Women Directors of Education: Policy Consequences, Gender Perspectives and Leadership Strategies

by

Katie Higginbottom

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Abstract

This study presents a qualitative analysis exploring how women Directors of Education in Ontario (English) public school boards manage the pressures of leadership. Alongside this analysis is a concurrent exploration of the effects the Ontario government’s 1993 *PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees* policy had on women Directors of Education in Ontario (English) public school boards. Data collection includes 12 interviews of women Directors of Education in Ontario (English) public school boards.

The study revealed a complex relationship between women Directors of Education in Ontario (English) public school boards and their discrimination experiences. Participants denied experiencing discrimination, despite describing instances of clear discrimination. Dropping out of the study or altering their original interviews silenced some women. Gender microaggressions were also apparent throughout the interviews. Additionally, participants denied ever experiencing pressures associated with their gender. Strategies for coping with the pressures of leadership are designed to deal with pressures associated with the board of trustees, board staff, the public and church clergy. Strategies Directors of Education used to manage these pressures were categorized into three groups: strategies for personal success; micropolitical strategies in the workplace and strategies for managing home life and professional life. Fifty percent of participants described formal/informal hindrances in managing the pressures of leadership, while 100% of participants described formal/informal supports, which aided their management of the pressures of leadership.
The study also revealed that most participants identified either an indirect effect or a direct effect of PPM 102 on their career; seven noted an indirect effect, and 1 a direct effect. Four noted no effect at all on their career.
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Chapter One: Introduction and Study Overview

1.1. Introduction

Women are being promoted to principal positions within public education systems more today than ever before. Nine years ago, the Learning Partnership (2008) argued gender parity is close to being achieved in Ontario among public school principals. However, educational administration scholars have noted women’s underrepresentation in administrative positions; women are not represented in leadership positions in schools proportionate to their representation in the teaching profession (Bascia & Young, 2001; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Loder, 2005; Smith, 2011). Recent data provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education support the latter claim. As seen in Table A, in the 2012/2013 school year, women held 81% of the elementary teaching positions, yet only held 65% of the vice principal/principal positions; likewise, in the secondary school panel, women held 55% of the teaching positions, yet only held 48% of the vice principal/principal positions (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Even though women hold more than half the leadership positions in schools in the elementary panel (65%), males, who comprise only 19% of the elementary teaching staff, nearly double (1.84) their visibility in the elementary system in leadership positions (35%) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Conversely, women’s visibility decreases (0.8) when looking at elementary leadership positions (65%), compared to women’s representation in the elementary teaching positions (81%) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Further, women principals have tended to have more teaching experience (15 years) than their male counterparts (5 years) (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Young & McLeod, 2001), yet teaching experience has been seen as devalued in the process of being hired in administration, preferred for leadership experience (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993).
Table A. Gender Comparison of Men Teachers/Administrators and Women Teachers/Administrators in the 2012/2013 School Year in Ontario Public School Boards.
Although the situation today in leadership positions in Ontario public schools does not quite represent gender parity, the situation has improved radically in the past 35 years. In 1980, women comprised 67% of the elementary teaching profession but only held 7% of principal positions and 20% of vice-principal positions in Ontario (Richter, 2007, p. 3). How did such progress occur? In an effort to promote women in educational leadership in Ontario, the provincial government passed legislation put forward by the Ministry of Education (PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees), “which required school boards to have employment equity plans in place for women” (Richter, 2007, p. 4) in 1993. The Education Act was revised to “develop and implement a policy of employment equity for women and other groups designated by the Minister, to submit the policy to the Minister for approval and to implement changes to the policy as directed by the Minister” (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 12). Along with the hard work of the Federation of Women Teachers’ Association of Ontario (FWTAO) during the 1980s, this legislation has been cited by the Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario (ETFO) as contributing to the drastic increase in women principals in the 1990s in Ontario (Richter, 2007). As seen in Table B, by 1996, women held 60.4% of the vice principal positions and 42% of the principal positions in elementary public schools (Richter, 2007, p. 4). These numbers have continued to rise, even though this legislation was removed in September of 2009 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).¹

¹ The Ministry of Education offers no explanation why the legislation was revoked in 2009.
Table B. Percentage of Women Administrators in 1980 and 1996 in Ontario Public School Boards.

In light of Ontario’s progress towards gender parity among middle managers - principals in publicly funded school boards - my thesis aims to explore women in educational leadership above principals in the organizational hierarchy in Ontario’s
publicly funded school boards. Did the activist work by FWTAO and the Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees legislation, both of which have been credited as having contributed to greater gender equity at the principal level (ETFO), contribute to greater gender equity at levels above the principal position within Ontario’s publicly funded school boards?

Gender parity in middle management is close to being achieved in Ontario’s publicly funded school boards, which mirrors other fields (Eagly & Carli, 2007), and can be observed at the level of school principal (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013; Richter, 2007). Still, drastic gender inequality remains in top levels of leadership, with women occupying no more than one fifth of top leadership positions across the public and private sectors in the United States (Colorado Women’s College, 2013). More specifically, in politics women comprise more than 50 percent of the voting population but only make up 19 percent of Congress, 12 percent of governors, and 19 percent of mayors in the country’s one hundred largest cities (Centre for American Women in Politics, 2016). In academia, women comprise the majority of college graduates and postgraduate students but only comprise a quarter of full professors and university presidents (Curtis, 2011). In law, women are almost half of law school graduates, yet only comprise 18 percent of equity partners in major firms and 21 percent of Fortune 500 general counsels (National Association of Women Lawyers, 2015). In the nonprofit sector, women make up three-quarters of staff positions but only one fifth of the leaders of large organizations (Lennon, 2014). In business, women make up one third of MBA graduates, but only make 4 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs (Bellstrom, 2015). Based on this widespread, highly documented gender inequity, one must wonder: did women’s success in educational leadership in Ontario extend above the position of principal, continuing up the school board’s hierarchy? Further, based on a review of literature it is clear that women leaders have faced different pressures than their male counterparts (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a). Therefore, one must also wonder, of women educational leaders who did reach top levels of leadership in Ontario’s publicly funded school boards, how did they do so; how did they manage these pressures? Based on a review of literature it is clear that the different pressures that women leaders have
faced (compared to their male counterparts) can limit a woman’s effectiveness in developing and managing her leadership identity (Butler 2004; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009). One’s development and management of their leadership identity - and more importantly, others’ acceptance of that identity and the behaviors associated with that identity – have been cited as hugely important in a leader’s ability to succeed as a leader (Butler 2004; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009). Pressures associated with stereotypical social expectations of women have been consistently cited as a major obstacle in a woman’s ability to effectively develop and manage her identity as a leader (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a).

This study aims to shine light on women in top levels of educational leadership in Ontario’s publicly funded school boards. In particular, this study will explore the ways in which women Directors of Education (CEOs) manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. For the purpose of this thesis, I define the term leader as a person in a formal position of authority. Though leadership activities can occur at many levels in a school system among those not occupying formal positions of authority, for simplicity and clarity, in this thesis leadership will be an activity limited to those occupying formal positions of authority.

1.2. Statement of Research Purpose

I have approached most of my PhD research about leadership, this thesis included, through the lens of social justice. Books such as Sheryl Sandberg’s (2011) Lean In, Katty Kay and Claire Shipman’s (2013) The Confidence Code, as well as articles such as Anne Marie Slaughter’s (2012) Why Women Still Can’t Have it All and Jessica Bennett’s (2014) Company Paid Egg Freezing will be the Great Equalizer, emphasize the morose social problem of gender disparity in leadership. Yet more research into the topic of women in leadership reveals that throughout the world, women are beginning to be recognized as assets to organizations (Catalyst, 2013). Consequently, international attention is being paid to the issue of women in leadership, and the various methods (and
the method’s effectiveness) that can be used to support, develop and promote women in organizations (Catalyst, 2013). I believe it a worthwhile endeavor to contribute to this body of literature, as improving women’s access to decision-making leadership positions is a matter of social justice. As Alice Eagly (2012) offered, those who wish their world were more peaceful and equitable need to recognize that largely leaders are those capable of creating meaningful change.

Given the pressures women striving towards top-levels of leadership in other fields experience (Bellstrom, 2015; Butler, 1990; Centre for American Women in Politics, 2016; Colorado Women’s College, 2013; Curtis, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lennon, 2014; National Association of Women Lawyers, 2015), I began to further wonder whether women at the top level of educational leadership - Directors of Education (CEOs) - experienced similar pressures. Knowing that other women striving towards educational leadership could learn from women Directors of Education, I became curious to know if women Directors of Education did experience pressures, how did they manage those pressures? Thus, women Directors of Education became more suitable research subjects for my study.

Reflecting on the dismal numbers of women in top levels of leadership internationally, I began to wonder why the widespread problem of few women in top-level leadership positions was not an issue at the forefront for women in education in Ontario public school boards. Closer researching of this issue revealed the implementation of the 1993 PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees policy, that has been credited with having increased the number of women in principal positions in the Ontario public school boards (Richter, 2007). My curiosity was piqued as to whether this same policy could be credited with numbers close to gender parity in top levels of leadership in Ontario public school boards. Regardless of the answer, a great deal could be learned from the Ontario public school board given its effort towards gender parity by use of formal policy PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees. Thus, Ontario public school boards became a suitable research context.
1.3. Statement of Research Problem

Research has shown that women leaders have a more difficult time succeeding in leadership positions than men because as women develop and manage their leadership identity, women are navigating through a series of pressures that men do not need to negotiate (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a). In the literature review chapter of this thesis, I will outline the three major pressures that exist for women in leadership positions that do not occur in an equal capacity for men in leadership positions. The first pressure is associated with the social expectation that women lead in communal ways. This pressure may cause difficulty for women leaders as they try to balance socially expected and accepted behavior for leaders – behaviors most often associated with, and expected from, men - with the socially expected and accepted behavior of women (Blackmore, 2002; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Heilman, 2001; Johanson, 2008; Reynolds, 2002a; Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier & Zuroff, 2004). The second pressure is associated with the social expectation that women who are caregivers, prioritize their family over their career. This pressure may cause difficulty for women leaders as they try to balance socially expected and accepted behavior for leaders, with the socially expected and accepted behavior of women as caregivers. Predominantly, women have still carried the responsibilities associated with marriage and children, despite their commitments to work outside of the home, often resulting in difficult choices and/or detrimental effects on a women’s career (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002b). A third pressure is associated with social expectations of women as objects of beauty (Kozee & Tylka, 2006). The pressure to conform to stereotypical prescriptions of women’s ideal beauty can limit a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity. This added difficulty of navigating these pressures whilst trying to develop and manage one’s leadership identity may explain why so few top-level leaders are women (Grogan, 1996; Lumby, 2009). The negative impact that the three aforementioned pressures can have on a woman’s ability to
develop and manage her leadership identity has frequently been cited in literature (Blackmore, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Heilman, 2001; Johanson, 2008; Reynolds, 2002a; Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier & Zuroff, 2004). A better understanding of how women who have made it to top levels of educational leadership (Directors of Education/CEOs) have managed pressures associated with social expectations of them, can serve to help women striving towards top levels of educational leadership to manage these pressures. This study aims to do exactly that by exploring how women Directors of Education have managed their leadership identities in spite of pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders.

I have chosen not to research all top educational leadership positions that are above the principal position because I want to focus on the position at the summit of Ontario public school board’s organizational hierarchy. Directors of Education in Ontario’s publicly funded school boards not only occupy the top (not publicly elected) leadership position in the school board, but are also sanctioned with the highest authority to make policy decisions. Unlike the United States, who often calls the person with the highest authority in a school board the Superintendent, in Ontario, this person is called the Director of Education and is ultimately the CEO of the school board. In the field of educational leadership, women are least likely to be represented proportionally to men in the position of Director of Education/CEO (Blount, 1998; Estler, 1975; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015). Therefore, women Directors of Education are defensible research subjects for the purpose of better understanding how women top-level educational leaders manage pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders.

1.4. Research Questions

In order to provide a broad overview of women in the directorship in Ontario, I will answer the following preliminary research question: What percentage of the Director of Education positions in Ontario’s 60 (English) publicly funded school boards have women filled since 1993? Given the salient statistic that women occupy no more than one fifth of top leadership positions across the public and private sectors in the United States
(Colorado Women’s College, 2013), it is important to understand how Ontario’s publically funded school board currently compares in terms of the percentage of women in top leadership positions (in this case in the Director of Education position). Further, it is important to track the history of women’s presence in the Directorship, given the affirmative action legislation passed by Ontario’s government in 1993 that has been credited as having narrowed the gender gap among middle management positions in Ontario’s public schools (ETFO, 2007). If this narrowing of the gender gap continued up the organizational hierarchy in Ontario to the level of Director of Education, beginning after 1993’s Affirmative Action movement, resulting in a steady increase towards gender parity (or close to gender parity) - can a case be made in support of Affirmative Action? There could be some benefit to other sectors in Ontario and Canada, as well as to other countries, from better understanding how Ontario’s public school board made progress in this widely recognized international problem. On the other hand, if this narrowing of the gender gap did not continue up the organizational hierarchy in Ontario, and a major gender gap remains at the level of Director of Education 22 years after Affirmative Action was implemented, can a case be made that Affirmative Action is a short-sighted (“band-aid”) solution to a very complex social problem? There could likewise be some benefit to other sectors in Ontario and Canada, as well as to other countries, from sharing Ontario public school board’s limited success using Affirmative Action policies.

Based on a review of contemporary theoretical and empirical research from various fields, including business, psychology, education, leadership, and gender studies, it is clear that women leaders face different pressures today than their male counterparts (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a). Better understanding how women who have made it to top levels of educational leadership have managed pressures associated with social expectations of them as women, may help other women aiming towards top levels of educational leadership to manage these pressures. This thesis aims to explore strategies women Directors of Education have used to manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. Following in the footsteps of women in leadership scholars (Ely, Adler & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009), for the purpose of this study, leadership is conceptualized as identity work, described as a process of
coming to understand and know oneself as a leader (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). Thus, my central research question is, **how have women Directors of Education managed their leadership identities in spite of pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders?** Research sub-questions are included to provide context, allowing for a more rich understanding of the situation for women Directors of Education in Ontario and include:

- How do women Directors of Education understand pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders?
- How have these pressures affected women Directors of Educations’ leadership identities?
- What strategies have women Directors of Education employed to manage their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?
- What helps women Directors of Education manage their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?
- And finally, what prevents women Directors of Education from managing their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?

Every woman may have a different understanding of social expectations of women leaders; some may reject the suggestion that their gender has played any role in their leadership journey, while others may embrace their gender wholeheartedly as part of their unique experience as a leader. The way in which each woman understand social expectations of women leaders will inevitably affect how she believes these pressures have affected her, what strategies she used to manage these pressures, as well as her conception of what helped and hindered her in managing these pressures.

### 1.5. Significance of Research

Beyond the obvious social justice argument that women have the right to occupy senior leadership positions, there are several additional justifications for research that promotes women in leadership. International research demonstrating the positive impact women in top leadership positions have on their organizations is constantly emerging. Summarizing international research between the years of 2004 - 2013, Catalyst (2013) asserts that women are good for organizations for four key reasons: Women “improve financial performance; leverage talent; reflect the marketplace and build reputation; and increase innovation and group performance” (p. 2). Women are good for the bottom line,
an awareness that has many organizations paying attention as to how their organization can support, grow and promote their women employees. Comparing companies with the most women on the board of directors, to companies with the fewest women on the board of directors, several studies found that companies with the most women board directors financially outperformed those with the least women board directors (Carter & Wagner, 2011; Joy, Carter, Wagner & Narayanan, 2007). Additionally, based on a study of 151 German firms between 2002 and 2005, Joecks, Pull and Vetter (2012) found that in companies where there are 30% women on the board of directors, there is a greater return on equity than in companies with 100% men on the board of directors. It is important to note that until there are 3 women board members (or 30% of the total number of board members), the return on equity by adding women (1 or 2) is negative (Joecks et al., 2012), a finding which confirms other researchers’ claim that 3 is the “magic number” needed for women to have a positive impact on board performance (Konrad & Kramer, 2006; Konrad, Kramer & Erkut, 2008; Torchia, Calabro & Huse, 2011).

Beyond gaining financially from having women in top levels of leadership, there is research that shows that having women in leadership positions leverages an organization’s talent. Many studies indicate that women outperform men in several leadership competencies (Folkman, 2012; Ibarra & Obadaru, 2013), therefore giving women the opportunity to lead, often results in better leadership. One study of 7000 leaders, found that women were rated more highly on 12 out of 16 outstanding leadership competencies, and were rated the same as men on the other 4 competencies (Folkman, 2012). Aside from being talented leaders themselves, having women leaders makes an organization appear more diverse and workplace satisfaction research demonstrates that employees are less likely to leave workplaces that they perceive as diverse (Kaplan, Wiley & Maertze Jr., 2011). Further, employee satisfaction and engagement is partly based on the company’s treatment of diverse people (Choi & Rainey, 2013; HR Solutions International, 2007). Therefore, by having women leaders and treating them well, organizations encourage other talented employees to stay with their organization, building employee loyalty.
Beyond organizations benefitting financially, and through their ability to keep and use their most talented employees, “gender diversity on boards is connected with better corporate governance and board oversight and less unethical behavior” (Catalyst, 2013, p. 8). Companies with women on the board: have better attendance at board meetings (Adams & Ferreira, 2009); are less likely to commit corporate fraud or violate securities regulations (Cumming, Leung & Rui, 2012); are more likely to be involved in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Soares, Marquis & Lee, 2011); have better Corporate Social Performance ratings (on indicators such as diversity, employee relations, human rights and product related social issues) (Hafsi & Turgut, 2013); and have an increasing appeal to clients, as well as have better reputations, both of which result in increased business (Bear, Rahman & Post, 2010; Braitwaite, 2010).

Finally, beyond financial benefit, leveraging talent, and reflecting the marketplace and building their reputation, the addition of women leaders, increases innovation and group performance (Catalyst, 2013). Group collective intelligence, a measure of general group effectiveness, is able to predict a group’s performance across various situations (Woolley, Chabris, Pentland, Hashmi & Malone, 2010). One study that examined the collective intelligence of groups found that how well the group members collaborated, mattered more than the sum of the intelligence of individual group members (Woolley et al., 2010). An additional and unexpected finding was that how well the group worked together was positively correlated to how many women were in the group (Woolley et al., 2010). Researchers explained that because women are thought to have more “social intelligence” than men, women may be better able to ensure all members of the group contribute their ideas more equally. Researchers found that a diversity of ideas is more important in problem solving than how intelligent each member of the group is (Woolley et al., 2010).

For the abovementioned reasons, women are being recognized as assets to organizations. Consequently, international attention is being paid to the issue of women in leadership, and the various methods (and the method’s effectiveness) that can be used
to support, develop and promote women in organizations. “Around the globe and across all avenues for change—from legislated quotas to an explosion of advocacy groups championing voluntary measures—efforts calling for actions to increase board diversity are approaching a tipping point” (Catalyst, 2014). Catalyst (2014) identifies three methods of effort being taken by companies: legislative, regulatory and voluntary methods.

Legislation, or “hard law,” is defined as rules that are passed by a government body of elected officials. Regulation, or “soft law,” is defined as rules that are passed by an administrative body that either oversees how laws will be enacted and enforced or oversees recommended conduct for companies. Voluntary efforts are defined as pledges or targets signed by organizations that are not legally binding but signal a public commitment to board diversity.

Each of these methods has its strengths and weaknesses. This thesis, which explores women in top levels of leadership in Ontario’s public school board 22 years after Ontario legislated affirmative action policy at the school level in Ontario school boards, can contribute to the international conversation about methods to get more women in leadership positions.

In addition to contributing to the international conversation about women in leadership and the various methods which can be used to get more women in leadership, this thesis offers a better understanding of how women who have made it to top levels of educational leadership have managed pressures associated with social expectations of them. Insights into how women in top educational leadership positions have managed pressures associated with social expectations of them, can serve to help women striving towards top levels of educational leadership to manage these pressures.

1.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the research problem, research questions and sub-questions, as well as outlined the significance of the study. I provide a literature review in the following chapter. Literature central to this study, which I explore in Chapter Two includes: Women and the Directorship/Superintendency, Women Leaders and the Pressures they Experience, and Employment Equity/Affirmative Action policies. In
Chapter Three I describe in detail the conceptual framework used in this study. I describe the methodology in Chapter Four. The findings comprise Chapters Five (Denial, Silenced Voices and the Power of Gender Microaggressions), Six (Pressures Associated with Leadership and the Strategies used to Manage said Pressures) and Seven (Hindrances, Supports and Affirmative Action). I offer discussion in Chapter Eight. Finally, in Chapter Nine I provide an overview of the study, summarize key findings, discussing limitations of the study, and make final conclusions, as well as, suggestions for areas of future research.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how women Directors of Education manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. Concepts central to the theoretical foundation of this study, which are discussed in this chapter, include: Women and the Directorship/Superintendency, Women Leaders and the Pressures they Experience, and Employment Equity/Affirmative Action policies.

This chapter begins by providing a sample job description for the position of Director of Education from an Ontario public school board. The chapter proceeds by outlining the history of women in the Directorship/Superintendency over the past one hundred and 25 years. Three models of explanation are used to illustrate women’s dismal representation in the profession to date. Three possible outcomes of women entering traditionally male workforces are also provided. Next, women leaders and the pressures they experience are reviewed more broadly. More specifically, this section examines the unique pressures women leaders face in developing and managing their leadership identity. I chose to review women leaders and the pressures they experience broadly, first, because the pressures women Directors/Superintendents experience in leadership is very specific topic and not yet adequately researched, and second, because as CEOs of a board of education, I consider women Directors to have a great deal in common with women leading in other sectors. Therefore, I consider this literature very insightful to this study. The chapter concludes with an examination of Employment Equity/Affirmative action polices, an explanation of Employment Equity/Affirmative Action’s path throughout recent history, and an examination of attitudes towards these policies and difficulties in translating theory to practice when implementing the policies. The following chapter addresses the conceptual framework used specifically for the purpose of this study.
2.2. Women and the Directorship/Superintendency

Each public school board in Ontario has their own specific job description for the position of Director of Education. For the purpose of example, Limestone District School Board’s most recent summary of the position is provided:

The Director of Education is both the Chief Education Officer and the Chief Executive Officer of Limestone District School Board. The Director reports directly to the Corporate Board. The Director is accountable to the Board of Trustees and, through Statute, to the Minister of Education for the organization and operation of the district. All Board authority delegated to staff is delegated through the Director of Education (limestone.on.ca, 2011).

Appendix A offers the full job description for Limestone District School Board including areas of responsibility details.

In the United States, in K-12 schooling, females outnumber males in teaching, yet males dominate in administrative roles (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015). Using Patterson’s American Education longitudinal data from 1910 to 1998, Tallerico and Blount (2004) found that the Superintendency (the American equivalent of the Directorship) “remained a primarily male occupation during the entire 20th century. More specifically, men occupied from 85% to 96% of all Superintendencies during this time period” (p. 640). Between 1910 and 1970 females began to move into the Superintendency, increasing women’s representation from 9% in 1910 to 11% in 1930 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). This increase has been attributed to the women’s suffrage movement and the fact that many superintendent positions were elected rather than hired for; suffrage activists campaigned hard for women to secure Superintendencies. Women’s representation declined from 11% in 1930 to a low of 3% in 1970 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). There was an effort during these years to depoliticize education resulting in less elected superintendents which helps explain this decrease. Further, once suffrage was achieved in 1920, many activists put their attention towards other issues. Additionally, many states put additional education in place for school administrators, yet held low quotas for women in these programs (Blount, 1998). Women’s representation climbed from 3% in 1970 to 10% in 1998 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). This climb has been attributed to the second wave of the feminist movement, which focused on leadership roles for women.
The climb was not larger however because policy standards became more focused upon, beginning with *A Nation at Risk* (1983), making equity issues less important (Blount, 1998). In 2011 the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and Pearson Publishing conducted the most recent large scale study of the Superintendency; women were found to comprise 24 percent of superintendents in the US, with the number rising to as high as 30 percent in districts that had less than 300 students (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young & Ellerson, 2011). This rise was attributed to three factors. First, women had become the majority of doctoral students in educational administration programs that also provided the credentials needed to be superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2011). Therefore, women were more qualified for the Superintendency than men, and more qualified for the Superintendency than ever before. Second, in order to save money school boards were more likely to promote from within. Given the number of women in lower levels of management and in teaching, women comprised the majority of the internal candidate pool and hence this increased the likelihood of women appointed to superintendant positions (Kowalski et al., 2011). Third, national testing of students and ranking of schools placed demands on schools, which resulted in more value being placed on superintendents as instructional leaders. Instructional leadership has been associated with women’s experience in teaching and curriculum development, while men have been more associated with management of school resources (Kowalski et al., 2011). Thus women’s experienced became more valued in the role of superintendent.

Women’s movement into the top leadership position of CEO, or the Superintendency, in the US mirrors the slow progress of women’s movement into other management/leadership positions more broadly (Sperandio & Devdas, 2015). Yet, the huge disparity between men and women in the Superintendency is paradoxical in the field of education (Blount, 1998; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015;), a field in which, as of 2000, women comprised 65% of teachers, 43% of principals, 57% of central office administrators and 33% of assistant and associate superintendents (Bjork, 2000, p. 8). The U.S. Census Bureau has described the Superintendency as being the most male-dominated executive position among all professions in the United States (Glass, 1992). Dana & Bourisaw (2006) note that the position of superintendent in the United States has been constructed as a male job. In 1997, school board member, Louis Walter,
explained to the school district’s woman superintendent that “her challenges are going to be constant because the community does not want a woman superintendent” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 22).

Several reasons have been offered as to why the Superintendency has remained dominated by males (Blount, 1998; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1998, 1999; Sperandio & Devdas, 2015; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Educational administration scholars have used three models to explain gender disparity in the Superintendency. The first model has focused on the women as a “cause” (personal traits, characteristics, abilities or qualities) for being unable to attain superintendent positions in higher numbers (Estler 1975; Schmuck, 1980; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996;). This model has assumed merit earns Superintendency positions. Academics have criticized this focus on women’s “internal barriers” as the “blame the victim” perspective (Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996).

The second model has focused on systemic gender bias that results in women’s missed opportunities to gain leadership experience. This model removes individual blame and points to the complex inner workings of an organization. For example, elementary teachers, predominantly women, have rarely been offered opportunities such as coaching, chairing departments, or directing special programs – opportunities that allow them to demonstrate their potential to climb vertically. This contrasts secondary teachers, predominately men, who have been offered these opportunities (Blount, 1998). Additionally, secondary schools have often had assistant principal positions (virtual training grounds for leadership) in their schools, whereas most elementary schools have not had this position in their schools (Blount, 1998). Thus women have traditionally had less opportunity to be mentored into leaders and to demonstrate their leadership competence. Where women were promoted to principal, was in elementary schools, and rarely was upper leadership potential sought from elementary schools (Blount, 1998). It is important to remember that women take longer, generally speaking, to pursue promotion; men teach 5 years, whereas women teach 15 years, on average before pursuing promotion (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Young & McLeod, 2001). Therefore, by the time women are pursuing the superintendency, they are often at the age
men retire, making them less desirable candidates to trustees (Kamler & Shakeshaft, 1999). Further, Glass (1992) discovered that circumstances in which women were promoted to superintendent – often led to them exiting the role.

Proportionately more than men, women [have tended] to occupy superintendencies in the smallest and least cosmopolitan districts, with the fewest central office administrators, declining student enrolments, more reported stress in the job, less satisfaction and the greatest vulnerability to lethal school board conflict (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996, p. 657).

This is important to understand because retention is just as important to women’s representation in the Superintendency as is their original hiring (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Additionally, seeing women try and not succeed in the Superintendency is likely a deterrent for other women who may have considered the role otherwise.

The third model has focused on society as a whole and is closely related to the second model. The third model holds that societal norms and expectations encourage discriminatory practices in schools and school systems (Schmuck, 1980; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). For example, the dilemma of balancing work and family life, which has traditionally affected women far more than men, can be thought to fall under this model of explanation. Gender stereotypes such as “think leader, think male” (Schein, 2001) can also be illuminated by this model of explanation. These stereotypes help rationalize why gatekeepers of leadership positions (those who influence hiring) have traditionally been white males, who have preferred to hire those most like themselves (Blount, 1998; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). These stereotypes also help rationalize another study’s results, which demonstrated that despite being prepared formally, experientially and personally, women were not encouraged to seek the Superintendency promotion (Brunner & Yong-Lyun, 2010).

Based on prior scholarship of the Superintendency, as well as on research on feminizing other occupations, Tallerico and Blount (2004) outline 3 possible outcomes of women entering traditionally male workforces: genuine integration; resegregation; or ghettoization. Genuine integration is the most optimistic with an equal number of men and women in the Superintendency. This situation assumes that talent and leadership
potential are evenly dispersed by gender; this situation also assumes that the job of superintendent will remain equally attractive to both genders.

It also presumes gender-independent labor queues, with employers ranking male and female potential workers at similar levels of attractiveness. Such labor queues would likely be associated with a significant ideological shift culturally, with leadership viewed as the shared domain of females and males rather than primarily as “manly work.” (Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 648).

This balance needs to endure over time in order to be classified as integration. Resegregation is when the movement of women into a career is met at the same time, with the exodus of men. School teaching is an example of resegregation, the feminization of a profession (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Ghettoization “essentially masks genuine integration by relegating one sex (typically females) to the less valued, lower paid, less desirable subcontexts or to part-time rather than full-time hours within a nominally identical, desegregating field” (Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 637). An example in education of this occurs in the professoriate, whereby women are more likely to have adjunct, part-time positions and men are more likely to have tenure-track positions (Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

2.3. Women Leaders and the Pressures they Experience

Despite the fact that empirical studies have clearly found that gender differences in leadership are minute (Pittinsky, Bacon & Welle, 2007), based on a vast review of literature it has become clear that men and women face different pressures as leaders (Butler, 2004; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009; Pittinsky, Bacon & Welle, 2007;). Further, research has shown that the different pressures that women leaders face (compared to their male counterparts) can limit a woman’s effectiveness in developing and managing her leadership identity (Butler 2004; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009). One’s development and management of their leadership identity - and more importantly, others’ acceptance of that identity and the behaviors associated with that identity – have been cited as hugely important in a leader’s ability to succeed as a leader (Butler 2004; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009).
Pressures associated with stereotypical social expectations of women have been consistently cited as a major obstacle in a woman’s ability to effectively develop and manage her identity as a leader (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a). For the purpose of this study, leadership is conceptualized as identity work, following in the footsteps of women in leadership scholars (Ely, Adler & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009). Therefore, I will begin this section of the literature review with an overview of leadership identity. Next, I will outline literature about the three main pressures associated with stereotypical social expectations of women, making connections to their potential effect on a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity.

2.3.1 Leadership Identity

When conceptualizing leadership as identity work, it can be described as a process of coming to understand and know oneself as a leader (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). One’s leadership identity is “in part self- and in part socially- constructed, always in response to the limitations of what is acceptable [behavior for leaders]” (Lumby, 2009, p. 29). From the perspective of Great Women Theory (Pittinsky, Bacon & Welle, 2007), people have strong expectations about women’s leadership styles. Despite the fact that empirical evidence has consistently demonstrated that men and women lead mostly in similar ways, sometimes observers perceive them differently, “blinded by expectations” (p. 108). The expectations of others can become self-fulfilling prophecies; “women’s leadership is thus molded as others’ expectations influence women’s own behaviors” (Pittinksy, Bacon & Welle, 2007, p. 108). Based on how others react to a leader’s behavior, the leader may need to refine their actions to ensure others validate their identity as a leader. Individuals taking on the role of leader aim to construct, maintain, protect and boost their own self-worth and status through the perceptions of others (Bauman, 2004; Goffman, 1959). A leadership identity can be thought of as the image a leader consciously projects to the world; the impression a leader manages. Developing and managing a leadership identity, therefore, relies greatly on the leader’s ability to reflect on the desires of others and
appease others through a leader’s actions. Emotions are closely linked to one’s identity creation, as “emotions are affective experiences, such as fear or joy, that emerge when one perceives events or situations to have a personal significance because they harm or promote oneself or one’s goals” (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015, p. 130).

Identity control theorists use the term “actual appraisal” to describe another person’s opinion of a leader, and use the term “reflected appraisal” to describe what the leader thinks another person’s opinion of the leader is (Stets & Harrod, 2004). Stets and Harrod (2004) argue that reflected appraisals are more important to a leader’s identity since reflected appraisals will affect the leader’s future behavior. Reflected appraisals, depending whether they are positive or negative, may inflict pressure on leaders to change their behavior. Due to a leader’s reliance on others, through reflected appraisals, a leader’s identity is constantly in flux (Lumby, 2009; Stets & Harrod, 2004).

Ely, Ibarra and Kolb (2011) emphasize that one’s identity creation as a leader can spiral either positively or negatively:

On the positive side, receiving validation for one’s self-view as a leader bolsters self-confidence, which increases one’s motivation to lead and to seek new opportunities to practice leadership . . . Recognition and affirmation strengthen one’s self-identity as a leader, which in turn fuels the search for new opportunities, growth, and so on. (p. 3)

In short, positive feedback fuels success in one’s leadership. In contrast, Ely et al. (2011) argue that “failing to receive validation for one’s leadership attempts diminishes self-confidence as well as the motivation to seek developmental opportunities, experiment, and take on new leadership roles, thus weakening one’s self-identity as a leader” (pp. 3-4).

Research has clearly demonstrated that women leaders have a more difficult time constructing and managing their leadership identity than male leaders (Butler, 2004; Ely et al., 2011; Lumby, 2009), with women much more likely to be caught in this negative spiral (Ely et al.). This negative spiral manifests itself in professional consequences for women. Specifically, a woman’s self-confidence at work diminishes; her drive to attain developmental opportunities wanes; and her willingness to experiment and/or accept new
leadership positions decreases (Day, Harrison & Halpin, 2009). Ryan and Haslam’s (2005) theory of the “glass cliff” might help explain this negative spiral. Ryan and Haslam (2005) argue that women, more than men, are more likely to be promoted into leadership situations that are precarious or risky. The result is that women appear to be failing in their leadership role when the organization was already failing before women began their term as leaders. This has detrimental affects on a woman’s reputation and career (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Because leadership has predominately been understood to be a male domain (Blackmore, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Grogan, 1996; Lumby, 2009; Pittinsky, Bacon & Welle, 2007; Reynolds, 2002a; Schein, 2001), a woman in a leadership context may be seen as “a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint” (Butler, 2004, p. 1), like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. Women may face a stigma (Goffman, 1986) when taking on the role of leader because some of the socially expected and accepted behaviors of women are incongruent with the socially expected and accepted behaviors of leaders - which have been highly associated with the behaviors of men (Ely et al., 2011; Lumby, 2009).

The next section will outline the pressures women leaders potentially face. First, literature about stereotypical social expectations surrounding women’s communal behaviour will be outlined and the potential consequences this has on a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity will be discussed. Second, literature about stereotypical social expectations surrounding a woman’s responsibilities associated with caregiving will be outlined and the potential consequences this has on a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity, will be discussed. Finally, pressures associated with conforming to stereotypical prescriptions of women’s ideal beauty will be outlined making connections to its potential to limit a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity.
2.3.2. Social Expectations of Women as Communal

Using *Human Capital Theory*, Havesman and Beresford (2012) argue that since there are no significant differences between the educational credentials, job preferences and the accumulated work experience of men and women in the US today, that the vertical gender gap in access to managerial/leadership positions must be attributed to the ingrained social understandings with regards to who (men or women) should lead. Leadership has long been predominately perceived as a male domain (Blackmore, 2002; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Grogan, 1996; Lumby, 2009; Pittinsky, Bacon & Welle, 2007; Reynolds, 2002a; Schein, 2001), which increases the difficulty with which a woman is able to create and manage her leadership identity (Lumby, 2009; Butler, 2004). Agentic qualities such as independent, dominant, commanding and controlling have traditionally been associated with leadership, but also with men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Schein (2001) termed this effect the “Think Manager/Think Male” association (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women leaders, therefore, often must try to reconcile the conflicting expectations of womanhood and leadership in creating and managing her leadership identity (Lumby, 2009). Trying to reconcile these conflicting expectations may result in a woman leader experiencing pressure. In this thesis, the term pressure refers to *influence on leaders by peers*, peers who encourage a leader to change their attitudes, values, or behaviors to conform to those of the influencing group or individual. Pressure may be external to a leader, or a leader may exert pressure on themselves - their own internalized pressures. Both of these types of pressures, however, originally come from external sources. As mentioned earlier, emotions play a key role in this process, “often accompanied by bodily reactions such as physiological arousal and facial expressions, and occasionally [emotions] even stimulate a tendency for action that can help in coping with the event” (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015, p. 130). Managers’ emotions have been linked with various job-related characteristics such as supervision duties, work conditions and interactions with those one is leading (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015).
Besides having needed to overcome the overt challenges of an organizational structure that was originally designed for male workers (Shakeshaft, 1989; Singh & Terjesen, 2008), in many ways a woman leader has needed to overcome covert challenges as well (Shakeshaft, 1989), such as fitting into an already defined schema of what a leader looks and acts like, in order to receive positive feedback (Butler, 2004; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Lumby, 2009). Collard and Reynolds (2005) argue that leadership is not just an act of the mind but also an act of the body and therefore, a leader and their actions cannot be disassociated from their body. Women who dress or act as men, or who present an androgynous image by ignoring one’s female gender, break traditional “gender scripts,” and are perceived as trouble (Blackmore, 2011; Butler, 2004; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Wallace, 2002). Yet, displaying too much femininity can undermine a woman’s leadership (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Wallace, 2002). Great Women Theory (Pittinsky, Bacon & Welle, 2007) notes that all of these expectations may result in a woman leader experiencing pressure.

Eagly and Carli (2007) have explained this phenomenon using the term “double bind;” a term coined to describe the phenomenon that “highly communal female leaders may be criticized for not being agentic enough. But female leaders who are highly agentic may be criticized for lacking communion” (p. 102). What has been socially expected and accepted of women, to be kind, caring, and unselfish or community-focused, has required communal traits that contrast with the agentic qualities, such as assertiveness, independence, and dominance that people expect in a leader (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Ely et al., 2011; Heilman, 2001; Johanson, 2008; Suh et al., 2004). Bascia and Young (2001) have referred to the internal conflict women in education face as “good girls” versus “bad girls.” “The nurturing, feminine, collaborative, and selfless woman educator” (Bascia & Young, 2001, p. 276) who works within the system, does not question the system and is appreciative to the powerful within the organization, is seen as a “good girl,” and is more likely rewarded than “bad girls,” who “take more risks by making vocal, public stands about expectations for themselves and others” (p. 276). The perceived need or pressure to display agentic characteristics that align with social expectations of a leader, could prevent women from pursuing or accepting leadership
positions, as women may feel they have to subvert their communal traits to seem in control (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Some research has shown that competent women leaders tend to be respected, but are not necessarily liked (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Sandberg, 2013). Dominant women often experience a “likability penalty” that men do not (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sandberg, 2013). This is especially apparent in male-dominated environments where women are deemed to be “less likable, less attractive, less happy, and less socially desirable than [women] in ‘female career[s]’” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 105), or when women are in the leadership minority (Eagly & Carli). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) note that powerful women are portrayed as evil in many literary classics. Some studies also show that women have not tended to profit as much as men from the display of communal characteristics, perhaps because people expect that these behaviours are present in women. For instance, the display of helpfulness and altruism was not a factor in women’s promotion, but was cited as important for men’s advancement (Eagly & Carli; Heilman & Chen, 2005). In sum, deviating from normative role prescriptions has generally been stigmatized (Blackmore, 2002; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Lumby, 2009), and this includes divergence from normative women’s role prescriptions in the workplace (Heilman & Chen, 2005). It makes sense that women leaders may experience emotions and pressure attempting to fit into normative role prescriptions.

It is easy to see how some men could ascend into the positive spiral developing and managing their leadership identity, given that the leader identity has traditionally been closely associated with behaviors associated with males. Male leaders tend to receive more validation (positive reflected appraisals) from those they are leading, and therefore, gain the confidence to take new risks in their role as leader (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Lumby, 2009). Unfortunately, the negative side of the spiral is the one on which women are far more likely than men to find themselves falling (Ely et al., 2011). It is no surprise, given the incongruence between socially expected behaviour of women and socially expected behaviour of leaders, and the double bind, that women grapple with internal barriers, such as low self-confidence, fear of rejection, pressure to please others,
imposter syndrome etc. (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Pigford & Tonnson, 1993; Sandberg, 2013). Even when qualified for a position, women may lack the self-confidence to apply (Bascia & Young, 2001). An internal report at Hewlitt-Packard revealed that on average, women will apply for a job when they meet 100% of the job criteria, whereas their male counterparts, on average, will apply for a job when they meet 60% of the job criteria (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Sandberg, 2013).

Association breeds expectation. In other words, people accept associations that tap into familiar expectations, such as *baby girl* and *pink*, and *baby boy* and *blue*, (Antonakis, 2011) more easily than associations that do not tap into familiar expectations, such as *leader* and *woman*. Antonakis (2011) calls this tendency to rely on familiar expectations the “Availability heuristic.” Thus, it follows, that the more frequently an association is made between two things (*leader* and *man*) the greater one’s expectation that when they meet a leader, it will be a man (Cialdini, 2009), or at least behave like a man.

Gender is the strongest origin by which people categorize others (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Social expectations of women leaders have been found to differ from social expectations of male leaders (Blackmore, 2011; Butler, 2004; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Wallace, 2002). Stereotypically speaking, women have been expected to lead in communal ways, demonstrating kindness, care, helpfulness and selflessness, emphasizing relationship building in all they do (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Lumby, 2009). When women leaders behave in these ways, it is easily processed in the minds of others (because of the availability heuristic) and therefore, accepted. However, when women leaders do not behave in these ways, it is not easily processed in the minds of others and is not easily accepted, potentially resulting in social difficulties, such as stigmatization, for those women leaders. This stigmatization may result in women leaders experiencing pressures to change their behavior.

The highly constricting social expectations of women as communal, may result in a woman feeling pressure, limiting her ability to successfully develop and manage her
leadership identity. This may help explain the lack of women in top levels of leadership. Next, I will explore literature addressing the prevalent social expectation that women are those responsible for caregiving and the potential consequences this can have on a women’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity.

