highlighting important days in the school year. One participant, on the last day of school before the winter break, compared the behaviour of two principals (one current, one former) on their differing approaches to acknowledging milestones in the calendar:

The day before Christmas when we had a [principal name] who left later because he had some personal issues, but when we came in the morning he had breakfast for us,
he was wearing a little Christmas sweater and playing the piano. This morning we had nothing. You feel it. There was nothing on Teacher’s Day (16).

Several teachers in this study echoed this sentiment, arguing that principals who embrace the possibility of celebration - of themselves, the students, important dates in the year - create a positive morale within the school community. Considering the relative simplicity – both in terms of time and cost – that this kind of intervention requires of leaders, it offers a promising avenue.

**Social interaction.** Teachers in this study emphasized the importance of social interaction between members of faculty to build trust, support, and a general sense of positive morale. Staff socials, for example, were mentioned as positive ways to build morale in a school. This study suggests that principals can have an impact on whether or not teachers are able to find time to create social community outside of faculty meetings. One participant revealed her principal put a stop to what she believed was an important part of positive morale at her school:

Every part of it is interpersonal skills. I don’t think there’s a desire for that interaction [on the part of the principal]. I used to run the social committee for the school. I ran parties, events, everything else was fun. It was kind of a big job, but it was a fun job so it felt like throwing a dinner party at your house. It’s homework. It’s a little hard, but it’s still fun. We would do three parties a year. We did potluck breakfasts on paydays and things like that. It was fun. She asked me not to do it because that wasn’t a valuable thing for the school. Instead I’m chairing commencement which is crazy. I don’t know why I said yes.
Chairing commencement is more important than building staff. I said, “This [staff socializing] is part of school success.”

“No it’s not. You need to chair commencement if you want to get promoted.” I don’t think I want to get promoted anymore (16).

While this passage reveals a particularly strong teacher-principal interaction, the general sentiment was fairly common throughout the study population and comprises a significant finding. It suggests that teachers view principals as crucial agents for the creation of teacher community.

**Disciplining teachers.** Some teachers discussed their experiences of having been disciplined by their principal. Sometimes this took the form of a sympathetic and collegial conversation; at other times, it resembled something more sinister and cruel. One teacher remembered fondly the guidance from a principal early in her career:

> The good administrators I think also see when we’re doing something wrong and correct us… I was a terrible teacher when I started. I was awful… I had a great principal. He was in a different board... He sat in and he had a really good informal, undocumented chat and said, “This is what I’m seeing. It might not work so well. Why don’t you try this?” He was very encouraging and very concrete and “Why don’t you try this. This might work for you, this might not work. Let’s see…” You felt like you were just… when something went wrong you felt like [someone] had your back, including the principal (16).

On the other hand, many participants in the study recalled incidents when principals used their position to discipline faculty in a way that was regarded as humiliating or demeaning. One participant explained:
I had a really good relationship with my administration. Um, so, I'd always tell them like, "Hey, morale around here, you know, people aren't happy." They're not happy with the fact that we had a principal that wanted to… When, when you parked your car in the parking lot, they … we have these little gates installed, and he would lock the gate so he could see who was coming in late. And, I was like; this is what you're worried about. We worry about getting the kids to class on time... You can't, you can't run a school like that (19).

More than one teacher expressed frustration at his or her principal’s inability to discipline teachers notorious for their inappropriate behaviour or lacklustre performance. One participant argued that this conspicuous lack of attention to teachers perceived as “problems” corroded morale:

I've had her as principal for four years and I've had only a year with my others, where teachers are not being effective. They're not doing what they're supposed to do. They are harming students, again, not in the blue pages way but just in a me as one professional watching them as another professional shaking my head and saying, "How can you possibly do this?" knowing that she knows what's going on. In her attempt to help them deal... she's afraid to have that hard conversation of, "You know what? Maybe you shouldn't be here right now," which baffles me because she's all about the kids. You're willing me to hold me and to yell at me about a mark but you're not willing to hold this teacher in when there's 30 students not being taught (10).

Several participants expressed frustration at principals who reprimanded the entire staff for failings of one or two faculty members. An example:
At staff meetings… A lot of times he would discipline, like to say, "Hey, another thing is swearing on the football team." He'd call it out and say, "We don't do this in our school.” But sometimes with leadership, you yell at the whole group, when there is only one person doing it. And, that gets people… That's, that's where a lot of that starts. People get really upset. When I think really it's just the person that's doing it… (19).

Teachers in this study did not perceive principal discipline as inherently destructive. On the contrary, teachers looked to principals as a source of guidance. But when the discipline seemed arbitrary, it was identified as having had a negative effect on faculty morale.

**Teachers being heard.** Study participants often expressed a desire to be heard by their principals. Many commented that they felt unheard by their principals, and suggested this was a major flaw in how principals behave towards teachers. One participant put it like this: “I’m constantly being asked for my opinion as a sort of ceremonious gesture. ‘We are a democratic institution and I care what you have to say’” (8). When teachers in the study perceived a lack of “being heard,” morale suffered, in this case in response to changes in the school:

Again, that sense of feeling unheard, the sense of feeling … last year was particularly low in terms of morale because the leadership change had been handled really poorly. I think that when a change happens … again, I use the word honor … there has to be some honoring of why people are holding onto what they're holding onto. Not that people are totally resistant to change or holding on for the sake of holding on, it's just that I think they need to be shown, if it is a better way … for
lack of a better term … if they need to be shown a better way, it has to be done, I think, not with a sledgehammer but in increments (9).

Several participants expressed frustration at what were perceived to be needless meetings, covering material already understood; the sense among participants was that they were being disrespected in this way. One participant explained the effect of not being heard:

I think when people feel in all industries, I’d imagine, that their voices don't matter, they divest… You see it in staff meetings where eyes glaze over and heads sag, "God, here we go." Right. You have the staff of 80 spending two hours in a meeting that accomplishes nothing for the purposes of staff or for the kids. It won't translate into any real gains in this school. What’s 80 times two? It's 160 person hours. That's four people working a full week. Think of how much you could accomplish with four people working a full week.

That’s just what that one staff meeting cost. What did we do? We talked about assessment for, of and as learning for the fifth time. Think about how much we could do with 160 person hours. That’s the frustration and we all recognize it, so we're sitting in that meeting thinking, "What the F are we doing? Why?" It happens all the time. That’s just the way it seems to be right now. I think for all the differences between teachers, that's something we all hold in common. We value time and we want to do our jobs (8).

The findings of this study suggest that the desire for participating teachers to be heard was strong. These teachers regarded themselves as professionals due respect and when that respect was not obvious, morale suffered.
On the other hand, many teachers were aware that the desire for principals to listen to teacher input has a limit. One participant expressed frustration at a principal seemingly too eager to listen to the voices of teachers: “I can give you every single staff meeting that we have. Somebody, and it’s usually one of a handful of people, stands up and goes on a rampage about something and they’re allowed to until they get tired” (5).

Teachers in this study expressed unequivocally a desire for principals to listen to their needs, talents, and concerns - in a way that honoured the capabilities of the staff. The morale of the faculty surveyed was closely tied to this principal behaviour.

**Principal presence.** Teachers in this study explained that their morale was affected by the ways principals carried themselves and maintained a presence in the school. Teachers spoke about ways principals have been able to improve morale by what is sometimes jokingly called MBA - “management by being around.” One participant described the actions of her current principal like this:

She comes to school with a smile on her face, she comes and greets us every morning… For both students and teachers alike, she comes out in the morning and greets us… This principal, she is only in the hall… She comes out… Our class would start at 8:30, she comes out at 8:15… She makes that engagement with every single student, not just the troubled students, not just the high achieving students, every student. She greets them, says good morning, shakes their hand, gets some breakfast. She does that at lunch and after school as well. She says, “Have a good day, see you tomorrow.” Every single day… (13).

Echoing the positive morale that emerges from this kind of principal behaviour, one participant fondly recalled one of her previous principals:
When I went to see him, he had retired and was filling in as principal at another school and that's where I met him when I was coming back and where did I see him? I walked in and he's the supply principal so to speak and there he was, standing in the hall at 3:15 as kids were leaving, obviously having a relationship with students because I watched him. He was just chatting with students. He's the supply guy. He's still got that relationship with students and I'm sure with staff as well (6).

Teachers in this study appreciated seeing their principal in action, walking the school halls, engaging with students and teachers alike. Among participants, morale was tied to the behaviour of the principal in this way: visible principals were able to improve the morale of many of the study participants.

**Principal keeping order.** Teachers in this study looked to the principal to establish student discipline and keep order in the school. They regarded this task as critical to the smooth functioning of the school - and if the task was unfulfilled, the morale of many teachers suffered. When one participant described what she perceived to be the abdication of the principal keeping order:

> It’s incredibly discouraging because it eventually makes its way into the classroom as well. The students are constantly getting up and walking around, wandering the halls just ignoring direct requests to sit down or to modify behavior or anything like that. They know that if … Basically they learned at this point that they can do whatever they want; the students were running the school, especially there was a group of about seven of them. This particular group of seven knew that regardless of what their behavior was they weren’t going to get … Or if they did get suspended
it would be for half a day. Nothing would be written up, no police would be called. The principal would just allow the behavior thinking that he … I don’t know … He was their buddy… Very, very unprofessional, very, very discouraging to teachers.

Another participant echoed this view:

I’ve seen positive morale when principals have enforced the code of conduct, enforced school rules, and proactively created an environment where kids understand that this is an institution of learning. It's not the street and you can't act like it's the street. When you walk into the building, you're in a school... Kids come into school and they act like they're in school. That comes from the office. The most dysfunctional schools I've seen are schools in which the administration refuses to acknowledge that the rules at school need to be different.

Teachers in this study reported their morale was affected by the ways principals were able to ensure an orderly school. They looked towards principals to act as the keeper of discipline. When principals acted in ways that supported student discipline, for many teachers in this study, morale improved.

**Principal empathy for teachers.** Many study participants reported that empathetic principal behaviours had a positive impact on their job satisfaction and morale. One participant, using language familiar to others in the study, shared experiences with her principal:

She just listens and then if you're complaining about kids, she goes to, "What is bothering you about this? Is it really the child's problem or the parents are a pain in the ass?..." And there's always a lesson but it is done as a lesson and it is done with
the utmost respect for you as another professional. She also knows whether you're just venting and not looking for a solution, but she's also not afraid to share her personal experiences, "You know what? I had this happen and here's how I felt," and so you're reminded that she's been in the trenches like you have and there is that camaraderie (10).

Of course, as expected, the lack of principal empathy was reported to have a negative impact on teacher morale and job satisfaction. Many teachers felt that their principals, past and present, have often failed to recognize them for the individuals they are. Many teachers bristled when they perceived that their principals were treating them impersonally:

We're not numbers. It requires feelings, and that interpersonal piece is really important when you're in a leadership role and when part of that leadership role is … it's different if the leadership role is: how many widgets are we getting out on the assembly line today? When the leadership role requires that you have sensitivity and compassion and emotional intelligence, then you need to have all those things to build relationships with the people that you're working with (9).

Teachers in this study consistently reported positive morale associated with an empathetic connection with their principals. They felt buoyed by a personal, authentic, and genuine attempt by the principal to understand them as individuals, with all that entails - emotions, hopes, disappointments, and fears. Principals who were able to take an empathetic stance were able to positively impact the morale of the participants, even in the face of external pressures like demanding parents.
**Principal support and encouragement.** One finding of the study is the importance teachers place on the encouragement and support of the principal for their teaching practice. Participants frequently recalled instances where principals either behaved in open and interested ways towards their new initiatives or direction their practice was taking, as well as instances where they perceived the principal to be scolding or otherwise unsupportive. The impact on teacher morale appeared strong, as exemplified by the participants below:

If you come forward with an initiative and you're really excited about it, typically what you want is … even if the person in charge doesn’t have to be … it can be in any circumstance. If the person in charge says, "Wow! Tell me more about that," and then, after you’ve had the opportunity to explain it, says, "You know, it's probably not going to work right now, but let's keep it on the back burner," or, "It's not going to work for these reasons; how can we modify it?" or, "How can we take pieces of that and infuse that into this initiative?" or something.

If they listen and give you something that says, "I value the fact that you’ve come forward with something that’s really exciting to you. How can we make it work?" that’s a very different approach than a) they don’t want to hear about it, or b) they put it down without really listening. They're there in body, but they don’t really listen. (9)

I have seen positive morale when administrators knew their... sounds arrogant for me to say because who am I to say what the role of a principal is? I was tempted to say sort of knew their roles. I see that as being supporting staff. I do have a
sentimental attachment to the idea of a principal as a principal teacher. As someone who is capable of being a leader in terms of instruction and pedagogy. To whom teachers listen and respond, who commands respect, and has the authority to instruct… Staff morale comes from feeling supported by the administration. It comes from feeling permitted to experiment and be creative (8).

Several teachers spoke about the importance of principals supporting teacher initiative on special events like student performances or athletics. One participant described the effect on morale when she perceived her principal as being unsupportive of her efforts on a school performance:

We were doing this big school show… it was a musical and I was doing choreography for the musical and we have a big open courtyard area that when you come in the front door the office is on the right and then there's this big open area. And we have gyms full of practices and the stage cafeteria and the stage are all kind of one space. We don't really have good rehearsal space.

So we were doing auditions, doing tryouts… [the area] is always full of kids. And I had music going and I was trying to show them these, you know teach them this certain dance and probably forty students and the music was going and it was loud. And she came out of her office and said, "This is a place of business. I can't hear in here." And I thought: wow, that's weird. I thought it was a place that you know, you were suppose to be able to, doing things with kids. And here we were, you know working after school, getting the school show ready with probably a hundred kids total involved and I thought that's a weird thing to say: “This is a place of business, be quiet” (7).
Another participant recalled an instance where a principal deflated morale through her hostility towards a very successful special event she had arranged:

I heard her practically yelling at one of the VPs at this event that I was talking about last week…. This vice principal who I’m working with, trying to get all of my okays on this event so we can have this fundraiser, arranged to have teachers who had their prep during that period because we did, it was a buy out in the last period of the day. That was one of my plans. We have it during the day. Kids have to buy their way out of class. We’re getting a lot more kids than if we have it after school; $2 I don’t have to go to class. I can go watch a basketball game…. It was exciting.

I had said to him [the vice principal], “Can we ask teachers to do on calls so we have extra teachers, the teachers who aren’t teaching?” He said sure. I said, “Will you look after that?” He said yes. I said great, because I can’t tell somebody you’ve got to do an on call. He said he would look after that. I ended up overhearing, I wasn’t supposed to. I saw the two of them standing there, chatting, so I walked up and then realized really quickly that I needed to just walk away because she [the principal] was just laying into him [the VP] about how you can’t ask teachers to do extra duties and things and me not know about it and blah, blah, blah...

Yes, she [the principal] was stressed, but that strikes me as the kind of thing that you just let it go or maybe deal with it after the fact, not as the kids are coming into the gym and everybody is feeling good and the news is there with the reporter and he’s getting reamed out… Instead of saying “Great job” to both of us, “Isn’t this fabulous, look what we’re doing here,” it became a downer (5).
Many teachers recalled similar instances where principal behaviour that was perceived as unsupportive, or even hostile, to teacher initiative or teaching practice had a negative impact on faculty morale. Teachers in this study placed importance on the sense that their principals were prepared to approach situations with a supportive disposition. In the absence of principal encouragement, one teacher reported that she felt:

Like a cog in the machine. It's just like you're just another...You're just churning almost all the time with very little to make you want to keep going… It's a lot of negativities all the time. Everybody needs affirmation or encouragement (20).

**Role of professional respect from principals.** Teachers in this study frequently spoke about specific instances where principals either supported morale by behaving in ways that were perceived as respectful of the teacher's professional capabilities, or in ways that demeaned that sense of professional respect. One participant described what might be called a micro-observation; a small interaction between principal and teacher that nonetheless had a memorable and strong impact on the participant’s sense of morale. She described the interactions with her principal:

The way that she would carry out a Friday morning meeting. I'm going to talk at you rather than have a conversation with you. The way she would interact in the hallway. If you're walking down the hallway. If I was carrying a coffee mug, she didn't like that. She would say, "Could you please put the coffee mug away." So, it was a lot of wrist slapping rather than, "Oh, I saw these students doing this and that looked really interesting. Good for you" (20).

This kind of observation was common to many participants. Participants in the study also complained that their principals often assume a negative intent - especially in regards to
managing teacher work time. This teacher perceived his principal to be excessively picky about how he spent his preparation periods; in “micromanaging” his time, he felt a sense of professional disrespect that negatively impacted his sense of morale:

Teachers are, again sort of painting broadly, but I think this is true. Teachers are capable of organizing their time for the most part. Not the dud teachers and they exist. If I have say, for example, I have a doctor’s appointment at 3:30 and I have a last period prep and I need to sign out of the school at 2:50 one day. It's of no consequence, I don’t need coverage, I'm not teaching. I don't need to get lectured for missing 20 minutes of my prep period about the fact that that's professional time supposed to be spent professional developing when I'm spending my morning, lunch, and after school, none of which is required in my contract, sitting in meetings and staying my nights marking.

I'm up on email with colleagues and administrators until midnight or 1 in the morning to be lectured about 20 minutes of professional time... It's a dehumanizing experience and it makes me want to scale back. That example happened to me fairly recently. My response was, I spent the next week sort of bitter about that (8). This participant articulated most clearly what others in the study commented on: that they wish to be treated as intelligent professionals, possessing both talent and positive motives. When teachers perceived principals acting in line with these teacher beliefs, teacher morale improved; when the respondents in this study perceived principals dismissing what they view as considerable professional capability, they experienced a decrease in morale and job satisfaction.
In the interviews conducted for this study, teachers strongly emphasized the degree to which their job satisfaction and morale was connected to the actions of their principals. A finding of this study, therefore, is that principals have considerable influence over the morale of the school faculty. Themes common to the participants in this study include: a desire to be acknowledged by principals; principals finding appropriate outlets for faculty social interaction; what might be dubbed “firm but fair” and transparent disciplining of teachers; a deep desire to be heard by principals, and to have their input taken seriously; principals finding the time to be visible in the school, and keep order among the students; principals offering authentic support and encouragement to teacher initiatives and career development; and behaving with respect towards teacher professional competence.