2.3.3. Social Expectations of Women as Caregivers

A prevalent social expectation of women who are caregivers has been that their family should be their number one priority, not their career (Cheung & Halpearn, 2010; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Lumby, 2009). This may result in women experiencing pressure. In less family-friendly professions, this social expectation leads many women to opt against having children (Cheung & Halpearn, 2010). Some research shows that in more family-friendly professions, women may choose to have children but her career may be detrimentally affected by this choice (Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007).

Bianchi, Robinson and Milkie’s (2006) American national study of dual-career, college-educated, married parents revealed, when all work—domestic and paid labour—is tallied, on average mothers exceeded fathers’ efforts by 4 hours per week, with mothers working 71 hours and fathers 67 hours (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Further, some research has found that although there has been an increase in fathers’ involvement in the home, child care still remains the domain of mothers more than fathers and paid hours in the workforce are still longer for men than for women (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). This trend has been found to be consistent in education (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Bascia and Young (2001) have noted that career and family compete for the urgent attention of women in education far more than of men in education. Though qualitative research has revealed that women in education often note the supportiveness of their husbands, their stories reveal that these working women take primary responsibility for home life, especially childcare; and that far more women in education take leaves or work part-time for the purpose of parenting (Bascia & Young, 2001). Given that some data has revealed that the purview of caregiving still largely falls on women, that the majority of workplaces lack family-friendliness and that this more adversely affects women than men.
(Bianchi & Milkie, 2006; 2010), it is fair to conclude that the prevalent social expectation that women manage “home life,” regardless of her role outside of the home, may result in pressures which still impact women’s life choices.

The following data surrounding working mothers suggests that in order to succeed professionally and financially, women should “opt out” of having a family (Cheung & Halpearn, 2010; Eagly & Carli). On top of sacrifices to their mental health and well-being, working women who have a family, tend to be penalized professionally. In terms of overall well-being, at the end of the work day men are those left with “free time” to workout, relax, socialize or spend time as they choose – one study indicated men have 212 more leisure hours per year than women (Eagly & Carli, 2007), while working women make up for their time at work by sacrificing leisure time to spend time with their children (Eagly & Carli). The Public Health Agency of Canada (2006) found that men and women differ in terms of the extent to which they describe certain factors in their lives as causing stress:

Among individuals 25–44 years of age, the proportion of men that reported their own work situation as a source of stress was 1.7 times higher than women . . . The proportion of women that reported caring for a child as a source of stress was 4 times higher than men; women were also more likely than men to report time pressure and personal/family responsibilities as sources of stress.

In 2001, Bascia and Young noted that the “ideal” woman school administrator was the married mother, a shift from the former single career-focused woman. The pressure to do everything and do everything well, the pressure that women have the overall responsibility to care for the home and the children, is a pressure which one study found manifests itself in higher depression rates among women who work and have children, when compared to men who work and have children (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010).

Some studies note women’s careers are those negatively affected by choosing to marry and have children, losing pay, seniority and experience within the workplace to spend time with their children, whereas men in the same situation benefit professionally
(Correll, Benard and Paik, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Summarizing several studies, Correll et al. held that mothers are more disadvantaged in the workplace than their childless female colleagues. In the United States, for instance, one study found that mothers who work outside the home experience a wage penalty of five percent on average for each child in their care (Correll et al.). Given that maternity leaves in the United States are 3 months, and that maternity leaves in Canada are 1 year, working mothers in Canada may incur a much larger wage penalty than their American counterparts. In addition, some studies have found that women are passed up for promotions due to perceived lack of commitment to their work after leaves of absence (Eagly & Carli).

Depending on the field of work, the social expectations of women as caregivers can limit a working mother’s ability to climb the professional ladder. Developing and managing one’s leadership identity when one is primarily seen as a caregiver proves to be quite difficult for many women leaders (Ely, Adler & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009), especially in work places dominated by men. Perhaps ambitious women who have watched other working mothers receive negative feedback as they attempt to develop and manage their leadership identity, feel pressure to be perceived as a committed employee and choose to avoid this path.

Some professions allow for more flexible schedules and therefore are more accepting of time spent away from work than other professions, helping facilitate working mothers’ opportunities to succeed in the workplace. Despite stereotypical expectations that women manage “home life,” and the aforementioned limits this may place on women, some women are ascending to top level leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sandberg, 2013). This has been observed in Canada over the past 25 years in the public sector far more than in the private sector, with 45% women in executive ranks and 34% women in the very top executive ranks in public service jobs in Canada’s federal government (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015). Progress is credited to Canada’s Employment Equity Act (1986, revised in 1995), which held employers accountable for becoming more inclusive, whilst ensuring job candidates met merit criteria (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015). This progress is also credited to
union advocacy (in Canada 74% of public sector jobs are unionized, compared to 16% of private sector jobs) towards family-friendly policies and protection against sexual harassment in the workplace (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015). One example of a family-friendly policy put forth by federal public service employers is a maternity leave top up to 100%, available to both mothers and fathers (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015). The situation for principals in Ontario mirrors the situation among those in public service jobs in Canada’s federal government. With the teaching union’s and the provincial government’s involvement, equity policies were adopted by public school boards, family-friendly policies were created, and women were promoted in large numbers (Richter, 2007).

In sum, a prevalent social expectation suggesting that if women are caregivers, their family should be their primary focus, not their career (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007), still may put pressure on women, potentially limiting many of women’s life choices. As this is the case broadly about women in the workplace, the extent to which it affects women in this study is worthwhile to explore. Finally, the pressure to conform to stereotypical prescriptions of women’s ideal beauty will be outlined making connections to its potential to limit a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity.

2.3.4. Social Expectations of Women as Objects of Beauty

Leadership literature has privileged men’s contributions over women’s (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Herda-Rapp, 2000). While literature in the area of women in leadership is growing, it is still a fairly new area of research. As such, to date literature on women in leadership has not yet exposed the full complexity of pressures women face on their path to top level leadership positions. One of these unexposed areas of complexity is a third pressure: the pressure to conform to socially constructed presentations of beauty. This pressure is not new, but its influence on women’s career ambitions has not been studied. Naomi Wolf (1997) suggests such pressure limits women’s liberation:
The affluent, educated and liberated women of the First World, who can enjoy freedoms unavailable to any women ever before, do not feel as free as they want to… Many are ashamed to admit that such trivial concerns---to do with physical appearance, bodies, faces, hair and clothes---matter so much. But in spite of shame, guilt, and denial, more and more women are wondering if it isn’t that they are entirely neurotic and alone but rather that something important is indeed at stake that has to do with the relationship between female liberation and female beauty (Introduction).

The pressure for women to have it all can go beyond the realms of corporate and domestic worlds. It can extend to the physical realm of the body where gendered ideals can pervade. This pressure can begin long before women are even thinking of careers or families, often before girls have even reached puberty (Kozee & Tylka, 2006). In my literature search I found no studies that examined the link between women in leadership and body consciousness or disordered eating patterns. My research did reveal, however, that women leaders tend to be high-achievers, conscientious, achievement-oriented, and very perceptive of their own image, and how others perceive them (Antonakis, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Those most susceptible to eating disorders and the effects of body consciousness tend to be girls and women from Western cultures (Lemon et al., 2009; Pivan, 2010), regardless of age (Allaz et al., 1998; Mangweth-Matzek et al., 2006), with “personal qualities of perfectionism, achievement-motivation, self-absorption, competitiveness and self-control” (Stirling & Kerr, 2012, p. 262). Many of the same qualities can be found in successful women leaders (Sandberg, 2013; Shakeshaft, 1989). Therefore, there is reason to believe women leaders may be especially vulnerable to pressures associated with body consciousness and disordered eating patterns.

Wolf (1997) believes the way women feel about themselves physically is directly tied to the limitations they feel as human beings.

More women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than [we] have ever had before; but in terms of how [we] feel about ourselves physically, [we] may actually be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers. Recent research consistently shows that inside the majority of the West’s controlled, attractive, successful working women, there is a secret “underlife” poisoning [women’s] freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control (p. 8).
Women preoccupied by pressures to look a certain way may struggle to successfully develop and manage her leadership identity. In Western countries, women’s bodies are closely associated with their self-worth (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Individuals may feel pressured to uphold gender stereotypes that exist in the media. That is, women’s ideal body image presents as beautiful, thin and big breasted, while the ideal body image of men presents as tall, muscular, and powerful (Katz, 1999; Kilbourne, 2000; Ridgeway & Tylka, 2005; Seibel Newsom). Moreover, many of these images are youthful images, negating older people outright (Augustus-Horvath & Tylka, 2011; Kilbourne, 2000). Young girls are often portrayed as highly sexual beings, valued above all else for their appearance. The brain does not fully develop until a person is in their early 20’s, and until then the brain is incapable of deconstructing images in the media, therefore young girls are especially vulnerable to the images in the media and what they say about femininity (Newsom, 2011). Women are often portrayed in the media in a series of images, poses, postures, and expressions that reinforce them as what Simone de Beauvoir (1949) called “the second sex.” These messages objectify them--magnifying their slighter frames and their sexuality, and placing them in roles that suggest subservience and powerlessness (Jhally, 2009; Kilbourne, 2000). Tylka and Calogero (2011) write that even ‘benevolent sexism,’ the more positive sexism towards women, “is an affectionate but patronizing view of women, consisting of beliefs that women are vulnerable to harm and in need of protection, thereby justifying the need to intervene on their behalf” and leading to a curtailing of their personal freedoms (p. 453). Katz (1999) argues that as a result of the feminist movement in the 1960’s and 1970’s, dominant white male masculinity was quite seriously being threatened. At the exact time women were becoming more challenging and threatening to the power of masculinity in business and other realms of life, cultural images of women became less threatening, literally taking up less and less physical space in the media, while images of men became larger, stronger and more threatening, occupying much more symbolic space in dominant culture (Katz, 1999).

Kilbourne (2000) argues women are socialized to prioritize appearance; men their ability to provide, and then media reinforces these messages. Girls, regardless of their...
sexual orientation, tend to start receiving messages to be attractive well before their
sexual identity is in place, which may put pressure on them and may influence their body
image as they mature (Kozee & Tylka 2006, p. 451). Kilbourne (2010) contends that
images of ideal beauty surround us, and from an early age girls learn that they must spend
a lot of time, energy, focus and money on looking a certain way; and when they fail—as
people inevitably will, in trying to attain the unattainable—girls should feel shame. The
ideal is unattainable quite literally as the ideal is generated digitally—that is, in the
electronic world, making such images simulacrum, not photographs, and thus not real.
But, these images are powerful, and they can create a belief in our culture that we
can look like this if we just try hard enough (Kilbourne, 2000). For over-achieving girls
and women, who take great pride in the effort they put forth in life, and experience
pressure to be perfect, this belief can have devastating consequences on their self-worth.

According to Rance Crain, formerly a Senior Editor with Advertising Age, “Only 8% of an ad’s message is received by the conscious mind. The rest is worked and
reworked deep within the recesses of the brain” suggesting that the impact of persistent,
ubiquitous images is profound and cumulative (in Kilbourne, 2010, video). This is key
because it demonstrates that most consumers of media miss, or fail to notice, that the
messages were deliberately designed. Thus there is a conscious effort on the part of
media conglomerates to send messages to girls and women that disempower them and
limit their ability to participate as an equal in society because they are not the same as (or
as good as) the ideal, and the ideal is presented as “normal.” Further, many girls and
women are taught to compare themselves to the ideal and to their female peers, thus
creating an inherent sense of tension and competition among the female gender
(Kilbourne, 2010). One study found that women who self-objectify are more likely to
objectify other women and body dissatisfaction is linked to each (Strelan & Hargreaves,
2005). Thus, by extension, men and women can restrict women’s “behaviour,
relationships, and perceptions of themselves” (p. 448). In the case of body ideals, they are
based on sexist ideology (Calogero & Jost 2011; Napier et al. 2010; Viki & Abrams
2002).
In 2007, the American Psychological Association released a report that revealed that girls exposed to sexualized images from a young age are more prone to depression or depressed mood, eating disorders, and low self-esteem (Kilbourne, 2010). It is worth noting that although individuals who are considered attractive by cultural standards have been found to receive some societal benefits (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), those who focus on their appearance and hold appearance-focused cognitive distortions are not found to be happier and may even be less happy than women who focus on their personality and other internal characteristics (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow 2005; Meyer et al. 2007). Clearly the well being of women is jeopardized by exposure to the media (Tylka & Calogeno, 2011, p. 456).

This research is extremely relevant to women in leadership. Simply by the years needed to advance to these positions, women leaders are not generally the adolescents often chronicled in research on media effects. They have, however, been exposed to an overwhelming number of media images about body image, and simply because of their age, have had greater exposure to this stimulus than the younger women often focused on in these studies. Additionally, and of equal importance, women leaders are conscientious, driven, and highly perceptive of their own self-representation, perhaps suggesting a greater vulnerability to the pressure of media. As Roberts and Waters (2004) offer, “older women are often assumed to be less vulnerable to the effects of these idealized images because they are “able to step outside of the objectification limelight” (p. 8), and thus are often overlooked in these studies (Tylka & Calogero p.454). But, there is ample evidence to suggest that highly driven women may be as affected as their younger, “more vulnerable” counterparts (Allaz, Bernstein, Rouget, Archinard & Morabia, 1998; Mangweth-Matzek, et al., 2006; McLean, Paxton & Weirtheim, 2010).

Jhally (2009) contends that body image is a key part of a woman’s personal and social identity, and that “body talk”—the chatter about weight and body parts in social settings—which has so often been considered the realm of the adolescent, is common in adulthood, even amongst powerful women. He says, “when women behave in a self-assured manner, they feel tremendous pressure to return to the more traditional feminine role so they will be recognized as “real women”” (Tylka & Calogeno, 2011, p. 452).
Tylka and Calogeno call this “gendered body conflict”. Another study found that American women were torn between expressing body-confidence, and body-shame, between a self-image that “represents a more traditional feminine role which is self-deprecating and one that represents a more masculine norm of self-assuredness” (Payne et al., 2010 in Tylka and Calogeno, 2011, p. 452). It is a disturbing realization that for a girl or woman to demonstrate a sense of self-assurance, by being ok with who she is and what she looks like, she is disobeying what it is to be a female in our society.

Clearly, the body image pressures womankind is navigating, in an attempt to be respected as a person and accepted as a woman, are intense. Statistics show that oftentimes these pressures manifest themselves in eating disorders and mental health issues. Frederickson et al. (1998) found that pre-occupation with appearance can affect a woman’s accomplishments by detracting from her focus. Media images, they argue place “significant demands on a woman’s cognitive resources and results in decreased performance on mathematics problems” (Fredrickson et al., 1998, p. 75) and on a modified Stroop task (Quinn et al., 2006b). If women are distracted from simple tasks, it is not an enormous stretch to assume that a women leader might be distracted from her work and thus less likely to thrive and be promoted to top leadership positions.

This section has made obvious a void that exists in the literature connecting women in leadership to pressures associated with the ideal standards of beauty in the North American culture. Quite possibly this connection could explain a large piece of the puzzle in terms of why women are not reaching top leadership positions. This segment made clear the blatant sexualisation and objectification of girls and women in the media. The effects of this were highlighted in terms of the physical, psychological and emotional health of girls and women. More research is needed to determine the extent to which a preoccupation with body image may be affecting women leaders; not only in terms of their health, but also in terms of the way these concerns might be inflicting pressures, impeding women’s success in leadership at a larger scale. This study will aim to shine some light into these issues.
2.4. Affirmative Action/Employment Equity

Throughout Canadian history, groups, such as women, have been discriminated against in the workplace, through official organizational policies and/or through the day-to-day interactions of an organization (Alexandrowicz, 2004). According to Abdella’s (1984) Report of Commission on Equality in Employment, which laid the foundation for Canada’s Employment Equity Act of 1986, four groups were systemically discriminated against: women, people with disabilities, aboriginal people and visible minorities. According to this report, the goal for women under an Employment Equity law would be as follows:

For women, equality in employment means first a revised approach to the role women play in the workforce. It means taking them seriously as workers and not assuming that their primary interests lie away from the workplace. At the same time, it means acknowledging and accommodating the changing role of women in the care of the family by helping both them and their male partners to function effectively both as labour force participants and as parents. And it means providing the education and training to permit women the chance to compete for the widest possible range of job options. In practice this means the active recruitment of women into the fullest range of employment opportunities, equal pay for work of equal value, fair consideration for promotions into more responsible positions, participation in corporate policy decision-making through corporate task forces and committees, accessible childcare of adequate quality, paid parental leaves for either parent, and equal pensions and benefits. (Abdella, 1984, p. 4)

The Employment Equity Act, implemented in 1986, and later amended in 1995, “require[s] positive efforts on the part of employers to reduce disparities in employment and workforce representation between designated groups and the general workforce regardless of its causes” (Jain, Lawler, Bai & Lee, 2010, p. 304, emphasis in original). Usually Human Rights law requires people to file a complaint to a Human Rights Commission or Tribunal to enjoy the equal rights promoted by the Canadian Human Rights Act, while the Employment Equity Act is recognized as a strategy to overcompensate with the purpose of correcting past discrimination (Jain et al., 2010; Cronshaw, 1988). Unlike the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1978, Employment Equity laws go beyond reactively protecting human rights to proactively reducing or eliminating workplace discrimination. It is important to note that Federal Employment Equity only
has regulatory jurisdiction over banking, communications and transportation, as well as most federal governments departments and federal agencies (Jain et al., 2010) – therefore there are many employers who are not required by law to follow the Employment Equity Act in Canada.

Provincially, Ontario’s Employment Equity legislation has been credited as being the result of a strong female presence in the New Democratic Party Government’s cabinet between 1990 and 1995 (Hyland Byrne, 1997). Bob Rae, the premiere at the time, appointed a historic 42.3% (11/26) women to his cabinet, which has been argued to have resulted in several policies that benefitted women (Hyland Byrne, 1997). As part of Employment Equity, the provincial government passed legislation put forward by the Ministry of Education (PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees) that made it compulsory for school boards to put in place employment equity plans for women (Richter, 2007) in 1993. This resulted in a revision to The Education Act (Ministry of Education, 1993). In combination with the hard work of the Federation of Women Teachers’ Association of Ontario (FWTAO) during the 1980s, PPM 102 has been noted by the Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario (ETFO) as contributing to the extreme rise in women principals during the 1990s in Ontario (Richter, 2007). It should be noted that provincial Employment Equity policies were revoked by the next provincial (Conservative) government in 2005 and PPM 102 was revoked by the Ministry of Education in 2009.

In the United States, President John F. Kennedy made Affirmative Action in the labour market a federal law in 1961, mandating that government contractors hire and treat employees equally regardless of their race, creed, colour or national origin (Kurtulus, 2015). In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson expanded Affirmative Action to include women, establishing the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). Johnson’s executive order required federal contractors to prepare annual statements in regards to their Affirmative Action efforts, goals, timetables and hiring (Kurtulus, 2015). Penalties were in place for those who did not abide (Kurtulus, 2015). There was a reversal of Affirmative Action efforts in 1980s when the leadership of the OFCCP changed. During Ronald Reagan’s presidency major efforts were made to rescind the
executive order enforcing Affirmative Action and when this was unsuccessful efforts were redirected to ensure Affirmative Action became less enforced (Kurtulus, 2015). Enforcement of activity increased slightly when George H. W. Bush took office and increased even more when Bill Clinton took office in 1993 (Kurtulus, 2015). Recently, in seven states (California -1996; Washington -1998; Michigan – 2006; Nebraska – 2008; Arizona – 2010; and New Hampshire and Oklahoma – 2012) Affirmative Action laws in public employment have been banned.

2.4.1. The Impact of Employment Equity/Affirmative Action

The impact of Employment Equity/Affirmative Action laws are difficult to measure because, historically speaking, they have coincided with human rights laws that protect people from discrimination. For this reason, it is difficult to determine whether human rights laws or Employment Equity/Affirmative Action laws are “responsible” for the increase in minority and women’s representation in the workplace. That said, Kurtulus (2015) completed a longitudinal analysis of the effect of three decades (1973 – 2003) of Employment Equity in the United States. In this study, Kurtulus (2015) compared those under contract with the federal government who had to abide by Affirmative Action to those who did not. Results of this study show that Affirmative Action policies did indeed improve diversity within the workplaces of those under contract with the federal government.

Understanding patterns surrounding attitudes towards Employment Equity is important because people’s attitudes affect the way in which policies are implemented. Further, people’s negative attitudes towards Employment Equity/Affirmative Action can help explain why Affirmative Action efforts are slowly being rescinded in North America (Kurtulus, 2015).
2.4.2. Attitudes towards Employment Equity/Affirmative Action

Employment Equity or Affirmative Action policies have both passionate proponents and ardent critics. Proponents argue that past discrimination is able to be rectified through Employment Equity laws that require selection processes to be more transparent and fair (Crosby & Clayton, 2004; Crosby, Iyer, Clayton & Downey, 2003), preventing future discrimination while allowing for a more diverse workplace (Miller 1997; Moscoso, García-Izquierdo & Bastida, 2010). Opponents of these policies argue that they are unfair because they preference one group over another, failing to consider meritocracy in selection processes, resulting in the discriminated group having their competence questioned when hired (Moscoso et al., 2010; Sowell 2004; Zelnick 1996). Critics claim Affirmative Action policies are reverse discrimination, which run contrary to principles of “fairness” (Crosby, Iyer, & Sincharoen, 2006). Additionally, those against Employment Equity may charge that those people benefitting from Affirmative Action policies are not those people who were disadvantaged by the original discrimination, nor are those disadvantaged as a result of Affirmative Action policies, those responsible for the original discrimination (Alexandrowicz, 2004). Along this rationale, some critics have argued that, “today’s middle-class, heterosexual, white males are paying the price in the workforce for attitudes and behaviours of their ancestors toward the poor, homosexuals, non-white races, and women” (Alexandrowicz, 2004, p. 220). Proponents of Affirmative Action dismiss these arguments claiming critics’ opinions are prejudiced (Moscoso et al., 2010).

Some of the tension surrounding Affirmative Action has been caught up in how Employment Equity or Affirmative Action has been defined (Goldin, Hinkle & Crosby, 2001). The United States Commission on Civil Rights defined Affirmative Action Movements as “any measure, beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, adopted to correct or compensate for past or present discrimination or to prevent discrimination from recurring in the future” (Moscoso et al., p. 212). The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (CEOWM) of the Council of Europe defined Affirmative Action as “a strategy designed to establish equal opportunities through measures which allow discrimination which is the result of social practices or systems to
be rectified” (Moscoso et al., p. 212). In Canada, Affirmative Action is defined as “a policy designed to increase the representation of groups that have suffered discrimination” (Alexandrowicz, 2004, p. 217). However, the actual term Abdella (1984) chose to be used in Canada is Employment Equity – because of the negative connotation, which Abdella (1984) noted the term Affirmative Action had in other countries.

In one study group attitudes toward Affirmative Action programs were investigated using an English-speaking American sample, an English-speaking Canadian sample, and a French-speaking Canadian sample. Findings revealed that French Canadians held the most positive attitudes towards Affirmative Action. This was consistent with past studies (Fletcher & Chalmers, 1991), which rationalized that because French Canadians might see themselves as disadvantaged minorities, they might see more value in Affirmative Action. Going along with this rationale, findings from Brutus et al.’s (1998) study revealed that black Americans also had very positive attitudes towards Affirmative Action, and that black French-speaking Canadians had even more positive attitudes towards Affirmative Action than did other French Canadians (suggesting a compounding effect). Brutus et al. (1998) found that one’s membership to a disadvantaged group (or to more than one disadvantaged group), made one more likely to have a positive attitude towards Affirmative Action policies. In addition, a review of literature by Lips (2003) found that scales measuring such subtle forms of sexism [which] ask respondents to indicate their level of agreement with items such as “Women shouldn’t push themselves where they are not wanted” and “it is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television” [. . .] show that men hold more of these attitudes than women do and that modern sexism is associated with negative attitudes toward women, feminists and affirmative action (p. 23).

### 2.4.3. Difficulties with Employment Equity/Affirmative Action

Thanks to policies such as Employment Equity/Affirmative Action as well as social progress, overt gender discrimination is not very common in the workplace (Eagly
Replacing overt sexism is “second generation gender bias, [the] powerful, yet often invisible barriers to women’s advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favor men” (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011, p. 2). These second generation biases include deeply rooted assumptions or codes of behaviour. These assumptions and/or codes of behaviour are part of a culture that was established long before women in the workplace became common (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Neosexism is an alternate term used to describe new, more subtle versions of sexism in the workplace, and “notes that although sexism persists, it may reveal itself in more covert forms due to contemporary societal egalitarian values” (Basford, Offerman & Behrend, 2014, p. 341, citing Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & St-Pierre, 1999). For example, in some workplaces, a great deal of value is placed on face time and willingness to move for promotion—things that women with children cannot do as easily as men (Herr & Wolfram, 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Even women without children may find themselves excluded from workplace cultures that may value traditional male activities such as golfing, “water cooler talk” about sports and/or “happy hour” at the bar with colleagues - activities that women may be less interested in, or may be less skilled at. Because these activities are valued and not written into a person’s job description, Employment Equity/Affirmative Action movements cannot help in these areas.

The term microaggression has been used to describe discrimination towards people of colour, but is useful in discussions surrounding second generation gender bias. Microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.” The construct of microaggression is particularly useful to this discussion because it discusses discrimination in terms of a range from overt to subtle; emphasizing how blatant discrimination needs to be in order to be perceived as discriminatory (Basford, Offerman & Behrend, 2014). Gender microaggressions are defined as “intentional or unintentional actions or behaviors that exclude, demean, insult, oppress, or otherwise express hostility or indifference toward women” (Basford et al., 2014, p. 341). One example of a subtle microaggression is to be excluded from important conversations (Suskind, 2011).
Another form of a gender microaggression in the workplace is resentment towards women who receive the benefits of policies designed to support their advancement (Swim, Aikin, Hall & Hunter, 1995). How others react towards microaggressions affects the culture of inclusivity in the workplace (Basford et al., 2014), as microaggressions can easily be dismissed dependent on the severity. “Microinvalidations, when perceived, may be viewed as largely unintentional, blatant microassaults should be much harder to overlook” (Basford et al., 2014, p. 342). Unfortunately, protection from microaggressions, second generation gender bias, neosexism or any of the other terms theorists use to describe the subtle discrimination experienced by women in the workplace (Basford et al., 2014), cannot be written into Employment Equity policies because of their inherently subtle nature.

Despite having a positive attitude towards the concept of Employment Equity policies (Brutus et al., 1998), individual members of disadvantaged groups are not likely to see themselves as discriminated against (Crosby, 1984). Therefore, individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups are unlikely to see themselves personally as in need of Employment Equity policies. This is true, even though members of disadvantaged groups may recognize that other members of the same disadvantaged group are discriminated against (Crosby, 1984), and therefore require Employment Equity/Affirmative Action policies. According to Belief in a Just World (BJW) theory,

people need to believe in a just world in which everyone gets what they deserve and deserves what they get. This belief enables them to deal with their social environment as though it were stable and orderly and thus serves important adaptive functions. As a result, people are motivated to defend their belief in a just world when it is threatened by injustices, either experienced or observed (Dalbert, 2009, p. 1)

This theory has been used to explain the very salient finding that even when discriminated against, women are unlikely to believe they have been discriminated against (Crosby, 1984; Hunter, 2002; Rhodes, 1991). According to BJW theorists, individuals find it too painful to believe that an unfair action could be taken against them personally and instead reconsider how they perceive the situation, in order to “restore justice cognitively by re-evaluating the situation in line with their belief in a just world”
(Dalbert, 2009, p. 2). Further, “For women to see themselves as victims imposes costs . . . Faced with a potential loss of efficacy and self esteem, together with the unpleasantness of identifying a perpetrator of injustice, many individuals prefer to revise their sense of merit or blame” (Rhode, 1991, p. 1775). There are times when this is not possible; when a situation is too blatantly unfair to reconceptualise. In these cases people deny or withdraw themselves from the situation (Wilkens & Wenger, 2014). In essence, BJW theorists argue that when women who are discriminated against say they have not been discriminated against, they have either re-evaluated the situation to be able to see it in a fair light, or they have chosen to deny the situation or disassociate from it. Assimilation of injustice is the name of this process (Wilkens & Wenger, 2014). Structural theorists argue “women internalise and reproduce the terms of patriarchal society, perpetuating discrimination and acting as agents for male dominance in restricting the activities and disapproving the claims of other women” (Cox, 1996, pp. 13, 125). However it is rationalized, due to the fact that members of disadvantaged groups are more likely to use assimilation of injustice when discriminated against, than to call out the discrimination (Crosby, 1984; Dalbert, 2009; Wilkens & Wenger, 2014). Crosby (1984) argues, “One cannot and must not rely on the disadvantaged people to act as their own advocates” (Crosby, 1984, p. 381). Since discrimination has taken new more subtle forms and women deny their discrimination even when it is overt, women may not know why they are not succeeding at the rate most men are. Some women may even blame themselves.

This section has described Employment Equity/Affirmative Action, explained Employment Equity/Affirmative Action’s path throughout recent history, outlined attitudes surrounding Employment Equity/Affirmative Action and the outlined some of the difficulties of translating Employment Equity/Affirmative Action from theory to practice. This literature is relevant to this study as this study explores the role an Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policy had on the careers of women Directors of Education in Ontario public school boards. In the Discussion chapter, this literature will be connected to the findings of this study.
2.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the history of women in the Directorship/Superintendency over the past one hundred and 25 years. Three models of explanation were used to illustrate women’s bleak representation in the profession to date. Three possible outcomes of women entering traditionally male workforces were also provided. Next, women leaders and the pressures they experience were reviewed. More specifically, this section examined the unique pressures women leaders face in developing and managing their leadership identity. The chapter concluded with an examination of Employment Equity/Affirmative action polices, an explanation of Employment Equity/Affirmative Action’s path throughout recent history, and an examination of attitudes towards these policies and difficulties in translating theory to practice when implementing the policies. The following chapter addresses the conceptual framework used specifically for the purpose of this study.
Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

As the purpose of this study is to explore how women Directors of Education in Ontario manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders, it follows that themes which are central to the theoretical foundation of this study include: Women and the Directorship/Superintendency, Women Leaders and the Pressures they Experience, and Employment Equity/Affirmative Action policies. These themes were explored in detail in the previous chapter. This chapter integrates these core themes into the description of the framework from which this study was conceptualized.

This chapter begins by outlining 3 conceptions of leadership and the leadership strategies that accompany those conceptions. Next, leadership as it is conceptualized and defined for the purpose of this study is also introduced. The chapter continues by briefly explaining the decision to focus on women Directors of Education, as research subjects, as well as the decision to focus on Ontario public (English) school boards, as the research context. From here, I outline the decision to focus on the role of the individual in leadership, while remembering the importance of the group context and the societal context in which one leads. The chapter next discusses the three main pressures literature notes affect women in leadership’s ability to develop and manage their leadership identity. A diagram illustrating the conceptual framework used for this study is provided, and described, to help the reader visualize this conceptualization. A description of how the conceptual framework is used in this study is provided. The following chapter outlines the methodology used in the analysis of this study, incorporating the conceptual framework described in this chapter.

3.2. Conceptions of Leadership and Leadership Strategies

Almost every scholarly book or journal article discussing the topic of leadership begins by stating openly how difficult it is to define leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 2003; Dewan & Myatt, 2008; Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Richmon & Allison, 2003; Thoms,
2005). While some theorists dwell on the need for a common definition, there is an agreement among other theorists that striving towards a uniform definition of leadership is futile: “Decades of academic analysis have given us more than 850 definitions of leadership . . . [however] definitions reflect fads, fashions, political tides and academic trends. They don’t always represent reality and sometimes they just represent nonsense” (Bennis & Nanus, p. 4). Leadership is a dynamic concept that reflects the situation in which it occurs as, “‘times change’, and productive leadership depends heavily on its fit with the social and organizational context in which it is exercised” (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999, p. 1). As such, it makes sense that the definition of leadership is not static but instead, ever-evolving. Although people differ in the ways in which they understand leadership, it is still important to gain insight into this area because “the way in which people envision leadership will dictate how it is put into practice” (Ryan, 2005, p. 22). Generally speaking, leadership can be defined as “a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (Chin, 2015, p. 199). Leadership strategies are the methods by which a person “enlists the aid and support of others” (Chin, 2015, 1999). This section examines three conceptions of leadership and three types of leadership strategies within each of those conceptions of leadership.

3.2.1. Three conceptions of leadership and three types of leadership strategies.

Through the centuries of controversy surrounding the definition of leadership, leadership scholars have conceptualized leadership in many ways. Many leadership theorists have noted three common themes that I will outline next. The first and most common theme is the role of the individual. The second theme, which is becoming more prevalent in literature, is the group context in which leadership occurs. The final theme is the societal or global context in which leadership occurs. Leadership, as it is understood today, is a complex process that warrants in-depth analysis from more than one perspective. All three themes of leadership are present in this study. It must be emphasized that these three themes are interdependent in many ways and that all perspectives combined help explain the overall phenomenon of leadership. For example,
exploring both the group context in which leadership occurs, as well as the societal or global context in which leadership occurs, helps to make sense of the actions of individual leaders.

Using these conceptions of leadership, leadership strategies can be categorized into three types. The first type, involving the role of the individual, is strategies for self-regulation. The second type, involving the group context in which leadership occurs, is strategies for managing others. The final type, involving the societal or global context in which leadership occurs, is strategies for managing societal pressures. It must be emphasized that, like the three themes of leadership, these three types of strategies are interdependent in many ways. All three types of leadership strategies are present in this study.

3.2.1.1. The role of the individual and strategies for self-regulation.

The most common theme that has been used to study leadership is the role of the individual leader. This theme contains strategies for self-regulation. This theme, the role of the individual, refers to the internal processing that happens when the leader is alone, regardless of external factors that may have influenced the reflection and planning. The individual leader does not exist in isolation, but rather, their behavior is influenced by exterior factors, such as emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015), pressures from others’ expectations to behave in a certain way, and internalized, or self-inflicted pressures (which have come from external experiences). These emotions and pressures affect an individual leader’s behavior (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). Weber (1947) believes individuals are influenced by society and then choose their behavior using rational thought, based on verstehen, “the observation and theoretical interpretation of subjective “states of mind” of actors” (Weber, 1947, p. 87). Therefore, to Weber, individuals’ actions are always tied to their interpretation of how others would perceive their actions. Shutz (1962) builds on this notion believing individuals “rehearsed their future action in imagination in anticipation of the outcome of this act” (Ryan, 1986, p. 12). This emphasis on rational thought highlights the important role the individual plays in the phenomenon
of leadership. Ravindran (2009) discusses the isolation that individual leaders feel due to the fact that they are not able to share all information with their staff because of confidentiality issues, emphasizing the role of the individual in leadership and the need for strategies for self-regulation.

*Strategies for self-regulation* can be primarily understood as the individual leader’s identity work. An individual leader’s identity work can be described as a process of coming to understand and know oneself as a leader (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). “To lead is to go into the silence and let the thinking come. It is to ponder, to dream, to vision, to strategize” (Norton & Smythe, 2007, p. 78). Knowing oneself as a leader allows an individual to deliberately select the strategies they use as a leader. Knowing oneself has been valued for centuries. The emphasis on self-awareness continues to grow in bodies of leadership theory (Bennis, Goleman & O’Toole, 2008; Covey, 2005; Goleman, 1995). Socrates’ injunction “Know thyself” from over 2000 years ago, is at the heart of Goleman’s (1995) claim that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is far more important than Intelligence Quotient (IQ): “IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 percent to other forces” (p. 34). Blasé and Blasé claim that factors affecting Emotional Intelligence, such as, “an awareness and understanding of emotions (even as they occur), the ability to manage one’s emotions, and the ability to express emotions in appropriate ways, given the context, are regarded as critical to effective school leadership” (p. 258). Self-awareness is at the foundation of Emotional Intelligence:

Much evidence testifies that people who are emotionally adept—*who know and manage their own feelings well*, and who read and deal effectively with other people’s feelings are at an advantage in any domain of life, whether romance and intimate relationships or picking up the unspoken rules that govern success in organizational politics. People with well-developed emotional skills are also more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of mind that foster their own productivity; *people who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought* [emphasis added]. (Goleman, p. 36)

Impression management also requires strategies for self-regulation. Impression management is a term coined by Goffman (1956) to describe the process in which
individuals strategize to control others’ impressions of them by behaving in certain ways, which through interpersonal reflection, the individual has deemed as acceptable by others. The individual’s identity and self-awareness can only be formed through others (Goffman, 1956); through time spent reflecting on others’ reactions to them. “No individual has a mind which operates simply in itself, in isolation from the social life-process in which it has arisen or out of which it has emerged, and in which the pattern of organized social behavior has consequently been impressed upon it” (Mead, 1938, p. 222). The development a leader’s identity is thus thought to be formed through personal reflection regarding what actions are the most socially acceptable and socially preferable to others. Interpersonal reflection, which is crucial in a leader’s identity creation and management, is at the essence of strategies for self-regulation.

Since there is a strong belief among leadership theorists that a great deal can be learned about leadership by studying exemplary leaders, aspiring leaders can learn and use those strategies proven successful by exemplary leaders in developing and managing their identity. The next section looks at the group context and strategies for managing others.

3.2.1.2. The group context in which leadership occurs and strategies for managing others.

The group context in which leadership occurs represents the common theme in leadership theory, which focuses on the proximate context in which leadership occurs. This theme represents the understanding that leadership is not exclusively the work of an individual leader, and that leadership does not occur in isolation from the groups of people being led. Rather, this theme emphasizes the relationships between leaders and those they are leading as being critical in creating change. It is important to remember that leadership does not occur in isolation as the context in which leadership occurs affects the overall phenomenon of leadership. As such, the group context in which leadership occurs and strategies for managing others have become more common foci in leadership theory.
Two practical situations help emphasize the importance of considering context in examining a leader’s actions. Ryan and Haslam (2005), in discussing the “glass cliff” phenomenon, argue that context is especially important to consider when examining the work of women leaders. According to the “glass cliff” theory, women are more commonly asked to lead in contexts in which an organization is already failing. Without considering the context, it might appear as though women leaders are at fault for the failing organization (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Likewise, according to Morrison and Milliken (2000), silence in the workplace is pervasive, especially surrounding highly sensitive topics such as gender discrimination (Piderit & Ashford, 2003), making context particularly important to consider when analyzing a leader’s willingness to speak out against something.

Despite the acknowledgement that leadership is not an individual activity, but rather a group one, in many ways the group is still reactive to the individual leader and his/her actions. The group still requires an individual leader to strategize the “maximizing [of] human capacity within the organization [and to engage] many people in leadership activity” (Harris, 2004, p. 14). Group contexts can have a positive or negative effect on the leader, depending on the group’s acceptance of that leader. For example, individuals taking on the role of leader aim to construct, maintain, protect and boost their own self-worth and status through the perceptions of others (Bauman, 2004; Goffman, 1959). Developing and managing a leadership identity, therefore, relies greatly on the leader’s ability to reflect on and meet others’ expectations through the leader’s actions. Ryan and Haslam (2005), use the term the “glass cliff” to describe the phenomenon that women, more than men, are often brought in to lead precarious and risky situations. This negatively impacts the way the woman leader is perceived by others, as it often appears as though it is the woman leader’s fault the organization is failing. Therefore, considering the group context a woman enters into to lead is crucial.

The prevailing acceptance of the notion that the group context is important in terms of understanding leadership, has influenced what types of strategies are now
associated with being an effective leader. The focus has shifted towards relationship building within *strategies for managing others*. Leaders now need to ensure they develop and employ strategies that deal with relationship building, which relies upon effective communication (Ryan, 2010). Many leadership studies have found that a leader’s ability to communicate effectively is fundamental to their ability to lead (Bennis, Goleman and O’Toole, 2008; Dewan and Myatt, 2008; Gilley, Gilley and McMillan, 2009; Hackman and Johnson, 2004, 2009; Klenke, 2002; McCroskey, Mottet and Richmond, 2006; Ryan, 2005; Wentz, 1998). In order for a leader to be effective in today’s world, the leader needs to understand the importance of using effective communication to build relationships within the group they lead. Becoming conscientious about the communication process between individuals in any given group, will help leaders better understand the needs, expectations, values and goals of those they are attempting to influence. According to Ryan (2005),

> astute leaders [need] to pay particular attention to the people with whom they [work]. In particular, they [need] to be able to interpret their . . . words, actions and gestures in ways that [allow] them to understand . . . [their] real intentions, dispositions and passions so that they [can] predict behaviour. (p. 7)

For Ryan (2010), *strategies for managing others* can be understood as the study of micropolitics. Bennis, Goleman and O’Toole (2008) claim transparency is an absolute must for leaders given the technological world leaders are working in (p. vii). If leaders want to be trusted, transparency is a must. “Trust and transparency are always linked. Without transparency, people don’t believe what their leaders say” (Bennis et al., p. viii).

The group context in which leadership occurs and *strategies for managing others* clearly cannot be ignored. Leadership is a group activity and as such, relationships are at the forefront of effective leadership. The phenomenon of leadership varies from group to group and from context to context. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore yet another type of leadership strategy which contributes to better understanding the leadership behaviours of an individual.

3.2.1.3. The societal or global context in which leadership occurs and strategies for managing societal pressures.
The societal or global context in which leadership occurs and strategies for managing societal pressures deal with the broad context in which leadership occurs - the systemic forces in the world, world politics, the ideology which dominates a given time in history. The broad context in which leadership occurs has an enormous influence over the dynamics in which a leader works.

Leadership is not exclusively the work of an individual leader, nor is leadership best understood by emphasizing the relationships between leaders and those they are leading in the group context. It is important to remember that leadership always occurs in a much broader societal or global context that affects the leader’s actions. According to institutional theory, organizations must be responsive to external demands and expectations in order to thrive, despite the fact there are often multiple conflicting external demands and expectations (Oliver, 1991). Rottman (2007) argues “since theories, policies, and discourses influence the actions of organizations and individuals with which or with whom they relate, they may themselves be conceptualized as leaders” (p. 4). Speaking about Australia, Blackmore (1999) discusses an example in which discourse affects practical leadership conditions, arguing

A discourse has emerged that justifies such “inclusiveness” and links arguments about how we need more “feminine qualities” in management to arguments that call for a more sensitive approach to people management, an approach that will capture both the hearts and minds of workers . . . In the current market-oriented and client-focused education industry, women are seen both as a new niche market and as a wasted source of leadership talent. (pp. 50-51)

Not only is Blackmore emphasizing that emerging inclusive discourse affects opportunities available to women, she later notes that “gender equity politics” were gradually emerging in the workplace as a result.