**Stress, Anxiety, and Burnout: Principal Actions (Blame, Ugly Incidents, Principal Buffer, and Teacher Workload)**

Teachers in this study reported that burnout, stress, and anxiety were major features of their working lives. They talked in very striking terms about the effects principals have had on their emotional well-being. In particular, participants in this study highlighted the negative effects of principal blame, vindictive principals, the importance of the principal as buffer against harassing parents, and the problem of excessive teacher workloads. In comments similar to many participants, two teachers described the phenomenon like this:

There are always people at various stages of burnout in the building... I’ve seen people when they had to leave. People in emotional breakdown, physical burnout; you can tell they’re not sleeping. They’ve been doing it for so long without support, without guidance, without leadership, and I think that’s really the key. When you don’t have support and guidance you’re just constantly digging, and digging, and
digging, and trying to get out of the mess, and you’re not even sure you’re going in the right direction. You know you’ve got to keep going and it just wears you down (17).

I think a lot of people enter the teaching field because they're idealistic, and they really want to make a difference. Their desire to make a difference drives so much of what they do. At the same time, as a teacher, you give and give and give and give, and there's demands that come from the students, demands that come from your [school] heads, demands that come from boards or the ministry or whatever. There has to be something to replenish what you give... (9).

This study finds that burnout is common among respondents, and can be quite debilitating. Furthermore, teachers in this study looked to their principals for help in preventing or assuaging it.

**Blame.** Participants reported being concerned that principals would blame them for the performance of their students. While teachers in this study spoke passionately about their desire to have students succeed, several respondents talked about the stress associated with having responsibility for achieving targets on standardized tests. A respondent explained this feeling:

Teachers have said to me, "The principal's going to blame me for that, right? I will be blamed for poor scores," but that again is teacher perception. I never heard of principals say, "I'm going to blame that teacher for scores," but I have seen principals print out all the scores and then say, "[teacher name], I noticed that this is the trend and there's your class, and there was everyone else's class. Where are your
scores?" Principals most definitely do that as if every class is the same, as if all of our children are somehow carbon copies of each other; students, I should say, are carbon copies of each other, which they're not.

I think that comes from principals feeling a tremendous amount of responsibility and pressure for those scores. Of course, as you know, a lot of these things are published. OSSLT is published, Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. Schools are being ranked by the Fraser Institute - like real estate is being bought because of what ranking your school has gotten…

In this day and age, these are very real pressures, very real, especially a declining enrollment… Right now, I think that numeracy teachers, so like math teachers and math Curriculum Leaders, are feeling a tremendous amount of pressure. If you look at the [job] postings from my board one year for they were all math; no one wanted them. The PORs [Person of Responsibility] were all math, and no one wanted them because no one wanted the pressure for EQAO [Educational Quality and Accountability Office] - to be responsible for the EQAO scores in the building.

That speaks volumes about all the pressure... They say to me, "Look, I know they're going to come to me when the scores aren't good. They're going to say, 'It's your fault. You didn't teach these kids properly.'" They feel a tremendous amount of pressure... (14).

Teachers in this study reported feeling that their principals were often eager to take the side of others when disputes emerged. One participant used especially strong language
in order to describe the stress she had felt in defending herself against accusations of unfair marking. She put it like this:

> It's almost not to minimize post-traumatic stress but it stays with you somehow because any initial conversation with the principal, usually, at my school is where it starts, I might not even know if there was an issue with the kid. They might have been fine in my class, and the kid could be fine… I'm sitting in the office and usually I haven't been told what's going on. I'm going in and it starts with having to defend: how was my teaching?… You’re then defending your classroom teaching…. You are defending. It's just a defensive … it [gets at] your personal character as well, get down to the point of, "Are you approachable enough. Do they know that they could come in? You said it once, but why didn't you say it five times?” It's almost like being in a courtroom without a lawyer… (10).

Several teachers discussed their principals taking a threatening tone. While this was usually in person, at least one participant recalled the effect of receiving an email that he perceived to be blaming:

> Yeah, I mean I think it's huge because the tone affects your feelings. If the tone is negative, then you feel … I know when I've experienced, when I've gotten an … Email’s probably the best example because email’s tricky. Sometimes it may not be what was … the tone may not be what was intentionally conveyed but it's again how it's interpreted. I definitely experienced emails where I read them, I thought I really screwed up or I've done something that's going to … I'm in trouble now. I can't sleep at night when I get those, especially I get that after school hours. Where on
the other hand, when the communication is more positive, even if it's a concern, it
doesn't seem such a big a deal…

I got called down to the vice principal. The message was “We need to talk
right now.” First of all, there was that, so automatically my stress level had gone up
because the principal or vice principal says we need to talk right now. Then again,
even during the course of the conversation, it was that very serious tone… I felt A,
I was being a little bit picked on… The fact that it had gone to this level and this is
how it was being dealt with, I will be honest, I was never part of that committee
again. That was that because it wasn’t worth the stress. It's things like that that can
make or break.

… I internalize that kind of stuff. My mind then starts racing and playing
back everything. It's all I can think of. I actually probably won't eat dinner that
night, probably won't get much of a good night’s sleep. I’ll be playing it and I’ll be
playing out all the different scenarios that when I have the conversation with
principal the next day, what are the possible things she’s going to say and what are
the ways I can possibly respond to them. How can I either defend or justify? How
can I, if I do need to apologize, what's that apology going to look like? It's all those
things. It's constant like my head is constantly … my brain is just on overdrive at
that point. I probably won't get any other work done if I had work or anything else
to do that night because that's all that I can think of and also I'm angry.

Quite honestly, I'm angry because I feel sometimes I do so much and all of a
sudden I'm being treated in this way. Sometimes too, I think to myself, why
couldn't this have waited ‘til the morning? Why couldn't this have been even … if it
was really urgent, it could’ve been a phone call and at least could have that verbal
discussion. Why does it need to be in an email? Are they trying to keep a paper
trail? I almost never respond other than to say, “Got your email. Talk to you in the
morning.” I’ve learned… (2).

Teachers in this study were quite sensitive to feeling their principal took issue with
their actions or performance; they reported feeling a high degree of stress when their
principal blamed them for student performance or conflicts in the school. This suggests
potentially powerful gains for principals well-equipped to navigate difficult conversations.

**Ugly incidents and vindictive principals.** Many participants recalled emotionally
charged incidents with school administrators. Some of these emotional wounds were quite
raw, even many years after the incidents took place. Participants described these incidents
as traumatizing. In some cases, participants would cry while retelling these stories. One
participant described an incident involving her school administration that still haunted her:

It was an incident where I felt that I have been touched inappropriately by a student,
males student, and the administration really just didn't take it seriously, and himself
said very inappropriate things. I had to navigate around that. It was hard to believe
that it happened seven years ago like it's happened yesterday. I navigated around
that and it was one of the absolute most distrusting experiences I've ever had in a
school. Eventually, my doctor said, "You cannot continue like this."

Before that even happened, I got so sick from the stress that I actually … I
don't know, I picked up a virus or I picked up a bacteria or something like that.
They couldn't find out what it was. I hospitalized… I think, I don't know if it was
seven days or 10 days. They had no idea what I had, and then I was discharged
after some serious medication to control the infection, and then my doctor said, "You are not going back to work like this." Then I was off for two to three weeks, but basically I had to handle it through the medical community, because at the school level, I got absolutely no support (14).

One teacher described her principal as having what she perceived as a particularly vicious response to a student’s infraction while under her supervision:

> There were rules such as no coffee after first period, only water. If a student, for instance, if I was teaching third period and he came in my room and a student literally just came in from lunch, I might be doing attendance or writing on the board and I didn’t see them walk in… He saw that student walk in, he wouldn’t ask me, “Did you see the student walk in with the coffee?” He would simply yell at me saying, “There is a student with coffee in here you need to get control,” instead of figuring out the situation. The same with food. There was no food in the classroom. Sometimes students will bring it in. In their backpack, you don’t see it.

> Then again once your back is turned they bring it out. He would always take the side of the student as opposed to the teacher and actually ask what the situation was. “Why is there food in this classroom?” This happened with the VP and the principal coming in to my room at the same time one morning... There was this one particular student, every single morning brought a muffin in and every single morning I asked her to go and sit in the hall. This time I didn’t see her have the muffin in her hand; I let her sit down. When I turned my back to write the instructions on the board for the day she pulled it out of her bag, they walked in,
saw her with the muffin said, “Why are you allowing food in your classroom? There is no food allowed.”

I’m like, “I didn’t - she pulled it out when my back was turned.” That’s again they are like, “Well you need to be aware of what’s going in your classroom.” Which is incredibly again demeaning in front of your students (13).

A few participants described their principals with the language of bullies. One teacher described the feeling like this:

Bullies are very dangerous people: he’s a bully, that’s what’s wrong with him. If he was a student, he might be in the principal’s office all the time because of what he does to people…. Tearing you to pieces in front of people, verbal bullying, and intimidation… A classic move on his part is to come into a teacher’s class and he’d berate them in front of the students… it’s a huge no-no, because what you’re doing is you’re coming in and you’re dishing out in front of students their teacher, you’re giving them crap. It’s never happened to me, but it’s happened to a lot of people, and you can’t recover from that. It also undermines the principal, because if the students are wise and reflective enough, they can realize it’s wrong. But if they’re not wise and reflective enough, you just kill that teacher (4).

Most teachers in this study recalled at least one tense incident that, often years later, was still painful. These events were important crises in their careers - and lives - and haunted them, despite their best intentions of moving on.
**Principal buffer - parents.** Teachers in this study looked to their principals to protect them from what they perceive to be the increasing stress of the school site - and the form that has been taking of late is that of the bully parent. Several teachers in this study reported this phenomenon as a major source of teacher stress and anxiety:

The harassing parent is becoming extremely common. Having parents just walk into the class and scream at you without going to the office in the middle of your class and, "Who are you to give my kid that mark?" And maybe you gave a kid an 80 and that would be considered a low mark, so you phone the office, you say a parent come in here is harassing me, has sent me emails. “What could you have done” would be the first thing I heard, then it's nothing.

I think this lack of safety is going to become a huge... It will get to a tipping point. What you are seeing right now is that emotional damage is being done instead of actual physical damage of a parent or a kid going too far. We're not there yet.

My coworker was... The next day, her blood pressure shot to the roof and ended up going in an ambulance from a house, blah-blah-blah instead of getting the cards, the please take care of yourself, when are you coming back, where are your lessons plans. There's something there. The parents not taking care of the child and they need... The parent, the administrator is not being a very good parent at that point to the child (17).

Probably a couple of years ago when I had a grade twelve English class and I had things come up with a plagiarism with a student. And the parent got completely out
of control, as they sometimes do. And I felt as if the principal really, really went
overboard trying to appease this parent. In the end kind of, I felt… made me feel
like I was completely unprofessional and maybe even wrong because the girl ended
up changing schools because of this whole plagiarism issue. And the mother,
because there's so many emails and such an outrageous superintendent.
I mean we were going to get a human rights lawyer, all sorts of crazy things would
happen. And the principal ended up not just discounting that one particular
assignment and not using it and no mark for that. She came into my class maybe
two or three weeks late into it. He took all the marks I had ever given this girl over
two months, no longer counted for her grade twelve mark. And I was livid. I just
thought what on earth. She plagiarizes this assignment and now nothing I marked
has any kind of integrity. That was terrible. I did not feel good about that
afterwards (7).

Then there's the exhaustion that becomes a metaphysical… I'm an English teacher.
I'm always marking… No, that was right and I am justified in this, and then we
were talking to colleagues and some of the exhaustion we feed in ourselves because
you say it to a colleague and they go because usually there's at least one other
person who has had this happened, will have it happen, or has it happening at the
moment, and you need to bend. It's just, I guess, the exhaustion just comes from the
being doubted because you're taught in the teacher's college that you belong here,
you will be a professional. You've been taught by the best and brightest whoever's
taught you and, yes, you will make mistakes but it will be fine.
You walk out of those meetings feeling like your professional integrity has been questioned like, "You have no idea what you're doing. You have no right to be in front of a classroom. Who gave you the right to assign an assignment, never mind mark an assignment?"

I've had parents say with me in front of my principal, "You barely know my child. How do you know how to mark this essay?" I've had parents say, "I have an English degree and I thought it was great, so what gives you the right?"

I also had principals whose attitude was, "I've got you. I'm here. I've got you, whatever." The marking with that, it just felt there was no weight on you. There was nothing weighing you down because it was no matter what mark the student gets … even if I did something wrong, like even if I completely messed up, I know that she will defend me to that parent and then turn around and tell me off if it's warranted. She has me first and we were a team, and the school should be a team.

When you're not a team… when the principal is on the parent's team, you feel like you're standing alone with nothing there and no one to help you (10). At least one participant reported that her principal took an interest to protect her from an overbearing parent, and in so doing, reduced the stress and anxiety of the situation:

I do think there was an instance last year where I was dealing with a particularly difficult parent. This parent was, in my opinion, sociopathic. But he just had high expectations for his daughter and was being a bully in the way that he was sort of pegging off various teachers of hers and trying to nail them to the cross…. Anyway, messy situation and one that escalated very quickly.
One area where I felt extremely supported was when I was having a meeting with said parent. I had told my department head that this meeting was going on. I simply said, "I don't mean to cause any alarm here, but I've heard that this parent can be particularly sticky and I'm just letting you know that this meeting is happening should anything happen as a result." At that point, it had come to the attention of the principal. I found this out after the fact that yes, these parents were on the radar as being bullying and slightly inappropriate towards faculty.

So, what had transpired in the course of maybe half an hour to an hour is I received an email during a meeting saying, "[teacher name], I'd like to come in and join you at that meeting." And I found out later that that was decreed by the principal. She said we cannot have faculty being pegged off like this by parents. There's a line that's being crossed here and that's unacceptable (20).

Teachers in this study reported negative emotional states when they perceived their principals as unsupportive in the face of hostile and questioning parents. When principals acted to protect them against what the teachers perceived as threatening behaviour from parents, teachers felt relieved, supported, and much less stress.

**Teacher workload.** One of the central findings of this study is that teacher workload can contribute to their sense of stress, anxiety, and burnout. Teachers in this study responded that when they were overworked, their emotional state suffered and exhaustion set in. Several teachers commented that they looked towards their principals to protect them from being depleted:

I think also recognizing when your faculty is over programmed and holding back rather than pushing forward. I think in action that can be shown as well. Canceling
a meeting when it's clear that the faculty is burnt out, giving some sort of value to their time and the way it is being used (20).

Several respondents described in positive terms their principals’ efforts to protect teachers from being overburdened. Principals who ensured the faculty in their schools had appropriate time to perform their work were able to effectively reduce the degree of stress felt by teachers in this study. One participant described her experience like this:

I personally went to the vice-principal and said, "I cannot do this literacy portfolio teaching three classes," and so I received a “student success” period to work on literacy. I was really teaching, instead of six out of eight, five out of eight. One semester, I was only teaching two courses as the POR [Person of Responsibility] literacy (14).

Another participant described the positive effect her principal had on stress and burnout through listening to teacher requests to reduce the amount of meeting time:

One positive thing that happened last year was when the counselors went to the leadership and said, "We're having as many teachers in our offices crying as children, so we need to take this PD [professional development] off the table because it's driving people crazy; and they listened and they did take it off the table.

Again, there's that listening piece, there's that reality of what's happening in your context and being sensitive enough to not only take a look at it but then do something about it (9).

The importance of teachers at least feeling like they are being listened to emerged in several participants’ comments. As an extension of being listened to, several teachers
explained that they believed principals should actively notice the kinds of workload stress faculty are under, and respond accordingly. One participant put it like this:

So I think it's important with the burnout thing, because you [the principal] watch what everyone is doing, and, and you need to be responsible for the amount of work that, that they're doing, because they may not be… I guess the thing is: we can't always go to the same teacher. Because in your school you'll always have your rock star teachers, and you [the principals] will abuse them. I don't know. I've just seen it time and time again. My last year, when I left that school, I called it “taking back my life” year (19).

Other participants echoed these sentiments, arguing that principals would ideally play some role in mitigating burnout through taking note of the kinds of school commitments – and potentially outside obligations, too – to ensure faculty were not in danger of becoming exhausted. One teacher put it like this:

I think it’s a quality of a good leader to recognize everyone has limits to their abilities and contributions, and to encourage people to constantly seek to establish their limits. So say, well you’re working here, and help them clarify their role, and say well, this is what we expect of you. It’s a benchmark, a standard, and we’d like to see you do that. Also, we expect you to do that but then we know that you also have a personal life and a family life, and another life that actually fuels this one, and keeps you going, so we want you to maintain that one too. Unfortunately there’s been fewer rather than the majority, who would recognize that in all people as staff, as professional contributors, right to the PLC [Professional Learning Community]. They would say, maybe even recognize we notice you’re doing this
much, and just be aware of those things and step in at critical moments… a
deliberate awareness of what people are doing… see whatever who’s doing what,
and where, and even just going your own, walking down the halls and seeing who’s
in the building, before, during, after, lunch time, paying attention to who’s in what
club or organization. Then keep reference on that (17).

Teachers in this study described the importance of scheduling, something the principal has
some control over, as being an important aspect of burnout:

I think that one of the most common reasons is multiple preps. In secondary, if
you've gone from teaching a particular subject for many years and you're moved to
a different department, you're going to have multiple preps. That's often not a
principal’s … they're not doing it to be mean. Often times, it's because of staffing
reasons, but they can use timetables very vindictively (14).

Many teachers in this study suggested that they perceived their principals often disregarded
their needs in the service of the broader school mission:

She [the principal] will say, "I really appreciate what you do,” but it's never enough.
It's, "If you're already doing this, then why can't you be doing this and this? When
you dial things back …" Again, unless you have some personal crises that she
deems worthy of not participating in school. It becomes, "Okay, why aren't you?"

One of my friends doesn't have a husband, doesn't have children, fabulous
teacher. She's been teaching for 15 years. She's one of the best teachers I know,
has dialed back to when she's doing it, and she was asked by [the principal], "Why
aren't you helping out as much? It's really a shame that you're not sharing your
expertise," and she said to her, "I'm burning out. It's just we're always doing
something and I'm tired..." And at the same time, why aren't you calling in the people who aren't doing anything? Why aren't you calling in the 15 people at school who never do what they're supposed to? Never mind the extra, why is it always the people who are doing everything (10)?

One participant underscored the importance of the principal being flexible about understanding the need for teacher personal days:

That you have to really need a day off to deserve it. That you've got two out of the whole year and choose carefully because you've only got two and no matter what that is now the official policy and despite whatever human condition you may have, it's on paper and we're following it. Very similar with hiring practices. We're been caught up in a bit of a policy or procedural loop hole right now. I find, personally, quite frustrating. Again, less a focus on the individual and what they've done and what they contributed and more on whatever policies that took place. Along with that, I think that lends itself to a lack of accessibility because you feel like you can't have an honest human interaction with said person if you feel like their bottom line is going to be to follow the paperwork.

I think that in a profession that deals largely in relationships that causes burn out it is incredibly discouraging. I think a lot of what teachers do and what they value are things that nobody else sees, perhaps, except for their students. So, knowing that your boss, essentially, at least understands that and can see that is really important in ensuring that when you're feeling low and that you've lost some of your defenses, that you'll get that pat on the back when you need it because you're giving so much (20).
Many teachers in this study pointed to the role of the principal in reducing the possibility for stress, anxiety, and burnout among the faculty. Of importance to many teachers was the ability of their principals to notice their workload, adjust it if necessary, and to mitigate burnout through the judicious alteration of school initiative and meetings.

**Stress, Anxiety, and Burnout: Effects on Teachers (Retention and Turnover, and Self-Medicating)**

In addition to the principal actions above, teachers in this study pointed to the results of the stress, anxiety, and burnout; the prevalence of self-medication among teachers in their schools and the frequency of teacher turnover and attrition.

**Self-medicating.** Teachers in the study reported that they often resorted to self-medication when they perceived their principals as negatively impacting their emotions. One teacher put it like this:

I do drink a lot more with a bad administrator…. [laughs] It’s terrible. I eat too much and I drink too much. You have the feeling; we always talked about it with [principal name] who was the last administrator here before [principal name]… It was like the walls were closing in. The halls seemed so small… You felt like you’re in a rabbit hole and it’s coming in. Things are coming in again. We’re just feeling like … you know that feeling like you just can’t come in the morning anymore? We’re getting there… Today wasn’t fun. Kids didn’t care. Kids are angry. There’s going to be an exodus from this school I think after the exams, so the rumors are (16).

Several teachers echoed this sentiment, commenting that because the faculties they work with struggle with burnout and stress, self-medication is a common phenomenon:
I faced just ridiculous conditions, toxic environment. That was then my first year at that school. Then after the medical leave, it was then in the summer, and then I came back to the school in September determined that I would not be placed in that situation again. I continued to work. There was very, very little you can do in a situation like that where you can ask for that kind of transfer. You can probably ask for a transfer for health and safety reasons, but I really don't know. I really don't know what teachers do in toxic environments like that, how they get out of them. I think we medicate ourselves. We're one of the most highly medicated professions in the province (14).

But the burnout there is insane. The substance abuse at our school in the staff is out of control – like most staff, it’s out of control. In the funny and obvious ways people burn out, people have left on stress leave, people have left... You get the people muttering and people talking. We usually judge how stressful a year is by how many people cry and how many times it happens. With our first principal, she made lots of people cry. Our current principal, because the bullying tactics, a lot of people cry. So you can measure where we are with the outbreaks, with the physical crying – which freaks some people out, especially when we also have a lot of colleagues crying and it’s because of what’s happening in the school. So there’s outbursts of that.

We have a really tight staff. You could just tell on Friday nights when they were drinking like if it’s been a bad week. If it’s around all the report cards then
you know it’s because of the work, but if it’s around PD or staff room meeting you can tell that people are drinking because of what’s going on at work (4).

Not all teachers in this study reported that school leaders impacted their decisions to consume substances like alcohol and drugs, yet the comments from the three participants above point to the issue. How widespread the problem is – if teaching is in the words of one of the participants, “one of the most highly medicated professions in the province” (14) – is not clear.

**Teacher retention and turnover.** The stress, anxiety, and burnout faced by teachers in this study often led to the desire to leave their schools, or the profession entirely. At times, it was permanent; at others, teachers in the study explained they took a leave of absence. One teacher described her response to burnout out, caused by a difficult principal, in terms of leaving the school:

I'd say my last year, and why I left the school. I didn't leave because of the kids… I left because I just couldn't handle… And, being a union rep is very different cause you're taking on other people's burdens, problems, issues, and then you create a relationship between administration, you, and staff. With my other principals it was cool, but this guy, just … I get the sense like, get out. It gets a little crazy… It gets too much … people's problems and I just couldn't take it anymore. So, I was like, you know, I'm going to leave while I'm not running; while the opportunity presents itself (19).

One junior teacher pointed out that as someone on a long-term occasional contract, she had little support from the union - and therefore felt especially vulnerable to her principal’s demands:
I don’t have the union support. It’s kind of funny and he really took advantage of that in my particular case. He’d come into my classroom unannounced at least three times a week, if he saw coffee or a cell phone, he wouldn’t talk to the student about it. He would degrade me about it saying, “How are students supposed to learn?...”

Yeah in front of a room full of 30 students. I would bring him in the hall and say, “Next time perhaps you could pull me aside and speak to me about this.” His retort would be, “Well the students learn better if they see you getting in trouble too.”

… It actually demoralizes me and takes away my power in the classroom.

This was especially the case this past year, it’s gotten worse, myself I … this … A lot of my illnesses, I had pneumonia twice, three times at that one school in the last nine months… When I left there in November I didn’t realize how depressed I was until I had left and then I really recognized how he (the principal) was actually making me question if I was supposed to be a teacher. Not just at that school but I was considering other careers, I’m like maybe I’m not supposed to be here, maybe this isn’t my path (13).

A difficult principal can be the cause for teachers to leave schools, or the profession entirely, as these two teachers exemplify:

On behalf of one particular colleague of mine he actually did make the leap of profession… [The principal] paraded him in front of students, said that the work wasn’t good enough, get it up to par... This particular person got an offer from their previous job to return as the manager. Not only did leave the school, also the profession entirely (13).
Right now our hospitality teacher... She’s close to leaving because of all the work she has to do, and all the extra work she has to do. It makes our school look great, great brand of us, so when people come to visit – we had the minister of education last week, and they’re eating this gourmet food made by like hooligans, it was made by Toms, and this stuff’s amazing, but she was like dead. So if it kills her career, she wants to leave teaching, but it makes us look good, I wonder if that’s worth it (4).

When transfers happened, participants in this study suggested that principals were most responsible for transfer requests. Several pointed to hard driving and unempathetic principals as being major causes of the loss of valuable faculty members:

There was a mass exodus at the school that I'm involved in with the Board and it had to do singularly because of the principal. A principal came in who, again was quite similar actually to the principal that I was speaking of at my school. Very dictatorial in a sense, not a lot of strong people skills, etc., etc. Good vision, not great at the execution. Certainly was lacking that human touch. I think made people's lives hell in a lot of ways. I think she would drag faculty into her office and berate them for reasons that...Without really knowing a lot of the back-story. Again, I think a lack of trust in the faculty on her part. That was very clear and visible to the faculty themselves. So, I think that after her second year, and she was let go shortly after, but I think that they lost maybe 10% of the faculty left and in all of the exit interviews it was very clear that it was because of her (20).
She [the principal] drove programs into the ground. Certainly the phys. ed. department thinks she drove the phys. ed. department into the ground. They’ve said that many times. Because we had a head of phys. ed. who... when you were talking about transfers, we did have someone who ran the phys. ed. department for almost 20 years and he left after she [the principal in question] was there for about two years because they had a big, big battle about something. This was right after I got there. I don't know. He put in the transfer and left and was very, very vocal about the fact that he was leaving because he didn’t think she supported the phys. ed. department enough (5).

Even participants who did not leave their jobs often recalled incidents with their principals that made them consider leaving their posts, or placing themselves on the transfer list. Two teachers from the study explained: “I remember going home and saying to my wife, “I think I need to change schools”” (2). “Definitely one year I had the paperwork ready to go. And because of time-tabling and courses I was getting that were not making me happy” (7).

Several teachers in the study had indeed changed postings as a result of principal behaviours. When they did so, they reported feeling positive about their moves.

Teachers in this study reported that powerful emotions like stress, anxiety and burnout were common features of their careers and those of their colleagues. Principals were able to positively affect teachers’ emotional well-being when they acted in supportive ways, buffering their faculty from harassment and monitoring their workload. Principals had a negative effect on the participants’ internal states when they blamed teachers for matters beyond their control, demanded excessive levels of work, and behaved in vindictive
and cruel ways towards teachers. The respondents believed these toxic environments led to turnover issues, medical leaves, and teachers leaving the profession entirely.

**Self- and Collective-Efficacy**

Generally, teachers in this study described their sense of self-efficacy and collective-teacher efficacy as strong and resilient. While principals played a role in maintaining and developing their emotional well-being in this domain, teachers reported principal effects milder than those affecting their sense of morale and stress, anxiety, and burnout. Nonetheless, teachers in this study identified a few areas where principals had an influence on their sense of efficacy: in the provision of professional development; alterations to their teaching schedules; and providing support. One participant described it like this:

Well, progress is always possible for everyone. We’re all human right? None of us are perfect, never will be, but we can always make progress. I would assume that with everyone, and always assume the best in people, always assume they’re working hard and well, and I’d like to see that in a leader who is actually working well to improve, to hone your craft (15).
Professional development. One of the ways in which participants recalled principals having an effect on their sense of self-efficacy, was in school administrators ensuring appropriate professional development was available. In this way, principals were able to ensure teachers felt like they were able to reach students, and confident that they were equipped for the challenge of improving student performance. One participant described the positive effect of his principal ensuring professional development:

I’ve been actually again at both schools I've been on, I've been offered the opportunity a couple of times to do watch and learns and sort of little mini PD sessions for either grade team or for the entire staff. I appreciate those opportunities because it's practice for me. It's also to me, it would suggest pretty clearly that there's a confidence and what I'm doing they see as being effective and good practice and worth sharing with the rest of the staff (2).

Another participant recalled an instance where she perceived the principal having an effect on the entire faculty through a professional development initiative:

So she was really interested in us building teams. And so she squirreled away, found… I don't know, came up with money, to take a team of us to a conference. Now, it doesn't mean principals have to do that to be effective, but she put this out to all the staff, this idea that she was going to take a team to a conference. So, everybody had the opportunity to be involved. But I'm sure that she had people, and I know she had people in her mind who she wanted to take because I hadn't originally said I was going to go. And she came to me and said I had to go. But the mix that she took was not just keeners. So I'm a keener, for sure. So I would be the person that a principal wants to take. But just having me come back to talk to the
staff is not always effective because everybody knows that I love everything. So, I'm not a very critical person. But she took people who were kind of naysayers or at least that were critical. And so she took a team of probably five or six of us to a conference and we were… it was at a hotel, and so we were in our hotel rooms.

And the conference was amazing. It absolutely totally changed my career…. (1).

The success of the professional development in this instance can be attributed to at least three things: first, the principal in this example was proactive in establishing the conditions for the professional development by ensuring that there was enough money; second, she was able to encourage faculty to attend, bringing positive affective feel to the activity; and third, she was able to involve many faculty members, including those in the group with varied opinions. In this way, this principal also supported collective-efficacy, as the interview participant explained:

That changed the way that we did business at our school. So then, we went back as a team of people who… we were a heterogeneous team, but we all really believed in this vision and there were enough of us… it's a small school that I was at, a very small school, and there were enough of us that I think it was kind of that critical mass of people who would probably appeal to different kinds of staff members… So, that absolutely changed my career. And when I think about the people from that school who are not at that school anymore, at least 60% of the people who were on that team are now in leadership positions. So, she's had a huge impact on the school; absolutely changed the culture of the school (1).

Last, this principal was able to find ways to buffer faculty from unnecessary distractions and build a time and space for conversations about instructional improvements and faculty
development. This interviewer made the case that this commitment to the development of the faculty, placing it as a priority not an afterthought, helped build her self-efficacy, as well as the collective-efficacy, of the learning team:

And then she, again, she just made things happen. So we had these lunch-and-learns back at school. And in my… this small town where I grew up, and that's the school I was at. I think every month, but maybe every two weeks, we had this extra long lunch which is probably against the Education Act, in terms of number of minutes of instructional time, but in terms of what really happened, absolutely changed the school. And if one union person had said, you can't take away my lunch, if one businessperson had said those dumb kids are on my property, if one parent had said the Education Act says blah-blah-blah, it would have fallen. So, I think it was a bit of a house of cards, and we didn't even, at the school or when we were sharing with other people, we almost felt nervous saying what we were doing because I don't know how it fit into the… what people should do. But again, people felt honored. Like she bought lunch and that's so cheesy, but everybody… people want food, they want to be honored, they want their time to be valued. And she built it into the day so it wasn't just stay after school for another hour to do this. (1).

This study finds that both participants’ sense of self- and collective efficacy were affected by the principal promoting professional development within the teaching faculty.
Schedule changes. Many interview participants reported that changes to their working schedules had impacts on their emotional states, particularly their sense of self-efficacy – in this case, specifically, their ability to meet the needs of the students. While some teachers saw these changes positively, and were often helped to that more confident view by their school leadership, others viewed schedule changes negatively. The teachers with negative views were very sensitive to what they perceived as vengeful or manipulative changes to their schedule. They believed it to be a common practice for principals looking to constructively dismiss teachers to arrange a schedule that, while in accordance with the collective agreement, would undermine the teacher’s sense of competence in the classroom. Several participants described seeing this in practice, and described the effect on teacher self-efficacy. Two participants described it like this: “He [the principal] switched people's schedules, looked up everyone's qualifications, made adjustments” (19).

A school leader will often change timetables of the teacher because, as you know, we have different qualifications. If I'm qualified in English and History, but I've been teaching English for 25 years and if he said, "I want you to teach History now," and I may say, "Retirement papers please." That's one way that school leaders do it. People move on (14).

Interestingly, in other findings above, teachers reported a desire for principals to take a “firm but fair” approach to disciplining teachers; the appropriate discipline of teachers, participants in this study explained, actually supported teacher morale. One possibility is that schedule changes described as constructive dismissal were understood by teachers as capricious or mean-spirited. Whatever the principal’s intention, if teachers feel their principal is using schedule changes as a means to push them out, knowing the effect
such changes have on teacher emotion, self-efficacy suffers. When teachers feel that those schedule changes could be directed at anyone, that no one is safe from a principal intent on teacher turnover, collective-efficacy would likely suffer. Like so much involved in leading people, much of the difference likely lies in the tone of the conversation, and perhaps the degree of trust in the building.

Highlighting the preceding point, one participant explained that when he was greeted with the news that he would be teaching something outside of his subject areas, and his comfort zone, leaders in the school stressed the support that would be given; as well, highlighted the learning that could come from the experience:

Things can and do change in any department at any time but she said, "You know what?" [leader name] said, "When I first started, I taught basically every course that exists in Social Science Department." Hearing she's using past experience to say, "It's okay." She said, "It is an amazing experience. You get a lot of exposure to different kinds of curriculum…” (11).

This study finds that teachers’ sense of efficacy is impacted by the courses they are asked to teach. In cases where the principal arranges a difficult schedule without the appropriate support, participants reported a loss in self-efficacy.
Role of principal support. In addition to teachers reporting that the perception of principal support affected their sense of morale, in the previous theme above, it also impacted their sense of efficacy. Participants in this study explained that the principal support was often a proxy for self-efficacy. One teacher explained the connection between principal attitudes and support on the one hand, and the sense of self-efficacy and growth mindset on the other:

For example, a growth mindset, if a teacher had gone through an issue or was working on a skill set, if they showed, demonstrated efforts to improve, the principal should then therefore demonstrate in their actions or in precedence that they too had a growth mindset in terms of the ability of that said professional and not to hold that over them (3).

Teachers in this study reported that when they felt undermined by their principals, they suffered a loss of self-efficacy. Teachers explained that they perceived being undermined when principals arbitrarily questioned their teaching practice or skill at maintaining class discipline in front of the students. One participant described the relationship between principal support and self-efficacy like this:

I think that the relationship between principals and teachers impacts teachers on a number of levels, and the levels that we've talked about before. It impacts their sense of self-efficacy. Can they really impact change if they're feeling undermined out there? Then how does that affect how they're feeling in the classroom, if they're always having to look over their shoulder?

We talk about children being risk-takers. Teachers have to be risk-takers, too, and they can't do that if they're being undermined with that relationship, with
the relationship with their principal; or if their relationship with the principal is such that the teacher is now questioning and second-guessing what they're doing. It sets them off balance… (9).

As in other areas, teachers in this study wished for the kinds of support that they, as practicing teachers, are expected and encouraged to give students in their classes.

Several participants explained that the relationship between a well-disciplined school and their sense of self-efficacy was strong, arguing that if they feel unsupported by the principal on discipline matters, maintaining authority in the classroom was difficult or impossible:

There was also a brand new evaluation process that came into play where, rather than meet with the teacher ahead of time to say, "I'll be in your class on such and such a day. What are the kinds of things you would like me to look at?" There was no give and take in terms of where … it was a very top-down approach, "I'm coming in to evaluate you," which, to me, undermines the teacher's level of professionalism as well, and undermines their sense of self-efficacy.

This new evaluation process, for which a lot of teachers ended up in tears in our offices, was a drop-in, so with no … and a drop-in without understanding … so a drop-in that sees what's happening, makes notes on what's happening with no verbal communication, makes notes behind a laptop. The evaluator doesn’t know which step in the process the teacher is.