Providing a more practical example, Krieg (2010) holds that

the language used in university curriculum documents communicates powerful messages about teaching and learning [and argues] that paying attention to the language used in curriculum texts provides the opportunity to examine the relationship between curriculum and the professional identities of both teacher educators and student teachers. (p. 433)
Within university settings tutorial leaders must work within the limits of curriculum discourse. Inevitably, this “contributes to different understandings of what it means to teach” (Krieg, p. 444) among tutorial leaders. If one is able to understand in this example, that revisions to curriculum affect “what it means to teach and learn in contemporary times” (Krieg, p. 445), one is better able to understand that regardless of the setting in which any individual leader works, a larger ideology plays a role in the phenomenon of leadership. Hannon and Bretag’s (2010) research exploring how teaching technology discourse informs teaching practice, revealed a more general trend: Policies and discourse meant to inform practice often juxtaposes actual practical experiences. Hannon and Bretag contend that

when educators are confronted with policies that potentially disregard both the learning needs of diverse students and the recent research on teaching and learning, we have a responsibility to engage with those policies, interrogate them, and make a space for constructive debate. (p. 106)

Arguably, this is true for any policies meant to inform leadership practices, again emphasizing the interconnectedness between the role of the individual, the group context in which leadership occurs and the societal or global context in which leadership occurs.

One example of an influence in the societal sphere exerting pressure on organizations and individuals within those organizations is the social movement feminism. With the emergence of books such as Sheryl Sandberg’s “Lean In,” Katty Kay and Claire Shipman’s “The Confidence Code” and Anne Marie Slaughter’s (2015) “Unfinished Business,” it can be, and has been, argued that throughout society and globally, leadership has been perceived as a male domain and that by many, this is seen as a problem. International research demonstrating the positive impact women in top leadership positions have on their organizations is also constantly emerging. For example, summarizing international research between the years of 2004 - 2013, Catalyst (2013) asserts that women are good for organizations for four key reasons: Women “improve financial performance; leverage talent; reflect the marketplace and build reputation; and increase innovation and group performance” (p. 2). International attention is being paid to the issue of women in leadership, and the various methods (and the method’s effectiveness) that can be used to support, develop and promote women in organizations.
“Around the globe and across all avenues for change—from legislated quotas to an explosion of advocacy groups championing voluntary measures—efforts calling for actions to increase board [gender] diversity are approaching a tipping point” (Catalyst, 2014). This international effort to promote women has resulted in Affirmative Action policies in some locations, which ultimately affects the group context in which leadership occurs, as well as the ways in which the individual leader leads.

This effort is juxtaposed by a parallel social movement towards “gender blindness” or the what Bacchi and Eveline (2010) call “mainstreaming gender.” Mainstreaming gender has been defined many ways (Walby, 2011) but is essentially the movement from separate institutional feminist units towards “the insistence that all parts of an organisation have a responsibility to attend to gender” (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p. 42). Walby (2011) argues that, “as a result of successful mobilization, feminist projects intersect with others, creating a dilemma over priorities” (p. 1). Through mainstreaming gender, there is the possibility that gender becomes no one’s responsibility or is forgotten (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010). As a result of mainstreaming, some have even come to argue there is no longer a need for gender advocacy or for Affirmative Action movements as there is no longer a gender problem (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Walby, 2011). Depending on which philosophy of gender an individual leader aligns with, an individual leader will either closely associate with their gender or may disassociate with their gender entirely. For reasons such as this, the societal or global context is important to consider when thinking about leadership and a leader’s actions.

Oliver (1991) argued that there is a range of strategic responses that organizations can take in response to external (societal) pressures to conform, offering five responses from most passive to most resistant: Acquiesce, compromise, avoid, defy and manipulate. Acquiesce includes the tactics: habit, “following invisible taken for granted norms”; imitate, “mimicking institutional models”; and comply, “obeying rules and accepting norms” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152). Compromise includes the tactics: balance, “balancing the expectations of multiple constituents”; pacify, “placating and accommodating the institutional elements”; and bargain, “negotiating with institutional stakeholders” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152). Avoidance involves the tactics: conceal “disguising non-conformity”;
buffer, “loosening institutional attachment”; and escape, “changing goals, activities or domains” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152). Defy includes the tactics: dismiss, “ignoring explicit norms and values”; challenge, “contesting rules and requirements” and attack, “assaulting the sources of institutional pressure” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152). Manipulate includes the tactics: co-opt “importing influential constituents”; influence, “shaping values and criteria”; and control “dominating institutional constituents and processes” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152). Based on multiple variables, Oliver (1991) argues that organizations respond to multiple external pressures using one of these tactics.

The next section outlines the importance of the interconnectedness of the three conceptions of leadership.

3.2.1.4. The interconnectedness of the three conceptions of leadership.

It has likely seemed sensible to many theorists to focus on the individual. Presumably, those interested in reading about and studying leadership theory are present or aspiring leaders and the question they are looking to answer is: What can I as a leader, do to strengthen my leadership skills/strategies? As such, leadership theory has predominantly aimed to answer this question. Practically speaking, it is also easiest to study the individual leader as it requires less time and money and is much more convenient.

However, focusing solely on individual leaders oversimplifies the phenomenon of leadership. Richmon and Allison (2003) noted,

It is possible to view this typology of theories as hierarchical, with progressively broader theoretical views of leadership. The most rudimentary and parochial theories are autonomous. Focusing on a single set of variables, the research converges solely on the leader as the source of insight into leadership. Increasing in theoretical sophistication are the interactive theories, which consider relationships and inter-group dynamics, while provisional theories provide the broadest frameworks, considering situation and organizational characteristics that are thought to impact the emergence of leadership. (p. 43)

While Richmon and Allison noted that autonomous theories of leadership are a category entirely separate from interactive and provisional, which do overlap with one another (p.
43), I argue that all three are interconnected and that since leaders only have direct control over their own actions and as such, they need to develop strategies that reflect the interconnectedness of these three themes.

The importance of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the role of the individual leader, the group context and the societal or global context, is reflected in the new demands and expectations being put on individual leaders. Gilley et al. (2009) note that changes in the global climate have created new conditions for individual leaders (p. 90). This emphasizes the interconnectedness between the outside circle and the innermost circle by stressing that changes in the societal or global context indeed affect individual leaders. Tucker et al. (2005) note that changes at a global level, such as technological advances, have created self-sufficient and empowered employees (p. 20). This emphasizes the interconnectedness between the outside circle and the middle circle by stressing that changes in the societal or global level indeed affect the group context in which leadership occurs. These new empowered employees again affect the conditions in which leaders are working (Tucker et al.). This emphasizes the interconnectedness between the middle circle and the innermost circle by stressing that changes in the group context in which leadership occurs affect the individual leader. Clearly, interconnectedness exists between the three themes of leadership.

Regardless as to whether the changes occur at a societal or global level (in the form of changes in policy or ideology) or at the group level (in the form of changes in the needs or expectations of employees), individual leaders are affected (Blackmore, 1999; Gilley et al., 2009; Tucker et al., 2005). Changes are happening at a global level that put pressure on organizations to change (Oliver, 1991; Whelan-Barry & Sommerville, 2010). Very much due to the interconnectedness of the three circles, leaders need to be capable of leading change in the emerging conditions in which they work. Therefore, there is a need for individual leaders to develop strategies that allow them to manage the external pressures of leadership. In this thesis, individual Directors respond to various external pressures of leadership and manage those pressures using strategies they have learned to be effective. Through exploring how Directors managed various pressures of leadership in this thesis, the complexity of the phenomenon of leadership will be illustrated.
The next section explains how leadership is conceptualized in this study, then briefly explains the decision to focus on women Directors of Education, as research subjects, as well as the decision to focus on Ontario public (English) school boards, as the research context.

3.3. Leadership Defined

For the purpose of this thesis, I define the term *leader as a person in a formal position of authority*. Though leadership activities can occur at many levels in a school system among those not occupying formal positions of authority, for simplicity and clarity, in this thesis *leadership* will be an activity limited to those occupying formal positions of authority.

3.4. Women Directors of Education in Ontario Public (English) School Boards

This thesis is approached through the lens of social justice. Largely, *leaders* are those people capable of creating significant change (Eagly, 2012). Improving women’s access to decision-making leadership positions is a matter of social justice. Given the pressures women striving towards top-levels of leadership in other fields experience (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Herr & Wolfram, 2009), I asked myself, did women at the top level of educational leadership - Directors of Education - experience similar pressures? Aware that other women striving towards educational top levels of educational leadership could learn from women Directors of Education, I asked myself, if women Directors of Education did experience pressures, *how* did they manage those pressures? Thus, women Directors of Education became suitable research subjects for my study.
3.5. Ontario public school boards

Upon reflecting on the bleak numbers of women in top levels of leadership internationally, I began to wonder why the prevalent problem of a small number of women in top-level leadership positions was seemingly not a problem for women in education in Ontario public school boards. Researching this issue more closely exposed the implementation of the 1993 PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees policy, that has been credited with having increased the number of women principals in Ontario public school boards (Richter, 2007). I asked myself whether PPM 102 could be credited with numbers close to gender parity in top levels of leadership in Ontario public school boards. I knew, regardless of the answer, a lot could be learned from the Ontario public school board’s effort towards gender parity by use of formal policy PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees. Thus, Ontario public school boards became a suitable research context.

3.6. The role of the Individual Leader

Much research about leadership focuses on the individual leader and their skills, behaviours and traits (Gilley, Gilley & McMillan, 2009; Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Klenke, 2002; Norton & Smythe, 2007; Rottman, 2007; Ryan, 2005; 2010). Leadership can even be conceptualized as identity work (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). When leadership is understood as identity work, there is a very individualized focus on the leader and therefore, in the conceptualization of leadership as identity work, the role of the individual in leadership is the focus. As such, in deciding to conceptualize leadership as identity work for this thesis, I was also deciding to conceptualize leadership in terms of the role of the individual leader. Focusing on leadership in terms of the role of the individual leader makes sense in this study as the primary focus is to explore strategies women leaders use to manage the pressures of leadership. Leadership theorists share a common understanding that much can be learned about leadership by studying exceptional individual leaders. Aspiring leaders can learn from, and use, strategies proven effective by exemplary leaders – such as the Directors of Education in this study.
It is worthwhile to recognize the importance of the group context in which one leads, as leadership does not occur in isolation from the groups of people being led. The relationships a leader has with those they are leading are increasingly becoming a focus among leadership scholars (Bennis, Goleman and O’Toole, 2008; Dewan and Myatt, 2008; Gilley, Gilley and McMillan, 2009). In this thesis the context is very important to remember since many of the strategies Directors of Education adopt have to do with managing people. It is also essential to remember that the group context is an education environment and therefore the strategies used in this thesis may be slightly different than strategies leaders in other contexts would use. In addition to the group context, it is important to remember the societal context in which a person leads. Notwithstanding the context a leader works in, a larger ideology informs their role as a leader. In this study, gender equity politics are at play given the 1993 Employment Equity policy that is credited with the substantial movement towards gender parity among principals in Ontario public schools that took place in the 1990s. Beyond this, social expectations of women leaders and the way women Directors of Education manage those social expectations, are explored in this thesis. These social expectations of women leaders are informed by society’s ideals for women and society’s ideals for leaders, making it crucial to remember the societal context in which leadership occurs.

3.7. Women in Leadership

Three major pressures exist for women leaders that may limit her ability to develop and manage her leadership identity. These pressures do not exist in an equal capacity for male leaders. These pressures are associated with stereotypical social expectations of women, namely the social expectation of women as communal, the social expectation of women as caregivers, and the social expectation of women as objects of beauty (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Pivan, 2010; Stirling & Kerr, 2012; Reynolds, 2002a). The negative effects these pressures can have on a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity have been well researched (Ely et. al., 2011; Lumby, 2009).
Additional pressures surrounding social expectations of women leaders may exist and may limit a woman leader’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity; however, they have yet to be studied. Furthermore, there are likely pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders (some related to gender, some unrelated to gender), which exist, but have yet to be studied and therefore have yet to be identified. Despite not yet having been identified, these pressures may limit a woman leader’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity. As such, this study will explore how women Directors of Education manage both identified and unidentified pressures surrounding social expectations of women leaders.

3.8. The Conceptual Framework

*Figure 1*, shown below, visually depicts the conceptual framework I have developed for this study.
The literature review inspired the development of the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework has been designed to include the three main pressures women are said to experience: pressures surrounding the *social expectation of women as communal*, pressures surrounding the *social expectation of women as caregivers*, and pressures surrounding the *social expectation of women as objects of beauty*. All three of these pressures, as they are societal pressures, are located in the *societal context in which leadership occurs* – the outermost (yellow) circle. The outer (yellow) circle also includes a series of question marks, which symbolize potential pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders that have not yet been identified in the literature.
The three circles are different colours to mark the different contexts in which leadership occurs. The outer (yellow) circle represents the *Societal Context in which Leadership Occurs*. The middle (green) circle represents the *Group Context in which Leadership Occurs*. The innermost circle (red) represents the *Individual Context in which Leadership Occurs*. At the core of the framework is the individual leader, labeled leadership identity, as within this study leadership is conceptualized as identity work.

The arrow coming from the outermost circle, pointing at the woman leader is meant to symbolize the pressure on the leader (resulting from social expectations of her), which, as research shows, potentially limits her ability to develop and manage her leadership identity. *Strategies*, has been placed above the leader at the center of the image, emphasizing its significance in this study. For the purpose of this study, *strategies* will be the term used to describe common themes that emerge in women Directors of Educations’ descriptions of how they manage pressures associated with social expectations of them. Factors which affect the strategies women Directors of Education use include *Inhibitors, Understandings, Affects and Facilitators*, and as such, are included in the Strategies bubble. *Inhibitors* refer to factors that inhibit a leader’s ability to manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. *Understandings* refer to the ways in which the leader understands pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. *Affects* refer to the ways in which a leader is affected by the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. *Facilitators* refer to factors that help a leader’s ability to manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders.

This image represents the filter through which the study has been conceptualized, including an analysis of the pressures women Directors of Education experience as a result of 3 main social expectations others have of women (as well as other potential pressures), and the strategies women Directors of Education use to manage their leadership identity in spite of those pressures. *Inhibitors, Understandings, Affects and
Facilitators are included in the Strategies bubble, demonstrating that the strategies women Directors of Education used were influenced by those factors.

3.9. How the Conceptual Framework is used in this Study

The conceptual framework helped design the research protocol used to answer the main research question: how have women Directors of Education managed their leadership identities in spite of pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders? The research protocol, developed based on this conceptual framework, also helped answer the following research sub-questions.

- How do women Directors of Education understand pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders?
- How have these pressures affected women Directors of Education’s leadership identities?
- What strategies have women Directors of Education employed to manage their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?
- What helps women Directors of Education manage their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?

The conceptual framework is also used to provide a visual of the various factors at play in this study.

3.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter began by explaining the decision to focus on women Directors of Education, as research subjects, as well as the decision to focus on Ontario public (English) school boards, as the research context. It became clear that the research subjects and the research context are inherently intertwined in this study and that from Directors of Education in Ontario public (English) school boards a great deal can be learned. From here, I outlined my decision to focus on leadership in terms of the role of the individual, while remembering the importance of the societal context in which one leads. More specifically, my choice to focus on Directors of Education’s leadership identities and the ways Directors manage pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders, led me to focus on leadership in terms of the role of the individual while remembering the
societal context in which leadership occurs. At this point, leadership as it is defined for the purpose of this study was also introduced. For the purpose of this thesis, I defined the term *leader* as *a person in a formal position of authority*. Though leadership activities can occur at many levels in a school system among those not occupying formal positions of authority, for simplicity and clarity, in this thesis *leadership* is an activity limited to those occupying formal positions of authority. The chapter next discusses the three main pressures literature notes affect women in leadership’s ability to develop and manage their leadership identity. Namely, pressures associated with social expectations of women as communal and pressures associated with social expectations of women as caregivers; as well as the pressures associated with social expectations of women as objects of beauty; are outlined. A diagram illustrating the conceptual framework used for this study was then provided, and described, to help the reader visualize this conceptualization. The way in which the conceptual framework is used in the study was then outlined. The following chapter outlines the methodology used in the analysis of this study, incorporating the conceptual framework described in this chapter.
Chapter Four: Research Design

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I outline and justify the research design selected for this study. More specifically, I describe in detail the choice to use a qualitative research design, specifically relying on the data yielded from 12 semi-structured interviews. Additionally, I outline the context of the study including a description of the location and the participants, as well as provide the rationale for those decisions. I describe the methods of data collection before concluding this chapter with an explanation of important ethical considerations that were made. Prior to delving into the research design used to answer the main research question, however, I first describe the process used to answer the preliminary research question.

4.2. Preliminary Process

In order to answer the preliminary research question, What percentage of the Director of Education positions in Ontario’s 60 (English) publicly funded school boards have women filled since 1993, I followed several steps. I created a table listing the 60 English speaking school boards in Ontario in the left hand column; and the school years 2016/2017 back to 1992/1993 across the top. The goal was to complete this chart, by filling in each board’s director’s name and gender for every year since 1992/1993. Online research was relied upon for the most current Directors’ names, as many school boards listed just their most recent Directors of Education. Where recent Directors’ names were not available online, I contacted each board, some multiple times. Additionally, in attempt to clarify/verify each Directors’ gender, I contacted each board of education, some multiple times. I made contact attempts first by email (to the Directors’ assistants) and then by phone. I spent four months attempting to adequately fill out this table. Unfortunately, several boards did not respond, several boards did not have all of the information – especially more distant history - readily available, and a few boards that did respond would not comment on the gender of any of their Directors for ethical reasons. In cases where gender was not commented on or confirmed by school boards, I used my
own judgment to assess gender based on first names and/or photos online. The final table is included in this chapter (Table C).

4.3. Qualitative Research

As previously described, the purpose of this study is to explore how women Directors of Education manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. As all studies are framed by the perspectives of the researcher (Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007), I began this inquiry process through a philosophical analysis of my own assumptions about ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology and rhetoric (Creswell, 2003; Dezin & Lincoln, 2003a, 2003b). Agreeing with Guba (1990) that, “if inquiry is not value free, then is not all inquiry ideological,” (p. 11) and aware of the highly interpretive nature of this study, I chose a qualitative research design.

Many academics have described the nature of qualitative research. For instance, Dezin and Lincoln (2003b) note that qualitative research allows the researcher to “[approach] the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)” (p. 30). Qualitative research designs are very suitable for research that relies heavily on observing, analyzing and describing (Merriam, 1998), as this research did. The term qualitative research “is an umbrella term” (Merriam, p. 5) which covers many types of inquiry, allowing researchers to describe, understand and explain various social phenomena without disrupting the real life setting of said social phenomena (Dezin & Lincoln 2003b). Merriam (2009) takes this a step further noting that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experience, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5).

This study strives to gain rich insight and provide detailed descriptions of how women Directors of Education manage leadership pressures. A consequence of having so few women Directors of Education in Ontario public (English) school boards, is that a large sample group is not available, and never before in history has been available, for a
study pertaining to women Directors of Education in Ontario public (English) school boards. Therefore, it would be impossible to conduct a large-scale study resulting in broad conclusions based on sizeable numbers of women Directors of Education in Ontario public (English) school boards. More importantly, a primary goal of my research is to incorporate the feminist research principle of giving women voice (Butler, 2004; Walby, 2011). By using a qualitative methodology I am able to give a voice to women top-level leaders in the education system who have not yet had the opportunity to put their mark on academic research. Given these pragmatic considerations and this central feminist goal guiding this study, a qualitative research design is ideal for this study.

According to Flick (2014), qualitative research analysis has three aims: to describe or compare a phenomenon, such as the subjective experiences of a group of individuals; to determine and explain the circumstances under which such similarities and/or differences occur; and to develop a theory from the analysis of empirical data. In my study, I describe and compare the subjective experiences of women Directors of Education. Further, I strive to determine and explain similarities and differences in participants’ accounts of their experiences with pressure associated with leadership. I do not however, aim to develop a theory from my analysis, as the small number of participants, and the vast variations between their accounts, limits my ability to do so with any degree of confidence. Rather than develop a theory, my purpose in conducting this study is gaining understanding and “the understanding is an end in itself” (Patton, 1985, p. 1).

4.3.1. A Critical Feminist Lens

Although qualitative research is widely understood as an umbrella term (Merriam, 1998; 2009), many researchers have aimed to organize and classify different forms of qualitative research into various categories (Cresswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Tesch, 1990). Considerations in these classifications include the theoretical framework from which one approaches the study (Merriam, 2009). Since my participants are all women, and at the outset of this study I was most interested
in understanding how, if at all, Directors of Educations’ gender affected their experiences as a leader (specifically, if their gender resulted in pressures associated with social expectations of them as leaders); originally it behooved me to frame this study with a feminist paradigm. Feminism can be defined simply as “the belief that men and women are equal and should have equal respect and opportunities in all spheres of life---personal, social, work and public” (Wood, 2008, p. 324). A concept central to feminist epistemology, “is that of a situated knower, and hence of situated knowledge: knowledge that reflects the particular perspectives of the subject. Feminist philosophers are interested in how gender situates knowing subjects” (Anderson, 2011, ¶ 2). As a feminist, I wholly adopt feminist researchers’ understanding that gender plays an important role in helping to understand a person’s perspective, providing context to their experience (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Ironically, the one longstanding weakness of feminist theory is “what gives feminism its unique force” (Rhode, 1990, p. 622): the claim to be a voice on behalf of all women. There are several groups of women that experience more discrimination than others and therefore, one homogenous voice to represent a diverse group of women is inadequate. This weakness causes me to reject feminist theory alone as insufficient in framing this study and turn to critical theory to fill in the gaps.

“Since the creation of knowledge is the business of research, and since knowledge can be used as a tool of control” (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 41), it is important to reiterate that at no point in my review of literature did I come across a single study that discusses women Directors of Education in Ontario. Granted there are studies that discuss women superintendents (the equivalent of Directors in Ontario) in the United States, research looking at top level women leaders in Ontario does not exist. Critical reflection as to why women Directors of Education in Ontario had not yet been studied, led me to explore situating this study within a critical qualitative research paradigm. The goal of critical theory is to identify “prevailing structures and practices that create or uphold disadvantage, oppression, and to point the way toward alternatives that promote more egalitarian possibilities for individuals, groups, and societies” (Wood, 2008, p. 325). Societal control and power differentials are key concepts of critical theory’s foundation (Foucault, 1977). Critical qualitative research, therefore, not only explores a phenomenon but also seeks to understand power relationships and challenge the status
quro within that phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). In the critical analyses, “there is a
dominant group and a less-powerful group or groups, and they participate in . . . an
ongoing battle over whose voices, whose perspectives, and whose values gain a hearing
and cultural legitimacy” (Wood, 2008, p. 326). While critical theory acknowledges
gender as one potential category that may contribute to power differentials among
individuals, critical theory, at the same time, values other categories such as race, sexual
orientation and age to help contextualize a person’s experience. For these reasons, it is
important that the approach to my study includes a critical perspective.

In order to be classified as feminist research, gender and how gender affects a
person’s experience must be a central focus of the research (Shaw, 2004). Given how
central gender is to my study, it makes sense to include a feminist lens in approaching my
research. In order to be considered critical research, researchers go a step beyond seeking
to understand, by seeking to challenge taken for granted understandings (Merriam, 2009).
Given how important critical questioning is to the analysis of my study, it makes sense to
also include a critical lens in approaching my research. Critical feminist theory marries
these perspectives, combining the important tenets of both feminist theory and critical
theory. “Current critical theory utilizes discourses of equity, inclusion, and social justice
that are familiar and compatible with feminist agendas” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 6).
Critical feminist theory, therefore, offers a balanced perspective, superior to either
feminist theory or critical theory alone for the purpose of approaching my study.

A critical feminist lens is helpful in studying women in educational leadership for
several reasons. First, literature about women in leadership indicates formal
discrimination in the workplace is fairly uncommon. However, what is common in the
workplace is, “second generation gender bias, [the] powerful, yet often invisible barriers
to women’s advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as
workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favor men”
(Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011, p. 2). The critical feminist lens aims to expose informal bias
(as well as formal bias). Second, questioning the status quo is central in the critical
feminist analysis and will be central in my analysis, as schools are noted to be a place
where traditionally status quos are upheld (Shermon-Newcomb, 2014). Finally, based on
findings of Shermon-Newcomb (2014), gender can be central in studying educational leadership: “women participants were more comfortable imagining themselves in curriculum leadership roles [than in principal roles] because these roles did not conflict with “female-appropriate” roles [whereas the principal role does]” (p. 214). Combining feminist theory with critical theory, allows me to put gender at the center of my research, while allowing the existence of “ambiguous bodily individuals who so often both are and are not what we desire of them” (Nye, 1990, p. 51). Critical feminist theory frees my participants to hold different opinions, and give different voices to the experience of women Directors of Education in Ontario.

Critical feminist theory can be and has been criticized for various reasons. As with any feminist research, critics argue there are “risks of homogenizing an extraordinarily broad range of views” (Rhode, 1990, p. 617). While feminist researchers argue critical feminist research gives voice to a group historically denied that privilege, some critics argue there is a tendency of researchers in this paradigm to overstate the empowerment or “freeing effect” participants gain through their involvement (Hilferty, 2004). To these ends, I must emphasize my awareness that the perspectives of 12 women Directors of Education in Ontario English school boards and any trends observed within those perspectives, do not warrant generalizations to any other group of women Directors of Education or women leaders more broadly. Further, while women participating in my study may have felt grateful to be included in the study, to have their perspectives documented for the purpose of higher learning, in no way do I think these interviews had profound effects on the women involved. Rather my humble goal is that my research formally documents the experiences of, and provides some insight into, a group that has not been studied before, perhaps providing background information for future research. In terms of the way participants were left feeling after participation, my hope is that women felt heard and challenged to question their own taken-for-granted perspectives.

My research maintains a critical feminist orientation because, unlike positivist logic-driven researchers, critical feminist theorists believe that focusing too much on the logical content of the words stated misses the value of questioning who said something, and/or why a person may have said something (Hesse-Biber, 2012). While valuing
participant voice, using a critical feminist qualitative orientation allows me to go a step further, deconstructing participant accounts of their experiences, searching for deeper meaning. Understanding the way by which the interests of diverse women and the interests of the dominant group intersect and contradict, is of primary importance to critical feminist theorists (Shaw, 2004), and it is from this perspective that I approach this study. The details of the study are outlined below.

4.3.1. Case Study Format

In this study, I employ a case study approach. “A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009), allowing for complex and different experiences by individuals within the phenomenon being studied, while maintaining contextual boundaries or parameters within which that phenomenon is being studied. Rather than seeing case studies as a research method, Stake (2005) sees a case study as the unit of study or “a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 443). The boundaries of a case study should be purposefully selected because those unique boundaries provide some insight into the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2003). To that end, I chose the parameters of this case study very deliberately. Women Directors of Education in Ontario’s English school boards were chosen largely because of Ontario school board’s adoption of an Affirmative Action policy, *PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees*, in 1993, as imposed by the Ontario government. This implementation of an Employment Equity policy 23 years ago, makes the case of women Director of Educations’ experiences within Ontario’s English school boards potentially quite different from the experiences had by Directors of Education in other Canadian provinces, or in other countries, which did not adopt Employment Equity.

To decide whether to frame a study as a case, Merriam (2009) suggests researchers ask themselves, “would there be a limit to the number of people who could be interviewed” (p. 9) to assess the boundedness of the topic, noting that if there is no limit, the study does not qualify as a case. In my study, there are a finite number of women Directors of Education in Ontario’s English school board who are able to provide insight
into the phenomenon I am aiming to better understand. In fact, there are only 60 Directors of Education positions in Ontario’s English school board, 25 of which were filled by women at the time I conducted interviews (August 2015). Expanding on Jenkins and Kemmis’ (1983) words “an instance drawn from a class,” Merriam (2009) provides an example I found particularly poignant in helping me decide to frame this study as a case study. “If the researcher is interested in the process of changing the organizational culture of a workplace . . . he or she could select a particular instance of organizational change to study in depth” (Merriam, 2009, pp. 43 - 44). Since gender equity within top levels of leadership in organizations is the end towards which my research ultimately aims, studying the particular instance of the experiences of women Directors of Education in the Ontario English school board may prove demonstrative to other organizations aiming towards gender equity in top levels of leadership. The Ontario English school board, which implemented Employment Equity 23 years ago, today, is close to gender parity (41% women) at the top level of leadership in the organization. The perspectives of women, many of whom benefited from this Employment Equity movement decades ago, and arguably still benefit today the momentum provided by said movement, are valuable to others wondering the effect an Employment Equity approach to gender equity might have on their organization. My study will provide that insight, allowing for diversity in rich perspectives of the 12 participants, while maintaining a common context, “its “casing” to use Charles Ragin’s felicitous term” (as cited in Flyvbjerg, 2013, p. 169), in which these women lead.

There are five main misunderstandings about case studies that Flyvberg (2013) aims to clarify (for more see Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, chapter 5). Here I address one of these misunderstandings, clarifying that misunderstanding both generally and more specifically to this study. Though some may argue that case studies contain “bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions” (Flyvbjerg, 2013, p. 186), in this case - as more often is the reality in case studies (Flyvberg, 2013) - the opposite proved true. Falsification, that is, the researcher’s preconceived notions being disconfirmed, characterizes many case studies, as it did this one. By empowering participants with a voice, participants “talk back” (George & Bennet, 2005), often rejecting the researcher’s ideas and replacing them with their own
new ideas, forcing the researcher’s views to change and the outcome of the research to change. In many instances in my study, participants outright rejected (what prior to beginning the study were) my own taken-for-granted beliefs on a subject. Examples of falsification, as it occurred in this study, will be discussed in the findings chapters of this thesis. Next, I will address site selection and participant selection and their importance in setting up this case study.

4.3.1.1. Site Selection

Site selection is a crucial aspect of a case study (Yin, 2006). There are important considerations to make when deciding where your study will take place; most importantly the location selected should provide valuable insight into the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, it is crucial that the location site allows for access to the participants capable of offering rich insights into the phenomenon being studied. In some cases the site selection cannot be separated from the sample selection (Edmonson & Irby, 2008). In this study, the location – the Ontario (English) public school board - was very purposefully selected as it offers insight into the effects of the 1993 Employment Equity movement on the leadership experiences of those who arguably benefited from the movement, even decades later. It follows that the site selection in this case is intrinsically connected to the sample selection, as the perspectives of women top level leaders within this board cannot be separated from the fact that without this movement, they may not be in the professional positions they are today.

The Ontario school board consists of 31 English Public boards, 29 English Catholic boards, 4 French Public boards and 8 French Catholic boards (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014-15). Eliminating the French boards from this study was a practical decision as I am not bilingual and did not want to risk distorting study results due to language barriers. Gender ratios within top levels of leadership are close to parity within Ontario’s 60 English school boards. Twenty-five Directors of Education (41.6%) identify as women, while 35 Directors of Education (58.4%) identify as men. Putting these numbers in perspective historically is difficult, however, due to the fact that despite great
effort, minimal information about each board’s Director of Education and their gender is available prior to 2000. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) website only lists current Directors of Education and when I contacted the office of the Executive Director of Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), she replied, “Unfortunately after a check of our files, we are unable to provide this information to you” (Kathy Sanford, email January 26, 2016). This led me to embark on my own attempt to find this information (as I have described at the beginning of this chapter), which produced limited results (see Table C).

Table C. Gender History of Directors of Education in Ontario (English) Public School Boards

The Ontario Ministry of Education’s website only offers gender demographics among the vice-principal and principal leadership positions from the 1994/95 school year to today. In the 1994/95 school year – the first year after the inception of the PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees policy - women comprised 39% of
elementary vice-principal/principal roles, 27.6% of secondary vice-principal/principal roles, making women having comprised 36.3% of all vice-principal/principal roles in Ontario publicly funded school boards. By 1996, women held 60.4% of the vice principal positions and 42% of the principal positions in elementary public schools (Richter, 2007, p. 4). These numbers have continued to rise, even though this legislation was revoked in September of 2009 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Recall that in 2015/16, at the top leadership position within Ontario English school boards, 41.6% of Directors identify as women, while 58.4% Directors identify as men. Due to lack of data, the steady progress of Ontario school boards to get more women in leadership positions is not clearly documented here. However, by extrapolating from what statistics we do have, I believe it becomes clear that Ontario’s 1993 Affirmative Action movement has been a success within the English school boards, catalyzing and developing a momentum that assisted in women’s continued success up the organizational hierarchy, well beyond the position of principal. This thereby illustrates the suitability of Ontario English school boards in terms of providing valuable insight on this thesis’ topic of study.

Though it would make for an insightful read, due to practical concerns surrounding what is a realistic scope of a PhD thesis study, a comparative case study design using two sites (for example, comparing women Director of Education’s leadership experiences in Ontario, and women Director of Education’s leadership experiences in a different Canadian province which did not adopt Employment Equity) is not used. More importantly, while gender equity within top levels of leadership in organizations is the ultimate end towards which my research strives, I chose to prioritize depth over breadth in my research, probing beyond descriptions of women Director of Educations’ leadership experiences to strategies women Directors of Education use to manage pressures they experience within their leadership roles. Framing this study as a case in which Employment Equity was successfully implemented, projects the voices of my participants further, allowing them to contribute to a much broader conversation about gender equity. By not making this a comparative case study analysis, focusing on one site rather than two, the study was able to delve deeper into how women Directors of Education in Ontario English school boards managed certain pressures, providing insight
that will be useful to others striving towards top leadership positions in education. The details surrounding the participant selection are gone into below.

4.3.2.2. Participant Selection

Participants were deliberately selected based on their ability to provide insight into the phenomenon being studied. Namely, participants needed to identify as women, currently work as or have very recently retired from the Director of Education position in an Ontario English school board. The group from which to draw potential participants was small to begin with, limited to 25 individuals, of whom I aimed to interview 12-15. Thus, although not ideal, women Directors of Education who were brand new that year to the position were included in the invitation to participate and in the final sample. I individually contacted all of the 25 women Directors of Education in the Ontario English school boards, since response rate is never 100% (Merriam, 2009). To make contact for the purpose of securing participant involvement, I relied primarily on the use of personalized emails to either the Director or their assistant, including the invitation letter by way of email attachment (see appendix B). I made contact by telephone only after two emails to the same person were not responded to. Each school board’s website posts the Director of Educations’ (or their assistant’s) email address and/or phone number, facilitating my first contact. As there was a Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) meeting for all Ontario Directors of Education on August 20-21, 2015 in Toronto, I aimed to schedule my interviews during these two days at the convenience of Directors of Education, and made this clear in my emails (and phone calls) to each potential participant. Once a Director expressed interest in participating, I emailed them the consent form (see appendix C) and to request a specific date and time for their interview. Additionally, the interview questions (see appendix D) were provided to participants in advance to allow time for them to reflect and think of specific examples to include in their interviews.
After approximately two weeks, I had heard back from 13 willing participants though not all were available during the time of the conference. After multiple reciprocal emails in which one willing participant sought additional information about confidentiality, anonymity, potential future publications etc., and I responded to each concern to the best of my ability, this person decided not to participate. This woman explained that though she would have liked to participate and saw value in the study, she felt the job was too political and there was too much risk involved in participating.

Of the 12 participants who completed the interview in person or over the telephone, 5 had spent their careers in an Ontario English Catholic school board, while 7 had spent their careers in an Ontario English public school board. Participants ranged in age from their mid forties to late sixties (45 to 67) (or as one participant indicated 60+), with their average age being 57.8 at the time of the interview. The average length of time participants had served as Director was 6.04 years. Almost all participants had begun their career in education (all but 1) and followed a very predictable path up the hierarchy, though the length of time each participant spent in each role differed rather significantly. All Directors had begun their careers in education as classroom teachers. Participants reported having served from 6 years to 20 years as a classroom teacher before moving on to any formal leadership role (an average of 11.4 years). Of the 12 participants, 4 never held the vice principal position, usually because the school they were in was too small to have a vice principal. Therefore participants’ average time in the vice principal position is less meaningful to consider (1.6 years), making it more valuable to look at the range of time they served: between 0 and 6 years. All participants but one served as principal, averaging 4.9 years, with a broad range of 0 years to 11.5 years before moving on to system level leadership. After leaving school level leadership, participants’ career paths show diversity, often dependent on the structure and size of their school board. The length of time and the nature of work experiences in between participants’ school level leadership and the Directorship, included a combination of a variety of positions within the board office (assistant superintendent, superintendent, Associate/Deputy Director), the Ministry of Education, and Principals’ Councils. One participant was single and the rest were married (none of the participants indicated it was their second marriage); all but
1 had between 1 and 6 children and/or step-children, ranging in age from 8 to 41 years old. Four had grandchildren.

4.4. Data Collection

All data yielded in this study came from semi-structured interviews that took place between August 2015 and February 2016. As I aimed to complete multiple interviews during the CODE conference, there were some conflicts in regards to scheduling with more than one participant wanting the same appointment. Thanks to my own flexibility and the flexibility of some participants, these scheduling conflicts were worked out, allowing every willing participant a time to take part in the study. Of the 13 original willing participants, 1 dropped out of the study prior to participating, after a lengthy email exchange in which she sought more information. This particular Director indicated she felt despite anonymity, participating was too risky to her career, given the highly political nature of the job. During the two days the CODE conference ran in Toronto, I was able to complete seven interviews face-to-face. Most of these interviews were conducted in my professor’s office at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) behind closed doors, though one participant requested meeting at a nearby restaurant and I abided by her request. The five remaining interviews took place between the months of September 2015 and February 2016 by telephone. Though I aimed to conduct interviews face-to-face, due to practical limitations I eventually was forced to conduct interviews by telephone. In this way, scheduling and completing interviews became much easier for participants. Details pertaining to data collection method are discussed below.

4.4.1. Interviews

Because my goal is to gain rich insight and detailed descriptions/examples of how women Directors of Education managed their leadership identities in spite of pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders, I used semi-structured
interviews, comprised mostly of open-ended questions as the primary research tool. Using interviews accomplishes one of the goals of feminist research, to give women a voice (Butler, 2004; Walby, 2011); using semi-structured interviews goes a step further empowering women Directors of Education to share ownership over the direction the research takes. Agreeing with Merriam’s view that “[the interview] is probably … the most powerful qualitative research technique” (Sharan Merriam, interview, April 3, 2007, as cited in Roulston, 2014), I chose semi-structured interviews specifically for the flexibility the format provides both the participant and myself as researcher. “The order of the interview may be controlled while still giving space for spontaneity, and the interviewer can press not only for complete answers but also for responses about complex and deep issues” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 349) such as gender in the workplace. As the literature reveals three pressures women experience that are quite personal in nature (pressures associated with social expectations of women as communal; pressures associated with social expectations of women as caregivers; as well as the pressures associated with social expectations of women as objects of beauty), the semi-structured interview format allowed me to gently prod in regards to these potential pressures during follow up questions, rather than making these questions part of the interview protocol. I chose to individually interview participants, to free participants of any reservations they may have had about sharing pressures they have experienced in the workplace in front of their colleagues. I also hoped that one-on-one interviews in a private location of the participants’ choice would ascertain more personal, in-depth and if necessary, vulnerable responses, that I knew an interview that took place in a public and/or group setting would not. Though I relied on an interview protocol (see Appendix D), I approached each interview as though it was a conversation in effort to reduce formality and build rapport. As a trend, telephone interviews were more revealing and personal than face-to-face interviews. For example, more details were shared related to physical appearance and the way it affected their leadership experience.

Some interview questions are anchored in the literature, though many interview questions are included with the goal of exploring new information not yet identified in the literature. For example, some questions are grounded in literature that outlines various pressures women leaders experience, which men do not experience to the same extent
(e.g., Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, because you’re a woman?). Other questions are largely exploratory in nature (e.g., What advice might you give another woman striving towards a top educational leadership position?). The order of the interview questions was rearranged in some instances, to allow for a free-flowing conversation. If I detected that a participant was closed to discussing a certain topic (e.g., whether they experienced any pressures because they were a woman), I did not press the issue and in a few cases did not ask some questions on the interview protocol if I felt the participant had already addressed the issue. Because of sensitive and personal nature of some of the questions, gauging the openness of a participant to the topic within the first few minutes of the interview proved important in deciding whether to probe further on a given question or to move on. Only a few participants were closed to the research topic, but these participants made it very clear to me from the moment the interviews began.

It is worthwhile to bring up participant response bias. Sometimes the very “casing” or boundaries that characterize a study can work against the research purpose by triggering participant response bias, as I suspect it may have in this study. As participants became aware that I was only interviewing women Directors of Education from Ontario, and that gender was a focal point in the study, some participants outright rejected the very notion that gender in any way affected their experiences as a Director. For example, one participant indicated that after discussing my research questions with her colleagues at the CODE conference earlier that day, “many directors were offended at your suggestion that a woman leader would do anything differently than a leader who is a man.” Needless to say, this comment took me by surprise. I did my best to diffuse the situation by explaining that I was actually interested in Ontario women Directors because of the Employment Equity movement 23 years ago and my own curiosity as to whether that movement eventually changed the workplace culture, resulting in a much more gender neutral environment in Ontario English school boards. Though this participant indicated the Employment Equity movement did not help her in any way, she was more open to the discussion after this. By the end of the interview – though she did not discuss gender much at all – I did feel as though we had built rapport and had established a mutual respect for one another. Though it is important to accept a participant’s response at face
value, it is also worthwhile to consider the possibility that subconsciously her responses may have been motivated by response bias in the form of social desirability (a participant’s tendency to deny any undesirable traits and to adopt traits that are more socially desirable). Might some woman Directors have felt they needed to protect the reputation of the school board they were now in charge of by portraying it as an unbiased organization?

Interviews lasted between 35 minutes and 1 hour, 30 minutes. Though face-to-face interviews were preferred in order to gain trust and increase the participant’s level of comfort, I did not find that face-to-face interviews yielded more personal responses than interviews over the phone. Participants varied greatly in the amount of personal information they chose to share; I found that phone interviews were more likely to increase a participants’ candor.

With the participants' permission, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim into a word document. Three participants who requested to see and approve the transcript were emailed the document once the transcriptions were complete. After reading her transcript, one participant wanted to back out of the study or edit her entire interview. After ensuring this participant that: A) participants would not be assigned a pseudonym for the purpose of the thesis, but rather all participants would be referred to as “participant” throughout the thesis, therefore no participant would be able to be connected to all of their quotations which were used in the thesis; B) she could review all the quotes that were to be included in the thesis and revise them if she saw necessary; and C) that her original interview and all documents associated with her participant would be destroyed after I successfully defended my thesis; this participant agreed to remain part of the study. For this reason, throughout the findings all participants are referred to anonymously and confidentially as “participant.” Next, I will discuss ethical considerations pertaining to this thesis.
4.5. Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that ethical integrity was maintained during this research, prior to beginning interviews I was required to submit my ethics proposal to the University of Toronto’s Ethic’s Board for their approval. After one round of revisions, my ethics proposal was approved on July 30, 2015 (see Appendix E). Important ethical considerations pertaining to my study are outlined below.

It is important for the researcher to acknowledge their relationship (proximity to, and perspectives of) with the location chosen in which to conduct the study (Edmonson & Irby, 2008). To this end, it is important to disclose that I am an employee of one of the Ontario (English) public school boards. My experience as an employee in Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) contributed to my decision to focus on this research topic. However, so did many other experiences I have had. Two experiences in particular, namely completing a reading course based on Professor Alice Eagly’s (Northwestern University) Gender and Leadership graduate course and interning at Harvard Business School helping to design an Masters of Business Administration (MBA) course for women leaders, motivated this study. These experiences contrasted my experience in TVDSB in such a stark way that I thought the world of business might have something to learn from the world of education – a belief which ultimately catalyzed this study. From this reading course and from my time at Harvard, I realized that the issues facing women striving towards leadership in business, from my perspective, largely did not exist within Ontario (English) public school boards. Of the four secondary schools in which I have taught, 3 out of 4 of my principals were women; 2 of those women have since been promoted into the superintendent position; and my school board currently has a woman Director of Education. Based on my own experience up until the time of this study, leadership seemed to well within my grasp and I was intrigued, given how problematic issues of gender equity in leadership are outside of public education, to better understand how Ontario’s (English) public school board created a situation close to gender parity. Though an employee of TVDSB at the time I conducted this research and still today, I made effort to remove any conflict of interest by not approaching the Director of
Education for TVDSB requesting her participation in the study. I made clear in the ethics application that this would be the case.

At the beginning of my research, 13 women volunteered to participate. However, as is standard in all ethical research, participants were informed from the beginning that they could withdraw at any point in the study without penalty. One woman exercised that right. From the remaining 12, I attained informed consent for their participation in addition to consent to be recorded, prior to the start of their interview (see Appendix C). In the letter of invitation and in the letter of consent I assured participants that their identities would remain anonymous in my thesis and in any subsequent publications. I reassured participants again prior to the beginning the interviews and at each interview’s conclusion. Further, participants were given the option to review their transcribed interviews and make any changes they felt necessary. Additionally, after their participation, I reminded participants that they could withdraw from the study, without consequence, penalty or judgment at any point if they no longer felt comfortable having their personal experiences shared in this thesis.

During the interviews, I made every effort to ensure participants were comfortable, including allowing them to select the interview location and offering the freedom stop if they needed a moment to collect themselves. Participants had the option to not answer any questions they did not want to answer. Though participants were sharing personal and at times vulnerable information with me, the benefits of having participated (empowerment through their voice; feeling of worthiness to be included in the educational administration academic literature for the first time etc.) far outweighed the small degree of risk involved in participating (potential feelings of discomfort/anxiety due to sharing personal information). To maximize positive feelings from having participated in the study, I offered participants the opportunity to see a summary of the results; 8 participants requested this summary.

Honouring my promise to protect participant confidentiality was of upmost importance to me in this study. I stored interview audio files for travel from interview locations to my personal office on a Scan Disk Cruzer encrypted memory stick. Audio
files were transferred from the memory stick to a password-protected personal computer on a secured network. I ensured full confidentiality during transcription by fully removing (or substituting with artificial identifiers) identifying information including the participant’s name, their school board and any additional information that could connect the interview content to the participant. To further ensure confidentiality, I assigned each participant a code case number and numbered all documents and data using this code, including audio files and transcripts. Next, I encrypted interview transcripts and audio-recordings into one file, saving it my Scan Disk Cruzer encrypted memory stick and locking it along with hard copies of consent forms in a secure cabinet in my home office. I am the only person with access to any raw data. I will delete all electronic data and shred any hard copies of data after five years.

4.6. Data Analysis

Following the advice of Merriam (2009) I began analysis early; first, as interviews took place, then as I transcribed interviews. “Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (Merriam, 2009, p.171). In both phases of preliminary analysis, I wrote down themes that surprised me, or that seemed to be dominating individual interviews or the study overall. For example, one theme that stood out immediately was the number of participants who definitively stated “no” to question five (Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, because you’re a woman?). A second trend that I noticed while conducting interviews was the vast disparity among participants’ descriptions of their individual experiences. What stood out to me in the preliminary analysis is not what would stand out to anyone else necessarily (Guba, 1990), therefore what was noticed immediately was not necessarily what would be confirmed after repeated and thorough data analysis. However, it must be noted that my preliminary findings largely contradicted my own expectations, thereby creating a trend towards researcher falsification rather than bias towards researcher verification (Flyvberg, 2013; George & Bennet, 2005). As such, I was fairly confident I was following Glaser and Straus’ (1967) inductive, constant comparative, grounded theory of analysis as I had set out to do.
Upon beginning my formal analysis, my Step One was to code the data into separate word documents by interview question, resulting in nine documents, one for each interview question. Thus the categories for the first step of coding came directly from the interview questions, which stemmed from the research questions, stemming ultimately from the literature review. Coding is “nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 173). Each interview question either provided important background information for the study or directly answered a research question/sub-question, making every question as important as the next to code. I began coding by reading and rereading each transcript as its own document. Each interview was flexible, taking on the structure of a conversation rather than the structure of a formal question and answer interview. Therefore, data for one question (code) might have been located at the beginning, middle and/or end of a transcript. I began with question one, reading each transcript separately and entirely, scanning for associated data, using the “search” function in word as needed. I completed this process for interviews 1-12, repeating this process for questions 2-9. Rather than using Nvivo, I opted to use a series of Microsoft Word files and documents. By the time I got through step one of coding during the formal data analysis, I was very familiar with each transcript and when I needed assistance, I found the “search” function in word as useful as Nvivo’s coding functions. For interview questions one through three, as well as interview question nine, I did not subcategorize the data any further, as questions one through three [Question one: What social expectations do you think have about leaders? (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?); Question two: What social expectations do you think others have about women? (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?); and Question three: What social expectations do you think you have about women leaders (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?)] were used to “warm” participants to the research topic and get them thinking generally about expectations various groups may have on them; and question nine [What advice might you give another woman striving towards a top educational leadership position?] was used to close the interview.
Once Step One was complete and data was coded according to interview question, I began Step Two (creating categories based on themes revealed in each interview question document) and Step Three (creating sub-categories within each theme based on more sub-themes revealed within each theme), which were completed one after the other for each question, by reading and re-reading each new document coded by interview question. Being a visual learner, I used pen and paper to first outline, and then re-outline key themes in each file. Once I was satisfied with the new categories (codes) created under each interview question, I created the new word file organized by sub-categories. Below, I describe more specifically, how I subcategorized research questions.

As I categorized data for question four (Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, based on other people’s expectations of you? (Prompts: Can you give me a specific example?)), I found it useful to sub-categorize participants’ responses into a yes/no chart (Step Two). From there, I further categorized the yes side of the chart based on the groups that were most likely to be sources of pressure as reported by participants (Step Three). Those included: Board of trustees; Board staff (system staff and school staff); The public; and for Catholic Director’s, Church clergy.

To subcategorize participants’ responses to question five (Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, because you’re a woman? (Prompts: Can you give me a specific example?)), I used a yes/no chart (Step Two). From there, I further categorized the no side of the chart (Step Three) into Denial, Silenced voices and The power of gender microaggressions.

As I categorized data associated with question six, (How have you managed these pressures? What strategies have you used?), I took memos outlining potential themes that were emerging. From there I sub-categorized data into three additional word documents (Step Two), based on three potential themes for strategies used by participants: Strategies for personal success; Strategies for working well with others; and Strategies for balancing home and work. Within each new document (sub-category), I created a chart with the summary of the strategy on the left and the actual content of the interview
supporting that strategy on the right. It was clear as I completed the analysis that there was a diversity of strategies even within each sub-category, emphasizing the importance that this research is by no means generalizable. I further categorized (Step Three) Strategies for personal success into Self-awareness, Self-care and Self-protection; Strategies for working well with others into Managing relationships; Managing conflict with others/making difficult decisions; and Managing one’s leadership image; and Strategies for balancing home and work into Supportive partner, Strategies for managing housework and Parenting strategies.

Question seven (What hindered/prevented (formal and/or informal) you in managing these pressures? (Prompts: Prohibitive policies/procedures? Unsupportive Spouse? Unsupportive bosses?)) was sub-categorized into a formal/informal chart, as was question eight (What supports (formal and/or informal) helped you in managing these pressures? (Prompts: Books/courses/professional development? Supportive spouse? Mentor? Policies? The 1993 Affirmative Action Policy?)) (Step Two). As I sub-categorized question eight, I realized that I had a great deal of content on Affirmative Action and therefore made a new document specifically containing said pertinent data. For the Affirmative Action document created, I further categorized participants’ responses into no effect, possible indirect effect and direct effect (Step Three).

4.7. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I first described the process used to answer the preliminary research question, What percentage of the Director of Education positions in Ontario’s 60 (English) publicly funded school boards have women filled since 1993? Several steps were followed in attempt to complete this table to include every Director’s name and gender, for every one of Ontario’s 60 (English) publicly funded school boards, since 1900/1991 (Table C). Next I outlined and justified the research design selected for this study by describing in detail the choice to use a qualitative research design, specifically relying on the data yielded from 12 semi-structured interviews. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews align with feminist principles, empowering participants to help
guide the interview direction to include areas of importance to them. Additionally, I outlined the context of the study including a description of the location and the participants, as well as provided the rationale for those decisions. In this study, the location – the Ontario (English) public school board - was very purposefully selected as it offers insight into the effects of the 1993 Employment Equity movement on the leadership experiences of those who arguably benefited from the movement, even decades later. The site selection in this case is intrinsically connected to the sample selection, as the perspectives of women top level leaders within this board cannot be separated from the fact that without this movement, they may not be in the professional positions they are today. Next, I described the methods of data collection. Data collection included recording interviews verbatim and transcribing them into word documents to be cross analyzed with other interviews. This chapter concluded with an explanation of important ethical considerations that were made including the disclosure that I am an employee of an Ontario (English) public school board (the site which this study took place). The final step of the data analysis resulted in the findings as organized and presented in the three chapters that follow.
Chapter Five: Denial, Silenced Voices and the Power of Gender Microaggressions

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to learn how women Directors of Education in Ontario manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. Because gender was a primary focus of this study, I have chosen to begin the findings chapters by sharing how participants reacted to the topic of gender and leadership. Gaining insight into participants’ understandings of gender and the role their gender plays in their leadership identity will provide context for the remaining two findings chapters which delve more directly into answering the research question(s). In this chapter, I explore the unique reaction of each participant to being asked whether they ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways because they are woman. Reactions of participants varied greatly. The next chapter, Chapter Six, explores in detail specific strategies women Directors of Education use to manage the pressures of leadership. Largely these strategies were reported as important in ensuring women Director of Educations’ professional success. Chapter Seven explores hindrances, supports and Affirmative Action in terms of, what they were and the way in which each affected women Director of Educations’ professional success.

I begin this chapter by exploring Denial; examples in which women denied ever being treated differently based on their gender. In some cases participants answered that they had never felt pressure to behave in certain ways based on their gender, but later contradicted that answer by giving an example of a situation that clearly demonstrated pressure was there to behave in certain ways based on her gender. Next, I explore Silenced voices; situations in which participants did not speak up against sexism or other forms of biased treatment – most likely to protect their professional success. Finally, I explore The power of gender microaggressions in this case study. In instances that do not reveal the identity of the participant, I will use vignettes to insight greater context to each situation.
5.2. Denial

Recalling Crosby’s (1984) early finding that “if you are a woman, you are probably at a disadvantage because of your gender, but you are not very likely to acknowledge the fact. The chances are that you deny your own victimization” (p. 371), it is not surprising that half the participants denied victimization that they later shared in their interviews had in fact occurred. For example, one participant replied when asked if she ever felt pressure to behave in a certain way because she was a woman, “I would say no to that but I have noticed as a woman I have probably struggled as a woman if I really reflect on that. I have struggled in the directorship”. To clarify, this participant said no one ever pressured her to behave in a certain way because she was a woman, but that she believed she had struggled as a woman in the directorship. Thus, this participant accepted that she struggled in the leadership position but denied that anyone else contributed in any way to her struggle. Later during the interview, this participant described a circumstance that can be interpreted as others putting pressure on her because she is a woman.

When I became Director it just so happened two men retired. I became Director, someone else came on board so the team was made up of six people, all women. That just happened, it just happened. And a very prominent leader in our community actually got a hold of me and said, “you better be careful because you’ve got an all women team and you know what people will say.” And I said “no, what will people say?” And she said to me, “you know they will say anything you screw up, a man could have done better.” And honestly [researcher] that was in 2013 or 2012 and I think, really? So that stayed with me. I’ll never forget that conversation because it was so foreign and I said that earlier. It was so foreign to me in my thinking. It never occurred to me. The team was the team. Now funny enough what happened was in a very short period of time the Ministry reached in and took one of my superintendents to second them and I had to get a replacement and it ended up being a male. It ended up being a male because he was the best candidate, for no other reason. And after that I had several people say, its good that you’ve got a male on the team. You know what? I’m the Director, he’s the superintendent so I don’t know what you think about being a male on [my team]. I’m the leader. That’s so interesting.

This participant was clearly upset reflecting about an incident during which a prominent leader in her community warned her about having an all female team. When she had selected a male to join the team “because he was the best candidate, for no other reason,”
several people said to her that it was good that she had a male on the team. These comments seemed to threaten the participant, bringing out a form of elitism or superiority — “I’m the leader” -- not yet seen in this participant’s interview. Despite the fact this participant was visibly angry during her description of this event, she still denied that she was ever treated differently because she was female.

Another Director responded, “I’ve been asked that so many times . . . and I’m going to tell you I don’t think so. I don’t think anything that’s happened to me has happened because I’m a woman”, when asked if she ever felt pressure to behave in a certain way because she was a woman. Despite acknowledging in that statement itself that people often asked her to describe the discrimination she has been subject to because she is a woman, this participant is still confident that “nothing that’s happened to [her] has happened because [she’s] a woman.” Later when speaking about a committee she sat on, she described the following situation:

There was a sense of pressure to be tough because so many of the men were quick decision makers, were very ‘let’s do it’ and ‘let’s stick it to them.’ And as a moderate, I often felt that some of them, although certainly not all, probably thought I was soft because I was a woman. I believe I was moderate because I am a careful and thoughtful person, but I think that some of the males likely attributed my decision-making style to my gender. And probably I was conscious of that when I would speak, and make decisions, and advise.

This participant described a situation in which she was very aware that her decision-making style differed from the males’ decision-making styles. Her decision making style was “moderate” whereas the males’ were “let’s do it” and “let’s stick it to them.” This participant denied that she experienced pressure based on expectations of her but was well aware that she was self-conscious about her moderate, careful and thoughtful leadership style because she believed men may have judged her as being “soft because [she is] a woman”.

Another participant adamantly denied that she had ever felt pressure to behave in a certain way because she was a woman, replying “NO! No. Not once, I’ve been in education for [x] years. Never! Or if anything was ever said or done – I missed it. NO,” when asked. Prior to this point in the interview, in answer to the question “what social
expectations do you think others have about women leaders, and this can be in education or in general,” she had denied any difference.

I don’t know about that. And I didn’t know about that. And I did ask around, nobody seemed to know. People didn’t seem to think there ought to be social expectations about that women leaders were any different than men leaders. I asked. People thought leaders are leaders, they have to be competent and there was some feeling – because I did ask a bunch of women directors about this question because I didn’t have an answer. They thought that the question was a bit insulting and disrespectful, so I don’t know if anybody has said this to you, but you might hear that in other people that it sounds as if there’s a bit of bias in these questions that look more like 1970, than 2015. In the field of education, which is female dominated, versus industry or business or general motors, that’s what people thought, that some of your research might suggest, expectations of women leaders that differ from men leaders because the industry is different. That’s what people thought. Our industry is such that because it is so female dominated, that people just expect the leader is the leader. There may have been a time where people may have thought, the leader is a woman, therefore she will be kinder and nicer and gentler and will deal for a longer time with incompetent behavior. There was also a time, and you will know if you read the literature, where people did not want to work for women because they thought they were tougher and meaner and they didn’t help people and the queen bitch I believe was a phrase in the 70’s or 80s that people did not want to have a woman boss because a woman boss must have clawed their way to the top and therefore will have no time or patience with anyone else. I think people don’t have those thoughts anymore. There was one continuum and the other, one might have been 1960 and one might have been 1980 and probably now the job is the job – in education as a CEO and you are either competent or you’re fired. And the terminations of women directors in the past ten years are about in the same proportion to men directors – they’ve both been fired.

This participant had spoken to her fellow Directors earlier on the day of her interview at a conference they had been attending. She noted that other Directors did not think there should be different social expectations for women leaders than there were for men leaders. She further indicated that both male and female Directors found the interview question “insulting and disrespectful.” This participant went on to discuss the history of women in leadership in education. She noted that at certain points in history working for a woman was preferred because women leaders were thought to be softer, and that at other points in history working for a woman was not preferred because she was thought to have “clawed her way to the top” and therefore would not be willing to help others.
This participant concluded however that at this point in history, “the job is the job” and men and women alike are either competent or get fired from the job of Director.

Beyond denying any difference in expectations of women leaders and men leaders, this particular participant had indicated the question was insulting not just to her, but to her Director peers whom she had spoken to about my research topic. Sensing a very defensive reaction to my research study, at this point in the interview I felt the need to move the discussion away from gender, shifting gears slightly to build trust and rapport with the participant. Upon reflection, I recognize that I was silenced in this interview. I moved away from questions that focused strictly on gender and focused more intently on leadership strategies. Later in the interview, after building some rapport, I asked about Affirmative Action potentially having an effect on this participant’s career. Her response was again adamantly no. Interestingly, at the end of the interview, I explained my motivations for completing this study to this participant. During this time, the participant indicated that she did recognize that other women may have felt pressures because of their gender and that some women may have benefited from Affirmative Action. Thus, once her defensive reaction to the notion that women leaders might have slightly different experiences than men leaders had eroded away, this participant was able to acknowledge that women may experience different pressures than men – even in education.

This section has articulated instances in which women Directors of Education denied having ever been treated differently because of their gender, yet later described experiences in which gender discrimination had occurred to them. The next section, Silenced voices, explores situations disclosed during interviews by Directors of Education, in which participants would have liked to speak up, but for various reasons, the participants were silenced.

5.3. Silenced voices

Given the power dynamics often in play when attempting to attain professional success, it is not particularly surprising that several participants mentioned situations in
which they had felt discriminated against, understood the importance of speaking out against that discrimination as a woman leader, yet decided it would be damaging to do so and instead remained silent.

One participant acknowledged several situations in which she felt she had been discriminated against, at least partially due to her gender. For example, this participant described a situation in which a person with the local news commented about her wearing the same colour of clothing too often. This participant took offense, acknowledging the double standard she felt she was held to as a woman.

I think that the reporter said it, not directly to me. I remember coming back to the executive council and saying “you know do you ever turn around to so and so and say a comment on [that man’s] tie or the shape of it but yet we have the liberty of commenting on a woman’s sweater or jacket or this or that”

This participant also noted hearing comments about blonde women, in which the implication was that women with blonde hair are less intelligent. Additionally, she resented being looked at up and down, as it made her feel judged. This participant understood that these forms of discrimination were very subtle but also noted that did not make them any less damaging. This participant connected the pressure women leaders have to look a certain way to the pressure young girls in Ontario schools have to look a certain way. This participant thought it very important that, as a woman leader, she stand up against these pressures to help improve the situation for girls in the future. This participant brought up other more serious forms of discrimination. In particular, she described feeling that her gender, combined with several other of her personal attributes, made others expect her to be soft, passive, “more reserved, less aggressive . . . more compliant . . . So when a decision is made – Can you believe that she said that? Because I break the mold of what they expect of me.” When I asked whether she had ever spoken up against she more serious forms of discrimination, she replied, “I’ve done it a couple of times and it’s gotten me in some hot water.” This participant went on to explain,

The role is a very political role - at every level. The Director role you have to understand the small p and greater p politics and I think that there’s an expectation that if you seek [the Director role] that you tolerate it . . . I was told - to challenge
the status quo of how you may treat people in the system or treat women in the system.

This participant described the very political nature of the role of Director, having been warned “go down that route and you’ll live to regret it” with regards to this participant’s desire to speak up against what she felt was discrimination in the school board. This participant additionally stated that she believed it was an expectation of the role of Director to tolerate discrimination and keep your mouth shut. Although this participant acknowledged that she had wanted to speak out against the more serious forms of discrimination related to the way certain she and other women in her school board were treated, she was advised against it, and heeded that advice.

Another participant noted that a woman’s physical appearance could affect her professional success, something that she did not see true in an equal capacity for men.

There is no question that for a younger woman moving forward in leadership there was an element of sexuality to the whole thing. And that I was viewed to be a fairly attractive woman seemed to make it easier. There were certain leaders I would be interviewed by, or even just talking with, who I could tell might not really be listening to what I was saying. That’s an awful thing to say. But I think there’s an element of truth to it - that a physically attractive woman has an easier time than one who might not be so viewed. As an older woman, as a Director in my 50’s, it didn’t really make a difference. That was more as a young woman moving from a teacher to a VP to a Principal. It was easier to be an attractive woman moving forward.

This participant was the first to discuss physical appearance in relation to success as a leader in education. When I asked this participant for an example, she described,

Following a regular face-to-face interview with a school hiring team, the Principal, who was popular and experienced, offered me a part-time teaching job by telephone. I was coming back from maternity leave and I was looking to fill a minor percentage of my entitlement. Before he offered me the job he told me, at some length, how great I looked at the interview, even commenting on how nice I looked in my suit. Now is that disgusting or is that disgusting?

When I asked this participant if ever she had expressed her discomfort with his remark, she indicated that she had not. She explained what she did do.
Following his comment, I believe I actually said “thank you,” perhaps merely as ‘social punctuation.’ I did not take the job, but not because of the Principal or his comment. I simply accepted a better job offer. I did not follow-up in any way regarding the comment. I just moved on and sought out challenging and growth-oriented jobs, and positive, inclusive leadership models, which were plentiful in both genders. Although obviously inappropriate in the circumstances by today’s standards, keep in mind this occurred in the late 80’s. Relatively speaking, that comment, though uncomfortable enough for me to have remembered it decades later, was fairly mild for the era.

She finished this story with an aside worthy of inclusion.

As an interesting aside, a few years later, a female teaching colleague on this same Principal’s staff, told me that she had been overtly harassed over time by this Principal to the point where she wrote a detailed letter to the Board describing his actions. She did not mail the letter (which she showed to me) but gave it to the Principal directly, and told him that she would send it to the Superintendent and Director if his behaviour recurred in any way at all. He apparently reacted with surprise that she thought she was being harassed, but at least for her, all harassment events stopped. She told me she did not want to make a fuss, as she knew his wife who was also a teacher. She did not want to transfer to another school as it was a great environment (other than the Principal’s actions) and because it was close to her home. She told me she refused to be driven out and was content to handle it her own way.

This participant’s story captures a glimpse of sexual harassment that at one time was tolerated in public education. Power relations between the victim, a woman applying for a job, and the perpetrator, a man in a position of authority, in control of who gets the job, likely played a role in the participant’s decision not to say anything about his comments “though [those comments were] uncomfortable enough for [her] to have remembered [them] decades later.” The participant’s aside describing another woman’s actions to stop this man’s behavior demonstrates the risk that was required to be taken by victims of sexual assault in order to stop this behavior. Both stories told together highlight how far we have come in terms of fair treatment of women.

Another potential participant opted to not partake before the study even began. After volunteering to participate, booking an interview time, asking clarifying questions pertaining to anonymity and receiving answers, the potential participant noted, “I have to admit, I have some reservations as the role is much more complex than people imagine.” When I reached out to confirm the appointment for our interview, she withdrew from the
study noting, “I have thought about the study and do not feel that I can participate though I would very much like to.” Unfortunately, reasoning for this original participant’s withdrawal was not given.

This section has articulated instances in which women Directors of Education were silenced. In all three examples, the women indicated a desire to speak but did not. The next section will detail examples of gender microaggressions that women Directors of Education brought to light during interviews.

5.4. The power of gender microaggressions

Gender microaggressions are defined as “intentional or unintentional actions or behaviors that exclude, demean, insult, oppress, or otherwise express hostility or indifference toward women (Basford, Offermann & Behrend, 2014, p. 341).” Gender microaggressions exist because of gender macroaggression or gender discrimination (Basrod, Offermann & Behrend, 2014), which is far less common in the workplace today than 30 years ago (Basrod, Offermann & Behrend, 2014; Eagly and Carli, 2007). In the stories of women Directors of Education, gender microaggressions were often what preluded denial or silenced voices. For example, being complimented for looking nice by a male principal is an example of a gender microaggression, as it demeans the participant to being valued for her appearance, rather than her professional competence. Arguably the male principal would likely not have complimented a male job candidate on his appearance. In this section, I describe and deconstruct 3 examples of gender microaggressions. These three examples serve to represent the multiple instances that were described through participants’ interviews.

One participant who had adamantly denied any sort of different treatment by others due to her gender, described the following story.

I was in a staff room of an elementary school. And the principal – nice man – got off on this conversation. Had I ever felt discrimination based on gender? And I said “no” and he said “are you sure?” and I said “no, I haven’t” and he said a strange
thing, he said “well”… and I’ve never let him forget it … he said, “Well I sort of understand that. You’re not really a woman.” And I didn’t quite know what he meant. I burst out laughing. I think he meant, [I did] not behave in stereotypical female ways. I never did wear pants, I always did wear dresses and high heels . . . so I presented as a woman, kind of almost – not quite girly girl – but close to it - but professional. I looked the same then as I look today.

This participant recognized the male principal was confused somewhat by her behavior and spent some time reflecting on what he had meant by his comment. She reflected on her clothing choices and decided those fit the feminine category. This participant came to the conclusion his statement meant that her behavior was not stereotypical female behavior for the time - yet she denied this comment ever having affected her behavior in any way. This participant’s denial highlights how easy it can be for victims to brush off individual instances of microaggressions. This comment insulted the participant by suggesting that her status as leader took away her status as a woman, as though woman and leader are incongruent identity categories. Beyond insulting the participant, implying she was not womanly because she was a competent leader (whether the participant admitted this was an insult or not), this principal more generally insulted women by implying that woman and leader are incongruent categories.

Another participant described a situation in which she was promoted and two male employees were hired to fill her former position. Each male was paid more than the participant had been paid working alone in that position, despite the fact the job requirements had not changed, but had merely been divided. The fact that the position and its responsibilities were not examined and assessed in terms of how many employees it would take to effectively complete the job and what a fair compensation package for that position would look like - until after the participant left the job - demonstrates an indifference towards the participant who had formerly filled that position. More broadly, a subtle message was sent in this situation that men are more valuable to an organization than women, despite how hard a woman works and what she is able to contribute and accomplish through that work.
Finally, another participant described her disappointment in learning that upon her appointment as Director, some of her colleagues made comments that insinuated that she had slept her way to the top. She described,

There were a couple of comments that [were said], like how did you move so quickly? But they were insinuating something very nasty and that really deeply hurt. Instead of thinking about working hard and doing my best, taking opportunities instead of - we all make our choice in life - I was taking the course and I applied and took the challenge to do it. Those really stung and there were a couple. . . and I remember them and only because they were colleagues of mine that said them. They completely floored me that someone would say that. Very unprofessional to say that, someone that I knew on a personal level, how could you say that?

Insinuations are good examples of microaggressions because they are difficult to call out since no one ever really said them. Gossip/rumours being spread about a person are also a good example of microaggressions, as gossip/rumours are difficult to track back to the source they originated from but they can have devastating effect. In this situation, hostility towards the participant for her success was expressed in a way, which could have caused serious damage to the participant’s career and did cause her emotional pain. There is also an underlying message that a woman could not earn the position of Director in the traditional way. Further, there are assumptions that a woman’s sexuality is her most powerful tool to get what she wants.

This section has described three examples of gender microaggressions, which emerged during interviews with Directors of Education. It is important to note that the term “gender microaggression” is mine, for the purpose of analysis, rather than any of the participant’s. These three examples were chosen from many, to demonstrate the breadth of misconceptions, stereotypes and assumptions that gender microaggressions can encompass. The first example demonstrates the stereotype that women and leader are incongruous identity categories; the second example demonstrates the misconception that men are more valuable in the workplace; and the final example demonstrates the assumption that a woman’s most powerful tool is her sexuality. It is important to acknowledge that in only one out of three examples did the Director of Education identify
the treatment they received as discrimination of any sort. This emphasizes how difficult gender microaggressions can be to detect, call out or prevent.

5.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have explored Denial, describing examples in which women denied being treated differently because of their gender. In all cases women denied being treated differently because of gender yet later disclosed an experience in which they felt they were treated differently because of their gender. In one instance, a Director was warned by a prominent leader in her community that she had better hire men to balance out her predominately female staff. In another instance, a participant felt pressure to be tough in meetings as not to be thought of as “soft.” Next, I explored Silenced voices, describing examples of situations in which participants did not speak up against sexism or other forms of biased treatment due to a perceived need to protect their professional success. In one case a woman did not speak up against discrimination because she was warned by a colleague not to. In another instance, a participant was told she looked nice by a male interviewing principal before he offered her the job – which despite feeling uncomfortable about, the participant did not speak up against. Additionally, one Director opted not to participate before the study even began despite wishing she could do so. Finally, I explored The power of gender microaggressions, describing examples of the subtle forms of gender bias that were explained by participants in this case study. One participant described being told she was not really a woman anyway, when discussing whether she had potentially been discriminated against at work because she was a woman. Another participant was replaced by two men who were each paid more than she had been to do the same job she did alone. Another participant was subject to sexual insinuations by her colleagues regarding how she had climbed so fast to Director. The next chapter explores strategies participants used to manage pressures associated with leadership.
Chapter Six: Pressures Associated with Leadership and the Strategies used to Manage said Pressures

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how women Directors of Education in Ontario public school boards manage their leadership identities in spite of pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. The last chapter provided context for this chapter and chapter eight, by describing the reactions of each participant to the question whether they have ever felt pressure to behave a certain way because of their gender. Given that many participants denied ever experiencing any sort of pressure to behave a certain way based on their gender, even though they actually had experiences which demonstrated this pressure was there, it is not surprising that so many of the strategies discussed in this chapter are void of the concept of gender. In fact, in several interviews, once participants had rejected the notion that gender had played a role in their leadership, I shifted gears entirely away from gender and towards more general experiences surrounding their leadership in order to probe other pressures. Therefore, in this chapter I outline strategies participants used to manage pressures associated with leadership.

In order to provide background information about these strategies and why they were chosen, I begin this chapter by summarizing the ways in which women Directors of Education responded to a series of questions on pressures of leadership. More specifically, I summarize pressures reported by Directors of Education that are associated with the following stakeholders: The Board of Trustees, Board Staff (including system staff and school staff), The Public and Church Clergy. The remainder of the chapter focuses on strategies Directors used to manage the various pressures of leadership. For the purpose of reader/practitioner-friendliness, I have categorized strategies into three groupings: Strategies for Personal Success; Micropolitical Strategies in the Workplace; and Strategies for Managing Home Life and Professional Life. Strategies for Personal Success include those strategies that impact the leader’s success and are sub-categorized into: Self-awareness, a keen understanding of who one is as a leader and why one is doing what they are doing; Self-care, the means for coping with the pressures of
leadership; and Self-Protection, protecting one’s reputation for the purpose of building one’s career. Micropolitical Strategies in the Workplace include those strategies that involve working with others (those above, below and at the same level of the organizational hierarchy), and are sub-categorized into Managing relationships, which involves building, maintaining and repairing relationships; Managing conflict with others/making difficult decisions, which involves showing strength when needed; and Managing one’s leadership image, which involves constructing and protecting one’s reputation. Finally, Strategies for Managing Home Life and Personal Life, include participants’ descriptions of how their personal lives are set up in ways that help facilitate their professional success and are sub-categorized into Supportive partner, Strategies for managing housework and Strategies surrounding parenting.

6.2. Pressures of Leadership

Though Directors of Education reported experiencing the pressures of leadership to differing degrees, with some Directors reporting they did not experience any pressures of leadership, it was clear through interviews that managing various stakeholders’ expectations was a point of stress for many Directors. Participants did not link these pressures to their gender. In fact, if anything, participants made clear that gender had nothing to do with these pressures and that these pressures were general pressures of the job. One key group of stakeholders is The Board of Trustees, who is responsible for hiring and firing Directors, ultimately making trustees the Directors’ bosses. Other key stakeholders are the Board Staff, including system level staff (associate directors, superintendents and support staff) and school level staff (principals, vice-principals, teachers, custodians, support staff etc.); The Public (parents and community members); and Church Clergy for Catholic Directors of Education. In this section, I will summarize the general pressures Directors of Education reported experiencing as a result of each group.
Since each Board of Trustees varies in size dependent and membership, context is crucial in understanding unique pressures Directors of Education felt. For example, if there was a small Board of Trustees and the majority of the trustees had sat on the board for several terms, Trustees likely felt more ownership over decisions the board made than a new trustee in a large school board. Each of these situations affects Directors of Education differently. Additionally, the length of time a Director had been on the board herself, as well as the work of her predecessors, also affected her in unique ways. One participant described her situation:

If you look at my predecessor, [Director X], who was an excellent leader. I was thrown into the role . . . the next thing I’m the Acting Director. There was no option for the organization at that moment. I had to stabilize, spend the whole year stabilizing the entire organization. And the other convoluting factor here is that it was also the time for new trustee elections. So the politics of that and getting re-elected. The leaving of a leader who was very charismatic and stabilizing and that story of [their] situation . . . The convoluting factor of the trustee elections . . . that came in play and that situation and the personalities between the governance and there is internal politics with staff.

This participant had not applied and been selected for the position of Director by the board of trustees, but rather had been appointed due to extenuating circumstances which had caused her predecessor to step down. Because of the chaotic circumstances in which she had stepped into the role, this participant needed to “[stabilize] the entire organization” limiting her ability to focus on other aspects of the Directorship. Additionally, there was a trustee election happening at the same time this participant stepped in to the role of Director. Finally, this participant noted that there were personality issues and internal politics among staff. All of these factors involved managing conflict at various levels of the organization. These factors had nothing to do with the Director herself, but were merely part of the complex context in which she found herself leading an organization. In this case, she found that the board of trustees wanted a passive Director who did as they wanted her to do. To be clear, this participant did not believe the desire for her to be passive was connected to gender. The Board of Trustees’ desire for her to be passive created tension between the participant and her board of trustees because of their differing agendas: the participant felt responsible to do the best
job she knew how as Director, which involved helping steer the direction of the school board; and the Board of Trustees felt responsible to their constituents, which also involved steering the direction of the school board. This participant had described many situations in which she and the board of trustees’ agendas had clashed. These clashing agendas resulted in a very stressful situation for this Director. The participant described a situation in which the Board of Trustees had attempted to bully her. Overall, this participant described the relationship with her board of Trustees as wrought with conflict.

Another participant also found herself in the situation where trustees expected her to go along with their ideas.

I think there was a time when I first became director where [the board of trustees] felt I should have not been quite as involved in the operations of the board. Many of them were long time trustees. They felt that I should have been more of a manager where that wasn’t my style. They wanted more of a figurehead and they soon learned that I wasn’t a figurehead, that I was happiest in rolling up my sleeves and getting in and doing with teachers, with custodians, with whomever it was, being engaged and having my thumb on the pulse of everything that was going on, so that I could guide it and maybe make recommendations for improvement or change of practice. So they soon gave up on it.

This long time Director was reflecting back on the beginning of her time as a Director. Even though this participant recalled conflict when ignoring the pressure that the trustees had attempted to put on her, she proceeded to lead as she was most comfortable leading. Though this participant recalled not caring, she did acknowledge that pressure from the board of trustees had been there and that conflict was sometimes the result of this pressure. It is important to note, this participant did not feel gender played a role in her conflict with the board of trustees.

One participant explained the main source of conflict with her board of trustees.

It mostly revolves around interpretation of what The Education Act allows or doesn’t allow and what they as trustees can and can’t do - what their role is. And the reason there is so much confusion is that The Education Act is written in a very
general way; it is not prescriptive and they will interpret in certain ways. There will be a difference in the way the politicians interpret it and the educators interpret it. So case and point has been for many boards across province – what is the role of the trustee in regards to communicating directly with front line staff? Or what is the role of the trustee in the appointment of principals and vice principals? That has been an issue that has been debatable in our school board . . . And where there was an agenda and a practice of trustees being involved and hands on in principal appointments, they were told that was inappropriate. And that practice exists in our board and we’ve been trying to correct that. So and the reason trustees behave that way, is that they feel – many of them come at it from an honourable point and it’s not always about power, many feel that it’s their school in their ward and they get very proprietary about it and they say they want the best principal for their school, right? And so their idea is that they should be involved in it because we want our schools to function well. Where we’re disagreeing is that The Education Act clearly says, “it is up to the Director of Education to operationalize the system” – that means hiring staff because the board of trustees only have one staff and that is the Director. It is only the Director that reports to them, everybody else reports through the Director. So its kind of fine-tuning those processes and protocols where Directors and boards have come at larger heads. And they are ongoing battles – the governance issues. Most of the differences are around governance.

This participant was able to manage these pressures by turning to The Education Act for reference and following The Education Act “to a T.” When the answer was not easily found in The Education Act, the participant involved the school board’s lawyers to help guide her. Notably, this participant did not feel gender played a role in her conflict with the board of trustees over issues of governance.

Another participant described her frustration with the fact that her Board of Trustees did not understand education from the perspective of someone who had worked in education.

Most of our Board are just people from the community. So, they too may have their own opinions about education and what they would like to see but, and I don't mean this in a patronizing way but, they don't know. They don’t know the business, they have opinions because they went to school themselves, they live in a community, they sent their kids school. So that's different than any reporting structure I’ve had before then. No, you do a lot of explaining and working with them to help them to understand why we’re doing a particular thing we’re doing. I mean lots stuff comes down from Ministry, so, it's not like we just dreamed it up. It’s like okay we’re now focusing on equity inclusion and here are all the resources we have and this is why we’re doing it and it’s all research-based. So the trustees can understand, but there also are often times when you have to articulate or just help them to understand why you would collect the data in this way and not this way, why that activity
might not necessarily improve student learning or achievement scores. So, there’s a lot of dialogue.

This participant described her frustration in needing to repeatedly help the Board of Trustees understand why things were done a certain way in education. Specifically, passing the budget was an issue of conflict with her Board of Trustees. The participant did not mention gender as a factor when describing these issues.

Finally, it is important to note one participant’s contrasting experience. One participant described the expectations of her trustees, which largely contrasts with the previous participants’ situations.

I have a board of trustees I report to. So we have a strategic plan for the board. So the expectations that they have of me is to lead the organization to accomplish what we’ve set out to accomplish. It’s not just me but now it’s myself and the senior team accomplishing these goals. Whether its student achievement goals, whatever you’re working towards, in the various areas. Yeah, they expect you to be confident and they expect you to be able to deliver on the plans that you put forward.

This participant did not receive pressure to step back and let the board of trustees make important decisions but rather received pressure to follow through on the organization’s goals by working with her team and producing results. She did not mention gender at all when discussing the board of trustees’ expectations. Though this pressure allows for more freedom and autonomy for the participant, the participant felt highly accountable for all that occurred within her school board. In this case, the expectations of the Board of Trustees did not conflict with the Director’s expectations.

Regardless of the type of pressures coming from the Board of Trustees, a common theme among participant interviews was the acknowledgement that the Board of Trustees had specific expectations of the Director. It was also a common theme that participants did not link the expectations of the Board of Trustees to their gender in any way. In many cases, expectations of the Board of Trustees conflicted with the leadership tendencies of the participant and this resulted in the Director feeling pressures. For example, in two cases, participants were expected to be figure heads rather than to be directly involved in leadership of the school board. In another case, the participant was expected to let the board of trustees be a part of the hiring of school administrators, a role that was strictly
reserved for the Director according to *The Education Act*. Passing the budget was mentioned by a participant as a source of conflict with her Board of Trustees. Finally, one participant mentioned pressure to fulfill her mandate as Director. The next section will detail pressures participants described feeling as a result of board staff.

6.2.2. Board staff (system staff and school staff)

The system and school staff’s expectations of Directors were varied but demanding. In some cases board staff (especially leadership) were looking to the Director to understand and solve many complex and personal problems in their lives. One participant had staff come to her with concerns of discrimination within the school board, believing that the participant would have all of the answers and solutions to a very intricate and deeply embedded social issue.

I’ve had numerous leaders across the system come to me and they look up and they would say, even principals and teachers would ask what tips do you have? I always tell them to be themselves. Don’t undersell who you are as a woman. Don’t undersell who you are based on [your] race. Don’t sacrifice [your] integrity. [Discrimination is] there.

This participant noted that many women looked to her to offer them advice or mentorship, an expectation that was not part of her job description. Though in some cases, this participant was happy to provide mentorship for women, this participant noted the pressure was there. This participant was also asked for guidance from those who were being discriminated against. Though guiding others through situations in which people felt they were being discriminated against was a priority to the participant - on top of all the other responsibilities of the Directorship – this was a pressure this participant noted having caused her stress. Notably these pressures are connected to the participant’s gender.

Another participant had staff expect that she, as a mother herself, would be understanding of the stresses of childcare. “A leader’s coming to work and their constantly late because of whatever, I get it. The childcare, the outer care - all of those complex factors . . . so experiential life experiences does have an impact on you.” This
participant noted that she did understand the stresses of balancing motherhood and working, because of her own experience (which had impacted her as a leader) but that being expected to give special treatment to mothers because she was a mother as well was an additional pressure she felt. Notably, this pressure is connected to the participant’s gender. Being expected to be understanding and helpful personally (in mentorship relationships or otherwise) because of their shared gender, in addition to the politics of the workplace, resulted in additional pressure on some participants.