If the class is in chaos, happy chaos, it doesn’t mean children aren't learning. It could mean that they're really learning and this is what they needed to do to
explore, and particularly in the case of experiential learning where they may be working on a lab... (9).

The previous selection suggests that principals who approach teachers, especially over sensitive issues like evaluation, assuming a negative intent are likely to deflate teacher emotion. Participants in this study understood themselves as dedicated professionals, doing their best, looking to grow but also wanting a principal who can understand that they might require the benefit of the doubt.

In the cases where principals were seen to undercut the authority of the teacher, the exact opposite of the kinds of support teachers seemed to be looking for, the results were, in the view of the participants, disastrous:

Absolutely undermining teacher's power. That's what I see consistently. A teacher is not effective if their power is undermined because the kid knows that teacher has no power. When you're dealing with behavior kids or you're dealing with entitled kids or rich kids... I mean I could think of all different types of kids right? It doesn't seem to matter to me what type of kid you're dealing with. If there's a kid that senses you as a [weak] teacher, you're no longer effective because you have no power or control over in class, over your marking, because the principal or vice principal has undermined it which we see a lot, you're not going to have an effective teacher (17).

Participants in this study viewed their work as incredibly challenging, partly due to the difficulty in securing the assent of students and keeping their attention. When principals appeared to be unsupportive of them, by undermining their authority or diminishing them in front of students, it was damaging. One teacher discussed the
challenges she faced with students at risk and the way her unsupportive principal undermined her:

[As a teacher] you can’t just be like, “Here is a textbook: read chapter 6, answer the questions,” done. It’s a song and dance. When you see me, I’m very animated when I teach this group of students. I literally I’m dancing in front of them to get them entertained and engaged in the material. This so called “bad principal” would say that it was me crossing boundaries, that I was inappropriate, which again makes me question my methods even though I’m achieving success with the students I didn’t feel like I was crossing any boundaries whatsoever. I also found it very ironic coming from a principal who in the hall would give daps [an informal fist gesture of greeting] to all of our drug dealers - and mind you ignore all of our high achieving students…. 

The students in this particular school just challenge teachers all the time. Because they know the principal is on their side for the most part. It got to the point at one point last year where we had students dealing drugs in the hallway washrooms. Then the principal wasn’t going to kick them out. They were just like, “this is the perfect school,” then the word got out more students who were dealing drugs enrolled and then the situation escalated to where we were having turf wars in the hall. (13)

Some issues were more sensitive to teachers in this study than others. As mentioned elsewhere in the findings, providing support for teachers in keeping a disciplined and orderly school was seen as essential to teachers in this study. When principals abdicated this responsibility, teachers felt the effect as undermining:
Again it’s just the lack of leadership, the lack of support from our principal… Yeah, I was told to go, excuse my language, go fuck myself by a student in a group full of teachers and students because I would not give him extra pizza. After the third time this happened I sent this individual to go and see the principal and the principal sent him home with two full pizzas. Yet no “Go apologize to the teacher for telling them to go fuck themselves,” nothing like that. Just simply rewarding the behavior was the easiest way out of the situation essentially… “Good luck teaching them.” They [the students] are never in the classroom. Then we get in trouble when they are wandering the halls, because that’s all under our control as well (13).

In this case, the teacher sent the kid to the office. The office sent the kid straight back. Immediately, the kid knows, and everyone else in the class knows, no matter what you do to this teacher, the office is not going to support him. They’ll support the student. It escalated (12).

Not all teachers reported negative experiences with these issues. One teacher reported that when he felt supported by his principal in dealing with difficult students – defined as something like his principal approaching the issue assuming his professionalism and positive intention – his sense of efficacy improved. He recounted the incident:

I had a couple students that were really deteriorating so to speak. There were a lot of issues going on. One in particular was having a really tough time. Anyways, ultimately ended up biting me pretty hard, just the immediate response of that principal at that time, just in terms of him making phone calls at the board level,
calling risk review meeting and just having that student removed and put in a different program for the rest of the year was just awesome.

Clearly, things weren't working well in my class. I felt badly that … I did feel responsible for that but at no time did the principal ever make me feel as though I'd failed, even though in my mind it felt like I'd failed the student to some extent because yeah, I should be able to work with everybody and not have that happen. It just wasn’t happening in this case. He never once even so much as intimated that I could have handled things differently or done things different so we didn't get to this. It was never like that.

That was encouraging for me because again it was a difficult class. I sort of reinforced that I was at least doing my best and doing mostly the right things. For me, it's always just come down to how supported I feel… (2).

By acting with a kind of enlightened authority, principals have had an effect on the sense of teacher self-efficacy through providing, in the eyes of study participants, appropriate support for teaching practice and maintaining what teachers believe to be appropriate student discipline. Principal support can be seen as a set of key principal behaviours, including a sense of respect for teacher competence, assuming a positive intention on the part of teachers, and finding ways to bolster orderliness.
Teacher comparisons. Several participants in the study complained that their sense of efficacy was negatively impacted through unhelpful and demeaning comparisons with other faculty. Some respondents reported that in an effort to demonstrate “best practices,” their principals would imply that some of their colleagues were delivering superior instruction; the tone with which this was done decreased the sense of self-efficacy for some participants. One teacher explained it like this:

Our principal loves the idea of PD, and loves the idea of constantly developing the staff… our PD a couple of days ago was taking a bunch of teachers to an ideal classroom, like the perfect classroom, just so you could see what the environment looks like: like look at the walls, see everything that’s going on. When the principal took teachers on this demonstration tour … people just felt like it was a punishment, people felt like it was favourites, I could see like a little civil war starting, it just was just like a really, really bad decision; a lot of people felt that it was like a public shaming. I’m sure it wasn’t intentioned, but it really caused a real stir. People left feeling really shitty….

Teachers are a weird breed of people. I always sometimes feel like I’m on the outside of them, because when I grew up I never wanted to be a teacher, it was the last thing I wanted to do, but sort of fell into it – I’m glad I did it. But I don’t know, teachers – a lot of the one’s I’ve worked with – I know really want that recognition; they want to be recognized. I think a lot of teachers were good students and that sort of makes them good teachers, because they go into teaching because they like school. But I think that somebody that likes school, or had a good experience in school, usually has someone above them mentoring them going “hey,
great job”, and when the reverse happens, when there’s a bit of a rub and there’s sort of a kicking as the dog, I think that kind of backfired, and people felt like they weren’t being patted on the back, in fact, they’re showing [the opposite]…

It’s sort of like having gold stars on the wall, I mean you’re not supposed to do that right, because it shows that Jimmy’s doing well, but Johnny isn’t. I think everyone felt like Johnny. So I think a lot of people were really rubbed the wrong way. It didn’t rub me so much the wrong way other than I was trying to figure out why is he doing this, I would not do this, this is not healthy for the building. So it’s the strange thing, and I think teachers like bosses, and I think like mentors, and I think teachers like feedback, and I think that’s what teachers do really well: they do it in the classroom, you probably do it too. You know when you tell a student at large, “you started this class, you weren’t very good at writing an essay, but now you’re doing fantastic,” you know how they grow. I think teachers like to grow like that too, and when they don’t get that from a principal, you get the exact opposite: I think it really backfires. Like I could see people’s lights turning off, the exact thing we’re not supposed to be doing as teachers (4).

Teachers in this study reported that their sense of self- and collective-efficacy was influenced by the actions of their principals. Through the provision of professional development, alterations to their teaching schedules, and providing support, principals were able to improve the internal states and sense of efficacy of those working face-to-face with students in the school. This study finds that this form of leadership, at least in the respondents interviewed here, has had an impact on the instruction in school sites.
Organizational Commitment and Engagement

Teachers in this study reported that their sense of organizational commitment and engagement fluctuate depending on the behaviour of the principal. The findings below suggest that teachers are willing to engage deeply - in putting time and effort into extracurricular initiatives, Professional Learning Communities work, literacy committees, and the like - but are more likely to do so if principals acknowledge their efforts, the principal avoids creating the appearance of favouring some teachers over others, and if the principal is able to read the staff’s interests accurately and appeal to them. In describing the effect her principal has on her level of organizational commitment and engagement, one participant explained: “Well you know if it [the principal] was someone that I felt a little bit differently about, I might get involved in maybe more literacy based activities or literacy committees and things like that…” (7).

Forms commitment takes. For participants, disengagement meant a reduction in the depth of participation in school programming. What this meant for teachers varied somewhat; for some teachers, their declining commitment did not impact the classroom, but did affect their moderating clubs and teams, or participating in school-wide curriculum initiatives. For others, the energy and dedication they brought to their classroom suffered. Several teachers explained:

I will tell you. The bitter teacher walks in at 8:00 and leaves at 2:35. They don't participate in any clubs or teams. I had a colleague who I worked with for years here and I didn't understand when I first started working with her why she was just so miserable. I just thought, "Oh, can you not smile?" And it was like that all day in class and her answer was no to everything… But when you talk to her about her
history, she actually had a master's degree. She had her principal qualifications. She had been summer school principal for years and then at that point where all of the sudden that was as far as she was allowed to go. She was our department head at one point; like incredible portfolio that now has been completely squashed. So the bitter teacher gives nothing (17).

I think that the majority of our teachers bring in like close to 100%. I won’t use the sports metaphor that you have 100%, but they give close to 100%. I think you get cut off at the knees a few times you’re going to start bringing in 60% and 70%. This year, seriously, a person cried, the person who got dressed down, the person who was really stressed out, they pulled back: they stopped doing the extra stuff, they’re still doing extra, but not doing it with a little bit of buzz. They tuned out. I tune out.

I have come into the school before and said, “You know what? This year I’m just going to maintain, I’m just going to come here and treat it like a job” – and that’s the worst thing you can do… you know, “I’m just going to treat this like a job.” That’s pretty good, but as teachers we think we have to be like super humans: no it’s a calling – which is kind of bullshit, but we do that. I don’t know why we do that, but we do it.

I remember, it was two years ago, and he [the principal] was just driving me crazy, and the administration was brutal, and I was just like, “You know what? I’m just going to come and go to work, I’m not going to give any extra...” (4).
Teachers in this study defined their organizational commitment and engagement in terms of the energy and dedication they brought to their work. While some teachers argued that their commitment level was not impacted by leadership behaviours, most others argued there was a strong connection: when leaders acknowledged their contribution, for example, it increased; when teachers in this study were burned out, bitter, and stressed - often because of principal actions - they reduced their commitment to school initiatives and even classroom activities.

**Acknowledgement-commitment connection.** Many teachers in this study reported that being acknowledged for their efforts by their principals - which were often above the contract requirements, required much of their own personal time, and benefitted students outside the classroom - was a major influence on their desire to commit in future instances. When describing what this acknowledgement looked like, one participant said:

He [her principal] would do, like the thank you cards. Honestly, he hooked me.

My second week there, I had a thank you card…. And, I just never had a thank you card. As simple as that, and I was hooked (19).

One participant recalled a principal from earlier in her career who was able to increase the commitment of the faculty through a sense of being honoured. Years later, she was still impressed by the effectiveness of his behaviour:

There's stuff that he can get out of his staff… by really making you feel like he honors and values what you do, like truly, truly making you feel like that. There's stuff that he gets out of you. You leave a meeting and you're just like, what, I can't believe I signed up to do all that stuff…. he was a master, a master (1).
Elaborating on this principal’s ability to elicit a higher degree of commitment, she continued:

Definitely pouring more emotion energy into it because I was getting a little bit what I need. I'm definitely just personality-wise, a person who needs lots of or I want lots of praise... for me that worked and so more hours and being willing to... because when I say Machiavellian, I do think it's benevolent. I do think that it's for a very, very good moral purpose and that this is his best way to get people there, and so I worked harder or kept working as hard as I could (1).

This belief was echoed by many of the participants in this study and represents a consistent finding. Other teachers in this study explained the importance of principals’ acknowledgement of their commitment like this:

Feeling respected by your principal and more than even just respected, just appreciated saying, “Good job.” When there is not a superintendent watching. We never got that, we would … Myself, I would run the talent shows and have extraordinary success wouldn’t get a word. I created the credit recovery program didn’t get a word. Same with other teachers and guidance, they came up with all of these innovative ways of engaging the students and helping them with halfway planning not a word was spoken to them in appreciation or support. Anything saying, “Good job this is great.” None of that unless there was a higher-up there present (13).

It’s generally just a verbal from the administration to say, “[teacher name], thanks a lot, that really means a lot to the school and the kids, and I appreciate you doing
that.” Straight and direct maybe even public in a staff meeting, but we’re all working together so it doesn’t have to be public. Just a recognition and to know that I know you are helping out and you are doing something and it means something to me and the kids here in the building, and I want you to know that it has a value here… [The principal is] paying attention to your work, what you’re doing. A lot of teachers have the feeling not only do they not know what you’re doing they don’t care. Couldn’t care less. We’ve had not only principals, even department heads, who would say to a teacher, how’s the Italian going, in a department where they don’t teach Italian they teach Spanish. You don’t even know what I’m doing here. You don’t know what my job is (15).

Building on this notion of feeling honoured by the principal, many teachers talked about the importance of feeling the principal acknowledges their talents and skills. One respondent described it like this:

Not to paint teachers with too-broad a brush, but distributed leadership... The more principals can... the more principals can say, "I trust you. I recognize your talents and abilities. You take responsibility for this."

Teachers, again I'm speaking broadly and, of course, there are exceptions, but in my experience, for the most part, teachers embrace work and are willing to go above and beyond and do quite a bit more than is required in the contract. They'll take on leadership roles. They do it all the time. They coach, they lead clubs. They chair committees when they're given permission to do so. If they feel like their voice will matter. If they feel like their perspectives will be valued, they will work.
What's better than having sort of an actively engaged workforce that's taken
ownership of the learning environment (8)?

In the view of the participants in this study, principals have the ability to increase
the organizational commitment and engagement of the faculty in their schools through the
use of appropriate forms of acknowledgement for their work and dedication.

**Principal favourites.** While teachers in this study underscored the importance of
acknowledgement and encouragement, many also explained the negative effect the
appearance of principal favourites had on their desire to commit extra time and energy to
school causes. By favourites, participants meant that they perceived principals had selected
a privileged group of teachers who received special treatment, or advanced invitations to
participate in school initiatives. Several teachers described the situation in their schools
like this:

There's always an in-group and out-group, yes, absolutely. Often times, that could
be just because the person is maybe … the principal's mentoring somebody because
of their PQP. It could be because they've known each other. There are many
reasons for that but there's always an in and out-group, yeah, for sure…. I
personally experienced that in terms of seeing a principal's favorite… At that time,
it did feel like favoritism and as a result, many initiatives that that person brought to
the table, I think people resisted because it's like, "Another pet project…” (14).

This perceived sense of principal favouritism can lead to distrust and resentment, as another
teacher explained:

There’s the mistrust, distrust from leadership and it’s generally a sign they’re not
playing by grownup rules…. When people see other people stepping up to do that,
whatever the admin wants, whatever it is, even if it has a negative impact on people, even if it’s not their job, say it’s an administrative job, and this is a classic, when there is a job let’s say, commencement, the admin is responsible for commencement. They’re going to be on the stage handing out diplomas etcetera but they will delegate more.

It starts with the secretaries, then it’ll go to staff, and they say, we’re going to strike a committee, which is the common practice in schools, so we can download this to staff. In many staff, you have a lot of younger teachers, or teachers who are on a career trajectory who always stuck up for those things to become the favorites. We have got I think an extraordinary case here where someone has been on that path for so long, that I think, you might hear this from some other people, but they’re actually calling the shots in the school because the administration is so new and weak, they just defer to these people, because they’re more experienced and they’ve been doing it longer.

That’s when the staff are really out there at their wits end, they’re dejected, completely dejected, withdrawn, it’s like, you can’t even talk to this admin, they can’t make decisions. You couldn’t ask them something because they would have to ask that teacher. So I guess they withdraw and that’s the result when they sense there are these favorites (15).

Participants in this study felt their sense of commitment decline when it appeared to them that their principals assessed staff not by their possible capacity, but by inclusion in an arbitrary group. One participant complained that it felt to her like her principal had selected favourites in her school for promotion over more - or at least equally - qualified teachers in
her school. Perhaps this is the clearest way to understand the offensiveness of the principal favourite concept; it appeared to teachers in this study that the favouritism enjoyed by some teachers was baseless, unwarranted, and perhaps more damaging, preventing their own engagement in the school. Believing it to be common across the school board, and the province, she described it like this:

It's called the ‘TAP’. It was one of the first things in my master's program that I remember somebody said, "Well, you know what it's called. In our work, it's called the TAP." And we all knew exactly what that meant except for the professor who said, "What's the TAP?" The TAP is you are chosen to go into administration. You don't choose administration. The TAP is usually given to people… Unfortunately, this has been a very dysfunctional system in our board… We had a teacher here, very young teacher, six years. Everyone can see she was being push, push, pushed all the way up here and then she’d give presentations to the staff that she didn't even understand what she was saying. Of course, everybody knew this so we have many teachers if you'll look at, their OCT [Ontario College of Teachers] qualifications who have their principal AQ [additional qualification], 1 and 2 Special Education guidance, all this and have been sitting on that. So I have asked my principal, "Why do we have over 10 teachers sitting on this qualification and this person who barely can spell things properly was the one that got... " She said, "I don't know. I have no idea what you're talking about." That's what I was told (17).

Respondents in this study felt that when they perceived principals favouring some teachers over others, for reasons that appeared to be to them arbitrary or secretive, their desire to commit to the goals of the school, the principal, or the board decreased and they
retrenched in their classrooms. The contrast between this finding and the desire for encouragement is interesting, and not necessarily a conflict. The major difference, as articulated by the study participants, is that while they enjoyed praise for themselves, the praise of others was not necessarily corrosive. What was damaging to teacher emotion was when decisions about the merit of faculty, or faculty initiatives, were based on perceived prejudice, unfairness, or without warrant. Like other findings in this study, there is likely a communication dimension – in the absence of communication for the reasons behind principals’ decisions, as we see in the comments from respondents above, teachers were often left to conclude that they were being unfairly dismissed by their principals. When principal decisions were regarded as secret or opaque, commitment predictably suffered.