Some participants described school level staff members doing a great deal to impress them as Director and to acknowledge their importance. As a result, when visiting schools, some participants noted feeling a pressure to perform. One participant explained the roots of this pressure thoroughly.

I’m pretty low key and low maintenance but people have a sense that you are going to arrive with an entourage of some sort and I understand that some people do that. I don’t. And some of my predecessors did so it took me a long time to understand. When I talk to a principal and say, I’m coming for a school visit. I [know] they [are] anxious and I [don’t] want them to be and I would say “Don’t plan anything. Take me around your school. Show me what’s important to you. That’s what I want to see.” And when I would arrive they would say, “Oh, there’s no one with you?” “No, just me.” “Oh, OK” . . . I have to pose for all kinds of pictures - that’s the other thing that I’ve really struggled with. I’ve learned that now when I go to the school and a teacher says, “Thanks for visiting, can we get a shot of you with the kids?” Of course, that’s great, but it’s not that I’m coming [for]. So that my goal isn’t to get press out of this, that’s not what I’m there for. . . Yeah. And I have to pose for all kinds of pictures - which I also have struggled with - and I’m happy to do it for people but in my mind, why do people even want a picture with me? I don’t get that but it comes with the position so that’s what you need to do.

This participant clearly felt uncomfortable in school situations due to the pressure she felt that others believed her to be a “big deal”. She hoped that others would not make a big deal of her because she did not believe herself to be one, but had to learn that, despite her wishes, others would address her as though she was an important person in the school board. This participant also did not want others to think that her school visits were simply done for the purpose of gaining positive publicity and therefore was reluctant to pose for photos with students. Eventually, this participant noted, she simply had to come to see
posing for pictures as part of the job. The participant’s gender was not mentioned in her description of this pressure, as she did not see her modesty as connected to her gender.

Regardless as to the unique pressures experienced by Directors when working with board staff, whether system staff or school staff, there was a common theme that board staff did add some additional pressure on many participants. Usually this was a result of expectations of the board staff as to how a Director should behave. In some cases, participants connected pressures from the school board staff to their gender.

6.2.3. The public

Just as the board of trustees and the board staff have high and sometimes unrealistic expectations of Directors of Education, so does the public. For some participants, the expectations of the public were mentioned as a pressure associated with the role of Director.

One participant discussed the pressure parents in the community put on her when it came to school closures.

There was a high expectation of a lot of parents that because in the past I had been their trusted principal, whom at the time they thought was wonderful because I so clearly had loved their kids and their families, that I would be more loyal to their school than the board…. that I would acquiesce to their needs and their wants as opposed to doing what needed to be done for a broader purpose - fiscal responsibility and all of those types of factors. . . I think they believed that because I would have empathy and sympathy for them, I would do what they wanted rather than make the unpopular and difficult decisions required by my role . . . I have felt pressure lots and lots of times because of wanting to do more than my dollars or my authority would allow me to do.

In this situation, having earned the trust and respect of the parents in a community in the role of Principal worked against this participant when she became Director. Because she had been such a caring Principal when she worked at the school, the public expected that she would not close down that school, even though it was the right decision to make as Director. This participant did not connect this pressure to her gender.
Another participant, a Director of a Catholic school board, found resistance from the public when she made difficult decisions as well. She believed these were connected to the religious element of her leadership and not her gender. She explained,

There were some instances for example around termination of employees and this is not so much [as] a leader, but [as] a Catholic leader, where we’ve had to move to terminate for different reasons. You’ll kind of get looks and comments of “Oh I never expected that because this is a Catholic institution - you’re a Catholic leader.” So from that, I can only deduce that their expectations of a Catholic leader would be more tolerant, more guided by the emotional piece than the job performance. But I’ve found that whenever I’ve moved for a direction that calls for a hard line stance. People would say, “wow I never expected that from a leader in this institution.”

This participant acknowledged that the fact her organization is a Catholic organization likely played a role in the negative public reactions to her “hard line stance[s].” Knowing that hard line stances were difficult for the public to accept from a leader in a Catholic organization, this participant noted feeling pressure to take a softer approach as a leader, though she did not feel she gave into this pressure.

Whether connected to their religion or not, many participants noted that the public’s expectations of them as Director can add additional pressure to the position. Often, the public was not pleased with hard line decisions that are a necessary part of the job of Director of Education. In these cases, participants did not connect pressures from the public to their gender.

6.2.4. Church clergy

Regardless of whether Catholic Directors of Education noted great of additional pressure or little additional pressure as a result of church clergy, participants from Catholic school boards noted different circumstances in which they lead than participants from public school boards. Therefore it is important to note those differences.
An additional pressure for Directors of Catholic school boards was the expectations of church clergy. In response to whether she ever felt pressure in her role as leader, one participant responded,

Absolutely. Very much so in a Catholic school board because you’re the Director. The local priests have a very specific view of what they want you to be, to the point of things, like, you are expected - and you know no one ever came out and said it but it’s a underground kind of expectation that I’m expected - to [do X] . . . You are expected to be the one that never would say anything negative about anything in the church ever, or [about] any religious Sisters you might have worked for in the schools. It doesn’t matter what they do, you’re not the one that will ever be able to say anything about that without being judged . . . Yeah, and you kind of know that going in. And you’ll be the one at different, like, the [X] club and the [X group] and all those things. You are the one that will be expected to take that leadership everywhere.

This participant was aware going in to the position of Director of what was expected of the Director by church clergy. Church clergy never tolerated negativity about any one or any thing in the church and did expect Directors would be responsible for leading various groups in the community. Despite knowing these expectations existed going into the role of Director, this participant did not hide the fact that these expectations were a source of pressure in her role as Director. It is worthwhile to note that this participant connected these pressures to the job and not to her gender.

Other participants were not as forthcoming about the expectations of church clergy, though it was clear through interviews that Catholic Directors were working within a more strict set of parameters than were Directors in public school boards. For example, when one Catholic Director assured me that gender equality in leadership existed in her school board, I asked about other types of equality (racial, sexual orientation etc.) aside from gender. She responded,

It will be slower in the sense that in a Catholic board to be hired as a teacher we are looking for Catholic teachers, so there are certain nationalities where Catholicism is not prominent, so we don’t have in terms of racial equality - we don’t have that. . . We don’t in the Catholic church provide for gay marriage. That isn’t something that’s within the Catholic tradition. . . gay marriage is not recognized within the church.
Therefore, from this conversation, I deduce that there is an expectation to hire, and to support the hiring of, a specific type of person; and to work with in a specific set of parameters defined by religious text. Given that there are more strict parameters within which a Catholic Director of Education needs to work, compared to a public Director of Education, Catholic Directors may experience different pressures than public Directors.

This section has outlined the general pressures Directors of Education reported experiencing as a result of the Board of trustees, Board staff (including system staff and school staff), the public and for Catholic participants, Church clergy. Pressures experienced as a result of the Board of Trustees included: the pressure to be a passive “figurehead” Director (in two instances); the pressure to allow Trustees to have a say in hiring; the pressure to get trustees to understand decision making from an educator’s perspective (rather than a politician’s perspective); and finally, the pressure to fulfill the board’s strategic plan. Pressures experienced as a result of Board Staff included: the pressure to guide others through serious issues surrounding discrimination; the pressure to understand childcare issues affecting people’s work; and the pressure to allow others in the school board to treat her as a “big deal.” Pressures experienced as a result of The Public included: the pressure to acquiesce to the desires of parents formerly dealt with in other roles in the school board (e.g., as principal); and the pressure to make socially accepted decisions. Pressures experienced as a result of the Church Clergy included: the pressure to remain positive about all aspects of the Catholic Church and the pressure to serve on various committees as a leader; as well as the pressure to work within a specific set of parameters defined by religious text. This chapter will now outline strategies Directors noted using to cope with the various pressures they experience. The remainder of this chapter focuses on strategies for managing the pressures of leadership and is divided into three sections: Strategies for Personal Success; Micropolitical Strategies in the Workplace; and Strategies for Managing Home Life and Professional Life.
6.3. Strategies for Personal Success

Whatever a participant’s description of the pressures of leadership, all participants agreed the Director of Education position is a job that requires a lot of one’s time and energy. As such, each Director had strategies for maintaining their personal well being, and for ensuring their ability to succeed in the position. More specifically, each leader made reference to a need to be self-aware, and to understand one’s deepest motivations for working in the position of Director; a need for coping mechanisms to relieve job-related stress; and a need to protect one’s professional reputation. As such, I have organized this section as follows: Self-awareness, Self-care and Self-protection. I begin by describing strategies surrounding self-awareness that Directors noted impacted their professional success. Gender was not mentioned in connection to strategies for personal success.

6.3.1. Self-awareness.

A common strategy many participants referred to was having a sense of self-awareness as a foundation in leadership activities. Self-awareness can be defined as the “ability to be aware of and understand one’s feelings and their impact” (Stein & Book, 2011, p. 23). Aspects of self-awareness that were brought up during interviews include reflection and knowing one’s true self. More specifically, using reflection and spending time getting to know one’s true self were strategies women Directors of Education reported helped their personal success. Years of personal reflection often accounted for one’s ability to know oneself well. One participant noted “I think, you know, reflecting on a daily basis is something you just have to do constantly . . . you know if you don’t do it you will just make the same mistakes again, and again, and again.” Another participant echoed this sentiment when discussing her own career trajectory claiming, “I think it’s really important for leaders . . . women, to be reflective – “what am I doing and why am I doing it? Is it what I want to be doing?” - because it goes so fast.”
Some participants noted in the past when they had felt insecure or their confidence had been rattled, they had looked inward to better understand themselves and why they felt the way they did. In describing a situation in which one participant recalled having led a group of her peers in a certain context and having felt insecure or even intimidated, she claimed, “First I had to remind myself that they chose me - including all of those men. Some of my insecurity was my own self-inflicted lack of ego”. This participant had earlier described the situation of leading her peers as quite challenging for her. She had described a situation in which a handful of her male colleagues were very vocal and outspoken, to the point of dominating important conversations. The participant felt a certain responsibility to ensure all members of the group had their opinions heard. This involved giving herself a bit of a “peptalk.” For this participant, the gender of those who had chosen her to lead the group may have played some role in her insecurity, as well as in her reflective efforts to overcome her insecurity. For one participant, eventually, the process of reflecting and recognizing one’s own insecurity developed into a more resilient self: “There’s a certain point I said, “I am what I am.” I have to be comfortable in my own skin. Some things hurt a bit but I would ask [myself] why they hurt and work through it”. In this case, the participant did not connect the strategy of reflection with their gender.

Once their ideal self was established through years of personal reflection, some participants noted checking in regularly to ensure their professional decisions were in line with their ideal self. In answering how she is able to make difficult decisions, one participant declared, “[You] have to be able to look at yourself in the mirror in the morning and know that you’ve done the right thing, you’ve done the ethical thing”. Another participant emphasized the need to be true to their ideal self, claiming that something important for leaders

is having a deeper understanding of integrity or being true to yourself [and] really, to your best self. Your self that is really looking at things from a service perspective and from - what is the right decision and the best decision? And I always do think that we need to be looking at it from the lens of the students that we’re serving.”

For another participant knowing she was acting with integrity, being true to her self and serving her students’ best interests, made making difficult decisions easier: “Knowing
and sticking to what’s best for the kids, finding and taking the moral position in every decision. . .That always, always gave me confidence”. In only one of these cases did the participant connect the strategy to know oneself well to her gender.

Finally, some participants used reflection and knowing oneself well to recognize what they could take on and what was unreasonable, with the goal of preserving their own wellness. One participant offered the following advice: “You need to have some sort of self-awareness about what you can and can’t do. If you’re going to be working every night - I work from 8:30 in the morning until 10 or 11 at night before I ever go home at night. You need to know what you need to let go”. This participant did not connect the awareness of what she needed to let go of to her gender.

In this section, I discussed the role self-awareness, including reflection and knowing one’s true self, play in terms of helping facilitate Directors’ personal success. The next section will outline strategies participants noted using for their own self-care.

6.3.2. Self-care.

Given the high levels of stress noted by Directors of Education when they discussed pressures they had experienced related to leadership, it is not surprising that most participants mentioned using coping strategies to ensure they take care of themselves. Specifically, acceptance of one’s limitations, taking care of one’s health, and protecting oneself from burnout were key to Director’s personal success.

One of the strongest themes I found during the analysis of this section was the acceptance (that often took years of self-reflection to reach) that one can let go of trying to be everything to everybody. Clarifying that not only is this a pressure that some Directors put on themselves, one participant noted “there are some expectations that people have about leaders that you can wiggle your nose like Genie in the 80s, and make everybody happy because people would like everybody to be satisfied. And the bottom line is, you can’t”. Another participant also referred to this self-inflicted pressure to satisfy everyone, noting it takes constant reminders to “withstand the idea that you can’t
always meet everybody’s expectations with decisions that you make”. Others found empowerment in reassuring themselves that it is not their job to make everyone happy. One participant noted, “One of the strong coping mechanisms is knowing that you don’t know everything and where can you go to get the information you need and the support you need if you don’t have it in that area. I think that’s been really helpful”. Another participant noted that sometimes it does not even make sense to try to please everyone: “I’ve learned as a Director I don’t have to be at the beck and call of everyone. [I’ll now say] I can’t come down for this two hour meeting because it’s going to take me [X amount of time] to get there, but I will call in and make myself available”. Participants did not connect the strategy to “let it go” to their gender during their interviews.

Another theme running through the interviews with women Directors of Education was a recognition that one’s health matters above and beyond all professional endeavours. One participant noted the importance of paying attention to her body’s warnings, “I started to learn – stupid stuff like your back is sore or you’re so unwell, not sleeping and you start to personalize things and you realize that you’re just not well and you need to take a step back and take care of yourself”. Other participants recognized how crucial their own physical health was to their professional performance and sense of balance in life. One participant noted, “I’m going to make sure I have an opportunity to [exercise] in the evening. So that sort of self imposed [rule for myself], that, I have to be able to do to create that balance for myself”. Participants never connected the recognition that their health matters to their gender.

Participants also recognized the potential to burnout in such a demanding leadership position and had strategies in place to protect from burnout. For some, protection from burnout involved learning to control their own thought process. In terms of handling gossip in the workplace one participant noted, “I don’t let chatter or comments, I don’t let them eat at me. I don’t walk into a room thinking what are they thinking about what I’m wearing. Or what am I going to say. I go in there because I have a job to do and I let other things escape”. Other participants recognized the potential to let the job take over their life and protected from that.
Like any job, it could just absorb you. I generally make it a rule - I have to monitor my phone for obvious reasons - but from Friday night until Sunday night, there are emails but I won’t respond unless there’s an emergency. I don’t have to necessarily respond. I try not to send emails or anything like that on the weekend. If the team gets something from me on the weekend, it’s pretty important.

This strategy served to both model self-care and to preserve it. This sentiment was echoed,

If I’m always the first one there and the last one to leave then I’m not giving the others permission [to take care of themselves]... I have to model what I have to expect of them too. So if I have something to go to and I leave lets say its 4:30 pm or 5:00 pm, whatever it is, that I leave and they appreciate that because it gives them permission.

Both participants attempt to facilitate and/or role model self-care through leading by example. The first participant mentioned avoiding sending emails to her staff on the weekends to allow them to take time for themselves, even though she needs to check her email on the weekend. The latter participant discussed leaving the office at a reasonable hour to allow her staff to feel it is ok to do the same. Through facilitating or role modeling self-care for their staff, both participants ended up preserving their own wellness. Neither participant connected preserving their own wellness to their gender.

In this section I outlined self-care strategies participants noted using to ensure personal success including acceptance of one’s limitations, taking care of one’s health, and protecting oneself from burnout. Next, I will share the strategies participants noted using for the purpose of protecting their reputation.

6.3.3. Self-protection.

Another strong theme that ran through participant interviews was a need to protect oneself and one’s professional reputation. Specifically, not mixing business with pleasure and acting with a standard of care were strategies Directors noted using to protect their reputation, thereby ensuring professional success.
Keeping one’s personal life separate from their professional life was a strategy mentioned by more than one participant. For some, this strategy was learned through either their own or someone else’s mistakes. One participant noted,

I’ve had friends who would name drop, like, “I had dinner with [participant X] last night.” When I found that out I had that conversation – “We can’t be friends. I’m sorry you can’t do that because I’m questioning why you’re my friend when you’re doing that in the staffroom.” My friendships have become this very small, tight knit group.

This participant was disappointed to learn that a friend she once taught with was bragging to others in her staffroom that she had had dinner with the Director the night before. The participant learned through this experience that she needed to be more selective about who she would be friends with. Another participant referred to her mentor’s memorable advice,

He said to me “[Participant Z], I never go to the liquor store in [our city], my wife and I never go out for dinner or go to a bar in [our city]. When we are going out socially – we go out of the district. Don’t ever do anything that you would be even modestly embarrassed about if it was in the [local newspaper].

Though a very strict standard to adhere to, this participant took seriously the advice of her mentor not to engage in any activity that, if reported in the local newspaper, would be embarrassing for the participant. This participant reiterated her learned understanding not to mix work and pleasure, stating

The people I hang out with on Saturday night – everybody has friends, including Directors – are not the people I see from Monday to Friday. Play in your own sandbox with your own kind. I also don’t go to trustees homes for dinner. Nor do I have them in my home for dinner. They are my boss. I would never expect a trustee to invite me for dinner on a Saturday night; nor would they expect to be invited to my house. I have never invited a boss; trustees are my boss and I have never invited a direct report into our home on Saturday night. EVER. And I wouldn’t.

This participant not only believed in keeping her social life outside the boundaries of the school district, she also believed in keeping her social life separate from her professional life. She would only socialize with people from outside her work on weekends and had strict parameters for appropriate conduct with her colleagues (which included not
socializing with them outside of work). None of these participants connected the strategy to keep their social lives separate from their personal lives to their gender.

Acting with a standard of care was another strategy that came up in regards to protecting one’s professional reputation. This included things like following “processes and procedures – and that’s why we have them. You have to know that you’re on the right side of the law. So you always do your homework, you do your due diligence. All directors have corporate lawyers who will advise [you], so you check with all of the appropriate people,” one participant marked. It was also noted, “Essentially I think the Director’s job is to make sure that they are following The Education Act, following their own board policies and [are] advised by a certain moral code that you put the students first and you do what is best for students in your professional judgment”. Participants did not connect their gender to the strategy of acting with a standard of care.

Self-protection strategies were outlined in this section, including not mixing business with pleasure and acting with a standard of care. More broadly encompassing, in this section, I have discussed self-awareness, self-care and self-protection strategies in terms of how Directors of Education noted using them to ensure their own professional success. In the next section of this chapter I outline micropolitical strategies in the workplace.

6.4. Micropolitical Strategies in the Workplace

Micropolitics has been defined many ways (Ryan & Higginbottom, 2016) but I most prefer Blasé’s (1991) highly cited passage,

Micropolitics is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends. It is about what people in all social settings think about and have strong feelings about, but what is so often unspoken and not easily observed (pp. 1-2).

In this section I outline strategies, which I refer to as micropolitical strategies, that participants noted using to enable them to effectively work with others in their
organization. As Angelle, Morrison and Stevenson (2016) note, personalities are one of the factors that shape the microcontext in which educational leaders do their work. Though no participant made reference to the formal term *micropolitical strategies*, participants did mention “little p, politics” and “lower case p, politics” as being very important in their success. All participants recognized the importance of having positive relationships with those with whom they work, whether the board of trustees, their executive team, principals, teachers and/or parents at the school level, the media, the general public or otherwise. Strategies for effectively working with others in ways that protected participants’ agendas (micropolitical strategies) were woven throughout the interviews with Directors of Education. As such, it is important to outline the ways in which participants described managing their relationships with others; the ways in which participants described carefully handling conflict and/or difficult decisions and people dissatisfied with their opinion or position; and the ways in which participants described managing their leadership image by working with and through others. As such, I have chosen to categorize Micropolitical strategies outlined in this section, as follows: *Managing relationships; Managing conflict with others/making difficult decisions;* and *Managing one’s leadership image.* I begin by outlining strategies surrounding managing relationships which Directors noted impacted their professional success.

6.4.1 Managing relationships

Forming groups and coalitions to assist in an educational leader’s agenda being satisfied is at the core of micropolitical leadership (Angelle, Morrison & Stevenson, 2016), and involves people skills. Managing relationships is at the core of forming groups and coalitions. Every participant mentioned the importance of managing relationships in regards to their own personal success. Specifically, collaborative decision making, maintaining an emotional bank account and finding common ground were strategies linked to managing relationships that Directors mentioned using.
Managing relationships involved participants spending a great deal of time listening and consulting with others, making compromises and ensuring that all felt their voices were being heard. A common theme in interviews was collaborative decision making; welcoming and requesting feedback/input from many before reaching any decisions, which participants felt helped their relationships with others. One participant noted, “I would surround myself with good advice, gather input and consult with others to try to get a feel of what people were thinking, what people were needing, and that would help me to speak with confidence, knowing that I was representing the voice of others.” This sentiment was echoed by another participant, “I might be making this statement but it’s also supported by the team that I would have around me.” Knowing team members felt their opinions were listened to resulted in trust being built over time, which sped up decision making later. One participant recalled,

I spent a lot of time in my first year, oh my gosh, I invested so much time making sure the team knew I was listening. Make sure, make sure, make sure. So now when other things come up I’m a little more efficient because I can say, “OK, here’s the situation. Here’s what we’ve done in the past, here’s what you told me, here’s why we made the decision we made, now what do you think we need to do here, and people feel reassured. . . And we can move onto the next step a little more quickly. You have to build trust.

This participant found listening to as many people as possible upfront, a strategy that helped the team become more efficient later. Because the team had been listened to upfront, and decisions had been made using consensus, the participant could now refer back to decision-making strategies they had used in the past which had proven effective.

An emphasis on being proactive can also help ensure people feel heard. One participant described a conscious effort to listen to her team before anything arose. “I’ve set up four meetings just with the two of them and so we just talk about “Ok, what’s out there? What do we need to talk about? What are your worries? How can we help? What are you looking at?” kind of thing.” Listening built trust between participants and their co-workers, which led to co-workers feeling involved in a group, which led to more efficient decision making. Beyond efficient decision making, one participant noted that working with and through others led to more effective decision making. It just made sense to listen to one’s executive team before making any suggestions themselves because, as
one director noted, the executive team has “expertise in their areas . . . If you put your opinions out there first then you would probably end up with some reluctance, perhaps for coming up with the ideas . . . So you are only going to get that if they have the freedom to express it”. Notably, participants did not connect their focus on collaborative decision making with their gender.

Another strategy that participants mentioned as effective in managing relationships was maintaining an “emotional bank account” with others. The concept of an emotional bank account stems from Stephen Covey’s 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Covey’s (1989) emotional bank account is an account of trust, or how safe one person feels with another, rather than money. One participant credits Covey for their strategy and explained,

I read and took to heart Mr. Covey’s stuff 15 years ago – his seven whatever they were. Yeah I actually paid attention to those. It’s very important to be trusted. You don’t have to be loved. You don’t even have to be liked. You do have to be trusted or you cannot be effective. . . I do believe you have to have an emotional bank account because now and again people make mistakes and you have to use your emotional bank account with people. If you’ve made a mistake or more likely, you’ve made a decision which is not popular because we have to make decisions which often are not popular and whoever it is has to suck it up and live with the decision so if they trust you in general and believe and respect in you, they may not like the decision but they’ll live with it.

This participant emphasizes the importance of being trusted over being liked. Trust, more than being liked, is at the core of managing relationships, as individuals need to know they can rely on the other person, before they will cooperate with them. This participant stood by Covey’s belief that there are six ways to make an emotional bank account deposit: understanding the individual, attending to the little things, keeping commitments, clarifying expectations, showing personal integrity and apologizing sincerely when making a withdrawal. Using these six ways to maintain an emotional bank account with colleagues helps others come to trust as well as like the leader. Those positive feelings create “padding” if ever something less positive – an emotional bank account withdrawal - (such as the boss informing the employee of a decision that is not desirable to the employee) occurs between those two people.
Another participant explains how she attends to the little things to maintain emotional bank accounts with her staff,

I try to keep in my mind little social bits about people like who had babies and who had, you know those sorts of things. So when you are going in the hallway you can stop and say, “Oh congratulations!” It took 30 seconds of your time but it will go miles when the going gets tough because that’s what they will remember . . . Those emotional bank accounts. If you have even a little emotional bank account with most people that you know then you may have to draw on it.

This participant believed that maintaining an emotional bank account with as many people as possible served as a safety net, proactively creating a situation in which she was able to do what she needed, however undesirable others may consider her action to be. Participants did not connect maintaining an emotional bank account to their gender when discussing these strategies.

Another strategy towards managing relationships that a few participants noted was finding common ground between themselves and others. This sometimes involved blurring power lines as one participant felt most comfortable in lateral positions to others. She explained

I tend to try and blur the power lines everywhere in my life as much as I can… I try to work not from a hierarchical sort of thing…If you think about it, if you’re the type of person that normally for the most part of your role sees everyone as equal it’s easy to develop relationships . . I’m at school dances and I’m helping out at all kinds of things like that so people get to know me in a very different way.

Creating common ground was accomplished through attending to the small things such as helping at school dances, and allowing others to see her in multiple settings, performing various tasks which some may expect Directors to consider beneath themselves. Another participant mentioned gaining respect from teachers in her school (when working as a principal) when she decided to move staff meetings to accommodate the staff that were parents, a group to which she belonged. Attempting to first understand others was a part of the process of finding common ground for this participant, allowing her to thus build the emotional bank account. One participant explained attempting to understand others in relation to conflict,
My own personal style is always to try to understand why they are taking the position they are taking. If I can understand where they are coming from than I can be better at finding that common ground that gets us to a resolution. Because my prowess is always that whatever is in conflict can be resolved. It’s just up to us to work extra hard to do it.

This participant also believed in Covey’s emotional bank account. She believed that understanding others helps maintain the emotional bank account even when compromise cannot be made and emotional bank account withdrawals need to be made. Her first goal though, was to find a compromise. Participants did not connect their efforts to create common ground to their gender during interviews.

In this section I have outlined micropolitical strategies Directors of Education noted as effective in managing relationships. More specifically, collaborative decision making, maintaining an emotional bank account and finding common ground were discussed in terms of their benefits with others relationship-wise. Through these relationships, participants were able to build groups and form coalitions with others which could be used to help accomplish participant agendas (thus qualifying managing relationships as a micropolitic strategy). The next section will outline micropolitical strategies participants used to manage conflict/difficult decision-making in the workplace.

6.4.2. Managing conflict with others/making difficult decisions.

When talking about managing conflict or making difficult (and/or unpopular) decisions, many participants stated that beyond being well liked by those you work with it is even more important to be respected. Participants specifically mentioned being firm, calling others out and being diplomatic as strategies that were effective.

Some participants noted the effectiveness of setting clear and firm expectations upfront. For example, one participant outwardly addressed new teachers at the new teacher staff orientation every year clearly stating her expectations and likely shocking many new teachers. She described this forceful strategy.
I get up and I look right down at all these brand new little people with their big eyes and I say, “I have something to say to you. Do not a screw a kid and do not screw this school board or I will fire you, with or without the police, with or without child services. If I think you screwed a kid, or I think you scammed the school board, I will fire you.” And they giggle and they titter and they go, “Who would do that?”

This participant was upfront by providing a somewhat intimidating message at the orientation meeting for new teachers. She used direct language as not to mince words and warned new teachers that they could be fired for “screw[ing] students.” This participant used this very direct strategy because of her past experience needing to fire teachers for having had inappropriate sexual relationships with their students. This participant did not connect her upfront behavior with her gender.

For many participants, being firm is an effective way to maintain (or gain) respect in the workplace when tough situations arise. The participant above described what would happen if someone did break her “no sex with students” rule, “somebody eventually does some stupid thing and they try to grieve [being fired] and the provincial union comes in and says – “You were told.” I have it in board policy: “No sex with students””. In describing a very difficult situation with a trustee during which a trustee accused the Director of lying, the Director described her response. “I’d say “no, I’m sorry, I will stop you there. I’m not lying.” But I’m not angry [in my demeanour. I just said], “I’m not lying, I’m sorry you feel that way. Here are the facts. Here is the data””. This participant did not connect her ability to be firm with her gender.

Another participant described a situation where a few voices were dominating a group meeting in which important decisions were being made. Despite not feeling entirely comfortable being firm in this context, she described feeling a duty to act. “There were voices who weren’t getting heard, so I did press the button on needing to hear from others and specifically demanded it at a few meetings. I think as a leader you need to be courageous and sometimes you need to dig deep to find the courage to act.” This participant did connect her experience in this situation to her gender, noting that she thought some men at the table may have thought her leadership expectations could be ignored because she was a woman. Another Director was very comfortable demonstrating firmness. This participant explained her response to principals after getting tired of
hearing principal complaints in regards to their workload. “If you made $40 000, I would entertain your concerns. You make $120 000. You’re off six or seven weeks in the summer. You’re off Christmas and March Break. You have a defined benefit pension plan. You have good benefits. I don’t want to hear about this”. This participant did not connect comfort with being firm to her gender.

For one participant, calling people out when needed was a very effective strategy for handling difficult situations. Her story demonstrates this point well.

“I’m blunt. They don’t expect it from me. I don’t know why. Perhaps because I seem to have an easy going manner and then to come in and kind of say this . . . and then be very matter of fact with them and [give them] a kind of look.”

[Here’s an example]. One of my principals, he was a really good teacher and when he became a principal there was great staff pushback and we were moving forward in developing success criteria and long range goals in schools and developing school improvement plans. For the first year he was there he crafted a school improvement plan and I’m part of the school review team where I actually go in with a team of principals and superintendents and observe in classrooms. And our observation is usually around their school improvement plan and what are we observing what’s happening within the classroom. And this was his turn, it was in his third year and we walked in and he gave everyone the school improvement plan. I looked at it and I looked at a superintendent next to me and I just showed him – it was a two-year-old school improvement plan! He just put his head down and shook his head. So I waited and we went and visited all the classrooms and nobody had picked it up.

. . . So we came back in and we began looking at the specifics and then towards the end when we were just about finished I said… “and what would this year’s look like?” And he looked at me and he said that would be this years and I said “I don’t think so because I have the one from that year and I’ve just compared it and they are exactly the same.” He said, “oh, I must have given you the wrong one.” I didn’t let him get away with it but I [let it go then].

. . . I called and emailed him that night and said I will be in your office at 8:10 tomorrow morning . . . He didn’t have to say much as he already felt like a goat. And I went in and I said, but why? He had all kinds of [excuses] where the teachers didn’t want to change and they didn’t want to do this and I said, “That’s your job to change them. That’s my job to change you.” I didn’t leave him [at that school]. I left him there one more year then I moved him to a vice-principalship.

The Director in this situation acknowledged that this story likely made its way through her board, setting a precedent regarding her expectations. For this reason, she felt very
comfortable having embarrassed the principal at the walk through, and later having demoted him. Another participant agreed that it is best to deal with situations immediately, as they can prevent more situations from happening later, “If there’s an issue I’d like to deal with it. I don’t like it to fester. I like to have a conversation, deal with it, address it, not let it go because it may happen again and again.” Neither of these participants connected their ability to call others out to their gender.

When it comes to the most difficult of conversations such as terminating an employee, many participants agreed it was necessary to be overly prepared, having notes – even a script - nearby in order to be able to always bring the conversation back to the facts. One participant described terminating employees, “those are the things that you know are coming and you know are going to be stressful so you prepare and script it. No matter what they say you can keep coming back and you just pick up your spot and keep going”. Disagreeing with a person on an important point can cause tension and requires skillful conversations in which participants described diplomatically making clear they do not care what the other person thinks, in order to end the discussion. One participant describes this, “Well I respectfully disagree with her quite often but I will tell her that and I will explain that here is why I’m doing something and here’s why I’m doing it that way and I hope I can have your support for it but if you don’t that’s OK too. If you can’t support that, that’s OK too”. Along this same line, one Director found herself in a situation in which she disagreed with her board of trustees but refused to give in. Instead she continued taking her proposal back to them with very small changes made that they had suggested, until she wore them down. This participant described this strategy proudly “So I just kept doing it and kept presenting it and eventually they gave up on me”. Being diplomatic was not connected by participants to their gender during interviews.

This section described examples of strategies participants used to manage conflict. Specifically, being firm, calling others out and being diplomatic were strategies participants described as effective in managing conflict. The next section describes strategies participants used to effectively manage their leadership image.
6.4.3. Managing one’s leadership image.

In order to be successful in their role as Director, participants mentioned concern regarding one’s professional reputation or leadership image as important. In some cases, participants noted the need to comply with others’ expectations of Directors of Education. Often times, these expectations were not outright but were unspoken beliefs others held, regarding appropriate actions, dress and leadership style Directors of Education should have. It is important to note, only some participants perceived others’ expectations of them as related to their gender. Some participants believed others’ expectations of them could be linked to factors such as their age, their religion, their appearance or a combination of the aforementioned variables (including gender).

Satisfying expectations of Directors is crucial in managing one’s leadership image, since one’s reputation as a leader stems entirely from others’ opinions of them. All actions taken that are mentioned in this section are specific to a noted expectation another person or other people had of the Director in the given situation. The prevailing strategy to managing these pressures therefore, was to appease others or to meet their expectations. Therefore, rejecting others’ expectations was not an option as a strategy, when it came to managing one’s leadership identity. Below, I have categorized actions taken by participants to meet the expectations of those around them and therefore attain professional success as a Director, in terms of the perceived cost to the Director. Specifically, Directors mentioned easily appeasing expectations with little personal cost, having more difficulty appeasing expectations with little cost, and having difficulty appeasing expectations with high cost.

Participants described some actions they took to meet the expectations of those around them, ensuring others viewed their leadership image positively, actions that they perceived as having little cost to them. For example, one participant described, “So I go to the [X] because that’s what he expects me to do and I get paid pretty well to be in the job. Then what I will do is a couple of times a month I will go . . . twice . . . so I can go to the other one [I prefer].” Although attending X is not this participant’s first choice, she perceives the cost of doing so justifiable given the salary she is paid. Further, doing so helps her know she is viewed positively in the eyes of this person. Since this participant
views this person’s opinion of her as highly consequential to her career success, she has adopted the strategy of appeasing him on this expectation. This participant did not connect her strategy to appease this man to her gender.

One participant described wearing high-heeled shoes as an accepted standard of the job. “I live in heels. If you’re really running around, and some days you’ve been there all day, you flip off the heels and you flip on the flats and you walk around the office you feel like people are going, “hmmm. That’s interesting””. Although flats might be easier to wear on particularly busy days, this participant says she lives in heels, having noticed the questioning looks of others if she does not. For this participant wearing heels has little “cost” and makes her life easier as she does not receive questioning glances from others. Wearing heels ultimately helps her maintain a positive leadership image in the eyes of others and therefore, she wears them daily. The aforementioned examples of expectations others have of Directors have been minor, those which Directors saw as easy and important to accommodate, in order to maintain a positive image as a leader. This example is connected to gender, as high heels are a shoe designed for women, though the participant did not specifically acknowledge gender in her explanation.

Expectations are not always minor and easy for Directors to accommodate, such as attending a certain place or wearing high-heeled shoes to work. However, Directors may still see expectations of them as in line with their own expectations of Directors of Education, and therefore do not view actions taken to meet these expectations as having a high cost to them. For example, maintaining a degree of calm or level-headedness, rather than reacting emotionally, was noted as important when in the position of Director. “I think there is an expectation that you’re poised and together and no matter how difficult the situation is you don’t lose it. That’s part of the role of being a leader.” Another participant expands on this expectation and the way it affects her behaviour,

I typically don’t give opinion either way. . . I’ll say “You’ve given me something to think about and you realize that a lot of things are confidential and I won’t be able to tell you what I’m doing but you need to trust that I will do something” . . . Because I think if you got into it you would give up a little bit and give up control.
This participant realizes the need to address an issue as it comes her way, yet maintains composure by not indicating what she thinks of that issue or what she will do about that issue. She believes this gives her more control of the situation. Participants did not connect their ability to stay in control to their gender.

Maintaining a level of poise, remaining unemotional and appearing in control at all times was seen by many Directors as important to maintaining a positive image as a leader. Some participants indicted they found this easy, while others indicated finding it challenging at times. Regardless, many participants mentioned having developed strategies (such as that mentioned above) to ensure they were effective in this. Another example of an expectation a Director feels others have of her is to be a community leader in every situation, even those situations outside her role as Director. She described an example from her past,

I’m in a room full of parents because I am a parent. My son is in grade [X]. I’m at the parent meeting. It came to the part about we need to fundraise and here’s what the trip is and everything. Literally, it was the weirdest feeling because the entire room turned [to me] and went, ok [participant’s name] what are we gonna do? . . . I’m just a parent but you can never be just a parent.

Although the responsibility was not this participants’ alone, she felt obligated to make suggestions and to fulfill expectations that she would know the right answers in this situation. Though fundraising initiatives for a student field trip was beyond the purview of Director responsibilities, appeasing the expectations of others in this situation helped this participant stay confident she would remain positively perceived as a leader. Other participants had noted similar pressure to lead in all community situations. Participants did not connect the pressure to lead in all community situations to their gender.

In some situations the expectations were difficult to appease, and had a high personal cost to the Directors who described them. Meeting these expectations, however, were viewed by Directors as necessary to maintaining a positive leadership image in the eyes of others (often very powerful others). One participant opted not to physically attend one particular meeting, but rather to call in, choosing to spend time with her family at a very important family time instead of spending the time travelling back and forth to this
meeting. The following year this participant recalled a comment she felt centered her out, requesting “everyone be present this year” at an annual meeting. The person in charge of running these annual meetings made this comment publicly, causing the participant embarrassment. Though this participant’s decision to call in to the meeting had been supported at the time, this participant felt it was later held against her. Through this experience she realized physical attendance at certain meetings is absolutely mandatory and decided rather than face the public persecution, in the future she would choose the annual meeting above all else, and in spite of the high personal cost. This participant did not connect her strategy to attend certain meetings in person to her gender.

Though examples of high personal cost were plentiful during data collection, many participants opted to limit some of the information they shared for fear of persecution once data became public. Not “stirring the pot” or not being confrontational was a common expectation in many of the examples I am not at liberty to share in this thesis. One nebulous example (that can serve to represent many more omitted examples) is a situation in which a male superior interviewed a participant for a leadership position. This participant described the male superior’s inappropriate conduct, “Before he gave me the job he told me how great I looked today. Now is that disgusting or is that disgusting?” In this situation, the participant refrained from calling this man out on his unprofessional comment regarding her appearance, despite her own discomfort with the comment and her overall knowledge that making such a comment was not appropriate conduct in a professional setting. One can assume the male superior’s expectation was that the participant would “turn a blind eye.” The participant met this expectation to “turn a blind eye” and not to “stir the pot,” by not complaining about the sexual harassment as she was well aware of the professional damage she might impose on herself by doing so. Gender was acknowledged in this instance. Like in this occurrence, in the examples I am unable to share, power differentials were often the cause of participants meeting the expectations in situations in which they were not comfortable doing so, and which had a high personal cost to them.
This section has outlined examples provided by Directors of Education of the strategy to appease or meet the expectations in order to manage one’s leadership image. Examples that had a fairly low personal cost were provided as well as examples that had a high personal cost. Managing one’s leadership image was part of a larger section, *Micropolitical strategies in the workplace*. The next section will outline strategies for managing home life and professional life.

6.5. Strategies for Managing Home Life and Professional Life

In this section I relay strategies Directors of Education provided which help them manage their home life and their professional life. Though participants never referred to the set up of their home life as a formal strategy, they did describe how their personal lives are set up in ways that help facilitate their professional success. I have created the following categories to organize the data: *Supportive partner, Strategies for managing housework* and *Parenting strategies*.

6.5.1. Supportive partner.

Every participant who had a partner indicated that the partner was very supportive. One participant noted, “My husband is very, very supportive. It’s important that if you have a partner, that partner is supportive, knows who you are, and appreciates who you are”. Another participant also credits their husband, “I have a supportive spouse.” One participant summed up how important having a supportive spouse is to the success of a Director.

I think it’d be hard if you didn’t have a supportive spouse. I think if you had an unsupportive spouse and you really wanted to get to be Director, you’d have to get rid of that spouse. At the risk of sounding kind of cold hearted about it, if your intent is to do that and this person is not supportive - this is an albatross around your neck. You have to get rid of them. When you look around there’s a fairly high divorce rate among Superintendents and Directors. A lot of them are recycled. People are often on their second or third partner or spouse. Ones who understand what it is before they get into it. It’s not unusual. It’s less usual in the Catholic
This participant emphasized the importance of having a supportive spouse. She stated that non-supportive spouses are usually “gotten rid of” by Directors. This participant elaborated that there is a fairly high divorce rate among Superintendents and Directors, a statement which is unable to be confirmed through this research. Though none of the participants noted their current spouse was from their second or third marriage, I did not inquire about divorce during my interviews. Therefore, it is possible that the marriages participants spoke of were not their first. One participant referred to their spouse as their “current husband” and another called herself the “second wife.” Neither of these points prove anything. I mention them only to demonstrate that one of the participant’s points may have validity, perhaps there is a “fairly high divorce rate among . . . Directors”. The degree of accuracy of the claim that Directors have higher than average divorce rates is a potential area for future research. Regardless as to which marriage (first, second, third etc.) Directors were in, if participants were married, their current partner was understanding of the demands of their role which helped facilitate their ability to do their job well. “I would say that my husband . . . has been very instrumental in my ability to do my job and be a mother and have a happy and functional family”. Another participant echoed this point, “I’ve been in a great partnership for a very long time. I tell everybody that I would never do what I’m doing if I didn’t have the sanctuary of my family”. At the point of the interviews many of the Directors’ partners were currently retired. Most participants indicated that their partners had less demanding jobs than they did, although one indicated their partner had as demanding a job as hers. Behaviours that accompanied the description of a supportive spouse involved helping at home and/or with children, the details of which will be outlined in the next sections. Gender was not brought up when discussing supportive spouses. It is important to note that all Directors in the study, in current relationships at the time of the study, were in heterosexual relationships. This was never specified by participants, suggesting a potentially heteronormative culture of education.
6.5.2. Strategies for managing housework.

It is not surprising, given their demanding careers, that participants had strategies in place for managing housework. One participant pointed out that all the hours spent at the office take a toll on her ability to manage all of the other aspects of life, such as what happens at home.