**Responsive leadership behaviours - reading the faculty.** Many teachers in this study commented on the importance of their principals understanding who they were as professionals, and in some way matching their interests to the needs of the school. One teacher described a past principal as having a very efficient but effective method of gaining teacher commitment:

He would walk in and within the first week, he had a commitment from a teacher who would organize grad in June. By the end of September, the entire year was mapped out, and everybody knew what they were coaching, what their responsibilities were, and it was conversational. He didn't pressure anybody. I didn't feel pressured. He just wanted to make sure that it was looked after, so that throughout the year, there wasn't a panic or a scramble to get people to do stuff (12).
Many other teachers commented on principal behaviour that involved a savvy reading of the faculty that impacted their degree of commitment. One participant explained it like this:

The very first principal in the school had started a school success team and it was voluntary and there was at least 35 to 40 of us in the room and we met for every week for a whole year and he was very open. He was a new principal, so he is like, "Okay, we'll try this." He was very open to trying things. The year after he was moved, the next principal came in, a senior principal, we asked for it, we've asked for it again, it's never been allowed. So there's an incredible silencing when those 40 people are still saying, "We wanted to improve our school by trying things and there's no meeting or forum to discuss it..." It was quite empowering. There's really a person who said, "Okay, so we have a problem." And he would stand up and say, "Here's the problem. Let's see if we can come up some solutions. Now, which one of these solutions is realistic that we can do within our jurisdiction of a school? All these kids are showing up late, so let's go through some of the possible solutions." So people felt, the teachers felt they were participating even though the solution may have been nothing at the end of the day. It was a person who allowed them to talk it through and I think that was the one person I saw who did that.

That's it (17).

Another participant explained that the faculty at her school had trouble dealing with a new principal who came into the school and, through what might be described as ignoring the culture and traditions of the place, negatively impacted commitment:
Yes, that we were being heavily scrutinized and people felt really kind of hamstringed. There was no room for individuals to kind of do what they were already doing… It wasn't a good fit at all at our particular school. It's very busy, it's lots of extra curricular activities. People are, we're sort of used to it because we've had someone for a long, long time before that and people were used to kind of running their things and doing what they wanted. That's where it came down. So some people really reacted against it and said “I'm not doing it.” Things sort of shut down and it was not a collaborative kind of feel to the school at all anymore and some people definitely just sort of checked out (7).

Yet another teacher stressed the importance of being able to read the faculty and engage them in language, practices, and culture that make sense to the faculty themselves. She explained that her principal was having trouble securing commitment from faculty over a possible new direction for the school:

In seeing that happen now, it's happening kind of in front of me now, where the principal is trying to bring in a little bit of a performing arts special programming to the school. When he first introduced it, there were a lot of eye rolls. Like, "We don't want to be a specialized school, we want to kind of be what we are," where a lot of staff have been there for a very long time and are very invested in the way things are. It's all in positioning. Here's this thing, and by the way, we have declining enrollment. As we have declining enrollment, we're going to have to open up our doors. If we're going to have to fill 200 spots, wouldn't we like to fill those 200 spots with students that auditioned for our building rather than people that are
just air-lifted in and dropped on us. Then the heads start nodding. "Oh, yeah, okay. I can see what's in it for me."

It's really about knowing what your staff want and need and then position whatever it is in that way for them. It's all about the message right? And the marketing. It's how you market it to your staff (6).

Teachers in this study reported that when principals were not alive to their nature as practitioners, or when they were deaf to the special characteristics of their faculties, teacher commitment suffered.

Bureaucracy. Teachers in this study reported feeling that when they perceived an inordinate amount of bureaucracy insisted on by the principal, they decreased their commitment and engagement - especially to events and activities that required paperwork. What teachers seemed to mean here is that, while they understood the need for “paperwork” (often connected to board policy about safety or permission forms), when they saw principals as more interested in fulfilling their obligations to paperwork than to the support of programming in the school, they felt deflated and less willing to commit to giving their time. When teachers saw their principals as partners in their commitment, willing to find ways to “make it work” by facilitating the paperwork or helping to break down “roadblocks,” in the words of one participant, they were more willing to commit. On the other hand, when study participants reported they felt like their principal’s desire to satisfy board-level minutiae exceeded their interest in supporting student and teacher initiative, their commitment waned. Two teachers put it in these words:

She [the principal] manages things instead of leading. The bureaucracy around getting something done... like that event should have been fairly easy to do. I
worked so hard on that event because there were roadblocks everywhere. “Have you checked this? Have you talked to this person? I’m not sure we can do this. I’m not sure we can do that. All those things are rules.” I know that there are rules and all that, but some people seem to be able to break down some of those things once in a while and say, here, we’re going to make this easy for you because this is a great thing. It’s kind of like there are roadblocks up, lots of roadblocks, and this is something I’ve heard a lot of staff say, is that I just got tired of doing it. It was starting to be too difficult, too many roadblocks, so I’m not going to do it next time because it was just too hard to get it done… It gets to be overwhelming, so you say, “I’m not going to do it” (5).

Thinking back to the principal I just worked with. When I went to her with those concerns, again, she completely, “I’ll find you the staff. Don’t worry about the bus.” It was like that. That for me is… I'm going to coach something else now because I know that she values it and that it's those kind of technical things that do create some work for her, she’s willing to do because she sees the value in it. I take it that she appreciates then, my time in doing that, the coaching or the facilitating in the club or that kind of thing. That's really all I kind of look for… (2). Principals of teachers in this study have had a powerful influence over their sense of organizational commitment and engagement - defined by these teachers as their willingness to dedicate themselves, and their time, to both the initiatives of the school, and the requirements of the students in their class. Participants reported that their principals were a major factor in their degree of commitment and engagement.
Motivation

Given the similarities that motivation shares with other domains considered in this study (especially commitment), a word on clarifying the meaning of these terms is due. This study echoes the sentiments of Leithwood and Beatty (2008) who argue that motivation “is a soupy mix of thoughts and feelings” (p. 76), and that teacher motivation is mostly intrinsic. Yet, not entirely; the connection to principals is in the ways they can “engag[e] [teachers] in improving their own performance…” and “encourage teachers to think about their work in new ways” (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008, p. 77). It is with this in mind that participants in the study were asked to describe instances where principals had an impact on “doing better work than [they] thought possible, or trying new approaches” (Appendix A).

Teachers in this study reported that they often struggled maintaining their motivation. They reported that there have been many initiatives to improve school performance in the recent past, and stretching back even further, and the result might be described as initiative fatigue. Teachers in this study felt pressure to adopt these new practices but, in many cases, felt little desire to do so. One participant described the feeling like this:

It's really that leadership role - they need to motivate a group of people which is the most difficult role. I think they can learn business, they can learn the legal stuff, they can learn the education landscape in Ontario, but how do they actually get to the point where they learn how to support... How do they get to motivate a group of people who have been not very happy for a long time? And that's what I would say teachers are, not been happy for a long time (17).
Motivation mostly intrinsic - but principal vision matters. For most teachers in this study, their motivation came not from their leaders but was intrinsic. They reported that they entered the profession to help students, and that the desire to please their principals - for its own sake - was not very strong. However, they did report that their principals were able to influence their motivation for new initiatives in the school or board by approaching the faculty with a clear and compelling vision. Leaders who were able to articulate a clear and meaningful vision for the faculty achieved, in the view of the study participants, a higher degree of motivation - especially to try new curriculum or student success initiatives. When describing her school, one teacher characterized the collective mood this way:

It’s demotivation and I do think a lot of it is just that there is no vision for our school that’s been articulated. The things that happen, the initiatives that happen are all the Ministry [of Education] initiatives that come down from the Ministry. Admittedly, we have to do all those things. We have to have our SIP [School Improvement Plan] plan and we have to do SSI [Student Success Initiatives] and we have to do this and, yes, we have to do all that, but [as principal] you can still meet all those things and still articulate your own unique vision for the school. That’s what we haven’t done, whether as a team or whether as an individual leader at the top who articulates his or her own vision or starts a process whereby we all buy into it. That’s never happened. I’ve been there five years and I still don’t really know what’s the vision here (5). She continued:
I think in terms of her vision, I would get her to try to articulate what her vision is. In one sentence, what type of school do you think you work at? What’s the one or two things you have to do, that we have to do as a school to get there and focus on those (5)?

This view emerged from other participants; teachers in this study were more willing to find the motivation to explore new ideas for their school or their classroom if the principal was able to connect them to a broader vision. Teachers expressed a desire to see their efforts as meaningful, not merely yet another change initiative, and in concert with a satisfying long term idea of how their school could be more effective.

The “wait out effect”. One finding of this study is what might be called “the wait out effect”; the mindset that new ideas could and should be ignored because any given principal will be at any given school for a shorter time period than most of the teachers. This phenomenon was present in many teachers’ comments; some discussed this tendency with some regret, others more matter-of-factly. One participant described her experience with this phenomenon like this:

Secondary teachers will say, "This, too, shall pass," and they're probably right. They will say, “[Sarcastically] This is the latest initiative from the Ministry. That's lovely." Some people, who are willing, will take it on and a vast majority will not, and then because there's no follow-up by the school leader, or the principal, or the VP doing instructional walkthroughs, it isn't taken up… They're going with the status quo… "Why aren't you doing this in your classroom?" Because there's no instructional walkthroughs (14).
Another teacher described the wait out effect as being part of protective mechanism against a difficult principal: “It [disengagement] hasn't happened to me because my approach is to kind of wait out the principal” (6).

This wait out effect was a consistent finding among respondents in the study. Teachers here were demotivated enough to describe their avoidance strategy of waiting out the principal in the absence of a compelling reason to do otherwise.

This study finds that school leaders are not the most significant contributor to the motivation of teachers (in this case, respondents reported being motivated more by intrinsic and vocational drives), yet participants nonetheless reported that their principals influenced their levels of motivation. Principals who were able to articulate and live by a clear and compelling vision of their schools, and the path to improvement, were able to inspire a higher level of motivation than those who were not. Principals who failed to do this tended to produce apathetic responses among the faculty, or more commonly, a resigned desire to merely wait out the principal, and ignore the school improvement initiatives entirely.

**Non-Leader Impacts**

Obviously, many important aspects of teacher emotion are not influenced by leaders. This study finds that two in particular, the socio-economic status (SES) of the students in the school and the role of labour politics, merit comment.
Role of school SES. Teachers in this study reported that their emotional states were shaped by the SES of the communities their schools served. Emotions like stress, anxiety and burnout, as well as their sense of self-efficacy, were influenced by the kinds of challenges presented by their students’ SES. Interestingly, both high- and low-SES communities seemed to impact the emotions of teachers in this study.

Two participants explained what it was like to work in schools with low-SES student populations with challenging home lives:

They [SES conditions] are material…. learning gaps that the kids come with. Lack of parental engagement in the homes. Not to generalize, but it's just something I've noticed as a correlate. I've worked in some of the highest achieving, most affluent schools in the city, and then the opposite.

I was brought to this environment to build literacy programs or at least to be a feather in the principal's cap in some respect based on previous things that I'd done. I feel a bit of a disappointment…. Low-SES schools are particularly grueling often because they're neglected plants. They're neglected sites, often because you don't have parental support. You often feel like you're going it alone (8). We teach the worst of the worst or the best of the best. We teach the at risk youth of Toronto. So it’s not the local school, it’s all the tough guys... It’s all of the students whose school has failed them in the past. And I mean worst of the worst in conjunction with that, but other schools have abandoned them. They bring lots of baggage, you always have baggage. Some of that stuff I’ve never done, but for me it’s the most rewarding work I’ve done as a person, but other teachers who’ve come
here, if it works for them, it’s the best work, but that brings so much stress, so much energy, so much strain (4).

Another teacher in this study described what she viewed as a fairly common event when working with high-SES families: “We see parents coming in saying, ‘Up that mark 20%. My student is going into Harvard whether you like it or not.’ So there's no integrity in the decision either, right” (17)? This view was echoed by others in this study, including this teacher:

  If she doesn't get what she feels she needs in that moment, she sort of threatens to go to the director and things like that. That's the kind of stuff that goes on. Parents go directly to the trustee quite frequently. They know their way around the system. They know lots of legal lingo and lots of them are lawyers themselves and they just know their way around so they can make things happen if need be (6).

One teacher provided an interesting case study. She had left a school serving a very low-SES community because of what she viewed as a difficult principal only to find her new school had a similar student body. Though the SES of the students and community was the same, as were the challenges of this at-risk population, her emotional experience was completely different, due to a different set of leadership behaviours: “Couldn’t be happier. It’s an hour and 10 minute commute longer but it’s worth every minute, worth every minute” (13).

One interaction with an interview participant captures best the mood among many teachers in this study concerning the role of the SES of a school’s student population in influencing teacher emotion, in comparison to the role of leader behaviours:
Interviewer: Maybe I'll put it this way. Imagine two schools. You can work at one of the two. They both have an opening, the principal is eager to hire you in both of them. [In school] one, you know the principal is a truly exceptional leader as you have defined it… but it has the lowest SES of the entire city. The exact opposite on the other side. The tyrant, but every facility advantage you can imagine, and all students come three grade levels ahead of where you expect them to be. Which would you chose?

Teacher: That’s a great, albeit extreme example… I see my role primarily as being contributing to the growth and development intellectual and personal of young people. I think the former is an environment in which way more of that is possible. I really like teaching kids who are highly literate and engaged and who have involved parents because I'm not an insecure teacher and I like dealing with parents. Not dealing with. Speaking with and collaborating with parents. However, I think it is true that more of a difference can be made if administrators are like those who I characterized as being effective in those sorts of environments (8).

Teachers in this study were well aware of the challenges that come with the SES of the student populations in their respective schools; some of those challenges came from middle-class parents who demanded a level of personalized “customer service,” and some from students who came from disadvantaged circumstances. But teachers in this study, when considering the role of the leader in influencing their internal states, generally viewed the SES of their school as less important than the leader’s behaviours. No teacher ignored the role of SES in shaping their emotions, but where they commented on it, they regarded the principal as having a larger effect.
Labour politics. Most teachers in this study did not mention the union specifically, but passing references to formal grievance processes and collective agreements suggests they understood their work against the backdrop of the union. Those that did mention the union, did so in two ways: at times, they described the union as being a protector against a difficult principal; at others, they described the union as an unhelpful ally, protecting too little, and siding with the principal. These instances could be very stressful to teachers in this study.

But the more transferable finding is that, having come out of a recent period of work to rule, many teachers in this study reported feeling low levels of motivation and commitment. A protracted and sometimes ugly labour dispute with the provincial government appeared to have a lasting impact on their emotional states at work. One participant described it succinctly:

Even when formal work to rule scenario was lifted, people felt that sense of deflation and it took time. It's still taking time for them to sort of resume normal duties. I think it happened in the late '90s… (8).

Teachers understood the labour struggle as corrosive to their emotions at work; furthermore, they did not report their principals as having had much success in overcoming these negative impacts. It is true that the labour situation is nearly entirely out of the control of the principal. Yet, it struck the participants in this study that their principals had some role to play in ameliorating the emotional and psychological impacts of broader labour issues. Teachers in this study looked to their principals for a kind of positive salve against the “deflation” that the labour issues brought about. If the reality of the labour
action was outside the control of principals, the emotional fallout was something principals could work to address.

**Gender and race: The identity of the participants.** There was no discernable influence of a participant’s race or gender in their comments on the role principals have played in impacting their emotional state at work. While a majority of the respondents were female and white, there was no difference in how the participants of other groups expressed or understood their emotions at work. The more dramatic emotional experiences were represented fairly evenly across the different racial and gender divisions. There were no phenomena specific to any particular subgroup, either. While the group is too small to draw any conclusions about the role of gender or race in influencing the phenomenon described in this study, this study finds no thematic distinction between different types of interview participants.

On the importance of the gender of the principal, one interesting set of responses bears mentioning. While most interview subjects did not think the gender of the principal mattered, three of the respondents, two females and one male, admitted sheepishly that they believed they preferred the leadership of male principals. When prompted for reasons to explain this, none could, but all expressed guilt and hesitation over their thoughts on the question. One participant expressed it like this:

It kills me to say [laughs]…. It’s funny that the men have done a better job than the women in this environment. All of my inspirational administrators are men and all the bad ones are women and I don’t understand if there’s a connection or it’s just lousy luck. Every man has been good and every woman has not, to the point where
it’s ridiculously bad. I don’t understand it because I was [inaudible 00:08:03] this, but I don’t believe there should be any difference, but there is (16).

The number of responses and the clarity of the data on this topic are not sufficient to say anything definitive about the importance of the gender of principals. However, perhaps the cultural baggage of the preference for male authority is at work, despite the best intentions of the teachers in this study.
**Urban, suburban, or rural teacher populations.** As Table 1 in the methodology section above illustrates, the respondents in this study varied in their location between urban, suburban, and rural populations. This sampling variation represents a fairly broad swath of school types of respondents; furthermore, there appeared to be no particular pattern associated with any particular kind of school site. While one might have expected in rural schools the relationships between teachers and principals to be closer, by virtue of the smaller community, there was no data to support that view. Perhaps the size of the school boards in southern Ontario – large, on average, and sometimes quite centralized – eroded the possibility for community even in the smaller and more rural schools. Conversely, some urban teachers described principal behaviours in glowing terms, while others described being made despondent by them. The number of school sites in each category in this study – urban, suburban, and rural – is small enough that little confidence could be placed in any conclusions based on this data, though the possibility of differences among these kinds of schools exists.

**Degree of Participant Agreement**

While a qualitative study of this size defies reliable analysis of the frequency and strength of the agreement of participants’ commentary, some word is due on the agreement of the teachers’ views in this study.