You put in an awful lot of hours and you juggle things all the time. Like everyday is a juggling of, ok who can I talk into picking up my dog at the groomers? That’s the thing that’s going to fall off the point today. It’s a constant everyday juggling between what’s happening at work and what needs to happen at home.

Some participants noted that their partners often pick up the “slack” in terms of managing the household. In reply to whether household work is approximately 50/50, a participant said, “I think he does a bit more.” Another said, “He does the grocery shopping, he took care of the kids, he drove them to school, he picked them up. I did none of that”. Another participant responded to clarify how helpful her partner was. In noting why her partner has been able to pick up the parts of managing the house that she is not able to complete, another participant said, “I’ve always had a partner that is available.” Each participant made clear their appreciation for their spouse, often reporting being very “lucky” that their partner is supportive.

Another participant noted the pressures of managing work and home life and how she handled them without relying on her partner to “pick up the slack”.

Ok there are pressures in terms of the job and there are pressures if you’re part of a household. I’m part of a household. So a strategy that I said to my current husband was “Look, I’m going to be a Director. I do appreciate that household responsibilities are half and half. My half will be performed by paying for it. So I will not mow the lawn. I am not going to do the garden. I’m quite prepared to hire a landscape architect. I am not going to shovel the snow. I am quite prepared to hire a person that shovels the snow. I am not prepared to come home at eleven o’clock at night and start cleaning, and cleaning toilets, and mopping floors. I will hire a cleaning lady.”

Other participants also mentioned contracting out work, such as cleaning. “I’ve always had a house cleaner,” claimed one participant; “I’ve got a cleaning maid” stated another; both clarified that they help with cleaning in between the professional cleanings.
Though focusing on housework was not a major component of this study, strategies surrounding how Directors managed balancing work and home life emerged when Directors were asked about which supports helped them along their path to leadership. Strategies for managing housework included having help from a supportive spouse or from a contracted employee such as a housekeeper. None of the participants discussed gender in describing strategies surrounding how they managed balancing work and home life. I will next share strategies regarding balancing work life and parenting, which also emerged during interviews.

6.5.3. Parenting Strategies.

Almost all participants in this study had children. Unfortunately due to the very revealing nature of these sections of participants’ interviews and the concern of participants about anonymity, I have chosen not to use direct quotes in this section of the findings. Rather, I will use more general descriptions of the data set.

Many of the participants with children noted having had their children later in their lives. In many cases, this meant that their professional “climb” had already been well on its way at the point participants had children. Though not a conscious strategy, participants noted, having children once a person has already reached a position of added responsibility may have been something that helped these women reach the highest level of leadership in their school boards. In the cases in which participants had already achieved a position of added responsibility at the time they had their first child, many noted a benefit that their children had only known them as a busy professional and therefore did not know any different.

Some participants were older at the time of this study, meaning they had their children decades ago, at a time when maternity leaves were much shorter (e.g., three months). By minimizing the amount of time a woman was away from work, shorter maternity leaves may have minimized the effect a maternity leave could have on the participant’s career climb. So although this was not a conscious strategy that participants reported, shorter maternity leaves may have helped some participants. Sharing maternity
leave with a spouse was something that younger participants did mention and could be considered a more conscious strategy that facilitated a Director’s ability to manage having children and being in a demanding professional position, again by way of shortening their time away from work.

None of the Directors interviewed mentioned a full time paid childcare provider, such as a nanny. A common theme among Directors with children was a supportive spouse or other supportive family members who assisted substantially with childcare. None of the Directors mentioned anyone not related to them, who assisted substantially in this area. All Directors who relied on the support of their spouse or other family for assistance in caring for their children, expressed gratitude for having had such understanding and supportive people in their lives.

This section has summarized key data surrounding strategies related to childcare as reported by participants. Strategies included having children once the Director had already reached a position of responsibility; taking shorter maternity leaves (with or without their partner taking a complementary paternity leave); and having a supportive spouse or supportive family who assisted substantially with childcare. This section was part of a larger section of this chapter which described strategies used by participants to help them manage work and home life. I will next provide a chapter summary before moving on to the chapter six.

6.6. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I outlined strategies participants described using to manage pressures associated with leadership. I began this chapter by outlining themes identified regarding the way in which women Directors of Education responded to a series of questions surrounding the pressures of leadership. Specifically, I summarized pressures reported by Directors of Education as a result of the board of trustees, board staff (including system staff and school staff), the public and church clergy. Pressures experienced as a result of the Board of Trustees included: the pressure to be a passive “figurehead” Director (in two instances); the pressure to allow Trustees to have a say in
hiring; the pressure to get trustees to understand decision making from an educator’s perspective (rather than a politician’s perspective); and finally, the pressure to fulfill the board’s strategic plan. Pressures experienced as a result of Board Staff included: the pressure to guide others through serious issues surrounding discrimination; the pressure to understand childcare issues affecting people’s work; and the pressure to allow others in the school board to treat the Director as a “big deal.” Pressures experienced as a result of The Public included: the pressure to acquiesce to the desires of parents formerly dealt with in other roles in the school board (e.g., as principal); and the pressure to make socially accepted decisions. Pressures experienced as a result of the Church Clergy included: the pressure to remain positive about all aspects of the Catholic Church and the pressure to serve on various committees as a leader; as well as the pressure to work within a specific set of parameters defined by religious text.

The remainder of the chapter focused on strategies Directors described using to manage the various pressures of leadership. The following categories were used to summarize strategies participants described using to manage the pressures of leadership: Strategies for Personal Success; Micropolitical Strategies in the Workplace; and Strategies for Managing Home Life and Professional Life. Strategies for Personal Success included strategies that affect the leader directly, and were sub-categorized into Self-awareness, Self-care, and Self-protection. Self-awareness included reflection and knowing one’s true self. Self-care included acceptance of one’s limitations, taking care of one’s health, and protecting oneself from burnout. Self-protection included not mixing business with pleasure and acting with a standard of care. Micropolitical Strategies in the workplace included Managing relationships, Managing conflict with others/making difficult decisions and Managing one’s leadership image. Managing relationships included collaborative decision making, maintaining an emotional bank account and finding common ground. Managing conflict with others/making difficult decisions included being firm, calling others out and being diplomatic. Managing one’s leadership image included satisfying expectations. Examples that had a fairly low personal cost were provided as well as examples that had a high personal cost. Finally, Strategies for managing home life and personal life, included participants’ descriptions of how their personal lives are set up in ways that help facilitate their professional success and were
sub-categorized into Supportive partner, Strategies for managing housework and Strategies surrounding parenting. Behaviours that accompanied the description of a Supportive spouse involved helping at home and/or with children. Strategies for managing housework included having help from a supportive spouse or from a contracted employee such as a housekeeper. Strategies surrounding parenting included having children once the Director had already reached a position of responsibility; taking shorter maternity leaves (with or without their partner taking a complementary paternity leave); and having a supportive spouse or supportive family who assisted substantially with childcare.

The next chapter, chapter seven, describes hindrances that participants identified as limiting their ability to manage the pressures of leadership and supports that participants identified as assisting their ability to manage the pressures of leadership. Affirmative Action is included as its own category and explored in terms of the way participants believed it affected their careers.
7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I summarize issues Directors of Education brought up during their interviews related to hindrances, obstacles and/or barriers that limited them in managing the pressures of leadership, as well as provisions and/or supports that aided their ability to do so. During the interviews, I specifically asked each Director about the impact the Ontario Ministry of Education’s *PPM 102: Affirmative Action policy/Employment Equity for Women Employees* of 1993 (which required all school boards to put in place employment equity plans for women) had on their career. In some cases, participants did connect their gender to hindrances that limited them in managing the pressures of leadership, as well as to supports that aided in their ability to do so. In all cases, participants realized their gender was inextricably connected to the impact *PPM 102* had on their career. I outline all of these findings as well as other important details participants included surrounding Affirmative Action in this chapter.

I begin by outlining hindrances, obstacles and/or barriers reported by participants, which I have divided into *formal hindrances* (such as, prohibitive policies and procedures etc.) and *informal hindrances* (such as, unsupportive colleagues/others and personality conflicts etc.). Next, I outline provisions and/or supports reported by participants, which I have divided into *formal supports* (such as, helpful books/courses and supportive policies) and *informal supports* (such as, mentors and supportive spouses/others etc.). Acknowledging that some participants identified *PPM 102* as a formal provision or support, and others did not, I summarize findings related to *PPM 102* separately in this chapter, after I have completed summarizing hindrances and supports reported by participants. I have chosen to approach *PPM 102*’s stated effect on participants’ careers separately in this chapter, due to its potential significance to the overall research question. I conclude this chapter with a summary before moving into chapter eight, the discussion chapter.
7.2. Hindrances reported by participants

When asked whether there were any formal or informal hindrances, obstacles, or barriers that limited their ability to manage pressures associated with leadership, 50% of participants (6), said no. This was surprising. Of the 50% of participants (6) who said yes, 3 noted formal barriers and 3 noted informal barriers. In this section, I will include the examples provided by each participant who indicated there was a barrier. I will begin with the examples of formal hindrances and move into informal hindrances.

7.2.1. Formal Hindrances

During interviews, I described formal hindrances, obstacles and/or barriers as “prohibitive policies or procedures.” One participant described needing credentials, specifically Additional Qualification (AQ) or Principal Qualification Program (PQP) courses, despite having already worked in the position that required the credentials. She described finding the courses unhelpful. “I have been in that position where I’ve had to do some busy work, what I would call busy work, to jump through hoops when I’ve already had a position”. Instead this participant offered the suggestion, “We should recognize and honor the experience that people have had and then challenge them in new ways because we get better leaders out of that.” Another participant described a specific incident that hindered her on her climb to leadership:

I wanted to take my principals course and I got into the [principal] pool before [an influential male colleague] got in the pool. He was very angry and [because of his influence] the executive passed a rule that they would not pay for anyone’s PQP qualifications as part of the course subsidy going forward. I was the first person impacted by that.

This participant had reinstated the old policy when she became Director but was still very fervent when speaking about the incident from years before.
Another participant noted the confidential nature of the information a Director is privy to, causing them to feel isolated, noting as a Director the isolation comes not only in the role and who you can talk to internally, but [also externally], so they’re very few people that I could go to outside of the circle because everything was hot – confidential…. You are privy to a vast amount of information from budget information to the situations of people and you don’t have the privilege to talk about that and nor should you. That barrier would be the isolation and lack of network support.

This participant felt limited by how few people she was able to consult with, or even vent with, as a Director. Even though there were times this participant would appreciate another’s insight on a budget issue or a “people issue,” she was aware that she needed to handle these issues alone because everything was confidential.

Another participant discussed struggling to interpret the Education Act, given its vagueness.

This lack of clarity in many policies and many laws that we would like to see firmed up and they’re like that because laws are sometimes intentionally left to be vague so they can be interpreted over the practice and by legal outcomes. And so I understand that, I’ve been around the block a few times, but it makes our job that much more challenging when you’re dealing with legislation or policy that is vague and people can interpret in many different ways and the challenge is to interpret it in ways that meet the needs of the organization. Of course it would help if it were clear-cut but life isn’t like that, it’s kind of messy, right?

This participant was very aware of the reasons the Education Act was vague but still felt that having a more clear cut legislation or policy would be helpful in her job. She felt challenged by the need to interpret the Education Act “in ways that meet the needs of the organization.”

Each of these participants understood the reasons such formal policies/procedures were in place, yet still felt the formal policies/procedures limited their ability to manage the pressures of leadership. Participants did not connect the hindrance these formal policies and procedures caused as connected to their gender.
7.2.2. Informal hindrances

During interviews I offered the following examples of informal hindrances, obstacles and/or barriers: unsupportive spouses and/or unsupportive bosses. In some interviews where more clarification was needed, I offered more elaborate examples of informal hindrances, obstacles and/or barriers such as personality conflicts with colleagues. Four examples that emerged during the interviews with Directors of Education were personality conflicts. One participant described a group that she felt did not support her in her professional ambitions.

I have had women that can be quite catty. Sometimes it’s the women that want you to fail more than the men... Typically it has been women that are more traditional types of women. Whereas you shouldn’t be the principal, you shouldn’t be the superintendent, you shouldn’t be the Director - it should be a man because that’s traditionally what education has been.

This participant worked in a Catholic school board, which may have something to do with the more traditional thoughts she described women having had. Regardless, this participant felt it was women, more than men that wanted her to fail. Obviously gender was connected to this informal hindrance the participant described. Another participant noted that you realize who your true friends are when you enter a leadership position.

I’ve learned over time that I like to keep professional and personal lives as separate as possible. I had a friend [who worked at the board]; I helped her go through cancer, did lots for her... [but] the school [that she worked at] wasn’t finished on time... There were some things that weren’t finished at [her] school and she would talk to me about [the unfinished school and how it was inconveniencing her] for a year. And that hurt deeply. [I] held [her] hand with chemo and cleaned [her] house, travelled with [her]; and then for her to make a decision I made and [act as though] I made it just to make her life miserable. I learned that as I moved into my leadership roles that my friends became a very, very small group of people.

One participant had a particularly difficult relationship with her Board of Trustees, which she felt was caused by the high turnover on her Board of Trustees and greatly hindered her ability to do her job effectively.

During my tenure I’ve worked with four chairs and three vice chairs in three years. So seven different people in three years. So [having time to establish relationships] is part of building that network...that’s important. So some of the other women directors you may have talked to probably had a longer time [to] build that support.
Another participant described a situation in which she put forward a proposal to inquire into an observed gender issue within public education but faced a lot of push back from some of the men who defended their position by predicting that in five years there would hardly be a male director left in the system, and that other diversity initiatives were more important. They cited the very few number of Directors, Superintendents, and even Principals, of “colour,” and also stated their view that there was already a preponderance of female Superintendents and Principals in many boards. These men were articulating their belief (fear) that men were becoming fewer and less powerful in school boards. They believed that other diversity initiatives were more important to invest in because of this. In this situation gender was connected to the informal hindrance the participant described. In all of these situations, the participants persevered and eventually got what they were working towards although they felt that the experiences hindered their climb to leadership in some way. In the next section, I will outline provisions or supports participants noted helped them on their climb to leadership.

7.3. Supports reported by participants

When asked whether there were any formal or informal provisions and/or supports that aided participants’ ability to manage pressures associated with leadership, 100% of participants (12) said yes; 58% of participants (7) identified formal provisions and/or supports, 100% of participants identified (12) informal provisions and/or supports. In this section, I will summarize supports that were mentioned, as well as, include select examples from participants who indicated there was a support in place that helped them. I will begin discussing formal supports reported by participants and move into informal supports reported by participants.
7.3.1. Formal supports

During interviews I offered the following examples of formal provisions and/or supports: policies, books, courses and/or professional development. When asked “What formal supports helped you in managing [the] pressures [associated with leadership]?”, three participants noted that Affirmative Action (*PPM 102*) was a formal support that helped them navigate their leadership path. I discuss those responses in greater detail in the final section of this chapter that formally addresses *PPM 102*. In addition, four participants noted educational opportunities as having helped them manage the pressures of leadership. For example, one participant noted, “I would say that in a formal way - education, education, education. I give credit to all of my teachers. I always thought I was so lucky to be in school; elementary, secondary, great university experiences and then continuing to learn”. The other three participants mentioned executive level education as being transformative for them later in their administrative career. Notably some of these experiences were outside education that specifically surrounds educational administration. For example, one participant described a transformational learning experience at Harvard Kennedy School of Public Policy in which she worked with professionals from various other fields outside of education. This participant felt an outside perspective enriched her ability to work within education.

7.3.2. Informal supports

During interviews I offered the following examples of informal provisions and/or supports: supportive spouses, colleagues, mentors etc.. Participants were very enthusiastic in sharing their informal support systems that had aided in their ability to manage the pressures of leadership. For example, when asked one participant declared, “Oh yes! And thank you for asking that!”.

Every participant mentioned at least two informal supports. Overall informal supports included: supportive partners, parents and families; mentors; encouraging educators (during graduate school or executive education); having female role models; supportive colleagues and supportive members of the public. Notably, having female role
models was the informal support most connected to participants’ gender. Mentors were a strong theme throughout participant responses. One participant describes why she felt mentors were so important to those in educational leadership,

I had really terrific mentors all along. Nobody really gets where they’re going without a good mentor . . . that would be both genders. You have to have a good mentor in education to open doors for you. They can’t walk you through but they can teach you what to do and what not to do. And prevent you from making stupid mistakes. So you do have to have good mentors.

Clearly this participant felt strongly about the role mentorship played in her success. She noted that both men and women had mentored her throughout her career, opening doors for her and preventing her from making “stupid mistakes.” Another participant echoed this sentiment.

In terms of formal [supports], I’ve always had really good mentors. I have had people be really supportive and have encouraged me even when I didn’t think I was up to the job or I wouldn’t have even considered it. They saw the potential before I even did. I wouldn’t be in this position if it hadn’t been for two individuals in particular. I said “are you crazy, I couldn’t do that” and I’ve tried to be that for people.

One participant’s principal was her first formal mentor. “I was fortunate to have a female principal who was doing a really good job and so the job was appealing and you’re thinking, yeah I could do that”. For this participant, having a female role model and mentor made envisioning her own ability to do the job more possible.

Family was commonly mentioned as an informal support that assisted in participants’ professional success. Parents often helped with childcare, which freed participants’ to dedicate extra time to their jobs

My spouse and I were fortunate to have my parents when my children were growing up. They’ve always been there to pick up where I wasn’t able to be there. I always knew that there was a safety net there. So I could afford to give that little bit of extra time at night. I didn’t have to run off to daycare to pick them up at night or pay the extra money. I honestly don’t know how single parents do it nowadays that we don’t have that support network. Or even couples that don’t have an extended family. It’s very difficult. I was very lucky in that regard – that is what’s made it much easier for me… [my parents] were always caregivers when I wasn’t there to be. They were always there to take them to school or pick them up or the bus will
drop them off at my parent’s house. They were very significant in [my children’s] lives.

Another participant echoed gratitude for their parents’ support. “My parents were very supportive. And my parents would keep my kids because my husband at that time worked shift work so my parents were there to support me.” Another participant brought up her mother and sisters as being very strong supports. “My mother and my sisters…I mean my husband was too in a busy and demanding career. And we were just very fortunate that we lived in fair proximity to my mom, which of course was a deliberate decision.” For these participants, support came in the form of providing relief from their family responsibilities to dedicate more time to their jobs.

One participant’s response summarizes well the responses of most,

Supportive spouse - I would say a very supportive family. And a mentor to talk about some of the policies and situations [you face]. I have a couple of good colleagues that I could turn to. The most important support wasn’t that. It was people who would send me [messages] from a wide range in the landscape, just a simple [message of support]. I would say my immediate office staff and exec assistants were the greatest support because they could read the rhythm of your day and your emotions. So that immediate circle in terms of a circle of support is critical.

This participant recognized the importance of “a circle of support,” that is, support from various sources. She noted her circle of support including a supportive family, supportive mentors, supportive colleagues, as well as, her immediate office staff and her executive assistants. Beyond these supports, this participant was appreciative of simple messages of support from more those more distant from the situation (such as the public or leaders in other sectors). Another participant also alluded to a circle of support.

Informally I’ve had tremendous support from people. I gave you the example of the principal who kept knocking at my door. Tremendous support from previous directors, from the Ministry of Education folks that I worked closely worked with when I was in student success. From the superintendent who hired me as an assistant superintendent and said, you should be a superintendent. You know, people have been highly, highly supportive and I mentioned to you that I’ve been in a great partnership for a very long time. I tell everybody that I would never do what I’m doing if I didn’t have the sanctuary of my family so that for me is…that’s how I keep going. I recharge, it’s spending time with my family.
For one participant, a network of support was particularly important to women. She noted “And I know this is true for men and for women but it’s more true for women – is that you need to have that network of support.” Other participants relied more heavily on some supports over others. All participants recognized the value of informal relational supports in helping them manage the pressures associated with leadership.

This section has outlined formal and informal provisions and/or supports participants noted helped them manage the pressures associated with leadership. The next and final section of this chapter discusses PPM 102, and the effect participants saw PPM 102 having on their career success.

7.4. PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees

Recall that according to Bacchi (1996), Affirmative Action referred to “proactive measures undertaken to create a non-discriminatory work environment” (p. 17). One of my goals during the study’s interviews was to determine whether, from the perspective of Directors of Education, PPM 102 was seen as effective in creating a non-discriminatory work environment which, even after the policy was removed in 2009, helped facilitate their leadership success.

Of the 12 participants, 4 indicated PPM 102 did not have any influence on their career, 7 indicated that PPM 102 may have had an indirect effect on their careers, and 1 indicated that PPM 102 had a direct effect on her career. As such, I have organized this section into the following categories: No effect, A possible indirect effect and A direct effect. In the next section, I will outline explanations provided by participants that fell into each of these categories.

7.4.1. No effect

One third (four) of all participants did not believe that PPM 102 had any effect on their own career success. Some participants were older at the time of being interviewed
and had been promoted long before 1993, when PPM 102 was implemented. For example, one participant was promoted to a superintendent position in the late 80’s, and when asked whether affirmative action had any effect on her career her response was,

No that was ages ago! NO! I don’t think that was helpful at this level …I’m sure it was helpful to many people in many areas. It was neither helpful nor prohibitive because once you get into senior management it’s about competency. You cannot have quotas based on gender in senior management. You might be able to have that in some jobs, but the person whom you work for has to sleep at night. I would not hire anybody based on any of those isms, because I didn’t have such and such kind of a person. I would hire the best person.

Not only did this participant not believe Affirmative Action had helped her in any way, she expressed a skepticism that Affirmative Action could effectively be used to hire for senior leadership positions. When I asked this same participant whether she recalled the Affirmative Action movement in the 90’s, she explained her role in helping to develop Affirmative Action plans.

I remember it because I had a committee and I developed policies and an implementation plan . . . And we – I can’t remember what was in my plan but it had to do with increasing the number of women administrators in the secondary path because that is where we didn’t have them . . . So I got more women into being high school principals, which was a job class which was under represented by the female gender.

Two other participants brought up timing. After one participant replied that Affirmative Action policies had not helped her in her career success, she elaborated,

I seem to always be just far [enough] ahead of the curve that things are developed after I’m already there. My whole career has been like that . . . Yeah, and see that would really bother me if I got hired because I was a woman. If everything was equal and I got hired because I was a woman, I would rather not have been hired.

The other participant claimed, “In my situation, there were not any Affirmative Action policies in place. And, I certainly would want to have been hired to be a leader based on my skills and experience, not because I am of a certain gender . . .”. For these participants, the idea of being hired because of their gender was not a welcome idea.

One participant was first promoted just a few years prior to PPM 102 beginning. When I asked whether any grass roots movements, which led to the Affirmative Action
movement, had perhaps helped her, she said, “honestly it didn’t [researcher].” When I elaborated, asking whether she may have been aware of the movement as a vice principal or principal and asked to “tap” appropriate women candidates and suggest they begin the leadership training to become a principal, she replied,

No. It was always, “what’s the criteria?” And that is where I loved when the frameworks came in because [before that] our criterion wasn’t that clear. And I think that we have made great strides . . . and I think that we can improve them but just the idea that there are actually some specific knowledge, skills and practices that you expect of a school and system leaders – is really a very, very good thing.

This comment emphasizes this particular participant’s belief that leadership frameworks, rather than any sort of Affirmative Action movement, should guide hiring processes. For each of these participants, in addition to rejecting the notion that Affirmative Action could have helped them in their career success, they each expressed a preference for a meritocratic approach to hiring, over any Affirmative Action movement.

7.4.2. A possible indirect effect

Though indicating a specific occasion during which Affirmative Action helped their career was not easy for most participants, the majority - 56% - of participants reported that in some way, perhaps indirectly, Affirmative Action policies likely helped them in their career. For example, one participant reported,

It might have at very senior-level because it would've brought awareness . . . It brings a level of awareness to say the senior team and the Director that perhaps wasn't there before, but I don't have a recollection of me benefiting directly from for Affirmative Action strategies.

Another participant echoed the point that Affirmative Action policies bring awareness.

It would be hard to say but I’m a big believer in having the frameworks in place to support the work so I would say policy is really important for that . . . I think that having a framework in society to move our thinking along - because it takes a long time to move our thinking along - It’s really helpful. So [Affirmative Action] really in the background, supported me along the way.
This participant believes that frameworks, such as the leadership frameworks (which guide the work of educational leaders), are very helpful in changing the way people think about an issue. During her interview, she compared leadership frameworks to Affirmative Action policies, in that, though they are helpful, these frameworks and policies do not entirely resolve all issues surrounding leadership. This participant acknowledged that the policy likely supported her all the way along her leadership journey by changing (progressing) the way others thought about leadership and who could be a leader. Participants in this group, who recognized Affirmative Action played an indirect role in their career success, generally replied with a comment similar to,

I don’t know if [Affirmative Action] directly helped. Certainly I don’t think that it hurt. Absolutely didn’t hurt. I know the board had Affirmative Action policies in place, as well as a steering committee and the goal at the time was to have more women principals because the board was still predominately male in that position. So certainly that must have contributed to the pathway that unfolded. But to say directly that I got to the position I got to because of Affirmative Action, I don’t think that I could say that.

This participant acknowledged that the Affirmative Action policy Ontario had in place from 1993 to 2009 “may have contributed to the pathway that unfolded,” though she did not see a direct relationship between Affirmative Action and her getting any leadership position. For women in this category, it was very important that their own merit be acknowledged. One participant claimed “I think it partially had to do with gender but also a great deal of competence.” The participants’ emphasis on their competence illustrates how central the PPM 102’s philosophy that equal ability (competence) was central, specifically, “when you have two people of equal ability you are going to give it to the woman,” was throughout its application in Ontario (English) public school boards. Very seldom were participants privy to a direct effect of Affirmative Action on their career.

7.4.3. A direct effect

Hardly any participants were able to note a direct effect between Affirmative Action and their career. In response to the question whether she would say that Affirmative Action played a role in her career success to date, one participant was clear,
Yes I would. One day my principal who was a fantastic guy - a really good mentor and supporter, and a very good leader - gave me a letter of encouragement to go into administration, saying that we need female principals and, “I’m putting your name forward to the Board. You need to do this. You’re amazing and blah blah blah.”

Many participants commonly mentioned mentorship. Of all 12 participants however, there was only 1 whose mentor directly mentioned using Affirmative Action to excel the participant’s career growth. In chapter eight, the discussion chapter, I will explore potential reasons so few participants saw a direct effect of Affirmative Action. First, I will summarize this chapter’s contents.

7.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined formal and informal hindrances, obstacles and/or barriers participants identified as having negatively impacted their ability to manage the pressures of leadership. When asked if there were any formal or informal hindrances, obstacles, or barriers, which limited their ability to manage pressures associated with leadership, 50% of participants (6), said no; of the 50% of participants (6) who said yes, 3 noted formal barriers and 3 noted informal barriers. An example of a formal hindrance a participant noted was the vagueness of the Education Act. Most examples of informal hindrances participants noted surrounded personality conflicts. Next, I outlined formal and informal provisions and/or supports that participants felt had a positive affect on their ability to manage the pressures of leadership. When asked if there were any formal or informal provisions and/or supports that assisted participants’ ability to manage pressures associated with leadership, 100% of participants (12) said yes; 58% of participants (7) identified formal provisions and/or supports, 100% of participants identified (12) informal provisions and/or supports. A common example of a formal support participants noted was educational opportunities. An example of an informal support participants mentioned were mentors. Finally, I discussed PPM 102 and the ways in which participants perceived that policy affecting their careers. Of the 12 participants, 4 indicated PPM 102 did not have any influence on their career, 7 indicated that PPM 102 may have had an indirect effect on their careers, and 1 indicated that PPM 102 had a
direct effect on her career. For those participants who indicated *PPM 102* had no effort on their career, timing was noted as a factor – meaning that *PPM102* came into effect after the participant was already in a leadership role. For those who noted that *PPM 102* may have had an indirect effect on their careers, it was very important that their competence was not questioned in this acknowledgement. For the Director who indicated that *PPM 102* had a direct effect on her career, she noted that her former leader had told her so at the time (therefore she had no doubt). The next chapter synthesizes key findings with seminal literature.
Chapter Eight: Discussion

8.1. Introduction

The purpose of this analysis was to answer the question: how have women Directors of Education managed their leadership identities in spite of pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders? In order to answer this question, I interviewed 12 Directors of Education from English speaking school boards in Ontario. In this chapter I analyze key findings from Chapters Five through Seven, making connections to the literature. First, I address the preliminary research question, connecting findings to literature. Next I connect denial, silenced voices and the power of microaggressions to key literature, followed by linking strategies connected to managing the pressures of leadership to seminal literature. Finally, hindrances, supports and Affirmative Action will be connected with important literature.

8.2. Preliminary Findings

At the forefront of this study is the overall representation of women in leadership positions. It is important to note that unlike in the past in Ontario, and more recently in the United States, women are no longer rare to see occupying the Director of Education position in Ontario. Findings from the preliminary research question in this study, *(What percentage of the Director of Education positions in Ontario’s 60 (English) publicly funded school boards have women filled since 1993?)*, revealed that in the 2016/2017 school year, women occupied 43.4% of Director of Education positions in Ontario. However, based on Tallerico and Blount’s (2004) three possible outcomes of women entering traditionally male workforces, *genuine integration, resegregation, or ghettoization*, 43.4% of women in the Directorship still does not qualify as genuine integration. Genuine integration requires an equal representation of men and women in a position, whilst the position remaining equally desirable to both genders (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Resegregation, when the movement of women into a career is met at the same time, with the exit of men, does not adequately represent the scenario of Ontario Directors of Education either. Finally, ghettoization, which essentially disguises genuine
integration by relegating females to the subcontexts or to part-time positions within a supposedly identical, desegregating field (Tallerico & Blount, 2004), does not adequately describe the situation. Only time will tell which of these three possible outcomes of women entering traditionally male workforces will adequately describe the situation of women Directors of Education in Ontario. At this point, it is fair to remain hopeful that genuine integration will occur.

8.3. Denial, Silenced Voices and the Power of Gender Microaggressions

Perhaps the most striking finding in this research is the fact that so many participants denied the existence of any form of gender stereotyping or discrimination during their journeys to becoming Director of Education. Half the participants denied discrimination, even when in their interviews they described explicit examples of gender discrimination. Additionally, many participants found themselves silenced at some point during this study or described themselves as silenced in their work as Director. Some Directors of Education were silenced by way of opting not to participate in the study, despite an original commitment to do so. For example, one participant originally committed but eventually declined stating the job of Director was “too political.” Some participants were silenced by way of limiting what content could be used from their original interview. For example, one participant requested to read any quotes that would be included in the final thesis for the purpose of approving their inclusion. After this “proof read” the participant asked that some quotes be removed/revised. Some participants were silenced by way of not speaking up against various forms of gender discrimination in the workplace despite feeling an urge to do so. For example, one participant had received unwelcomed compliments about her appearance by a principal interviewing her, but had not spoken out against these for fear of losing the job opportunity. Finally, the power of gender microaggressions was also an unexpected finding. Gender microaggressions were able to stunt a participant’s ability to recognize discrimination and/or stir doubt among participants in regards to their own ability or decision-making. In order to help make sense of these unexpected results, specific examples from the findings in this study are connected to key literature in this section.
8.3.1. Denial

As previously stated, half of the participants denied gender discrimination, even when in their interviews they described explicit examples of gender discrimination. This phenomenon - that individual members of disadvantaged groups are not likely to see themselves as discriminated against even when they have just been discriminated against - is well documented in the literature (Crosby, 1984; Hunter, 2002; Rhodes, 1991). There are two main explanations for this. Belief in a Just World (BJW) Theory explains that psychologically, people cannot accept that they are discriminated against because it is too painful. To see oneself as a victim inflicts personal cost; people could lose efficacy and self-confidence, as well as feel pressure to identify the perpetrator of injustice (Rhodes, 1991). At a subconscious level, people are much more likely to re-conceptualize the event to be a fair situation, deny the event was discriminatory, or detach themselves from the event altogether, than to see the event as one during which they were discriminated against (Wilkens & Wenger, 2014). Structural theorists argue that women are so accustomed to living in a patriarchal society that they reproduce patriarchy through their own perspective of, and actions during, various events that happen to them and to other women (Cox, 1996). Mainstreaming gender theorists argue that the postfeminist movement, a reaction to feminism, which has declared that “the most important battles have been won, and that its time to celebrate, not contest, the new forms of gender relations,” disempowers women from seeing their own discrimination (Walby, 2011).

The term second generation gender bias, is useful to help understand participant denial from the structuralist perspective; defined as “powerful, yet often invisible barriers to women’s advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently favor men” (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011, p. 2). Because participants were so entrenched in their culture, as it was their daily work environment, it may have been difficult for them to recognize discriminatory situations, instead perceiving discriminatory situations as norms or job expectations. For example, one participant reported calling in, instead of physically attending an annual meeting for Directors, because of an important family event. The
participant reported that comments were later made publicly about needing everyone present at the meeting the participant had called in to. The participant felt centred out/punished for not physically attending this meeting. This example demonstrates that in the Director of Education culture, value is placed on face time - something that women with children cannot do as easily as men (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The participant denied that this may have been gender discrimination, explaining it as a just an unwritten rule of the job. Wilkens and Wenger’s (2014) explanation would be that the participant reconceptualised the event in order to align with her belief in a just world. Structural theorists would explain that because the participant is so entrenched in patriarchal society, she accepts her work culture - which privileges men - as a norm. Mainstreaming gender theorists’ explanation would be that since specific feminist efforts to conquer gender discrimination have been politically transformed into general efforts towards gender blindness, the participant no longer sees gender discrimination as a possibility (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Walby, 2011). It is also possibly true that because I interviewed women who made it to top leadership positions, those women did not experience discrimination in the same ways as women who did not make it to top levels of leadership.

8.3.2. Silenced Voices

The term microaggression, which discusses discrimination on a spectrum from overt to subtle, is useful in helping make sense of participant silence. Perhaps because the discrimination described in these interviews was generally, not overt, but rather very subtle, participants were not confident that the individual instances of discrimination would be validated as discrimination, or if rather she might be thought to be petty, or to be “making things up,” and so just let the instance of discrimination go? In general, discrimination needs to be blatant to be to be viewed as discrimination (Basford et al., 2014).

An example of a participant whose voice was silenced in this study is the participant who was warned that speaking up against the discrimination she saw in the
school board would have negative consequences professionally. Notably, this participant was in the Directorship – the top position in the school board - at the point that this occurred. The fact that this participant did not have the freedom to speak out when she was ultimately, the person occupying the most powerful position in the school board is very telling. One can wonder whether there are other important issues that this participant is unable to speak out about. According to Morrison and Milliken (2000), silence in the workplace is pervasive, especially surrounding highly sensitive topics such as gender discrimination (Piderit & Ashford, 2003), and therefore it is not surprising that women often choose silence over speaking out (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Piderit & Ashford, 2003). Many times managers have learned through experience that speaking out will result in negative consequences (Piderit & Ashford, 2003). In this example, the person who warned the participant had learned through their own experience that speaking out can have detrimental effects on one’s career. Therefore, the participant did not speak out, as not to face professional consequences.

Interestingly, women were also silenced in all instances that had anything to do with her physical appearance. One participant noted that a local news employee had commented on her wearing the same colour too often. The same participant had noted hearing comments connecting a lack of intelligence to having blonde hair. This participant clearly understood these were sexist comments that held women to a different standard than men and even explained her own sense of responsibility to speak out against these subtle forms of sexism in order to stand up for her young female students. Still, this participant did not speak out against these comments, noting speaking out had “gotten [her] in hot water” in the past. Frederickson et al. (1998) found that focusing on one’s appearance can affect a woman’s accomplishments by distracting her from her focus, noting that media images place “significant demands on a woman’s cognitive resources” (Fredrickson et al., 1998, p. 75) and results in decreased performance on cognitive tasks. Despite not speaking out against it, this participant exhausted a great deal of cognitive energy towards deconstructing the sexism she had experienced (and the ways in which the sexism she had experienced is linked to social pressures on young girls). Unspoken patriarchal norms are reified by not speaking out against them, and this was not lost on the participant who haboured guilt about not having spoken out against this.
Another participant had noted that her physical appearance had benefitted her when she was younger pursuing promotion. This is consistent with the finding that attractive women reap professional benefits (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Knowing the benefit her looks reaped likely played a role in her decision not to speak out when a member of the hiring committee commented on her appearance at length after an interview. Both of these participants were able to speak about the unfairness of their treatment, yet neither did anything to challenge the status quo. Noting that these silenced women were both strong, confident women leaders emphasizes the powerful and untouchable nature of patriarchal norms that can pervade work culture.

It is worthwhile to note that one participant’s comments towards me indicating that this study is offensive to her may have been an attempt to silence my research. Perhaps because of power differentials, perhaps because of shock at the situation, when this happened, I did not speak out in justification of my research. Going forward, I am hesitant to share my research with participants because of this participant’s comments to me. I struggle to know my research has offended some of the very women I aimed to give voice to through my research. Bascia and Young (2001) describe the internal conflict women in education face as “good girls: the nurturing, feminine, collaborative, and selfless woman educator” (Bascia & Young, 2001, p. 276) who work within the system, do not question the system and are appreciative to the powerful within the organization, versus, “bad girls: [girls who] take more risks by making vocal, public stands about expectations for themselves and others” (p. 276). In this case, I was questioning the status quo and by doing so, taking on the role of “bad girl.” Good girls are more likely to be rewarded professionally than bad girls (Bascia & Young, 2001), making speaking out potentially risky for one’s career. It is a very interesting (but not surprising) finding that in order to maintain a positive professional reputation, at least one participant and myself, did not speak out about issues we were both passionate about.
8.3.3. The Power of Gender Microaggressions

Recall, a gender microaggression is defined as “intentional or unintentional actions or behaviors that exclude, demean, insult, oppress, or otherwise express hostility or indifference toward women” (Basford, Offermann & Behrend, 2014, p. 341). One example of a gender microaggression from this study is when a participant described being asked by a male colleague if she had ever been discriminated against because of her gender, and when she replied “no,” he responded, “Well I sort of understand that. You’re not really a woman.” Though the participant denied being insulted or affected negatively in any way by this comment, this comment was insulting, suggesting that because she was a leader, she was not womanly, as though woman and leader are incongruent identity categories. The participant was left puzzled, trying to decipher the meaning of his statement, eventually settling on the fact that he meant she did not fit the stereotypes associated with women. Recalling Great Women Theory (Pittinsky, Bacon & Welle, 2007), it is important to remember that people have strong expectations about women’s leadership styles. Despite the fact that empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that men and women lead mostly in similar ways (Pittinsky et al., 2007), sometimes observers are “blinded by expectations” (p. 108). Thinking about this comment more critically, this colleague was passive aggressively complimenting her by saying she was not like other women, or like other women leaders, which implies there is something inherently negative (or un-leadership like) about being a woman, or being a woman leader – identity categories to which she belongs. Given that a woman’s ability to effectively develop and manage her identity as a leader is negatively affected by pressures associated with stereotypical social expectations of women (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a), it is easy to see how this comment could have instigated identity issues for the participant.

Leadership identities are constructed with the purpose of appeasing others to gain others’ acceptance, and therefore a leader may change their behavior based on another person’s response to them as a leader (Bauman, 2004; Goffman, 1959; Lumby, 2009). Because leadership is still predominately perceived as a male domain (Blackmore, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Grogan, 1996; Lumby, 2009; Reynolds, 2002a;
Schein, 2001), it increases the difficulty with which a woman is able to create and manage her leadership identity (Butler, 2004; Lumby, 2009). In this case, the participant received positive feedback for her leadership but negative feedback for her womanhood. This could lead the participant to believe that in order to continue receiving positive feedback as a leader, she must downplay her femininity, or subvert her communal attributes (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This is a common conundrum according to literature. Agentic characteristics such as being independent, dominant, commanding and controlling are associated with leadership, *but also with men* (Eagly & Carli, 2007). It is likely that in her role as leader, this participant was displaying agentic characteristics. Collard and Reynolds (2005) argue that leadership is an act of the body and a leader and their actions cannot be disassociated from their body. Women who garb or behave as men, or who aim to ignore one’s female gender, presenting an androgynous image, break traditional “gender scripts,” and are perceived as trouble (Blackmore, 2011; Butler, 2004; Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Wallace, 2002). Therefore, although this colleague may have been satisfied with the participant’s behavior as a leader, another colleague may find her leadership behaviour troublesome, perceiving it as “too manly”. The term “double bind” is used to explain the phenomenon that women leaders who are too agentic may be criticized for not demonstrating enough communal traits, while women leaders who are too communal may be criticized for not demonstrating enough agentic traits (Eagly & Carli, 2007). It would seem this participant found herself stuck in this bind, yet denied it. It is also possible that this participant aligned with philosophies of gender blindness and postfeminism and therefore did not have the philosophical tools to make sense of this experience (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Walby, 2011).

This section has helped make sense of denial, silenced voices and the powerful nature of gender microaggressions by synthesizing unique examples from the study with key literature. The next section will discuss the pressures associated with leadership and the strategies used to manage those pressures.
8.4. Pressures Associated with Leadership and the Strategies used to Manage Said Pressures

After clarifying that gender had little to do with the pressures they experienced in their work, participants described four main groups who act as a source of pressure; as Directors are always attempting to manage these groups’ expectations: The board of trustees, board staff (system staff and school staff), the public and church clergy (for Catholic boards). Findings discussed here emphasize the importance of considering all three themes of leadership – the role of the individual leader, the group context in which leadership occurs, and the societal context in which leadership occurs - in understanding one’s leadership strategies. Though looking at the role of the individual leader has its uses, this perspective of leadership often fails to tell the whole story (Ryan, 2010). Two contrasting examples from this study, surrounding Directors’ interactions with their board of trustees, highlight the importance of understanding the group context in which leadership occurs when attempting to understand a leader’s actions. One participant described her interactions with her board of trustees as wrought with conflict. She described a situation in which her board of trustees expected her to be a passive figurehead who allowed them to do exactly as they pleased. As social expectations can affect a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity (Butler, 2004; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009), it is easy to understand why when this participant could not meet the expectations of her board of trustees, while meeting her own expectations for herself as Director, she experienced negative emotions and stress. One’s identity creation as a leader can spiral either positively or negatively (Ely et al., 2011). When a leader receives positive feedback (from those they are leading), they feel validated in their leadership, their self-image improves, increasing one’s confidence and motivation to continue leading and pursue new leadership ambitions. Affirmations from others solidify a leader’s leadership identity, fueling their leadership success (Ely et al., 2011). On the opposite end of the spectrum, receiving negative feedback from those one is leading diminishes one’s confidence; their self-image is negatively affected, as are their ambitions to pursue new leadership opportunities ultimately weakening a leader’s leadership identity (Ely et al., 2011). In this example, the inability of the Director to
satisfy the expectations of the board of Directors had negative effects on her leadership identity.

Another Director had a very different experience with her board of trustees. She described having a strategic plan for the board, which the board of trustees expect her to lead the organization to accomplish. In this example – unlike the previous example - the expectations of the board of trustees aligned with the participant’s goals for herself as Director, therefore affirming her actions and leadership identity. Both of these examples illustrate how understanding *the group context in which leadership occurs* ultimately helps explain leadership at the individual level, emphasizing the importance of, and overlapping nature of, the three themes of leadership.

Another participant spoke about a need to ensure she was following *The Education Act* in terms of the freedoms she allowed the board of trustees. Despite the desire of the board of trustees to participate in the hiring of school principals, this participant denied trustees’ participation after turning to *The Education Act* for direction. By considering *the societal context in which leadership occurs* in this example it becomes clear that leaders are always operating within the limits of a broader societal context that imposes policies and laws a leader must adhere to. These policies and laws (the societal context) affect the group context in which a leader is working. In this case, following *The Education Act* caused some tension for the participant, as the trustees were upset to be cut out of the hiring process. Ultimately, this example helps demonstrate that understanding leadership from *the societal context in which leadership occurs* helps explain the role of the individual leader. In this case, the leader’s strategies changed based on broad policy she was obligated to adhere to.

In discussing their interaction with board staff one participant described feeling pressure to help staff members that came to her with complaints of feeling discriminated against. This pressure competed with other pressures associated with the position of Director and the participant was not always able to help, which caused her distress given she felt great responsibility to do so. *The societal context in which leadership occurs* and the staff in this situation was working in (Ontario public sector), is one in which
discrimination in a place of employment is not tolerable because of policies such as The Human Rights Act. Tucker et al. (2005) note that changes at a global level, such as technological advances, have created self-sufficient and empowered employees (p. 20). Like Blackmore (1999) notes that in Australia emerging inclusive discourse affected opportunities available to women and that “gender equity politics” gradually emerged as a result; in Ontario, Canada, inclusive policies and discourse has created “equity politics”. The pressures staff members were putting on the Director were impacted by the societal context in which they worked. This resulted in the Director experiencing negative emotions. As noted, emotions can motivate an individual to change their behavior as they did in this case (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). The fact that some of this participants’ employees felt discriminated against by other employees meant that the group context in which leadership occurs required sensitivity and equity awareness, thus changing the priorities of the individual leader. Relationships and the communication process are very important within the group context (Ryan, 2010), and in this case, they became the participant’s focus.

Another participant explained that she felt she was expected to be understanding and compassionate with staff that were mothers, because she was a mother. This created some conflict for her between managing the various priorities and responsibilities of the position of Director. The double bind – the phenomenon that women are expected to be communal, but not too communal; and agentic, but not too agentic (Eagly & Carli, 2007) – helps explain this participant’s inner conflict. Demonstrating communal traits such as compassion and understanding as a woman leader may lead to judgment as these characteristics contrast agentic traits often associated with leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In this situation the group context in which leadership occurs caused her to question her identity as a leader. The same is true for another participant who described feeling expected by school staff to act as though she was a “big deal” – to travel with an entourage of her team, to maximize photo opportunities with students etc. This conception of leadership - the individual leader as a “big deal” - did not align with the participant’s own conception of leadership and therefore caused inner conflict. As Ryan (2005) notes, it is helpful to understand how individuals perceive leadership because how one views leadership affects how one actualizes leadership. In this case, the participant
did not see leadership in terms of the role of the individual leader, and therefore did not travel with an entourage of her team, nor did she enjoy posing for multiple photos when she visited a school. The group context in which leadership occurs influenced the leader in this situation. The participant worried that she was disappointing staff by not meeting their expectations of her as a leader. Identity control theorists argue that “reflected appraisals” – a leader’s beliefs about other people’s opinion of her as the leader - are more important than “actual appraisals” – people’s opinions about a leader – because reflected appraisals affect the leader’s future actions (Stet’s & Harrod, 2004). In this case, the participant did rely on her “reflected appraisals” (Stets & Harrod, 2004) to determine her future behavior as she began posing for more pictures etc. to meet the expectations of those she was leading. As Lumby (2009) notes, because a leader relies on others, through reflected appraisals, a leader’s identity is always in flux.

When describing situations with the public, a few participants described tough decisions they had to make being taken negatively by the public. One participant recalled, “I’ve found that whenever I’ve moved for a direction that calls for a hard line stance. People would say, “wow I never expected that from a leader in this institution.”” Situations such as school closings, or termination of employees often sparked these sorts of reactions from the public. Catholic participants particularly felt this pressure. It is possible that in the societal context in which leadership occurs, there is an ideal of what a “good Catholic” looks and acts like, which hard line decisions go against. In this example, the societal context in which leadership occurs influences the group context in which leadership occurs by influencing the group’s opinions of what an ideal leader or ideal Catholic leader behaves like. The societal context leads to comments such as “wow I never expected that from a leader in this institution” in the group context, which can lead to a leader feeling pressure to change her leadership style. In these cases, the participant experienced the pressures (coming from the public) to be a softer leader but the participants still did what they felt was the right thing to do, demonstrating that sometimes the individual leader can withstand all external pressures and demands and do what they want. However, since leaders aim to construct, maintain, protect and boost their own worth and status as a leader others’ perceptions (Bauman, 2004; Goffman, 1959), going against expectations is a difficult task for many leaders.
When Catholic participants described their interaction with church clergy, they described several expectations from church clergy. When asked if she felt pressure in her role as Director, one participant responded “Absolutely. Very much so in a Catholic school board because you’re the Director. The local priests have a very specific view of what they want you to be.” One participant described feeling expected to never speak negatively about the Catholic faith, or anyone in the church, ever. Another participant described being expected to take leadership positions in several community organizations. From a conversation with one participant I deduced that within the Catholic school board there is an expectation to hire, and to encourage the hiring of, a specific type of person; and to work within a specific set of parameters defined by religious text. Oliver (1991) notes that organizations must be responsive to multiple external pressures. In school boards, the set of parameters defined by religious text contradicts and conflicts with other parameters defined by societal norms. For example, when I probed about equitable hiring practices – an expected norm in Ontario, Canada - in the Catholic school board, one participant explained that the Catholic Church does not recognize or accept gay marriage and therefore although the Church strives towards racial equity, there will never be equity in terms of diverse sexual orientations. Thus, within the societal context, conflicting demands exist which results in leaders needing to make choices about which they will prioritize. For a Catholic leader who values equity, and feels obligated to follow equitable hiring practices, the Catholic school board’s rejection of openly gay applicants may be difficult to support. Hannon and Bretag (2010) note that policies and discourse meant to inform practice often contrasts actual practical experiences. It is possible that some Catholic leaders do not support this belief and find ways to hire without bias/discrimination without definitively breaking the Catholic faith’s rules.

By looking at the pressures associated with four main groups of people with whom Directors interact, the board of trustees, board staff (system staff and school staff), the public and church clergy for Catholic boards, the complexity of leadership becomes clear. The three themes of leadership, the role of the individual leader, the group context in which leadership occurs and the societal context in which leadership occurs, provide a framework for considering the multiple pressures that influence a person’s leadership,
which helps understand one’s leadership strategies. By looking at the pressures associated with the four main groups of people with whom Directors interact, it also becomes clear that a leader’s identity is constantly in flux as a leader attempts to manage their own emotions and satisfy expectations to gain confidence and self-worth as a leader. Because women experience conflicting pressures associated with the double bind (the pressure to be communal, but not too communal; the pressure to be agentic, but not too agentic) this can be particularly difficult for women, as was demonstrated in this section.

8.3.1. Strategies used to manage the pressures associated with leadership

Participants had a relatively easy time articulating the strategies that they use to manage the pressures of leadership. Main strategies participants used surrounded building and managing one’s leadership identity; feeling confident; achieving some level of wellness/balance; and building and managing relationships through various circumstances.

One strategy that many participants noted was the need to know oneself as a leader, which usually came through regular reflection about one’s identity as a leader. This practice ultimately affected their ability to develop and manage their leadership identity. The response people give to a leader’s leadership identity is the key source of feedback through which a leader can read their effectiveness, and therefore it is not surprising many participants mentioned strategies surrounding building and managing one’s leadership identity. One participant noted, “I think it’s really important for leaders . . . women, to be reflective – “what am I doing and why am I doing it? Is it what I want to be doing?” - because it goes so fast.” A leader’s sense of direction stems from the leader’s ability to reflect (Dewan & Myatt, 2008). In many cases, reflection was helpful to participants. For many, reflection surrounding one’s identity as a leader helped them realize what was most important to them, which guided important decision making. As previously noted, however, one’s identity as a leader relies heavily on other’s feedback (Butler 2004; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009). Therefore, the desire to satisfy other’s expectations can compete at an interpersonal level with aiming to stay true to one’s beliefs, leaving the leader’s identity constantly in flux (Lumby, 2009; Stets & Harrod, 2004). “Receiving validation for one’s self-view as a leader bolsters self-
confidence . . . [However,] failing to receive validation for one’s leadership diminishes self-confidence” (Ely et al., 2011, p. 3) and has negative professional consequences for leaders.

Through the process of reflection, one of our participants became aware of, and uncomfortable with some inequities she realized were occurring in her school board. This participant felt a strong desire to speak out against these inequities but was warned against doing so. She described feeling there was an expectation that Directors tolerate inequities. In this participant’s experience “rocking the boat” was very much frowned upon. According to Morrison and Milliken (2000) silence in the workplace is very common, especially around highly sensitive topics. Despite knowing herself as a leader, and knowing she was strongly against inequality, this participant heeded the warning that speaking out against inequities may be professionally damaging for her, surrendering to expectations that she would tolerate inequitable treatment that occurred in the school board. In this situation, reflection and knowing oneself as a leader made managing her leadership identity more difficult because she was aware she was acting against her beliefs. Further, to those affected by the inequity and to those who wished she would speak out against the inequity, it may have looked as though this participant did not value equity. This participant found herself in a precarious leadership position, one that took a personal toll on her wellness. Ryan and Haslam (2005) identify a troublesome trend coined the “glass cliff”, a trend in which women are more likely than men to be appointed to precarious or risky leadership positions. According to the glass cliff theory, women are chosen more than men to lead organizations that are already wrought with conflict or encountering declining performance (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). People often associate the negative situation and performance to the woman leader, leaving their reputations tarnished, negatively impacting their future opportunities (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). In this case, the Director chose not to remain in the position of Director much longer largely because she came to understand her leadership identity and knew what she could and could not tolerate.

Several strategies made participants feel more confident. For example, the strategy of getting to know oneself often helped participants feel more confident. One
participant used reflection to identify and conquer insecurity that was keeping her from being the best leader she could be. Berkovich and Eyal (2015) note that reframing can be used to cope with negative emotions. Other participants found that knowing one had made the moral and/or ethical decision and/or the decision that was “best for kids,” provided great comfort to participants, often helping them feel more confident when they made decisions, even if the decision was not popular. One participant noted, “Knowing and sticking to what’s best for the kids, what is the moral position in the decision . . . That always, always gave me confidence.” When participants knew they had done their due diligence, followed the law and The Education Act, they felt more justified making decisions. Additionally, having collaborated on decision making made participants feel they were speaking for many and not just themselves, which gave them confidence. It is not surprising participants had so many strategies centering around feeling confident, since women often lack confidence in leadership positions when compared to men (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Pigford & Tonnson, 1993; Sandberg, 2013).

Many strategies focused around achieving wellness/balance through the use of strategies to balance work and home life. Strategies such as contracting out home responsibilities such as cleaning and lawn-care; leaving the office at a reasonable hour; prioritizing one’s workout; getting enough sleep; living close to family who can assist with childcare; choosing a supportive partner; and splitting the maternity leave with one’s partner, all centered around prioritizing one’s wellness. Bascia and Young (2001) note that career and family compete for the urgent attention for women in education far more than for men in education. Therefore it is not surprising that top-level women leaders in education had many strategies for balancing home life and work life. Many participants expressed a pressure to “do it all.” Despite these strategies, some participants still mentioned struggles surrounding attempting to upkeep this balance. Bianci and Milkie (2010) note that the pressure to do it all manifests itself in higher depression rates among working women than among working men. One participant explained, “You put in an awful lot of hours and you juggle things all the time . . . ok who can I talk into picking up my dog at the groomers? That’s the thing that’s going to fall off the point today.” One participant discussed missing her child’s birthday to attend an important meeting. One participant noted that the first activity to be sacrificed when times get too busy are those
for her wellness such as exercise and seeing friends. Notably the participant who seemed most comfortable with her work-life balance was the participant who had no children. This is consistent with the literature that finds that working women make up for their time at work by sacrificing leisure time to spend time with their children (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

One finding from this study that contrasts literature is the finding that participants noted spending less hours at home doing chores than their husbands. Many participants in this study noted how much more their husbands did around the house, even parenting the children, than participants did. All participants in this situation praised their husbands’ supportiveness and expressed sincere gratitude for having a supportive partner. Bascia and Young’s (2001) study also found that women in education praised their supportive partners. Additionally, unlike many studies that find that working women have paid help to raise their children, no participant had ever had paid help with the children, but rather relied on supportive family members. Despite the common assumption that education is a family-friendly work environment, according to the Goldin and Katz’s (2011) criteria for family-friendly workplaces, which includes the availability of maternity leave, formal part- or flex-time policies, or telecommuting, educational administration only satisfies one of the three criteria – available maternity leave. It is extremely uncommon that anyone working as an educational administrator would have part- or flex-time policies or options of telecommuting. Therefore it is not surprising that many participants noted stress surrounding balancing work and home life.

Many strategies surrounding building and managing relationships through various circumstances were disclosed during the study, illustrating that managing relationships with others was a clear priority for all participants. This is consistent with literature that emphasizes that a shift has happened in leadership towards focusing on relationship building and the group context in which leadership occurs (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Richmon, 2000; Ryan, 2005). Leaders now need to ensure they develop and employ strategies that deal with relationship building (Ryan, 2010; 2005). One of the prevalent strategies discussed this this study was collaboration. Building consensus through collaboration with the executive team was mentioned many times by participants.
Participants felt using collaboration to come to a consensus on important decisions helped build trust among their executive team, which helped strengthen the relationships between participants and their immediate team. This is consistent with leadership literature that stresses the notion of motivated, empowered groups working in collaboration, striving towards a shared vision (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Richmon, 2000; Ryan, 2005). Beyond collaboration, participants mentioned remembering small details about those they are leading and remembering to ask about those details. Some participants referred to this as building up an emotional bank account with others, referring directly to Stephen Covey’s work. This emotional bank account served to “soften the blow” when participants had to discipline a person, or make an unfavourable decision that impacted that person.

Managing conflict while maintaining relationships required careful strategizing on the part of participants. Oftentimes, participants described being firm, calling others out and being diplomatic as strategies that helped them manage conflict in their jobs. Being firm and calling others out both involve a level of transparency with those one is leading. Rather than engaging in a comfortable interaction, which skirts around issues, directly telling others what the issues are demonstrates transparency, which employees respect. One participant directly told principals not to complain about their workload, stressing the perks of their job including a high paying salary; six or seven weeks off in the summer, as well as Christmas and the March Break; and a defined benefit pension plan. Bennis, Goleman and O’Toole (2008) use the term transparency to encompass “integrity, honesty, ethics, clarity, full disclosure” (p. vii). Though not always comfortable, participants described the need to be absolutely clear in their communication. Another term for diplomacy skills could be micropolitical skills. Explained, “micropolitics is . . . about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends” (Blasé, 1991, pp. 1-2). At the core of micropolitics, is relationships. As mentioned by participants, building relationships with others can be accomplished through making regular emotional bank account “deposits.” Sometimes building these emotional bank accounts helped to form coalitions with others. One participant described the importance of making small emotional bank account “deposits” on a regular basis. “Those emotional bank accounts. If you have even a little emotional bank account with most people that
you know then you may have to draw on it.” There is a need for some level of Emotional Intelligence in both building the relationships and in delivering upsetting news to a person while maintaining a positive relationship. Emotional Intelligence includes the ability to both manage one’s own emotions and to read the emotions of others, as well as the ability for a person to deal effectively with other people’s emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Goleman, 1995). Participants discussed the need to maintain a degree of calm or level-headedness, rather than reacting emotionally. “I think there is an expectation that you’re poised and together and no matter how difficult the situation is you don’t lose it. That’s part of the role of being a leader.” Participants emphasized that managing conflict, through being firm, calling others out and being diplomatic, was made more easy when a positive relationship already existed, again emphasizing the importance of relationships.

This section has outlined main strategies used to manage the pressures of leadership that were disclosed in the interviews with women Directors of Education. Strategies surrounding building and managing one’s leadership identity; feeling confident; achieving some level of wellness/balance; and building and managing relationships through various circumstances were discussed linking examples from the study to seminal literature. The next section describes hindrances that participants identified as limiting their ability to manage the pressures of leadership and supports that participants identified as assisting their ability to manage the pressures of leadership, linking examples from the study to key literature. Affirmative Action is included as its own category, first explored in terms of the way participants believed it affected their careers then linked to key literature.

8.5. Hindrances, Supports and Affirmative Action

Participants noted various hindrances and supports which affected their ability to manage leadership pressures. One participant noted that a formal hindrance she experiences in the role of Director is the isolation she feels due to the highly confidential nature of the job. “You are privy to a vast amount of information from budget information to the situations of people and you don’t have the privilege to talk about that and nor should you.” Berkovich and Eyal (2015) found that school leaders regulate their emotions by talking with colleagues and friends – a luxury not afforded to top leaders.
Ravindran (2009) notes that isolation at the top is quite common among top-level leaders, mainly because they cannot share their fears and stresses with anyone else in the company. Another participant noted a similar isolation as a result of an informal barrier – the loss of friends. “I learned that as I moved into my leadership roles that my friends became a very, very small group of people.” Many participants echoed the concept that work and pleasure should be kept separate and that one needed to be more selective about who one’s friends were once one became a top-level leader. The literature again notes that it is common to feel lonely and at the top levels of leadership due to the fact one can no longer share one’s fears and (Ravindran, 2009). Another participant described the difficulty of interpreting *The Education Act* as a formal barrier she experienced in her position.

Many participants shared that those they were leading wanted Directors of Education to have all the answers, all the time; leaving only those at a Director’s level left to ask for assistance, again creating a feeling of isolation. Larcker (2013) notes that two thirds of CEOs do not get leadership advice *despite wanting it*, making the feeling that one has no help a common trend among top-level leaders. One participant more generally described an informal barrier - feeling that a particular group did not support her in her professional ambitions. “I have had women that can be quite catty. Sometimes it’s the women that want you to fail more then the men.” Structural theory can help provide some insight into this situation. According to structural theorists women have become so used to living in a patriarchal society, that they themselves produce sexist thinking and behaviours (Cox, 1996). Another participant described a high turnover of chairs of the board of trustees as an informal barrier, which resulted in difficulty forming relationships and/or feeling connected. This again emphasizes the importance to leaders of relationships with others; even professional relationships (rather than friendships) serve to foster a sense of belonging for the leader (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). Any one of these individual situations, or the combination of these situations could result in the feeling of isolation that one participant described. Feelings of isolation can have detrimental effects on a leader’s ability to develop and manage their leadership identity (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011).
Participants also felt a great level of support on their journeys to becoming Directors of Education. Every participant noted various supports (formal and/or informal) that helped them manage the pressures of leadership. Several participants noted their education as a formal support, which enabled them to manage many pressures associated with leadership. “I would say that in a formal way - education, education, education. I give credit to all of my teachers,” one participant noted. For others, learning came more informally through the support of their mentors. One participant said, “You have to have a good mentor in education to open doors for you. They can’t walk you through but they can teach you what to do and what not to do. And prevent you from making stupid mistakes.”

Mentorship is noted as a support in the workplace that women leaders have difficulty finding (Eagly & Carli, 2007) – this was not the case in this study. According to research, the majority of learning (70%) happens “on the job” rather than in a formal educational environment (Bruce, Aring & Brand, 1998). However, in this case both were mentioned as a support that assisted in managing the pressures of leadership. Family members (spouse, parents, siblings etc.) and other people such as colleagues etc. were also mentioned as an informal support that assisted by way of encouragement or aiding with childcare. Overall, participants showed great appreciation for any and all support they were given on their journeys to becoming Director. Having a high level of appreciation for a supportive spouse in particular is consistent with other literature about women educational leaders (Bascia & Young, 2004). The next section of this chapter discusses PPM 102, and the effect participants saw PPM 102 having on their career success, connecting these key findings to the literature to help make sense of them.

One of the most interesting informal findings of this study was that, in conversation with educators, PhD students, even with Faculty in the Department of Educational Administration in Ontario (all of whom are involved in, or closely connected to, Ontario public school boards) interested in learning more about this study, most – in fact the majority – had never heard of an Affirmative Action movement in the Ontario public school boards. It is also important to note that at no point during my coursework in an Ontario Faculty of Education Educational Administration PhD program, did PPM 102
and its role in diversifying educational administrators ever get studied or discussed. Additionally, it was very difficult to find any literature that covered this movement. The Ontario Ministry of Education has taken down the description of PPM 102 and the role it played in Ontario public school boards, compounding the difficulty of researching this policy. Given the extremely effective nature of PPM 102 – based solely on the dramatic increase in women vice principals and principals during the 1990’s – it is shocking to me that more people involved in, or closely connected to, Ontario public school boards are not aware of this movement’s role in the progress towards gender parity in Ontario public school boards. Granted the Affirmative Action movement (PPM 102) now took place over twenty years ago (1993), the extremely important role the movement played in the history of Educational Administration in Ontario public school boards should be well known. Because PPM 102 and its effect on gender parity in educational administration in the Ontario public school board is not well known, I question, very critically, why this is the case.

According to Oliver (1991), organizations must respond to competing external demands and expectations; because of this competition among multiple external demands there is a range of strategic responses organizations can take in response to these multiple pressures to conform: Acquiesce, compromise, avoid, defy and manipulate. It is possible that dependent on the degree to which movement towards gender equity was “in demand”, Ontario public school boards went from acquiesce, to compromise, to avoid, over the 23 year span since PPM 102 was initially implemented. Acquiesce - including “mimicking institutional models [and] obeying rules and accepting norms” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152) - can be thought to have happened initially resulting in the implementation of PPM 102. It is likely the external pressure to take action towards gender equity at least partially came from other institutional models and Ontario public school board’s desire to fit in to this widely occurring equity movement. Obeying rules and accepting norms that came as a result of PPM 102 likely followed. In 2009, PPM 102 ended. As gender parity among administrators became apparent in Ontario public school boards, it is possible that the Ontario public school boards moved towards the response of compromise including “balancing the expectations of multiple constituents . . . [and] negotiating with institutional stakeholders” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152). In “Mainstreaming Politics” Bacchi and
Eveline (2010) note that “mainstreaming is a commitment to guarantee that every part of an organisation assumes responsibility to ensure that policies impact evenly on women and men” (p. 20), removing any one group’s responsibility for gender equality, which arguably has made gender equality no one’s responsibility. Something more pressing than gender parity likely took precedence over *PPM 102*, once progress was apparent. A negotiation among the board of trustees *may* have occurred at this time to make the decision to remove *PPM 102* – though notably, I have no evidence of this. Finally, today it could be said that avoid is the response the Ontario public school boards use with gender parity. Avoidance involves “disguising non-conformity [and] loosening institutional attachment” (Oliver, 1991, p. 152). By not making the details on *PPM 102* publically available, the Ontario Ministry of Education disguises what action it took and is no longer taking towards gender equity. By not keeping publically accessible data that documents the gender statistics among top levels of leadership, the Ontario Ministry of Education further loosens institutional attachment to the goal of gender parity. Is it possible that Affirmative Action/Employment Equity carries such negative connotations and stigma (Abdella, 1984) that the Ontario Ministry of Education would like to distance itself as far away from Affirmative Action/Employment Equity as possible? Is it possible this data has, to date, simply not been thought to be of importance, and/or has been too difficult, or too time consuming to document? Is it possible that in the movement to mainstream gender, keeping track of gender data become less of a priority?

Of the 12 participants, 4 indicated *PPM 102* had no effect on their career, 7 indicated that *PPM 102* may have had an indirect effect on their careers, and 1 indicated that *PPM 102* had a direct effect on her career. The fact *PPM 102* is not well known among educators in Ontario public school boards may help explain why 11 out of 12 participants did not feel *PPM 102* had a direct effect on her career. If the Ministry of Education is aiming to downplay any role Affirmative Action/Employment Equity played in women leaders’ histories, because of the pervasive stigma associated with Affirmative Action/Employment Equity (Abdella, 1984), it is possible that those working in the organization understood and adopted this belief at a personal level. Because one argument against Affirmative Action/Employment Equity is that those who benefit from movements of this sort may be thought to be less competent (Moscoso et al., 2010;
Sowell 2004; Zelnick 1996), it is likely that participants did not want to identify their success directly with Affirmative Action/Employment Equity. It is also possible that since most women deny gender discrimination even when it is occurring (Crosby, 1984), participants did not see themselves as in need of Affirmative Action/Employment Equity, therefore did not see themselves as ever having directly benefitted from it. Another possibility is that school boards have adopted a gender blindness lens and that those working in the organization understood this and adopted this belief at a personal level discrediting any potential benefit an Affirmative Action movement could have had. It is also possible that participants truly did not benefit from the Affirmative Action/Employment Equity movements in their school boards.

8.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter analyzed key findings from Chapters Five through Seven, making connections to the literature. A key finding is that in the 2016/2017 school year women occupied 43.4% of the Directorship positions in Ontario public school boards. While it is too soon to determine for sure, at this point, it is fair to remain optimistic that genuine integration will describe the situation of women entering this traditionally male dominated work environment. One of the most surprising findings was that 6 of the 12 participants denied discrimination, even when in their interviews they described explicit examples of gender discrimination. Belief in a Just World (BJW) Theory helps explain this finding by explaining that psychologically, people cannot accept that they are discriminated against because it is too painful. A structuralist perspective is also useful in explaining this finding by explaining that because participants were so entrenched in their work culture, it may have been challenging for them to interpret situations as discriminatory, instead perceiving discriminatory situations as norms or job expectations (Cox, 1996). Mainstreaming gender theorists explain that since specific feminist efforts to fight gender discrimination have been politically transformed into general efforts towards overall gender blindness, the participant no longer sees gender discrimination as a possibility (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Walby, 2011). Another startling finding in this study was participants’ silenced voices by way of not participating in the study at all (despite
initially expressing a desire to do so), by revising one’s interview (to ensure one was not recognizable through commentary) or by not speaking out in the position of Director, despite expressing a desire to do so. Silence in the workplace has been noted to be pervasive, particularly surrounding highly sensitive topics such as gender discrimination (Piderit & Ashford, 2003), and therefore, to those who study this phenomenon, it is not surprising that women often choose silence over speaking out (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Piderit & Ashford, 2003).

Defined, gender microaggressions are “intentional or unintentional actions or behaviors that exclude, demean, insult, oppress, or otherwise express hostility or indifference toward women” (Basford, Offermann & Behrend, 2014, p. 341), and were commonly found in this study. One example of a gender microaggression from this study is when a participant described being asked by a male colleague if she had ever experienced gender discrimination, and when she replied “no,” he responded, “Well I sort of understand that. You’re not really a woman.” Despite the participant denying being insulted or affected negatively in any way by this comment, this comment was insulting, permeated with an underlying suggestion that because she was a leader, she was not womanly, as though woman and leader are incongruent identity categories. Since a woman’s ability to effectively develop and manage her identity as a leader is negatively impacted by pressures associated with stereotypical social expectations of women (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a), it is possible that this comment could have instigated identity issues for the participant.

When discussing pressures experienced in their work, participants ensured that gender had little to do with the pressures they experienced. Participants described four main groups whose expectations Directors aim to manage, and therefore, who act as a source of pressure: The board of trustees, board staff (system staff and school staff), the public and church clergy (for Catholic boards). In this section, the group context in which leadership occurs and the societal context in which leadership occurs revealed themselves in terms of their importance in leadership. For example, one participant described her interactions with her board of trustees as toiled with conflict. In this example, the group
context in which one leads is revealed in terms of its importance in leadership, demonstrating how expectations of others can add personal stress on the leader. As social expectations can affect a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity, (Butler, 2004; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lumby, 2009) it is easy to understand why when this participant could not meet the expectations of her board of trustees, while meeting her own expectations for herself as Director, she experienced stress. In this example, the inability of the Director to satisfy the expectations of the board of Directors had negative effects on her leadership identity. In another example, a participant described feeling pressure to help staff members that came to her with complaints of feeling discriminated against. In this example, the societal context in which one leads is revealed in terms of its importance in leadership, helping make sense of how the pressures staff members were putting on the Director were impacted by the societal context in which they worked. Discrimination in a place of employment is not tolerable because of policies such as The Human Rights Act; this resulted in a situation in which this Director’s employees did not feel they needed to tolerate the discriminatory situation in which they worked and therefore they sought their leader’s assistance in dealing with discrimination – thereby resulting in additional stress on the Director.

Main strategies participants used surrounded building and managing one’s leadership identity; feeling confident; achieving some level of wellness/balance; and building and managing relationships through various circumstances. An example of building and managing one’s leadership identity was getting to know oneself through regular reflection about oneself as leader. According to Dewan & Myatt (2008), a leader’s sense of direction stems from the leader’s ability to reflect. An example of a strategy that helped Directors feel more confident was relying on a moral stance about what is best for kids when decision making. Since women often lack confidence in leadership positions when compared to men, it was not surprising that women had strategies to conquer this (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Sandberg, 2013; Pigford & Tonnson, 1993). Bascia and Young (2001) note that career and family compete for the urgent attention for women in education far more than for men in education. Therefore, it is not surprising that many strategies focused around achieving wellness/balance through the use of strategies to balance work and home life and included hiring various sorts of help.
around the home. Finally, managing relationships with others was a clear priority for all participants which is consistent with literature that emphasizes that a shift has happened in leadership towards a focus on relationship building and *the group context in which leadership occurs* (Hackman & Johnson, 2009; Richmon, 2000; Ryan, 2005). Collaboration to build consensus with their executive team was mentioned many times by participants.

Participants noted both formal and informal hindrances that affected their ability to manage the pressures associated with leadership. One participant noted that a formal hindrance she experienced in the role of Director was the isolation she felt due to the highly confidential nature of the job. Isolation at the top is quite common among top-level leaders, mainly because they cannot share their fears and stresses with anyone else in the company (Ravindran, 2009). Participants also noted feeling a great deal of support on their journeys to becoming Directors of Education. Every participant noted various supports (formal and/or informal) that helped them manage the pressures of leadership, including supportive spouses, supportive colleagues and mentors. Having a high level of appreciation for a supportive spouse in particular is consistent with other literature about women educational leaders (Bascia & Young, 2004).

Given the dramatic increase in women vice principals and principals during the 1990’s – which *PPM 102* is credited with having instigated (Richter, 2007), it was very surprising to realize as I was completing this project how few people involved in, or closely connected to, Ontario public school boards were aware of this movement’s role in the progress towards gender parity in Ontario public school boards. This was an unexpected finding, which led me to question the powerful nature of stigma surrounding Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policies. Of the 12 participants, 4 indicated *PPM 102* had no effect on their career, 7 indicated that *PPM 102* may have had an indirect effect on their careers, and 1 indicated that *PPM 102* had a direct effect on her career. Since one argument against Affirmative Action/Employment Equity is that those who benefit from Affirmative Action/Employment Equity movements may be thought to be less competent (Moscoso et al., 2010; Sowell 2004; Zelnick 1996), it is possible that participants did not want to identify their success directly with Affirmative
Action/Employment Equity. It is also possible that a board-wide adoption of gender blindness minimized the significance of an Affirmative Action movement, which took place decades ago.

The next chapter, the conclusion chapter, the research problem is revisited, contributions to theory, as well as contributions to policy and practice are discussed, and finally limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed. The following chapter concludes by offering suggestions for future research.
Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1. Introduction
The purpose of this study is to learn how women Directors of Education manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders. In this chapter, I outline the research problem and the research purpose. I then discuss contributions to theory, as well as contributions to policy and practice. Limitations of this research are discussed, and lastly, this thesis concludes by making suggestions for areas of future research.

9.2. Research Problem
Women leaders have a more difficult time than men succeeding in leadership positions because as women develop and manage their leadership identity, women are navigating through a series of pressures that men do not need to navigate (Blackmore, 2002; Butler, 1990; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002a). Three major pressures that exist for women in leadership positions that do not occur in an equal capacity for men in leadership positions were outlined in chapter two, the review of literature chapter. The first pressure is associated with social expectation that women lead in communal ways. This pressure can pose a challenge for women leaders as they try to balance socially expected and accepted behavior for leaders (behaviors most often associated with, and expected from, men) with the socially expected and accepted behavior of women (Blackmore, 2002; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Heilman, 2001; Johanson, 2008; Reynolds, 2002a; Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier & Zuroff, 2004). The second pressure is associated with the social expectation that women who are caregivers, prioritize their family over their career. This pressure can pose a challenge for women leaders as they try to balance socially expected and accepted behavior for leaders (behaviors most often associated with, and expected from, men), and the socially expected and accepted behavior of women as caregivers. Largely, women still carry the bulk of responsibilities associated with marriage and children, despite their commitments to work outside of the
home, often resulting in detrimental effects on a women’s career (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002b). The third pressure is associated with social expectations of women as objects of beauty. The added difficulty of navigating these pressures associated with stereotypical social expectations of women, whilst trying to develop and manage one’s leadership identity, may explain why so few top-level leaders are women (Grogan, 1996; Lumby, 2009). The negative impact that the above-mentioned pressures can have on a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity has been well documented in literature (Blackmore, 2002; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Heilman, 2001; Johanson, 2008; Reynolds, 2002a; Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier & Zuroff, 2004). A better understanding of how women who have made it to top levels of educational leadership have managed pressures associated with social expectations of them, can serve to help women striving towards top levels of educational leadership to manage these pressures. This study aimed to do exactly that by exploring strategies women Directors of Education use to manage the pressures associated with social expectations of women leaders.

9.3. Research Purpose

I have approached my PhD research, this thesis included, through the lens of social justice. Much research emphasizes the pessimistic social problem of gender disparity in leadership; specifically, women are poorly represented in top-level leadership positions (Catalyst, 2013; Colorado Women’s College, 2013; Eagly & Carli, 2007, Rhodes, 2017). Yet more research reveals that, internationally, women are beginning to be recognized as assets to organizations (Catalyst, 2013). As a result, international attention is being paid to the various methods (and the method’s effectiveness) that can be used to support, develop and promote women in leadership in organizations (Catalyst, 2013). Contributing to this body of literature is worthwhile as improving women’s access to decision-making leadership positions is a matter of social justice.
Given the pressures women in other fields who are striving towards top-levels of leadership experience (Bellstrom, 2015; Butler, 1990; Centre for American Women in Politics, 2016; Colorado Women’s College, 2013; Curtis, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Lennon, 2014; National Association of Women Lawyers, 2015), I thought it worthy to explore whether women at the top level of educational leadership - Directors of Education - experienced similar pressures. Knowing that other women striving towards educational leadership could learn from women Directors of Education, my research question took shape: If women Directors of Education did experience pressures, how did they manage their leadership identity in spite of those pressures? Women Directors of Education thus became suitable research subjects for my study.

When comparing the dismal numbers of women in top levels of educational leadership internationally, to women in top educational leadership in Ontario, I began to wonder why the widespread problem of few women in top-level leadership positions was seemingly not a problem for women in education in Ontario public school boards. Closer research revealed the 1993 implementation of PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees policy. Learning that PPM 102 is credited with having increased the number of women in principal positions in the Ontario public school boards (Richter, 2007), my interest piqued as to whether this same policy could be credited with numbers close to gender parity in top levels of leadership in Ontario public school boards. Regardless of the answer, I was aware that a lot could be learned from the Ontario public school board given its effort towards gender parity by use of formal policy PPM 102: Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for Women Employees. Thus, Ontario public school boards became a suitable research context.

9.4. Implications for Theory

This research contributes to theory in four ways. This research contributes to leadership theory by building upon the long-standing recognition of the highly complex nature of leadership, and by demonstrating that pressures surrounding social expectations can influence a leader’s behavior. This research extends educational leadership theory by
studying a largely understudied group of educational leaders: women Directors of Education. More specifically, this research provides a foundation of theory for those wishing to better understand Ontario public school boards’ journey towards greater gender equity in leadership. Additionally, this research contributes to women in leadership theory by moving beyond pressures women leaders experience to exploring strategies women use to overcome those pressures, as well as by providing practical examples. Finally, this research provides depth to the Affirmative Action/Employment Equity literature by documenting one case in which an Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policy was implemented, as well as documenting the effects of said implementation as observed by those most affected by the policy.

This research contributes directly to leadership theory by reemphasizing the highly complex nature of leadership, and by demonstrating that pressures surrounding social expectations can influence an individual leader’s behavior. Today, more than ever, due to changes at a global level, such as technological advances (Gilley et al., 2009), as well as changes at the societal level, such as emerging inclusive discourse (Blackmore, 1999), leadership is becoming even more complex. The information revolution has made information accessible to many, therefore eradicating the acceptance of a previously dominant discourse that held leaders as the most informed or knowledgeable people working in an organization. As employees today are more empowered and autonomous than ever before (Tucker, Vao & Verma, 2005) - partly due to changes in dominant discourse surrounding leadership - leadership at the individual level has become less about position and power (Fritz, Brown, Lunde & Banset, 2005). This results in new social pressures on individual leaders. At the individual level leadership today is about knowing oneself as a leader and developing and managing one’s leadership identity in ways that will allow the leader to facilitate and motivate others to grow in ways that will improve their self-efficacy. As inclusive discourse became more prominent in society, women became more visible on the leadership scene. A great deal of focus has surrounded whether women behave differently in leadership roles than men. As a result, a huge amount of pressure on women leaders emerged; pressure to behave in stereotypical female (communal) ways, as well as pressure to behave in ways that align with
stereotypical leadership behaviours, which are primarily agentic (Blackmore, 2002; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely et al., 2011; Heilman, 2001; Johanson, 2008; Reynolds, 2002a; Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier & Zuroff, 2004). This has caused a great deal of strain on individual women as they develop and manage their leadership identity. This thesis extends literature on the complexity of leadership by demonstrating that gender may be an additional factor that adds to the complexity of leadership.

Educational leadership literature directly benefits from this research, as the research subject in this study, women Directors of Education, are highly unrepresented in the educational leadership literature (Grogan, 1996), especially women Directors of Education in Ontario. In this research, I aimed to answer the preliminary research question, What percentage of the Director of Education positions in Ontario’s 60 (English) publicly funded school boards have women filled since 1993? In attempting to answer this question, it became clear the data simply was not available. In the end, after four months of effort attempting to answer this research question, it became clear that, in many cases, individual school boards did not have this information either. Though incomplete, it is clear from the data that was available that the increase in Directors of Education was slow and steady following PPM102. Though incomplete, the table I aimed to complete (Table C) provides a starting point for those interested in better understanding the Ontario public school boards’ path towards greater gender equity in top levels of leadership, helping to fill a large gap in the educational leadership literature.

Beyond simply documenting quantitative data, this research contributes to educational leadership theory by moving beyond recording pressures women leaders experience to exploring strategies women educational leaders use to overcome those pressures, as well as by providing practical examples. It is well documented that women educational leaders have a more difficult time succeeding in leadership positions than men because as women develop and manage their leadership identity, women are navigating through a series of pressures that men do not need to negotiate (Blackmore, 2002; Grogan, 1996; Reynolds, 2002). This thesis did explore and document pressures women Directors of Education experience, thereby growing the body of literature that focuses on women Directors of Education. Beyond simply exploring these pressures
however, this study explored strategies women Directors of Education use to manage these pressures, as well as provided practical examples of these strategies. Practical examples of strategies women Directors use to manage the pressures of leadership can provide some guidance to women striving towards educational leadership. This research is useful not just in the area of women in educational leadership but contributes more broadly to literature in the area of women in leadership. This research provides practical value to women in leadership research by offering pragmatic information which may help aspiring women leaders.

Finally, this research provides a real life example, which gives gravity to Affirmative Action/Employment Equity literature by recording a case study in which an Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policy was adopted and implemented. Beyond simply providing a real life example of Affirmative Action/Employment Equity, this research records the effects of an Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policy’s implementation as noted by those most directly affected by the policy. Affirmative Action/Employment Equity literature document the stigmas associated with these policies. For example, opponents of these policies argue that they fail to consider meritocracy in selection processes, resulting in the discriminated group having their competence questioned when hired (Moscoso et al., 2010; Sowell 2004; Zelnick 1996). This research extends on this Affirmative Action/Employment Equity literature by demonstrating that in this case study, those who benefitted from the Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policy worked hard to ensure their merit was not questioned. This is just one example of how this study provides real life examples that support and build upon Affirmative Action/Employment Equity literature.

9.5. Implications for Practice

Leadership is a complex phenomenon. Individual leaders need to develop strategies that reflect the complexity of leadership. This study has outlined multiple strategies that women Directors of Education used to manage the pressures of leadership. Regardless of whether a leader’s actions are best understood by understanding leadership
as the role of the individual leader, by examining the group context in which leadership occurs, or by examining the societal context in which leadership occurs, other women leaders can learn a great deal by studying the strategies women top-level leaders use to manage the pressures of leadership. Recalling that the phenomenon of leadership varies from group to group and from context to context, it is important to remember that no one “how to” formula exists for the incredibly complex process of leadership: “There needs to be attentiveness, attunement and openness to the not-yet-known” (Norton & Smythe, 2007, p. 67). Therefore, in reading the application of strategies section, current and future leaders are cautioned that the applications of strategies are provided not as a “how to” formula, but rather as potential strategies leaders may or may not choose to incorporate.

In this study participants discussed many strategies surrounding their own personal success. Specifically, strategies surrounding Self-awareness, Self-care and Self-protection were discussed in terms of the way in which they impacted Director’s personal success. Other women leaders may want to consider implementing some of these strategies into their own practice.