The comments in this chapter represent the most common themes across all interviews, and as a whole summarize reasonably the interview data. But as one might expect, not all teachers had equally strong responses to questions about the various domains under inquiry (job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; self- and collective-efficacy, organizational commitment and engagement; and motivation). Some participants
were simply less sensitive to the behaviour of their principals than others. While all participants could identify key behaviours of their school leaders that shaped their emotions, and led to improved or diminished classroom performance, some teachers regarded principals as less important in this domain than they have been historically. In other words, several participants argued that principals were becoming less relevant in their ability to care for faculty and bring out the best in them; generally, this change was lamented by the participants. Partly, this appeared due to what a few participants viewed as the decreased role of principals in schools themselves, and viewed the tendency of principals to be occupied with meetings outside of school as a major factor in their perceived disengagement. Nonetheless, the majority of teachers interviewed claimed they wanted principals to assume the role of steward in caring for faculty. In fact, as highlighted elsewhere, a large minority of teachers participating in this study specifically explained unprompted that they look to principals for the same kind of support students look to teachers for, or even that children look to parents for.

Where there was some disagreement between participants, it usually came in the degree of importance assigned to various leader actions. For example, some teachers explained that their sense of efficacy increased when their leaders arranged professional development, while others argued that teachers were capable of planning and executing their own learning. In both cases, the teachers in this study generally endorsed the importance of professional learning, and argued there was a key role for school leaders to play. Yet the particulars of the professional development sometimes differed. This finding might reflect the importance of school leaders paying close attention to the needs of their faculty and finding ways to accommodate inevitable variation among faculty. Another area
where disagreement sometimes occurred was in the role principals play in ensuring
commitment from faculty. While all participants explained the way principals behaved
shaped their commitment, for some teachers it was critical and the sole component, and for
others it was part of a larger story, including the stage of career they found themselves in,
and their commitments to their families and loved ones. The findings indicate that the
actions of principals alone do not explain entirely the emotions-at-work for teachers in this
study, which is to be expected.

One curious and consistent observation was the surprise felt by participants at the
strength of their emotional responses. Many participants entered the interview with the
belief that they might not have much to say on the topic of principals’ effects on their
emotions. Yet, once the interview began, many participants - nearly all - were surprised by
the depth of the reactions they continue to have from the behaviours of their school
leaders. Participants who had many stories to share of ugly incidents, or burnout, or mental
health leaves largely ascribed these to the behaviours of their school leaders. This evidence
might suggest that notions of "classical professionalism" (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1069) still
permeate many teachers’ models of what educators are supposed to think and feel.
Chapter 5 – Discussion, Implications for Practice, Suggestions for Future Research, and Conclusion

Discussion

The findings above point to the importance of teacher emotions and suggest important ways principals may influence and shape them. This study suggests that teachers view their work as intrinsically emotionally charged; these emotions play a key role in their energy, enthusiasm, and commitment. Furthermore, the study points to the benefits of principals viewing their leadership at least partly in those terms in order to allow teachers to function at their best. Far from being at the periphery of educational administration, this research suggests that concern for teacher emotion needs to lie near the centre of the work of school leaders. The discussion below will highlight the results of this research, by outlining the themes that emerged from the study. This chapter also advances five key principal behaviours; they appeared in the interview data as consistent and practical ways principals can lead in concert with teacher emotion. As well, this chapter considers some alternative interpretations of the data, ultimately concluding that principals who take into account teacher emotions are likely going to be more successful at producing conditions of optimal teacher performance than those who do not.
Teachers view their labour as emotionally charged. The findings of this study suggest an important point that is often overlooked in the literature: teachers view their labour as emotionally charged (Hargreaves, 1998; Beatty, 2000a). Teachers in this study made the point, time after time, that their daily work was infused with emotion, and that while this emotion came from a variety of places, the most important of these sources was their school leadership. This emotional aspect of their working life was at the top of their minds, and coloured the way they understood their work, their students, and the school generally. Present were various domains of “emotional geography” that Hargreaves noted (Hargreaves, 2001) - the teachers in this study identified the parents, the students, and the leadership as important contributors to their emotions. But by far their greatest emotional flashpoints - negative and positive - related to their school leaders.

The connections were deep and immediate. In the data they provided, respondents would likely agree with Hargreaves (1998):

Good teaching is charged with positive emotion. It is not just a matter of knowing one’s subject, being efficient, having the correct competencies, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy” (p. 835). It is encouraging to consider the possibility, suggested by this work, that principals have the greatest possible impact on teachers’ ‘pleasure, creativity challenge and joy’ in their work.
**Emotional domains are interrelated, but evidence exists for separate treatment.**

The domains considered here (job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; a sense of individual and collective self-efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement; and a willingness and motivation to improve their practices) appear to be exhaustive of teachers’ emotional experiences at work. While it might have been a challenge for participants to think beyond the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews, the latitude in conversation allowed the possibility of new emotional domains to emerge. The participants’ responses mirrored the work done by Leithwood and Beatty (2008) and Leithwood (2006) in describing the kinds of emotions felt, and their impacts. It is reasonable to provisionally conclude that these domains describe the vast majority of the emotions teachers feel at work, especially in relationship to their leaders.

However, it is worth noting that teachers often drew little distinction between the kinds of emotions described here. For example, a participant might describe experiences that eroded her morale and quickly describe how that diminished her sense of commitment, or increased her feeling of burnout. Teachers here often saw these domains as interrelated; indeed, it makes sense that they are. Emotions are not neatly divided into categories; though those categories existed in minds of teachers, they tended to bleed into one another. Addison and Brundrett (2008) mused that:

A number of other words and phrases, such as: morale, commitment and job satisfaction, are seemingly used interchangeably within the motivational literature. Whatever term is used, motivation is not just about being ‘happy’ or ‘satisfied’ (Dinham and Scott 1998); it is, as Molander and Winterton (1994) indicate, about
the willingness of a member of staff to expend effort in the fulfillment of his/her role (p. 80).

In some ways, this is an apt characterization - teachers’ emotional experiences could be described in a variety of ways that might be described by more than one single phrase. Yet while the terms might overlap, it nonetheless makes most sense to consider these various areas of emotion separate-but-interrelated phenomena. (In this way, this study echoes theoretical work of Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006), who combine pre-existing measures like collective efficacy and trust to form a new measure: academic optimism.) Some teachers’ morale was impacted, but not their sense of stress; some teachers described events that undermined their efficacy, but did not erode their job satisfaction. These terms, while related, merit distinct consideration where appropriate. These phenomena are not just one, but a constellation of interconnected emotions.

**Morale and commitment were strongest connections; motivation the least.** Of the areas under consideration here, and the literature generally, job satisfaction and morale, along with commitment and engagement, were the domains most affected by leadership behaviours. The data in this study revealed that motivation for teachers was mostly intrinsic; they joined the profession to help students and they generally use that criteria as their guide. They want their students to succeed, are genuinely delighted by it, and define their careers in terms of that student success. There might exist a temptation to therefore suggest that leader behaviour matters not in improving teacher motivation. The gap between leaders and teachers recalls Sarason’s (1971) words:

> The principal wants to be and feel influential. His dilemma begins when he realizes that words and power, far from guaranteeing intended outcomes, may be ineffectual
and even produce the opposite of what he desires. When he encounters hostility and resistance to his recommendations or ideas for change, (e.g. with a teacher) he feels he has one of two alternative means of response: assert his authority or withdraw from the fray. The usual consequence of either response is to widen the psychological gap and increase the feelings of isolation of those involved (p. 129).

However, in at least one key respect, leadership had a notable influence over teacher motivation: in the willingness of teachers to test new approaches to teaching, which often came at the request of curriculum experts from their school boards. In this way, this study echoes others regarding teacher motivation, stressing the notion that motivation is key to the teaching endeavour, not least of all for adopting important change initiatives (Fernet, Senecal, Guay, Marsh, & Dowson). Unmotivated teachers often turned to the tactic of waiting out their current administration to avoid change initiatives altogether. That is not surprising, and underscores the relevance of leading in accordance with teacher emotions.

At the other end of the spectrum, teachers understood morale and job satisfaction as central aspects of their emotional lives, and ones that they believed principals have an astonishing amount of control over. Teachers in this study assigned responsibility to leaders for ensuring that faculty are contented in their work.
Strength of negative emotion – principals should first do no harm. Most teachers in this study had experienced at least one profoundly negative incident at the hands of a principal at some point in their career. Teachers in this study clung to these negative experiences, even to their own dismay. More than one teacher chided herself or himself because of not being able to move on. Teachers implied that they had a professional responsibility to their students to compartmentalize or work through stressful experiences, and when, even years later, they could not, there was a sense of professional failure. In this way, many teachers in this study adopted the kind of “classical” stance of professionalism that Hargreaves (2001) warns about.

It is worth noting that, in general terms, teachers put a greater emphasis on the negative experiences than the positive ones. That is, the desire to move schools or leave the profession because of perceived principal cruelty tended to be stronger than the improvements in their motivation and brought about by positive and supportive principal behaviour. In the interviews, many participants apologized for being “so negative,” but nonetheless felt that their most important experiences were negative. This finding may suggest that while productive and positive principal behaviours are important, they are perhaps not so important as avoiding negative or damaging behaviours. Teachers in this study often reported not being particularly impressed by some of their principals, but were often able to accept that – even if they preferred otherwise. But when principals acted in ways they regarded as damaging, the effect was long-lasting and profound. In this way, teachers described the actions of their principal not unlike the principles of medical ethics often attributed to Hippocrates: first, do no harm.
It bears mentioning again the emotional states of teachers in this study were closely tied to principal behaviours. This connection appeared to be bothersome to many of the teachers, as though they struggled with assigning principals this kind of importance in their teaching career. Nonetheless, in general there was a strong connection between principal behaviour and the internal states of teachers. Far from teachers viewing the principal as irrelevant or “in their way,” they generally understood their principals in terms of parents, or teachers; those they looked up to, sought advice from, and cared deeply about what they thought. This strong connection may reflect a tendency among teachers to internalize their leaders’ behaviors as they wish their students to do of their own leadership in the classroom.

The centrality of the principal role in shaping teacher emotions. There are lots of factors that contribute to a teacher’s emotions at work. Teachers, not unlike any group of workers, bring their whole lives to work, their personal histories, their ambitions and frustrations. It is perhaps ambitious, then, to find a kind of principal effect – that is, some clear and understandable influence from principal to practitioner – in the complex working lives of teachers. Ambitious, perhaps, but the evidence supplied by teachers in this study suggests that we can indeed say something meaningful about the ways principals have shaped teacher emotions.

The data in the findings above provide many rich experiences of teachers whose emotions have been influenced – often profoundly – by their principals, but two in particular come to mind to illustrate the centrality of the role of principal in shaping teacher emotions: participants 13, and 20. These teachers isolated the behaviour of principals as more critical to their wellbeing and effectiveness as a teacher than other important factors,
including the socio-economic status of the student population. Participant 13, who declares she left her last school because of her principal’s negative behaviours, finds she “couldn’t be happier” in her new school, even though many of the factors that might affect her motivation, morale, and self-efficacy are the same or inferior in her new school. The difference? The behaviour of her new principal is more nurturing, supportive and empathetic than her previous principal. Participant 20 declared unequivocally, “There was a mass exodus at the school that I'm involved in with the Board and it had to do singularly because of the principal.” And while these participants’ statements are the clearest, they are not a minority; teachers in this study, time after time, identified principal behaviours as centrally important in establishing and maintaining their morale, self-efficacy, commitment, as well as reducing stress, anxiety and burnout.

This study emphasizes the role of the principal in creating emotionally healthy working environments for teachers. This is not to suggest that system leaders have no role to play; however, the principal has the authority in the school, legislatively and in other ways. Board leaders can certainly find ways to support principals in the job of emotionally responsive leadership (in the very least, by making it a priority), but the heavy lifting likely falls to the principal, given that superintendents and district leaders work so remotely from the average teacher.
Critical principal behaviours: Key findings. In the emotional lives of teachers, principals matter. This study supports the view of the core body of research in this field that suggests principals play a central role in shaping the emotions of teachers (Nir & Kranot, 2006; Sass, Seal, & Martin, 2010). The findings of this study dovetail with others in recent years from other geographic regions, contexts, and settings. This study serves as further validation of the idea that school leadership needs to be understood as at least partly, if not principally, a social endeavour, infused with emotion on both the parts of the leaders and the led. In general terms, then, this study traces and affirms familiar ground. However, in considering the range of principal behaviours and actions that had an impact on teachers’ emotions at work, several specific and key areas - common to most participants in this study - emerge: showing professional respect; encouraging and acknowledging teacher effort and results; providing appropriate protection; being seen; allowing teacher voice; and communicating principal vision.

Showing professional respect. Teachers in this study thrived when they felt a sense of professional respect from their principal. This respect came in a variety of ways: in being consulted on the topic of school programming, curriculum directions, and the implementation of change; in principals assuming a positive intention on the part of teachers; and allowing teachers autonomy in building their programs and delivering their lessons and evaluating student work. Teachers described feeling exhilarated and engaged when principals found ways to express their confidence in teacher ability. This feeling of being respected, demonstrated through principal behaviour, led to increased teacher commitment and morale; teachers who felt their principals valued their capability, knowledge, and even ambition, gave more.
When teachers felt their professional judgment, or integrity, was called into question, their morale suffered profoundly. Perhaps because the profession is structured in the way it is - thirty students in a class, one teacher - perhaps because teachers often enter the profession out of a sense of vocation; whatever the reason, the desire among teachers in this study to have their professional judgment respected was remarkably strong. When they felt undercut by their principals - for instance, when their marks were unilaterally changed by the principal - they felt despair, and a sense that their practice lacked meaning. When they felt blame from their principals, and when that blame felt unearned or merely at the whim of a powerful parent or due to an unrealistic expectation, they experienced a deep sense of stress and anxiety. When issues occurred, teachers were fully prepared to be disciplined, but asked that they be disciplined for only their own errors; group admonishments eroded morale and commitment. As well, they wished to be accorded an adult sensibility; they bristled when principals seemed to equate the rules for students with the rules for adults. While teachers in this study reported feeling buoyed by encouragement and support, they were prepared to take suggestions to improve their practice, provided it came from a position of respect and of encouraging a growth mindset. Most teachers were able to speak candidly about incidents where they received some kind of correction from the principal, one going so far as describing her initial teacher performance as “terrible” (16); but principals who approached teacher improvement and critique by assuming a positive intent and encouraging growth were able to do so with respect, and earned in many cases the admiration of the teachers in this study. On the other hand, in the absence of professional respect, their desire to teach fell away in many cases. Under these negative emotions, teachers dreaded coming to work, began to resent their students, and withdrew
their commitment to school initiatives. They retreated from school programs, committees, and commitments. They cared less; in a caring profession, this is a worry.

*Encouragement and acknowledgement.* Teachers in this study reported that they desired encouragement from their principals. While they enjoyed working with students, and while they were sometimes a source of rejuvenation, the emotional effect of teaching was largely that of feeling drained. The students took and took, and the teachers gave and gave. And the teachers then looked to their principals for encouragement and acknowledgment. This echoes what other writers on school culture have noted. For example, Bolman and Deal (2002), write about what they call the Human Resource frame, a way of thinking that “highlights the importance of individual needs and motives. It assumes that schools and classrooms, as other social systems, work best when needs are satisfied in a caring, trusting work environment” (p.4)

Teachers consistently reported that feeling acknowledged by their principals was a critical contributor to their emotional satisfaction with their work, and in securing future commitment. The form this acknowledgement took was not of much importance; a kind word, a small note, or a brief thank you in the hallway was often sufficient to remind the teacher that his or her efforts were noticed and appreciated. In fact, the grander the gesture from the principal, the less profound the response in the teacher, suggesting that a small but genuine demonstration of thanks was more valuable than the faculty-wide thank you. The reasons for this likely relate to the inauthenticity of “announced acknowledgement.” If the acknowledgement given was in some generic or rote form, the eventual effect was often the opposite of the intended one (for a similar discussion, see Beatty, 2011).
When teachers felt their principal knew what contributions they had made, and appreciated them, noting the positive effect those efforts had on students or the school generally, they felt energized. That energy led to a continued commitment, especially in those efforts not required by the collective agreement like extracurricular involvement. This commitment can require many hours and much dedication from teachers, and is a critical part of student engagement and overall school success. When teachers felt that principals were unaware of the depth of their commitment, contributions, and effort, when they went unacknowledged, they suffered a blow to their morale, and often disengaged. Teachers in this study would only toil for so long unthanked and unnoticed; at some point, they would withdraw, taking with them opportunities for student success. Principals thanking teachers, genuinely being aware of their effort, noticing, and complimenting them, had profound effects on teachers in this study. Gratitude begat a sustained commitment; its absence, withdrawal and disengagement.

Of particular note, this study supports the work of Bandura (1993) in understanding notions of efficacy: “Teachers' beliefs in their personal efficacy to motivate and promote learning affect the types of learning environments they create and the level of academic progress their students achieve” (p. 117). Performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states are suggested as central sources of efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The teachers in this study provided evidence to support this theory. They often reported that verbal persuasion in the form of principal encouragement was important. (Conversely, the negative effect of teacher comparisons to their sense of efficacy can be seen as a reflection of Bandura’s (1977) suggestion of vicarious experience
as a source of efficacy; in this case, the vicarious experience took on a negative and condescending tone, and so had the opposite of the intended effect.)

While teachers in this study praised the role of acknowledgement, too much of a good thing - when directed at only a small group of teachers - had a negative effect on the faculty; what we might call the problem of principal favourites. When principals appeared to have a small group of favoured teachers, the effect on the morale and commitment levels of other faculty suffered. The appearance of principal favourites took the following forms: some teachers seemed to be selected for leadership without competition or credential over those more qualified; being given preferential treatment for course scheduling; or perhaps being approached for participation in professional development. The results of this perception were predictable: teachers not in the favoured group tended to withdraw their effort and retrench in their classrooms, believing they had been pigeonholed by their principals, and that increased effort mattered not so long as the favoured teachers would dominate the spotlight.
**Appropriate protection.** Teachers in this study wanted protection, and they looked to their principals for it. Their unprompted analogies drawing parallels between the principal-teacher relationship and the teacher-student relationship suggest that this is a widespread phenomenon. Perhaps owing to the often-combative nature of school sites - parents and students clamoring for grades, denigrating the role of the teacher - teachers felt they needed defending. When they felt defended, their loyalty to the principal, and their desire to experiment with the principal’s initiatives, increased. Teachers reported, in simple terms, “doing more” for those principals. Yet when teachers felt undefended by principals, their stress and anxiety issues became severe. Teachers reported many medical leaves after feeling unprotected in the face of emotionally violent and negative interactions with bullying parents or students. Their emotions became toxic.

Part of protection includes school orderliness. Teachers in this study, even those that identified as very progressive educators, reported that the ability of a principal to keep order affected their emotional states. This principal responsibility was understood as critically important to both the functioning of the school, but more simply to the stress and anxiety levels of teachers. According to participants in this study, a principal who is unable to enforce basic discipline runs the risk of burning out the teachers in the school, making them feel unsafe, and that their efforts to create a functional environment for students in their class will, unsupported by the principal, never be enough. In such a state, teachers suffer.

One area of protection was that of guarding against unrealistic work expectations for teachers. Schools can be places of near unending work; a teacher who wanted to dedicate her entire waking life to professional duties could easily find a way to do so, and
likely still feel there was much more work to be done. Principals who understood this reality, who were able to monitor the workload of teachers in their schools and provide a reasonable respite from exhaustion, were able to insulate teachers against burnout.

Principals who ignored the distribution of work, who perhaps looked to only a small group of high achieving faculty or who drove agendas beyond reasonable expectation, exhausted their staff; the result, according to this study, was a risk of teacher disengagement as a protective measure.

**Being seen.** One of the more subtle but important respects in which principals supported teacher emotion, at least according to teachers in this study, was in their visibility in the school. Teachers reported that a visible principle was more able to gain authority with students, and therefore act as an agent of order and safety. Visible principals were more likely to find the impromptu social interactions with teachers that afforded small moments of gratitude. Visible principals were able to set a positive tone with staff and students alike.

When principals were not able to find the time to be in the halls - especially at important times like between classes, and immediately before and after school - teachers tended to view them with greater suspicion. While teachers understood that they must be doing something in their offices, this lack of visibility meant that teachers began to view them as irrelevant - and as such, the commitment levels of teachers in these schools with invisible principals suffered. It meant a greater emotional distance between teachers and their principal; that emotional distance led to decreased morale, lowered commitment, and an atmosphere of hostility rather than cooperation.
Allowing teacher voice. Teachers in this study reported that their sense of engagement and commitment, as well as their morale, improved when principals allowed teachers to have a voice. Examples of this voice might include hearing teacher input on new directions for the school, or in addressing issues like student absenteeism. While participants understood that school challenges are not easily solved, and even though teacher input in and of itself might not help to alleviate the problems under consideration, they nonetheless felt empowered and buoyed by the mere act of being listened to. Principals of teachers in this study solicited teacher voice to varying degrees; when it was absent, teachers often assumed that all school direction had been preordained, that their expertise or input was considered an inconvenience, and their morale and commitment suffered accordingly. Blase and Anderson’s study (1995) found that teachers who expressed dissent found themselves marginalized, leaving them “resentful, hostile, frustrated, outraged, bitter, violent, used, exploited” (p. 40). Participants in this study generally supported that view, as well as the work of Leithwood and Beatty (2008), who argued that “stasis and demoralization are typical outcomes of leadership that does not allow people to voice their criticisms” (p. 29). Meetings under principals who were perceived to be disinterested in teacher voice tended to be administration monologue, and therefore, in the judgment of the participants, dismissive and demotivating.

In fact, it was just this sort of behaviour that tended to prompt teachers to view school improvement initiatives as mere principal careerism. Participants often mirrored the language of Ball (2000), in characterizing these uni-directional meetings as pointless distractions from what they regard as the real work of schools. While teacher and principal are likely not actually at odds with each other, the appearance of a principal driving an
irrelevant agenda (but one that advances the principal’s own career), is exacerbated when the principal of a school fails to openly solicit teacher opinion and work with it, thereby honoring the experience among the faculty, and building morale. When principals solicited teacher voice, they achieved greater commitment.

**Communicating vision.** What teachers reported is that vision matters; when they were able to see the vision of the principal - when they were able to understand the drives behind it, the rationale, and the hope of sustained success - they embraced initiatives in higher numbers. When the change or improvement to school programming or classroom instruction seemed like yet another board initiative, change for change’s sake, or worse, merely another step in the career of the principal, they became demotivated.

Finnigan (2010) reported that “teacher expectancy is higher when principals… communicate a vision, clarify expectations, and set high standards for teaching and learning...” (p. 175). Similarly, teachers in this study recalled fondly principals who were able to articulate a vision for the school. In fact, one interesting finding of this study is that the particular vision mattered less than the existence of a vision at all; when teachers in this study understood their efforts as part of a larger effort, part of a longer-term vision, they were more likely to deepen their commitment. Perhaps what has been reported by teachers in this study signals a hunger for vision that transcends particulars; surely, not all “visions” are going to be equally popular with teachers. True, securing agreement of teachers is important. In this way, principals would do well to understand their audience and find ways to seek endorsement of their vision. Yet teachers in this study did nonetheless express a desire for a larger vision, even when they had little preference for what exact form that might take. When principals were seen to be connecting the work of teachers to a
vision - especially the additional work that might come with new initiatives - they were more likely to view it positively, to respond with openness and curiosity, and to devote their energy to it.

These principal behaviours - showing professional respect, encouraging and acknowledging teacher effort and results, providing appropriate protection, allowing teacher voice, and communicating principal vision - are practical and concrete means by which principals of teachers in this study shaped the emotional landscape of the school faculty.

It should be noted that while teachers often recalled incidents of hurtful, vengeful, and truly unpleasant principal behaviours, like those found in Blase and Blase (2003), they also had a kind of sympathy for principals and the emotional demands and difficulties of that role, reminiscent of Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2002). The teachers in this study, then, did not have in mind as the ideal principal a superhero; they were well aware of the challenges involved in school leadership. The positive principal behaviours noted in this study, those that teachers said had a positive effect on their emotional states, are within the grasp of the average among us.
Emotion-performance connection - a “natural path” for school improvement?

Principals have, as Hallinger and Heck (1996) have noted, at best an indirect effect on the instruction and performance of the schools they nominally lead. Principals do not teach the classes, coach the sports teams, or direct the drama productions; they must, therefore, work through those that do. The findings from this study suggest that, in the absence of principal emotional support, teacher morale suffers, engagement decreases, and turnover and retention problems emerge. Admittedly, there are many aspects of teachers’ emotions at work that principals have no control over: teacher pay, school SES, the facility conditions, and many others are totally indifferent to principal effort and behaviour. However, this research suggests that many of the factors most important to teachers - a sense of satisfaction, the feeling of being acknowledged for a job well done, being respected for professional talent - are influenced by the principal. McGuigan and Hoy (2006), for example, found that a school’s principal was of major importance in fostering a sense of academic optimism in teachers - optimism being comprised of teacher self- and collective efficacy, among other things. This study aligns with the notion that, of the factors that a school board or school has influence over, leadership behaviours play a central role in fostering positive and productive teacher internal states.

One of the earliest findings on this phenomenon, Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, and Zellman (1977), was echoed by teachers in this study: that a “supportive school principal” (p. xi) was more important than other considerations, including financial concerns, in improving school outcomes. This was even more important than a good project director at the district level. “The organizational climate of the project – the quality
of the working relationships – strongly affected the percentage of goals achieved and project continuation” (Berman et al., 1977, p. xi).

One of the most comprehensive overviews of the connection between teacher emotional well being and the consequences for school performance comes from Hirsch (2004), who found that “Teacher working conditions are important predictors of student achievement… and teacher working conditions make a difference in teacher retention…” (p. vii). As well, Hirsch (2004) found that teacher background and experience mattered little in teachers’ perceptions of their working conditions.

Teachers in this study were frustrated with what they perceived to be a history of overly technical reform initiatives in school. They saw merit in many of the literacy reforms, for example, and would often volunteer to join a PLC on a topic of concern to their school board or the Ministry of Education. Yet there was a stronger desire to feel that their emotions and well-being were considered in the functioning of their schools and the wave after wave of educational change. In this way, their frustration was reminiscent of Hargreaves (1998):

… reformers, administrators and teachers themselves must endeavor to ensure that the ‘rational’ aspects of their change agendas, with their checklists, targets, meetings and paperwork, do not crowd out teachers’ time to care for their students or connect with them emotionally in general (p. 852).

As well, Sarason (1971) shows how little, despite another generation or two of study, the field of educational administration has gone to embrace social theories of school leadership:
Is it an oversimplification to say that efforts at educational change have been based on an asocial theory of human behaviour, just as American human psychology was based, for years, on rigorous, ingenious, systematic, ‘objective,’ sterile and irrelevant studies of the Norway rat (p. 49)?

Teachers in this study thrived when their leaders behaved in ways that reflected the social and emotional dimension of schools and school leadership; when their leaders did not understand the social and emotional dimension of their jobs, or behave in ways that reflected an awareness of teacher needs, teachers suffered. Teachers in this study wanted to be cared for in ways akin to those their principals want teachers themselves to care for the students. To name a few: with empathy; with awareness of who they are as individual people; with support during difficult times; with respect for their abilities, and confidence in their professional growth; and protection against the hostile elements of their environment.

In the absence of appropriate principal behaviours, the worst-case outcome is attrition. Sass (2010) points out that “Teacher attrition is a significant international concern facing administrators” (p. 200). This can happen in several ways, usually in the teacher leaving one school for a different one, or leaving the profession entirely. This study supplies evidence that such things happen, and that teacher emotions are an important factor in decisions to leave. This study echoes the findings of Weiss (1999), who found that “teachers’ perception of school leadership and culture and teacher autonomy and discretion shape the extent of their willingness to do their best work, to commit to teaching as a career choice again, and to plan to stay in teaching” (p. 869). A frustrated, burned-out teacher who feels as though her good-faith efforts are unnoticed (or worse, undermined) by
her principal, at least according to the behaviour of the teachers in this study, will find a way to solve that tension by leaving her school site for another. Teachers who feel unprotected by their principal will seek out a place where they feel supported and defended against parent and student harassment. These teachers will take with them institutional memory, technical expertise, and energy for student success. Schools, like any human organization, are more than the sum of their parts; the disruption of losing a faculty member could be profound. With her loss goes all the relationships that person might have had, all the many ways (some noticed, some not) that teacher might have positively influenced students, coached teams, provided extra literacy guidance, and the myriad other ways teachers boost student academic outcomes, confidence, sense of belonging, and general wellness.

Perhaps the strongest advocate for this way of conceiving of successful school leadership is Leithwood. He puts the “natural path” for school leadership, one that places teacher emotions at the centre, like this:

A significant handful of teachers’ emotions have a major influence on teaching and learning; teachers’ working conditions, in turn, have a major influence on these emotions; school leadership, especially the leadership practices of principals, is one of the most powerful direct and indirect sets of working conditions influencing teachers’ emotions; and leadership practices demonstrably nurturing positive teacher emotions are part of several more comprehensive leadership models (Leithwood, 2007, pp. 615-6).

This study finds much support for this conception of school leadership. Participants echoed Leithwood’s insistence that leadership is intrinsically social and, when done well, in line
with the emotional needs of teachers. Their responses supported the findings of studies that connect teacher efficacy with leadership behaviours (for example, Goddard & Goddard (2001). Teachers wanted what Avolio and Gardner (2005) describe in their insistence that resilient organizations attend to more than merely technical concerns:

Public, private and even volunteer organizations are addressing challenges that run the gamut from ethical meltdowns to terrorism and SARS. What constitutes the normal range of functioning in these conditions is constantly shifting upwards as new challenges, technologies, market demands, and competition emerge. We suggest that such challenges have precipitated a renewed focus on restoring confidence, hope, and optimism; being able to rapidly bounce back from catastrophic events and display resiliency; helping people in their search for meaning and connection by fostering a new self-awareness; and genuinely relating to all stakeholders (associates, customers, suppliers, owners, and communities) (p. 316).

What teachers in this study reported was that emotional concerns - using the language in the passage above, hope, confidence, optimism - are not mere luxuries, but tools for the job; not pleasant, but essential. As Tsui and Cheng (1999) note, teacher morale, sense of support, and their perception of a friendly work environment matter; not just because building schools that empower, protect, and honour teachers is a worthy goal in and of itself (though, it might be), but because in doing so we can positively influence student outcomes. Indeed, this is also a matter of equity; as Finnigan (2012) points out, effective principals are even more critical in school districts with low SES. School districts without deep financial resources, or where families struggle in an economy that distributes wealth
and opportunity with avarice, require the most effective leadership of all. In using a model of indirect leadership effects, one that holds most principal influences are those that work through others, this study suggests it is possible for principals to more positively effect teacher performance by “leading with emotions in mind” (Leithwood and Beatty, 2008). In behaving in ways that positively shape teacher emotions, they can ensure the teaching faculty are able to perform at their best. Principals do not teach, but can shape the performance of teachers in classrooms by showing professional respect for teachers, encouraging and acknowledging teacher effort and results, providing appropriate protection, allowing teacher voice, and communicating principal vision.

**Overly sensitive teachers?** It is possible to take the view that teachers in this study were overly sensitive to the behaviour of their principals. When they received terse emails late at night from their principals, as in the case of one interview participant, or in the case of another, was reprimanded in front of her students, perhaps they overreacted. Taking this view, we would see the emotional strain of teachers as an unnecessary and unwarranted response to the inevitable rough and tumble of working in a school. Understanding the evidence like this might lead us to conclude, then, that teachers might stand a little toughening up.

However, to take that view would be to ignore a centrally important point: change needs to rest on the shoulders of principals. This is true for reasons both pragmatic and principled.

First, speaking pragmatically, there are many more teachers than principals. According to the most recent data from Ontario’s Ministry of Education, the jurisdiction in which the study was carried out, there were over 115,000 teachers and only about 7,000
principals and vice-principals. Taking just a few key domains studied here, if we are to increase teacher self-efficacy and morale, and decrease stress and burnout, one powerful approach is to make schools more supportive places for teachers. If a change is necessary – and this study suggests one is, the most efficient and practical direction is to ensure principals are leading with teacher emotions in mind, to use the language of Leithwood and Beatty (2008). Changing 115,000 teacher mindsets, either through different selection processes or some sort of training, is a far more challenging task than assigning responsibility to principals. The principal as an agent of change, and as a key figure responsible for creating emotionally responsible schools, is a more practical model than burdening teachers with toughening up.

The principled point is in concert with the pragmatic. To use the sentiments of the interview subjects, principals signed up for the job. And the view of teachers in this study, that principals need to ensure emotionally responsible working conditions, certainly appears reasonable given that principals have chosen to assume a leadership role, even if it is one in a working environment of immense interpersonal complexity. This position of power allows them to, at least to the extent possible, create a working world for teachers that would allow them to be their best.

Many teachers in this study drew an analogy between how they perceived their relationship to their principal and the relationship they as teachers had with their students. In other words, teachers often understood themselves as students of the principal. This appears a reasonable analogy. The literature on effective instruction highlights the need for teachers to appeal to affective domains of students, to treat them as valued individuals, and to understand the exercise of teacher authority as a force for good, for inclusion, for
support. Teachers in this study wanted a similar kind of treatment from their principals. The analogy need not infantilize teachers – and it bears repeating, it came from the study participants themselves – but point to a deep and as yet largely unmet desire among them to be treated with care, respect, and sensitivity by those who hold authority over them.

Beyond the control of principals? While major school context factors discussed above were not of great importance for teachers in this study – at least, compared to principal behaviour – some were, including board bureaucracy and outside pressures like EQAO (Educational Quality and Accountability Office) scores. These areas of teacher frustration have elements well beyond the control of principals – and one could imagine principals themselves being frustrated with conforming to board pressures and demands for improved student performance on standardized tests.

This study does not seek to ignore the reality of the difficulty of the principal’s role; on the contrary. But the organizational structure of our schools places the principal in the school and – at least in nominal terms – the principal in a position to buffer teachers from the kind of caustic stress from blame, even if that blame originates at a different level of the school system. When teachers report – as they did in this study – that there is a reluctance to take on Curriculum Leader positions, when teachers shrink from expanding their own influence, growing their careers, and contributing more fully to the optimal performance of their schools, principals ought to find ways to ameliorate the sense among teachers that taking on additional responsibility means, in the main, being blamed.

True, it is hard to establish whether this is perception or reality; the study’s design offers no chance to see if teachers are merely exaggerating their fears or if blame does indeed emanate from higher levels in the organization. But underscoring a central point of
In this study, teacher perceptions matter. Principals can find ways to shelter the faculty in their schools from these negative emotions and encourage teachers. Much in the way teachers are obliged to find ways for their students to feel safe enough to take risks in their own learning and growing, to adopt a growth mindset, teachers in this study wanted the same from their principals.

**Teacher emotions: Overly complex, intrinsically reciprocal?** Emotions are indeed complex. Their origins are often shrouded, the results unpredictable. This study does not claim an exhaustive understanding of teacher emotions; the conclusions merely concern the ways in which principals shape teacher emotions, and the resulting effect on teacher practice. But even in that claim, we might take the view that emotions are too complex to try to understand in this fashion. Certainly, psychologists have discovered much about the difficulty of understanding emotions – and especially using self-report mechanisms in the inquiry. Gilbert (2006), for example, points to the importance of real-time data gathering to understand emotions without the distorting lens of memory.

The critique is well-taken; it would be ideal to create experimental conditions to explore this idea further. And large longitudinal studies involving real-time data collection, perhaps including qualitative journals, would be good evidence to bring to the questions raised and addressed by this study. Yet, even those techniques would allow for large gaps: real-time data collection would exclude teacher experiences from previous teaching years, for example, and the onus on the participants in more exotic study construction would deter all but the most committed subjects. As well, the clarity of teacher experiences reported in this study points to the value of a standard interview-based qualitative study. It is true that emotions may be complex, and that recollecting accurately the antecedents of the emotion
is difficult, but teachers interviewed here were able to connect principal behaviour to their emotional states without accompanying uncertainty or vagueness.

In this way, the epistemological view of this study might be placed within a fairly straightforward realism, in modern times represented by philosophers and historians like Richard Feynman and Richard Dawkins. Dawkins perhaps puts it best:

It really comes down to parsimony, economy of explanation. It is possible that your car engine is driven by psychokinetic energy, but if it looks like a petrol engine, smells like a petrol engine and performs exactly as well as a petrol engine, the sensible working hypothesis is that it is a petrol engine (Dawkins, 1996).

If teachers report their emotional states are influenced in profound ways by their principals, and that those influences bleed beyond merely their internal states and into their professional practice, this study holds there are few reasons to reject that straightforward explanation. Teachers in this study reported clearly that principals shaped their working emotions, in both positive and negative ways.

But is this phenomenon reciprocal? Undoubtedly, there is some give and take in all human relationships, yet the teacher-principal relationship is one of the led and the leader. There was a genuine sense among participating teachers that their emotions are, in meaningful ways, the end result of principal behaviours. Perhaps it might be another way: teachers might consider themselves to be organizational equals with their principals. But for all the talk of flattening the hierarchy in schools, teachers in this study continue to view principals as powerful actors. As such, they perceive the principal as bearing a responsibility for contributing positively to teacher emotional states. This study holds that these teacher perceptions are important if we are to create nurturing and supportive schools
for teachers, and in so doing, allow them to feel good about their work and commit to new levels.

The conceptual framework used as a starting point for this study suggested that principal behaviours were a significant factor influencing the emotional atmosphere of the school, teacher emotional states and beliefs, and, furthermore, their classroom performance. The model suggested that leaders create better schools by working through others, as Hallinger and Heck (1996) emphasize, and in ways fitting with Leithwood and Beatty (2008). The study largely bore this model out: teachers in this study were able to draw close connections between the behaviour of their principals and the emotional atmosphere of the school, particularly in regards to the collective sense of exhaustion, efficacy, stress, and morale. Even closer were the connections between principal behaviours and individual teacher emotions, and the influence of those principal behaviours on their teaching practice. In the main, teachers in this study were able to connect the behaviour of their principals to meaningful influences on their teaching practice.
Unique contributions of this study. As mentioned in chapter three, the motivation for this study had two aims: first to confirm a young set of findings that teachers’ emotions were important to their practice, and that school leaders had important influences on these emotions; and second, to explore, from the perspective of teachers, what leadership practices support positive teacher emotions, and have the possibility of influencing their teaching practice. The findings of this study, as stated earlier, certainly support the work of Leithwood (2007), Hargreaves (1998, 2000, 2001), Mascall (2003), and Beatty (Leithwood and Beatty, 2008), to name a few, that suggest teacher emotions are important to teacher performance, and that principals who lead through emotionally responsive and responsible leadership behaviours are probably likely to improve teacher performance.

Yet the study goes further than confirmation in at least two important and unique outcomes. The first concerns the centrality of emotions to the working lives of teachers. In making the case that these principal effects were central to the lives of the teachers in the study, not ancillary, this study places on the school improvement agenda affective concerns that are often overlooked in leadership studies. This is not simply a problem of the academy, either; the complex and ambitious plans for system and school improvement very often ignore the emotional side of leading teachers. This study argues that, unless teacher emotion has a central place in understanding school operation, improvement, and change, any proposed initiative is likely to suffer. This study places teacher emotions at the heart of school leadership.

The second novel contribution of this study is the specific set of practices identified as being important for teacher emotions. While there has been some work that argues teacher emotions matter, few have attempted to identify promising principal behaviours that
are likely to lead to teachers feeling more supported, more encouraged, and more committed. This study is the first of its kind to suggest a practical and achievable set of practices for principals to support teacher emotion; this rich description of exactly what constitutes “leading with teacher emotions in mind” (Leithwood and Beatty, 2008) allows for much greater clarity than existed before. The emotionally responsible principal behaviours identified in this study could influence principal preparation and mentorship. And while the understanding of these leadership behaviours would benefit from further study, they offer a promising, if provisional, place to start.

**The need for appropriate principal education and training.** The study suggests a question: can this sort of leadership be made, or is it merely born? While much of the management and leadership literature stresses the so-called traits of leadership, this study illustrates that principal behaviour, not necessarily innate qualities, are important. While it might very well be that teachers respond to extraverted leaders (though this study does not support that old chestnut), or leaders innately optimistic (as the recent Ontario Leadership Framework suggests is important), a more important consideration is what the systems we find ourselves with can train. If we are to build an optimal school system, we do not have the luxury of assuming we can fill all the leadership roles with those whose inherent traits are most suited to the job. If we insist that all school leaders have the charisma and charm of a Martin Luther King Jr., we will not have enough men and women for the job.

We need not demand this kind of interpersonal genius. This study suggests that a set of simple, achievable leadership practices can improve teacher emotions, and through the fostering of increased morale, motivation, commitment and efficacy, lead to gains in the classroom. These practices - showing professional respect, encouraging and
acknowledging teacher effort and results, providing appropriate protection, allowing
teacher voice, and communicating principal vision - are not very different in kind or degree
from those that we train teachers to work towards. This study recommends, therefore, that
programs to train aspiring school leaders, performance management processes, and
retention and promotion considerations, be at least partly guided by the findings of this
study; that teacher emotions matter in achieving optimal school performance, and that
leaders play a key role in shaping those emotions.

Implications for Practice

Recommendations emerging from this study include better preparation of principal
candidates for this aspect of the job, providing appropriate training for principals currently
in the role, and placing emotionally savvy school leadership practices on the agenda of
district and system leaders. Those interested in school improvement, at all levels, should
consider the central role emotions play in achieving not just more humane school
environments, but (because of the emotion-performance connection) improved school
outcomes. In this way, this study supports the recommendations of others, including
Schmidt (2010), who argued “leadership preparation programmes in the new millennium
should be required to train school leaders emotionally as well as cognitively” (p. 627). As
well, this study highlights some specific key behaviours for principals, and those that guide
and mentor them, to keep in mind. Those considering the design of programs preparing
principals should carve out a place in the curriculum for the emotional dimension of school
leadership. As well, district- and system-leaders should put on their agendas this important
area of educational leadership and administration. Doing so might ensure that in the desire
for technical changes, the human side of school leadership is not lost.
Suggestions for Future Research

There are several areas where future research seems important. In addition to keeping this topic on the research agenda, the three areas below would allow greater clarity on the importance of emotionally sensitive leadership practices.

First, for reasons explained in the methods section, this study gathered data from secondary teachers. While there is still some dispute over whether the different panels are fundamentally different, especially in regards to leadership practices, it would make sense to perform similar research in the elementary panel. Understanding any possible differences in teacher perceptions of leadership practices would be of great value.

Second, as most studies are, this work is rooted in a particular place and time. It would be interesting to note if the findings presented here are stable over time, or if they evolve. While the literature, going back a generation or two, is congruent with many of these findings, studies that retrace this ground will only add to our confidence in the importance of emotionally sensitive leadership practices. As well, it would be interesting to see if studies from different jurisdictions produced similar results.

Second, interesting work might come from quantitative studies measuring the magnitude of the effect of emotionally sensitive leadership. Leithwood et al. (2010), in the most recent and extensive quantitative study of related phenomenon, found that the Emotions Path of school improvement was an effective way to produce better student results. However, that study included schools with as few as three teachers participating; three teachers in a school might not adequately capture the practices of the leadership. As well, that study did not include the range of emotional domains suggested by this study. A measurement tool could be piloted to reflect the major concerns of teachers in this study,
tested for reliability and validity, then used on a large scale to compare the effect size of perceptions of key leadership behaviours with student performance. While this would be an ambitious study, it is the next logical step to establish the value of leading in emotionally sensitive ways. Such a study would go some way to clarifying the weight or magnitude of the effect of the behaviours on school performance (Hattie, 2012).

**Limitations of the Study**

While the study aims to minimize limitations, at least five exist:

As with most qualitative research, the sample size is fairly small, limiting the eventual transferability of the results. While the methods used aimed to create results that would reflect the reality in a variety of school settings, it needs to be noted that the views of the participants in this study may not mirror those of teachers at large.

Data collection was limited to those participants willing to submit to an interview. Research of this kind relies on participants interested in the study itself, which might produce a set of respondents with views unlike the general teaching population.

Data collected was subject to the imperfect memories of the participants. Recent critiques of these methods (especially Gilbert, 2006) have indicated that self-report data about emotions occasionally suffers from unreliability. Despite the length of the interview and care in the approach, respondents might also not have felt comfortable sharing difficult emotional experiences with the interviewer.

While many researchers have emphasized the “core leadership practices that appear to be effective across varied contexts” (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 59), there are nonetheless important differences in context – particularly socioeconomic status – in each
school setting. While the sampling strategy accounts for this limitation to some extent, school contexts might limit the transferability of the findings.

Last, one further limitation of this study was the difficulty in drawing even clearer distinctions between the emotional domains and concepts identified in the literature review. The starting point for this study was the ways in which principal actions can influence teacher working emotions that have been described in a large body of literature as important to teacher performance: job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; a sense of individual and collective self-efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement; and a willingness and motivation to improve their practices. On the one hand, participant responses were coherent on these questions. Yet, there was an inherent messiness in the descriptions of the participants’ responses to their principal behaviours. Not so much messiness that the categories suggested by previous researchers, the categories of the review, were irrelevant, but enough blurring of the lines that the data of this study resisted a neater and more direct division. There is a very real sense of connection between the emotional domains under consideration by this study (job satisfaction and morale; stress, anxiety, and burnout; a sense of individual and collective self-efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement; and a willingness and motivation to improve their practices). These similar-but-distinct aspects of teacher working emotions are a challenge to detangle. It is likely that there is a degree of interaction or overlap between emotional domains under consideration by this study.

These limitations need to be considered when evaluating the findings of this study. Yet despite these concerns, the consistency of the respondents’ views, as well as its coherence with previous studies of this kind, suggest the data will nonetheless provide
insight into the ways leadership behaviours have shaped teacher emotions. Furthermore, the suggestions for future research would go some way to reducing or removing some of these limitations.

Summary and Conclusion

This qualitative research study explored the impacts principals had on the emotional states of teachers. The theoretical framework proposed that teacher performance was affected by principal behaviours. According to the 20 teachers interviewed for this study, principals had a profound impact on their internal states. Teachers in this study reported principal behaviour was a key factor in improving their working emotions - or deteriorating them. Furthermore, teachers in this study supported the claim that principals can affect teacher performance, by affecting their emotional states across the five domains found in the literature: job satisfaction and morale; burnout, stress and anxiety; self- and collective-efficacy; organizational commitment and engagement; and motivation. This study therefore supports the recent literature on the importance of school principals understanding the influence of the emotional dimension of their leadership behaviours.

The discussion of the findings stressed the importance of the following key principal behaviours in influencing the emotions of the teachers working in their schools: professional respect shown for teacher capability; providing appropriate acknowledgement for teacher commitment, competence, and sacrifice; protecting teachers from damaging experiences like harassment; maintaining a visible presence in the school; allowing teachers’ voices to be heard; and communicating a satisfying vision for their school. In this way, this study adds a unique contribution to the work on leadership practices. Through these behaviours, principals can contribute to optimal emotional well-being of the
faculty. Recommendations emerging from this study include better preparation of principal candidates for this aspect of the job, providing appropriate training for principals currently in the role, and placing emotionally savvy school leadership practices on the agenda of district and system leaders. While these findings suggest schools would be improved with the adoption of these recommendations, further research is needed to determine the magnitude of these impacts to understand how they compare to other possible principal behaviours or mechanisms of school improvement.
References


Appendix A: Participant Interview Protocols

The questions below are general, in order to provide some flexibility in the semi-structured interviews. The sample below represents the sorts of questions likely to emerge, but other directions might be explored based on respondent experiences. In the words of Merriam: “… interviewing in qualitative investigations is more open-ended and less structured… the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). This set of question prompts reflects the central questions of the research on this topic, and is drawn from prominent themes in the literature, principally from Leithwood (2006), Beatty and Leithwood (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Theme</th>
<th>Specific Examples of Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerning the General Emotional Impact School Leaders Have on Teachers</td>
<td>1) This study is concerned with the emotional impact school leaders have on teachers. I’m wondering, how do you feel about your principal (and past principals)? Why?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2) People in education talk a lot about school leaders – in both positive and negative ways. In what ways do you think the role of principal is important? Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific Instances Where Principals Have Had Emotional Impacts</td>
<td>3) Describe an emotionally important interaction with your principal (past or present). What made it memorable? How did it make you feel? Why – can you describe the context? Key: What was the result?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Principals Have Influenced Teacher Organizational Commitment and Engagement</td>
<td>4) Can you think of something a principal has done to get you to be even more dedicated? If so, how did this increase your dedication and commitment? Why?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>5) Can you think of something a principal has done that decreased your commitment to the school and the students? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) For both of these questions, what pre-existing relationship did you have with your principal? Was that important? Other context features? How did other staff view this situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Principals Have Influenced Job Satisfaction and Morale</td>
<td>7) Can you think of something a principal has done to make you love your job more? What made it memorable, and why? Please describe it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8) Can you think of something a principal has done to make you dislike your job? What made it memorable, and why? Please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9) Do you think these events or actions were widely understood by the rest of the faculty, or was this your individual perception? Was there anything else going on that had an impact on this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Principals Have Influenced Teacher Stress, Anxiety, and Burn Out</td>
<td>10) Teaching has been described as “emotional labour,” and any teacher knows how draining it can be. When you have seen staff become “burned out,” what has caused it? How did the principal help matters? Or cause them to worsen? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11) Has something a principal has done ever made you want to quit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How Principals Have Influenced Teacher Motivation | 13) Can you think of a principal that motivated you to do work better than you thought possible, to try new approaches perhaps? Why?

14) Can you think of a principal that made you feel less willing to put in more hours, less driven to persevere, or try new approaches? Why?

15) For the above examples, what kind of relationship did you have with the principal? Where there any other relevant contextual factors?

How Principals Have Influenced Teacher Efficacy | 16) Can you think of an instance where a principal made you feel more capable than you thought you were? Why was it effective?

17) Can you think of an instance where a principal made you feel less capable than you thought you were? Why was it damaging?

18) Can you think of ways a principal has influenced you to think that anything was possible, despite the kinds of upbringing and parents your students have, or other limitations in the school? Please describe.

19) How did your relationship with your principal in these examples affect your reactions? Were there any contextual factors that might have played a role?

How Principals Have Influenced Collective Teacher | 20) Can you think of an instance where a principal made your whole staff feel more capable, more engaged, more able to “reach students” than they thought they were? Why? |
| Efficacy          | 21) Can you think of an instance where a principal made your whole staff feel *less* capable, less engaged, less able to “reach students” than they thought they were? Why?  
|                  | 22) Do you think these events or actions were widely understood by the rest of the faculty, or was this your individual perception? |
| School Context Factors | 23) How has school context affected your emotions?  
|                  | 24) Have the circumstances of the school (the students’ economic circumstances, the school facilities, pre-existing factors) affected your commitment, sense of efficacy, or motivation? If so, how? |

** Where appropriate, probe to gather data on whether the participant’s view is widely reflected across the school (“Do you think this is something that most teachers were aware of?”).
Appendix B: Information Letter for Participants

OISE

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

TEACHERS WANTED

I am looking for teacher volunteers to take part in a study of School Leadership. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Blair Mascall, Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. The data is being collected for the purposes of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. The nature and purpose of the research is to shed a better light on the role school principals play in shaping teacher emotions, motivation, performance, commitment, teacher stress, and burnout.

Generally, the purpose of the research is to understand better:

- As perceived by teachers, what have leaders done to have an impact (positive or negative) on organizational commitment, sense of self-efficacy, motivation, satisfaction, morale, and decreased stress and burnout?
- What, in the view of teachers, is an effective set of emotionally supportive leadership behaviors?

Benefits of Participation:
- An outlet to consider the role school leaders have in shaping your emotions and teaching performance

- Contribute to research on best leadership practices for school principals

- Access to the findings of the study

**What Your Role Would Entail:**

Your participation would involve ONE interview session, approximately 45-60 minutes long. With your permission, the interview will be taped. The location can be of your choosing.

*In appreciation for your time, you will receive a $20 gift card.*

*All participants’ names and affiliations will be kept strictly confidential.*

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

John Lambersky, PhD Candidate, OISE/University of Toronto:

[johnlambersky@gmail.com](mailto:johnlambersky@gmail.com)

(The study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Blair Mascall)
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form - Interview

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by John Lambersky, at OISE/University of Toronto. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about school leadership practices as part of a study, “Understanding The Human Side of School Leadership.” The nature and purpose of the research is to shed a better light on the role school principals play in shaping teacher emotions, motivation, performance, commitment, teacher stress, and burnout. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Blair Mascall, Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. The data is being collected for the purposes of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

I understand the following:

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or consequence.

2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. With your permission, an audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study. The audio tape will be transcribed and kept secure and confidential in the personal locked files of the principal investigator. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the data.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

5. Faculty and administrators from my school will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. As a participant, I will at no time be judged or evaluated and at no time will be at risk of harm. As well, no value judgments will be placed on my responses.

7. The potential benefits to me as a participant include: an outlet to consider the role school leaders have in shaping my emotions and teaching performance; an avenue to contribute to research on best leadership practices for school principals; access to the findings of the study. As well, the community benefits include a better awareness of the affect principals have on teacher emotions, and therefore on teacher performance.

8. I understand that the inclusion criteria for the study are teachers: a) working in a high school as a teacher; b) interested in sharing their thoughts on the research questions; and c) from a variety of schools representing a range of socioeconomic statuses. There are no special exclusion criteria.

9. I will be paid $20 as compensation for my time.

10. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I can contact the investigator, John Lambersky (johnlambersky@gmail.com), or Professor Blair Mascall.
(blair.mascall@utoronto.ca) with any other questions or concerns. I can also contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273, if I have any questions about my rights as a participant.

11. I can have access to the final report, which will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection and which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944. In the case that I would like to be informed of the results of the study, my contact information will be kept separate from the data.

12. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

____________________________  _______________________
Participant’s Signature      Date

____________________________  _______________________
Participant’s Printed Name    Signature of the Investigator, John Lambersky

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: _____

If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.