9.5.1. Implications for Self-Awareness, Self-Care and Self-Protection

Leaders may want to incorporate time for reflection into their schedules as reflection helps leaders to come to know themselves as a leader (what they stand for; what their priorities are etc.). Knowing who you are as a leader allows difficult decisions to be made more easily. When something comes up that hurts a leader’s feelings; whether criticism or conflict; leaders may want to reflect on why their feelings were hurt, as working through this to discover one’s own vulnerabilities and weaknesses helps prepare a leader for future hurt feelings, building resilience. As one comes to better understand oneself, leaders may want to check in with themselves periodically to be sure their decisions and actions align with their leadership identity and best self. Leaders may also want to use self-awareness to build standards around what one is capable of accomplishing in one day is so that one can know what they can let go of.
All participants noted it is important to realize and accept as a leader that one cannot be everything to everyone. In terms of caring for oneself as a leader, women leaders may want to recognize and accept this fact. Likewise, leaders may want to recognize one cannot know everything at all times but can take comfort in knowing that one can find relevant information as needed. Women leaders may want to pay attention to the physical signs one’s body gives before becoming ill (e.g., sore back, not sleeping etc.). Likewise, prioritizing one’s exercise may want to be considered a personal investment for women leaders. As it is easy for work to take over one’s life in high pressure leadership positions, women may want to model balance and wellness for their employees, in doing so, taking care of oneself and one’s employees. Whether this means leaving the office at a reasonable time each day, or not sending unnecessary emails over the weekend, leaders may want to aim to find balance wherever they can and form rules for themselves and their employees around this balance.

In terms of protecting oneself as a leader, many participants warned about the necessity to choose friends selectively once in a top leadership position. Leaders may want to avoid doing anything that they would not be happy to see published in the local newspaper such as drinking and/or socializing at local venues. Rather, leaders may want to consider enjoying a social life outside of their school district where they are less likely to be recognized. Friendships outside of work are noted to be less complicated relationships and as such, leaders may want to consider prioritizing these relationships. Along these lines, in terms of having friendships with colleagues, leaders may want to consider socializing with those in the same position as them (other Directors), rather than anyone lower than them in the organizational hierarchy as this may blur the boundaries of the professional relationship. In protecting oneself as a leader, leaders may want to act with a standard of care, ensuring one has done their due diligence by contacting the appropriate people (e.g., board lawyers etc.) or referring to the appropriate document (The Education Act) before acting. Though following these strategies does not guarantee success for women leaders, leaders may want to consider using some of the strategies top
level leaders have identified as helpful. The next section will outline how women leaders may want to use micropolitical strategies in the workplace.

9.5.2. Implications for Micropolitical Strategies in the Workplace

Throughout this study micropolitical strategies were found to help women Directors of Education in managing the pressures of leadership. Micropolitical strategy very much involves relationships. Leaders may want to focus their attention on building and managing relationships in their workplace. There are several strategies that emerged in this study that are worthwhile for leaders to consider when thinking about the relationships they have with those whom they work with. Notably, none of the strategies provided by participants were connected to their gender. Listening to others about important issues ensures they feel empowered and that they have a voice. Listening to multiple stakeholders not only empowers those involved but can lead to better decision making as multiple perspectives are considered. Collaborative decision making builds trust among employees and eventually can lead to more efficient decision making once dealing with repeat issues. Welcoming and requesting feedback on one’s performance or how issues are handled in the workplace also makes employees feel important. Additionally, listening to general concerns regularly, before problems arise is a proactive strategy that can help predict problems prior they transpire.

Building and maintaining an emotional bank account with as many people is possible is also a strategy women leaders may want to consider. Covey (1989) notes six ways that a person can build an emotional bank account with others: understanding individuals; attending to the little things; keeping commitments; clarifying expectations; showing personal integrity and apologizing sincerely when making a withdrawal from the emotional bank account. One participant also noted the effectiveness of blurring power lines/finding common ground in certain situations – for example by volunteering to supervise student dances or at bake sales. This participant found that others seeing her sharing work that others might think is “beneath” the Director of Education helped build relationships with others. Leaders may want to consider implementing this strategy as
they see fit. Strong relationships with others help form coalitions that help leaders push through their leadership agendas.

When it comes to managing conflict and difficult situations, participants had many strategies. Women leaders may want to set clear expectations upfront and be firm if expectations are let down. Women leaders may want to consider using direct language, rather than “mincing” words during conflict, as well as, using facts and data to support one’s stance. Likewise, participants noted the importance of calling others out if they have done something very wrong. If necessary, leaders may want to consider making an example of one person’s poor behavior, allowing others they are leading to understand the leader’s standards. Women leaders may want to deal with difficult situations right away. When dealing with the ultimate difficult situation of terminating an employee, a leader may want to consider being over-prepared with detailed notes, perhaps even a script to guide the conversation. This will prevent leaders from getting off track or distracted by the employee’s emotions/comments. Finally, using diplomacy and remaining level headed and unemotional during conflict was strongly encouraged by all participants.

Participants noted several strategies surrounding managing their leadership image (or professional reputation) that are worthwhile for leaders to consider implementing. Several of these strategies came down to satisfying expectations of them as Director of Education. Participants assessed perceived gain versus perceived cost before deciding whether to satisfy expectations, with the ultimate goal of being viewed positively in others’ eyes. Even when the perceived cost was high, if stakes were high, participants recommended satisfying expectations, especially if those with the expectations had a significant role in the participant’s future career success. Other leaders hoping to make it to top levels of leadership may want to consider building and maintaining a positive professional reputation among as many people as possible. In one’s attempt to do so, it is wise to consider perceived gain versus perceived cost before making decisions. Finally, leaders may want to avoid “stirring the pot” or being confrontational in the workplace. The next section will outline how leaders might use strategies described by participants for balancing work and home life.
9.5.3. Implications for Managing Home Life and Professional Life

This study revealed several strategies for managing home and professional life which women Directors of Education used to help manage the pressures of leadership. Leaders may want to consider adopting strategies for managing home life and professional life as the job of Director is very demanding. Although many participants did not note the ways they described managing home life and professional life as *deliberate strategies*, these methods or conditions are still worthwhile for leaders to consider because participants did note these methods or conditions helped them find balance. Leaders may want to ensure their partner is supportive of their goal to become a Director and aware of the job responsibilities and hours, *before* a Director gets into the position. Having a partner who is understanding of the demands of the position of Director helped facilitate many participants’ ability to do the job well. Women leaders may also want to choose a partner who is available to help at home as many participants described their partners “picking up the slack at home” as very helpful. If women leaders do not have a partner that is able to perform extra duties at home, they may want to pay a professional to complete those duties.

Having children later in life, after one was already in a position of additional responsibility was noted as helpful in terms of balancing parenting and one’s professional life. Though again, this was not described as a *deliberate strategy*, but rather as a condition that facilitated balance, it is something for women leaders to consider. Participants who had their children later in life described it being helpful that their children only ever knew them as a busy professional. Additionally, shorter maternity leaves were described as helpful (though not always a deliberate decision) in balancing home and professional life. Therefore, again, this is something for women leaders to consider if they would like to have children. Finally, women leaders may want to have (or find) supportive people in one’s life to help with childcare.
9.6. Implications for Policy

It is very important to consider how research can inform and improve policy. This study can be used to complement other research completed pertaining to the effectiveness of Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policies in increasing equity in top levels of leadership. This study produced evidence of a general and steady increase in women in the top leadership position in Ontario (English) public school boards between the years of 1993, when the policy was implemented, and today. Additionally, this study gave voice to the women Directors affected by the PPM 102 in the Ontario (English) public school board, seeking information as to how the policy affected their journey towards top leadership (if at all). Other industries hoping to replicate the movement towards gender parity in top levels of leadership can use this research to help guide them in creating and implementing their own Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policies.

Within Ontario public school boards, there is continuous effort towards equity and inclusion practices. CODE’s (2014) Equity and Inclusive Education: Going Deeper document states:

Since the release of the provincial Equity and Inclusive Education (EIE) policy in 2009, Ontario school boards have established equity and inclusive education policies, and have developed approaches to implementation based on their own internal organizational frameworks, processes and local contexts (CODE, 2014, p. 2).

This research reveals evidence that demonstrates policies surrounding equity and inclusion practices in Ontario public school boards are not always being implemented; and therefore, this research could be used to draw attention to, and help repair, flaws in Ontario public school boards’ translation of equity and inclusion policy to practice. According to CODE’s (2014) Equity and Inclusive Education: Going Deeper document, diversity is defined as,

the presence of a wide range of social characteristics within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, age, ancestry, colour, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion or faith, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic circumstance.
Though the majority of CODE’s (2014) *Equity and Inclusive Education: Going Deeper* document discusses students, a few sections do address equitable hiring and promotional practices. For example, it is noted that, “Discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to recruitment, hiring, talent development, career mentoring, promotion, retention, and succession planning are identified and removed (AOF1)” (p. 21). Policies surrounding equitable hiring practices might help prevent some unconscious bias. School boards hoping to limit or even eliminate unconscious bias might consider bias awareness training for all staff involved in hiring processes. In this study, a Director of Education working in a Catholic school board commented that the Catholic Church does not accept same sex marriage, and therefore Catholic school boards are not diversifying in terms of sexual orientation in top levels of leadership. This Director’s comments reveal that all forms of diversity are not valued in Ontario public Catholic school boards. Clearly there is a flaw in the policy, in that it does a poor job of directing Catholic educational leaders how to navigate the religious components of their school board while implementing equity and inclusion policies. Many leaders in the Catholic system may find themselves confused in trying to implement equitable hiring policies.

Presently organizational change initiatives fail up to 80 percent of the time (Vales, 2007). This is problematic and reflective of a larger and more general disconnect that often exists between policy and practice. Leadership training programs and professional development opportunities for current leaders need to teach strategies Catholic leaders can use to navigate the religious components of their school boards while implementing equity and inclusion policies effectively. For example, Superintendent and Director training programs in Ontario would benefit from having a course dedicated towards issues that specifically affect Catholic leaders.

In terms of the larger findings of the study, it was found that women Directors of Education have a complex relationship with their own discrimination and that women Directors of Education have various strategies for managing the pressures of leadership. Given that gender did reveal itself as a source of discrimination, it might be worthwhile for school boards to consider gender bias training for all educational leaders who are involved in hiring and promotional practices.
9.7. Limitations

This thesis is based on the accounts of 12 women Directors of Education from Ontario English speaking public school boards. Due to the very small sample group, it is not possible to extrapolate any results to the experiences of other women CEOs in Education. This is not to say however that the strategies in this thesis could not be useful to other women Directors of Education. Strategies may be useful to other women leaders, however, they cannot be thought to be a “how to” guide.

The scope of this study is limited, merely telling a snapshot story of the experiences of 12 women Directors of Education. It is important to additionally consider participants’ willingness to be forthcoming. Given the highly political nature of the job Director of Education, participants may have felt limited in what they could say without risking their careers. Therefore, this study may not capture all of the pressures women Directors of Education experience. Further, given the extremely personal nature of women’s relationship with their self as an object of beauty, I suspect that sharing personal details surrounding pressures one might feel to meet stereotypical standards of beauty did not happen in an earnest and/or honest way.

9.8. Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout this study, it has become clear that much future research is needed to better understand women top-level educational leaders in Ontario, and in Canada more broadly. More specifically, better documentation of the number of women in leadership positions in Ontario (English) public school boards is needed. Growth and progress towards gender parity in top levels of leadership cannot officially be confirmed or denied unless formally recorded. Making this data publically accessible also keeps Ontario (English) public school boards accountable for making efforts towards gender parity in top levels of leadership. I also recommend that future research aim to capture pressures women leaders experience as a result of social expectations surrounding stereotypical standards of beauty. Further, future research should aim to capture how pressures women
leaders experience as a result of social expectations surrounding stereotypical standards of beauty affects their work as a women leader. Data which demonstrates the connection between stereotypical standards of beauty, and the effects it has on women in leadership, can help contribute to the increasing evidence showing portrayals of stereotypical standards of beauty in the media are harmful to girls and women. It is my hope that with increased evidence in this regard, action will be taken against the media industry, thereby raising the standards of how women are portrayed in the media. While this study examined gender as a primary factor that may affect the experiences of Directors of Education, future studies could also consider factors such as race and sexual orientation, helping to provide a fuller picture of how diversity affects Director of Education’s experiences. More understanding about how race and sexual orientation affect women in leadership’s journeys is helpful in developing policies which support equitable hiring practices, and equity overall, in a school board.

9.9. Chapter Summary

For several reasons identified in the research, women have a more difficult time developing and managing their leadership identity than men. The purpose of this study is to explore how women Directors of Education manage the pressures of leadership (with the purpose of helping other women striving towards leadership). This research contributes to leadership theory by expanding upon the understanding that leadership is highly complex in nature, as well as by showing that a leader’s behaviour can be influenced by pressures surrounding social expectations. Further, this research expands on educational leadership theory by studying women Directors of Education, a group very little is known about. Through my attempt to document the growth in the number of women Directors of Education in Ontario public school boards, this research serves as a stepping stone for those wanting to better understand Ontario public school boards’ path towards greater gender equity in leadership. In addition, by moving beyond pressures women leaders experience to exploring strategies women use to overcome those pressures, as well as by providing practical examples, this research contributes to women in leadership theory. Finally, this research expands on Affirmative Action/Employment
Equity literature by documenting one case in which an Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policy was implemented, as well as by documenting the noted effects of said policy as observed by those most affected by the policy’s implementation.

In this study participants revealed multiple strategies pertaining to their personal success. Specifically, Directors of Education discussed strategies surrounding Self-awareness, Self-care and Self-protection in terms of the way in which they impacted Directors’ personal success. It may be worthwhile for other women leaders to consider implementing some of these strategies into their own practice. Additionally, several strategies emerged in this study that are worthwhile for leaders to consider when thinking about the relationships they have with the people they work with. Finally, women leaders may want to consider adopting strategies for managing home life and professional life as it was revealed that the Director of Education job is very demanding.

This study complements other research pertaining to the effectiveness of Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policies in increasing equity in top levels of leadership. By producing evidence of a steady increase in women in the top leadership position in Ontario (English) public school boards between the years of 1993, when the policy was implemented, and today, a case can be made for the effectiveness of Affirmative Action/Employment Equity policies. This study also demonstrates that policies surrounding equity and inclusion practices in Ontario public school boards are not always being implemented. Therefore, this study could be used to bring attention to, and help fix, flaws in the translation of equity and inclusion policy to practice in Ontario public school boards.
References


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APPENDIX A

LIMESTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD POLICY NO. 3

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION JOB DESCRIPTION

The Director of Education is both the Chief Education Officer and the Chief Executive Officer of Limestone District School Board. The Director reports directly to the Corporate Board. The Director is accountable to the Board of Trustees and, through Statute, to the Minister of Education for the organization and operation of the district. All Board authority delegated to staff is delegated through the Director of Education.

Areas of Responsibility

1.0.0 Student Welfare

1.1.0 Takes the necessary steps to provide a safe and caring environment that fosters well being, and maintains respectful and responsible behaviour for each student.

1.2.0 Takes the necessary steps to provide for the safety and welfare of students while participating in school programs or while being transported to or from school programs on transportation provided by Limestone District School Board.

1.3.0 Takes the necessary steps to provide facilities to accommodate Limestone District School Board students.

1.4.0 Acts as, or designates, the local attendance counsellor for the district.

2.0.0 Educational Leadership

2.1.0 Provides leadership in all matters relating to education in the district.

2.2.0 Ensures that effective and appropriate educational programs are delivered to all students in the district.

2.3.0 Establishes and maintains clear, consistent expectations that that encourage pupils to pursue educational goals.

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2.4.0 Considers the implementation of various measures to assess the academic achievement of pupils, including but not limited to tests administered by the Education Quality Accountability Office, average grades on student achievement reports, and the average number of secondary school credits accumulated.

2.5.0 Ensures that students in the district have the opportunity to meet the standards of education mandated by the Ministry of Education.

2.6.0 Develops and maintains positive and effective relations with staff at the provincial and local government levels.

2.7.0 Develops and maintains positive and effective relations with schools and board departments.

2.8.0 Provides leadership to promote clear, consistent, expectations that focus on successful outcomes for students.

3.0.0 Fiscal Responsibility

3.1.0 Ensures that the fiscal management of the district is in accordance with the Ministry’s Funding Model, other applicable grant regulations, and in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, Regulations, and Board Policy.

4.0.0 Organizational Management

4.1.0 Demonstrates effective organizational skills that result in district compliance with all legal, Ministerial and Board mandates and timelines.

4.2.0 Reports to the Minister with respect to matters identified in and required by the Education Act and Regulations.

5.0.0 Strategic Planning

5.1.0 Provides leadership for the development and review of a multi-year strategic plan, in accordance with Ministry regulation and Board Policy, as amended.

5.2.0 Ensures appropriate involvement of the board (approval of process and timelines, establishment of board priorities and outcomes, key results and final board approval).

5.3.0 Reports regularly on results achieved and district improvement plans.

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6.0.0 Personnel Management
6.1.0 Has overall authority and responsibility for all personnel-related issues, save and except those personnel matters precluded by board policy, legislation or collective agreements.

6.2.0 Ensures effective systems are in place for the selection, supervision, development and performance review of all staff.

7.0.0 Policy/Procedures

7.1.0 Facilitates the planning, development, implementation, review and evaluation of board policies.

7.2.0 Provides leadership in the planning, development, implementation, review and evaluation of administrative procedures.

8.0.0 Director/Board Relations

8.1.0 Establishes and maintains positive working relations with Limestone District School Board.

8.2.0 Supports Limestone District School Board in performing its role and facilitates the implementation of its role as outlined in board policy.

8.3.0 Communicates effectively with the board and individual trustees.

8.4.0 Reports violations by Board of Act, regulations, policies or guidelines to Board and if not addressed satisfactorily, report such violations to the Deputy Minister of Education.

9.0.0 Communications and Community Relations

9.1.0 Establishes effective communication strategies to keep the district informed of key monitoring reports, student, volunteer and staff successes, local issues and board decisions.

9.2.0 Ensures that open, transparent and positive internal and external communications are in place.

9.3.0 Ensures that School Councils have the opportunity to provide appropriate advice and support as required in the regulations and/or board policy.

9.4.0 Participates in community affairs in order to enhance and support the district and promote public education.

_________________________ Limestone District School Board
Board Policy Handbook
10.0.0 **Student, Staff and District Recognition/Public Relations**

10.1.0 Establishes effective recognition programs and strategies to ensure that the internal and external audiences are aware of student, volunteer, staff and district successes.

11.0.0 **System Leadership**

11.1.0 Demonstrates positive and proactive leadership that has the support of the staff with whom the Director works most closely.

11.2.0 Makes succession plans to ensure strong future leadership for Limestone District School Board.

Legal Reference: *Education Act* S. 283, S. 286, S. 301, *Bill 177: Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act*

Revised: January 2011

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Limestone District School Board
Board Policy Handbook
August 4, 2015

Dear Director:

My name is Katie Higginbottom, my supervisor’s name is Dr. Jim Ryan. I am a student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am requesting your cooperation as a voluntary participant in a study entitled: *How women Directors of Education manage the pressures of leadership,* in which I will examine how women Directors of Education in Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards manage pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them. This study is being completed as fulfillment of the thesis research requirement for the doctoral program at OISE/UT in the department of Theory and Policy Studies.

The purpose of this study is to investigate (through interviews) the pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders women Directors of Education face, and the strategies these women use to manage those pressures. This research has a number of objectives, including: (1) exploring what pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them, women Directors of Education experience; (2) exploring how these pressures affect women Directors of Education; (3) exploring what strategies women Directors of Education use to manage these pressures; (4) exploring what helps women Directors of Education manage these pressures; and (5) exploring what hinders women Directors of Education in managing these pressures. Results from the study will be written up in the form of a doctoral thesis and scholarly and professional journal articles for possible publication. Results will also be submitted for presentation at academic conference and used for publications in academic journals. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature about women in educational leadership in Canada. There is a substantial amount of research available that looks at women in mid-level leadership positions in education, such as the principal position.

Participants may benefit from sharing their experiences with managing pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders. They may also learn from the conversations about how to change their behaviors in the future to better manage these pressures. Benefits of this study also include that the results will be used to inform both educational leadership theory and practice. As there is a limited body of literature regarding women top level educational leaders in Canada – this study will contribute to that body of knowledge. The results could also be used to inform personal practice and professional development for women striving towards top level of educational leadership, hopefully providing women with helpful information about how to manage pressures they experience associated with others’ social expectations of them.

This research project will begin with interviews with 15 women Directors of Education from Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards. I am proposing to conduct an in-depth interview with you, lasting approximately one hour in length. Interviews will be
semi-structured, like a conversation. The questions will ask about the pressures you experience associated with others’ social expectations of you, how you understand those pressures, what strategies you use to manage those pressures, what helps you manage those pressures and what hinders you in managing those pressures.

I am approaching you to ask you for your consent to participate. There is no known harm associated with your participation in this research. You may withdraw answers, decline to comment or withdraw your entire participation in this study at any time, if you withdraw from the study you will be asked if you would like your data destroyed. If you request your data to be destroyed all of your paper data will be shredded and digital data will be deleted. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be judged or evaluated at any time. You will be asked if you agree to have the interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription. You have the choice of declining. Because research results are far more accurate with the use of interview transcriptions during data analysis, if you decline I may decide to interview someone who does agree to be audio recorded. If you agree to be audio recorded, you will be sent your interview transcript via email within four weeks of your interview. You will have two months to review your transcript and send any changes to the researcher via email. You may be asked to participate in a second interview if you feel you have more information to add to the study that was not addressed in the initial interview. Your audio file and transcription will be assigned a code to keep your identity anonymous. Your identity will remain anonymous and any names you use in the interview will be kept anonymous as well. Any names of organizations that you mention will also be kept anonymous. The information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet and stored on a password protected computer in a locked cabinet in the researchers’ home office. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. All computer files will be deleted and all paper files will be shredded.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this research. Benefits include sharing personal experiences and practices and gaining reflection and insight into practices and their associated outcomes.

There will be no compensation for participation. If you are interested in participating in this research or if you have any questions about it, please contact me by email at k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca, you may also contact my supervisor at jim.ryan@utoronto.ca. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 416-946-3237 or by e-mail at ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

You can also 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.

If you would like to participate in this study please sign below and return a copy to me. Please keep a copy for your records.
Thank you in advance for your participation.

Katie Higginbottom
Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
234 Hickory St, Whitby, ON
L1N 3X8, Canada
1-905-220-7042
k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca

Dr. Jim Ryan
Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
252 Bloor St West, 6th Floor, Toronto, ON
M5S 1V6, Canada
1-416-978-115
Jim.ryan@utoronto.ca

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ___________________________ School Board: ___________________________

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion:

In the case that you would like to be informed of the results of the study, your contact information will be kept separate from the data.
Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: ______
Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Dear Director:

My name is Katie Higginbottom, my supervisor’s name is Dr Jim Ryan. I am a student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am requesting your cooperation as a voluntary participant in a study entitled: *How women Directors of Education manage the pressures of leadership*, in which I will examine how women Directors of Education in Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards manage pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them. This study is being completed as fulfillment of the thesis research requirement for the doctoral program at OISE/UT in the department of Theory and Policy Studies.

The purpose of this study is to investigate (through interviews) the pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women Directors of Education face, and the strategies these women use to manage those pressures. This research has a number of objectives, including: (1) exploring *what* pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them, women Directors of Education experience; (2) exploring how these pressures affect women Directors of Education; (3) exploring what strategies women Directors of Education use to manage these pressures; (4) exploring what helps women Directors of Education manage these pressures; and (5) exploring what hinders women Directors of Education in managing these pressures. Results from the study will be written up in the form of a doctoral thesis and scholarly and professional journal articles for possible publication. Results will also be submitted for presentation at academic conference and used for publications in academic journals. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature about women in educational leadership in Canada. There is a substantial amount of research available that looks at women in mid-level leadership positions in education, such as the principal position.

Participants may benefit from sharing their experiences with managing pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders. They may also learn from the conversations about how to change their behaviors in the future to better manage these pressures. Benefits of this study also include that the results will be used to inform both educational leadership theory and practice. As there is a limited body of literature regarding women top level educational leaders in Canada – this study will contribute to that body of knowledge. The results could also be used to inform personal practice and professional development for women striving towards top level of educational leadership, hopefully providing women with helpful information about how to manage pressures they experience associated with others’ social expectations of them.

This research project will begin with interviews with 15 women Directors of Education from Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards. I am proposing to conduct an in-depth interview with you, lasting approximately one hour in length. Interviews will be
semi-structured, like a conversation. The questions will ask about the pressures you experience associated with others’ social expectations of you, how you understand those pressures, what strategies you use to manage those pressures, what helps you manage those pressures and what hinders you in managing those pressures.

I am approaching you to ask you for your consent to participate. There is no known harm associated with your participation in this research. You may withdraw answers, decline to comment or withdraw your entire participation in this study at any time, if you withdraw from the study you will be asked if you would like your data destroyed. If you request your data to be destroyed all of your paper data will be shredded and digital data will be deleted. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be judged or evaluated at any time. You will be asked if you agree to have the interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription. You have the choice of declining. Because research results are far more accurate with the use of interview transcriptions during data analysis, if you decline I may decide to interview someone who does agree to be audio recorded. If you agree to be audio recorded, you will be sent your interview transcript via email within four weeks of your interview. You will have two months to review your transcript and send any changes to the researcher via email. You may be asked to participate in a second interview if you feel you have more information to add to the study that was not addressed in the initial interview. Your audio file and transcription will be assigned a code to keep your identity anonymous. Your identity will remain anonymous and any names you use in the interview will be kept anonymous as well. Any names of organizations that you mention will also be kept anonymous. The information collected with be kept in a locked cabinet and stored on a password protected computer in a locked cabinet in the researchers’ home office. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. All computer files will be deleted and all paper files will be shredded.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this research. Benefits include sharing personal experiences and practices and gaining reflection and insight into practices and their associated outcomes.

There will be no compensation for participation. If you are interested in participating in this research or if you have any questions about it, please contact me by email at k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca, you may also contact my supervisor at jim.ryan@utoronto.ca. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 416-946-3237 or by e-mail at ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

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M5S 1V6, Canada
1-416-978-115
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Name: ________________________________ School Board: ________________________________

Signed: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion:

In the case that you would like to be informed of the results of the study, your contact information will be kept separate from the data.
Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: ______
Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Personal information

A. Name _______________________________________
B. School Board __________________________________
C. Number of Years as a Director ________________
D. Age_______
E. Marital Status __________________________________
F. Number of Children (and ages) ________________
G. Complete a brief history of your Career Path on this timeline

|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|

1. What social expectations do you think others have about leaders? (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?)

2. What social expectations do you think others have about women? (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?)

3. What social expectations do you think others have about women leaders (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?)

4. Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, based on other people’s expectations of you? (Prompts: Can you give me a specific example?)

5. Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, because you’re a woman?

6. How have you managed these pressures? What strategies have you used?
7. What hindered/prevented (formal and/or informal) you in managing these pressures? (Prompts: Prohibitive policies/procedures? Unsupportive Spouse? Unsupportive bosses?)

8. What supports (formal and/or informal) helped you in managing these pressures? (Prompts: Books/courses/professional development? Supportive spouse? Mentor? Policies?)

9. What advice might you give another woman striving towards a top educational leadership position?
APPENDIX E

ETHICS REVIEW APPLICATION FORM FOR
SUPERVISED AND SPONSORED RESEARCHERS

(For use by graduate students, post-docs, residents, external investigators,
and visiting professors/researchers)

SECTION A – GENERAL INFORMATION

1. TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT

How Women Directors of Education Manage the Pressures of Leadership

2. INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

Investigator:

| Title (e.g., Dr., Ms., etc.): Ms. | Name: Katie Higginbottom (998784980) |

Before you start, familiarize yourself with: TCPS2
Department (or organization if not affiliated with U of T): Theory and Policy Studies

Mailing address: 252 Bloor St. West 6th floor Toronto, On M5S 1V6

Phone: 905-220-7042  Institutional e-mail: k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Project:</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Doctoral Research ☐  Visiting professor/External researcher ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Based ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBR/CBPR ☐</td>
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Supervisor/Sponsor (must be a UofT faculty member with research privileges):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: Dr</th>
<th>Name: Jim Ryan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department: Theory and Policy Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailing address: 252 Bloor St. West 6th floor Toronto, On M5S 1V6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 416-978-1152</td>
<td>Institutional e-mail: <a href="mailto:jim.ryan@utoronto.ca">jim.ryan@utoronto.ca</a></td>
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</table>

Co-Investigators:
Are co-investigators involved?  Yes ☐  No ☒

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*Please append additional pages with co-investigators’ names if necessary.*

3. **UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD:**

Social Sciences, Humanities and Education ☒  Health Sciences ☐
HIV/AIDS ☐

To determine which Research Ethics Board (REB) your application should be submitted, please consult: [http://www.research.utoronto.ca/about/boards-and-committees/research-ethics-boards-reb/](http://www.research.utoronto.ca/about/boards-and-committees/research-ethics-boards-reb/)
4. LOCATION(S) WHERE THE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED:

(a) If the research is to be conducted at a site requiring administrative approval/consent (e.g., in a school), please include all administrative consent letters. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine what other means of approval are required, and to obtain approval prior to starting the project.

University of Toronto ☐ (If this research involves U of T students, faculty or staff as participants, please contact the Provost’s office for approval)

Hospital ☐ specify site(s)

School board or community agency ☐ specify site(s)

Community within the GTA ☐ specify site(s)

International ☐ specify site(s)

Other ☐ specify site(s) interviews to take place at a location convenient to the participant, e.g., coffee shops.

(b) For all off-campus research, whether in the local community or internationally, the researcher should consult with the Framework on Off-Campus Safety, Guidelines on Off-Campus Safety, and Guidelines on Safety in Field for institutional requirements.

(c) The University of Toronto has an agreement with the Toronto Academic Health Sciences Network (TAHSN) hospitals regarding ethics review of hospital-based research where the University plays a peripheral role. Based on this agreement, certain hospital-based research may not require ethics
review at the University of Toronto. If your research is based at a TAHSN hospital, please consult the following document to determine whether or not your research requires review at the University of Toronto.

5. OTHER RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL(S)

(a) Does the research involve another institution or site? Yes [ ] No [x]

(b) Has any other REB approved this project? Yes [x] No [ ]

If Yes, please provide a copy of the approval letter upon submission of this application.

If No, will any other REB be asked for approval?

Yes [ ] (please specify which REB) No [x]
6. FUNDING OF THIS PROJECT

(a)

<table>
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<td>Fund #: 4 (6 digits)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agency:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied for funding ✔</td>
<td>Agency: OSSTF</td>
<td>Submission date: April 1, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agency: OGS</td>
<td>Submission date: April 27, 2015</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Unfunded □

If unfunded, please explain why no funding is needed:

7. CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

(a) Is this research to be carried out as a contract or under a research agreement? Yes □ No ✔

If yes, is there a University of Toronto funding or non-funded agreement associated with the research? Yes □ No □

If Yes, please append a copy of the agreement with this application.
Is there any aspect of the contract that could put any member of the research team in a potential conflict of interest? Yes □ No ☑

If yes, please elaborate under #10.

(b) Is this a Division 5, Health Canada regulated clinical trial that involves drugs, devices or natural health products?

Yes □ No ☑ (if so, the application must be reviewed by the full board)

8. PROJECT START AND END DATES

Estimated start date for the component of this project that involves human participants or data: August 2015

Estimated completion date of involvement of human participants or data for this project: November 2015

9. SCHOLARLY REVIEW:

(a) Please check one:

I. ☑ The research has undergone scholarly review by thesis committee, departmental review committee, peer review committee or some other equivalent (Specify review type – e.g., departmental research committee, supervisor, CIHR, SSHRC, OHTN, etc.): Thesis Committee has approved.

II. □ The research will undergo scholarly review prior to funding
(Specify review committee – e.g., departmental research committee, SSHRC, CIHR peer-review committee, etc.):

III. ☐ The research will not undergo scholarly review (Please note that all research greater than minimal risk requires scholarly review)

(b) If box I or II above was checked, please specify if:

☒ The review was/will be specific to this application

☐ The review was/will be part of a larger grant

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

(a) Will the researcher(s), members of the research team, and/or their partners or immediate family members:

   (i) Receive any personal benefits (e.g., financial benefit such as remuneration, intellectual property rights, rights of employment, consultancies, board membership, share ownership, stock options, etc.) as a result of or in connection with this study?  Yes ☐  No ☒
(ii) If **Yes**, please provide further details and discuss how any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest will be managed during the project. (Do not include conference and travel expense coverage, or other benefits which are considered standard for the conduct of research.)

N/A

(b) Describe any restrictions regarding access to or disclosure of information (during or at the end of the study) that have been placed on the investigator(s). These restrictions include controls placed by the sponsor, funding body, advisory or steering committee.

N/A

(c) Where relevant, please explain any pre-existing relationship between the researcher(s) and the researched (e.g., instructor-student; manager-employee; clinician-patient; minister-congregant). Please pay special attention to relationships in which there may be a power differential – actual or perceived.

N/A

**SECTION B – SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH**
11. RATIONALE

Describe the purpose and scholarly rationale for the proposed project. State the hypotheses/research questions to be examined. The rationale for doing the study must be clear. Please include references in this section.

Research Questions

Based on a review of contemporary theoretical and empirical research from various fields, including business, psychology, education, leadership, and gender studies, it is clear that women leaders face different pressures today than their male counterparts (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Reynolds, 2002a; Blackmore, 2002; Grogan, 1996; Butler, 1990). Thus, my central research question is, how have women Directors of Education managed their leadership identities in spite of pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders? Research sub-questions include:

• How do women Directors of Education understand pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders?
• How have these pressures affected women Directors of Educations’ leadership identities?
• What strategies have women Directors of Education employed to manage their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?
• What helps women Directors of Education manage their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?
• And finally, what prevents women Directors of Education from managing their leadership identities in spite of these pressures?

Rationale
Research shows that women leaders have a more difficult time succeeding in leadership positions than men because as women develop and manage their leadership identity, women are navigating through a series of pressures that men do not need to negotiate (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Reynolds, 2002a; Blackmore, 2002; Grogan, 1996; Butler, 1990). Two major pressures that exist for women in leadership positions that do not occur in an equal capacity for men in leadership positions. The first pressure is associated with others’ social expectation that women lead in communal ways. This pressure may cause difficulty for women leaders as they try to balance socially expected and accepted behavior for leaders – behaviors most often associated with, and expected from, men - with the socially expected and accepted behavior of women (Ely et al., 2011; Johanson, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier & Zuroff, 2004; Blackmore, 2002; Reynolds, 2002a; Heilman, 2001). The second pressure is associated with others’ social expectation that women, who are caregivers, prioritize their family over their career. This pressure may cause difficulty for women leaders as they try to balance socially expected and accepted behavior for leaders, and the socially expected and accepted behavior of women as caregivers. Predominantly, women still carry the responsibilities associated with marriage and children, despite their commitments to work outside of the home, often resulting in difficult choices and/or detrimental effects on a women’s career (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Reynolds, 2002b; Grogan, 1996). This added difficulty of navigating pressures associated with stereotypical social expectations of women, whilst trying to develop and manage one’s leadership identity, may explain why so few top level leaders are women (Lumby, 2009; Grogan, 1996). The
negative effects the two aforementioned pressures can have on a woman’s ability to
develop and manage her leadership identity have frequently been cited in literature (Ely et al., 2011; Johanson, 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Suh, Moskowitz, Fournier & Zuroff, 2004; Blackmore, 2002; Reynolds, 2002a; Heilman, 2001). However, there may be additional pressures surrounding others’ social expectations of women leaders, which may limit a woman leader’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity, worth exploring. For example, one potential pressure is associated with others’ social expectations of women as objects of beauty. The pressure to conform to stereotypical prescriptions of women’s ideal beauty may limit a woman’s ability to develop and manage her leadership identity – despite not having been previously studied.

Additionally, there are likely other pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders (some related to gender, some unrelated to gender) that exist, but have yet to be studied. A better understanding of how women who have made it to top levels of educational leadership have managed pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them, can serve to help women striving towards top levels of educational leadership to manage these pressures. This study aims to do exactly that by exploring strategies women Directors of Education have used to manage the pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders.

**Thesis Proposal References**


12. METHODS

(a) Please describe all formal and informal procedures to be used. Describe the data to be collected, where and how they will be obtained and how they will be analyzed.

Qualitative methods are relied upon to answer the main research question: How have women Directors of Education managed the pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders?
Because my goal is to gain rich insight and detailed descriptions/examples of how women Directors of Education manage these pressures, I will use *semi-structured* interviews, comprised mostly of open-ended questions as the primary research tool. Using interviews accomplishes one of the goals of feminist research, to give women a voice (Walby, 2011); using semi-structured interviews goes a step further empowering women Directors of Education to share ownership over the direction the research takes. I have anchored many interview questions in the literature, as well as created some interview questions meant to expose new information not yet identified in the literature.

I will contact *all* of the 25 women Directors of Education in the (English) Ontario Public School Board, since response rate is never 100% (Merriam, 2009). To make contact for the purpose of securing participant involvement, I will rely on the use of email or telephone. Each school board posts the Director of Educations’ email address and/or phone number. As there is a Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) meeting for all Directors on August 20-21, 2015 in Toronto, I will aim to schedule my interviews during these 2 days at the convenience of Directors of Education. During these 2 days, I will prioritize interviews with women Directors of Education who work in school boards not located near Toronto, over women Directors of Education who work in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In the instance that more than 15 women Directors of Education respond, I will prioritize whom I select to interview based on the following 3 criteria listed in priority sequence: those who give permission for their interview to be recorded; those who have children; those who have been Directors of Education for the longest period of time. To clarify, if more than 15 women Directors of Education respond, those who do not give permission to have their interview recorded will be eliminated from the
list of eligible participants first. If after this first elimination is made, more than 15 women Directors of Education remain on the list of eligible participants, I will next eliminate participants who do not have children. Finally, if after these 2 eliminations are made, more than 15 Directors of Education still remain eligible to participate, I will rank interview participants based on the length of time they have been in the position of Director of Education, keeping the 15 Directors of Education who have held the position the longest. Interview questions will be provided in advance to participants to allow time to reflect and think of specific examples in advance. The questions will ask about the pressures you experience associated with others’ social expectations of you, how you understand those pressures, what strategies you use to manage those pressures, what helps you manage those pressures and what hinders you in managing those pressures.

Next, I will conduct interviews with 12-15 women Directors of Education, until saturation is reached. I predict interviews will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews will take place at a location convenient for the participant, e.g., coffee shops. I will lead these interviews face-to-face to maximize my ability to gain participant trust. I will use prompts to probe for more detail and specific examples, ensuring that answers are in-depth and rich in content.

I anticipate that informal data analysis will begin during interviews. As such, I will be prepared during each interview to begin coding by memoing and perhaps even by memoing onto a diagram that helps categorize emerging themes. With the participants' permission, interviews will be recorded, transcribed verbatim into a word document. Within one month of the interview date, I will provide a copy of their transcription to each Director of Education to ensure all information is accurate. Participants will have
two months to review and make changes. I have provided a copy of the interview guide in Appendix A.

Once interviews are complete, I will use inductive analysis to explore similarities, differences and themes in participants’ answers. After reading and re-reading transcripts, I will compare and contrast participants’ answers and organize themes surrounding my research question and sub-questions. Though it is difficult to predict what the findings will reveal, at this point in time I plan to use the following four categories as a starting point to organize data: *Strategies for managing pressures associated with social expectations of women as communal; Strategies for managing pressures associated with social expectations of women as caregivers; Strategies for managing pressures associated with social expectations of women as objects of beauty; and Additional strategies for managing pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders.* To further organize findings, I will establish sub-categories within each category listed above. I will create these sub-categories based on a further analysis of each aforementioned category of findings, again looking for similarities, differences or themes in participants’ response.

(b) Attach a copy of all questionnaires, interview guides and/or any other instruments.

(c) Include a list of appendices here for all additional materials submitted (e.g., Appendix A – Informed Consent; Appendix B – Interview Guide, etc.):
13. PARTICIPANTS, DATA AND/OR BIOLOGICAL MATERIALS

(a) Describe the participants to be recruited list the eligibility criteria, and indicate the estimated sample size (i.e. min-max # of participants). Where applicable, please also provide a rationale for your choice in sample size and/or sample size calculation.

All women Directors of Education in Ontario’s English Public School Boards will be recruited to participate. Because of the challenges associated with language barriers, women Directors of Education from French speaking school boards were eliminated from eligibility to participate. Based on publicly accessible information accessed through the Council of Directors of Education (CODE) website, there are approximately 25 women eligible to participate, of which I hope to secure the participation of 12-15. In the instance that more than 15 women Directors of Education respond, I will prioritize whom I select to interview based on the following 3 criteria listed in priority sequence: those who give permission for their interview to be recorded; those who have children; those who have been Directors of Education for the longest period of time. To clarify, if more than 15 women Directors of Education respond, those who do not give permission to have their interview recorded will be eliminated from the list of eligible participants first. If after this first elimination is made, more than 15 women
Directors of Education remain on the list of eligible participants, I will next eliminate participants who do not have children. Finally, if after these 2 eliminations are made, more than 15 Directors of Education still remain eligible to participate, I will rank interview participants based on the length of time they have been in the position of Director of Education, keeping the 15 Directors of Education who have held the position the longest.

(b) Where the research involves extraction or collection of personally identifiable information, please describe the purpose, from whom the information will be obtained, what it will include, and how permission to access the data is being sought. (Strategies for recruitment are to be described in section #15.)

N/A

(c) Is there any group or individual-level vulnerability related to the research that needs to be mitigated (for example, difficulties understanding informed consent, history of exploitation by researchers, power differential between the researcher and the potential participant)? If so, please provide further details below.

There is very minimal individual-level vulnerability related to the research that needs to be mitigated. All participants are over 18 years old and able to make informed decisions about participating. Participants may describe very personal experiences and feelings that might be sensitive, and I will make efforts to ensure participants feel comfortable at all times and are aware they have the option to stop the interview at any point and/or withdraw consent. Participants should not have any difficulties understanding informed consent. There is no history of exploitation by
researchers. Due to my role as a teacher in Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB), and the fact that TVDSB’s Director of Education and I have a (distant/minor) professional affiliation, unless absolutely necessary (to meet the minimum of 12 participants), I will not interview the Director of Education from TVDSB.

(d) If your research involves the collection and/or use of biological materials (e.g. blood, saliva, urine, teeth, etc.), please provide details below. Be sure to indicate how the samples will be collected and by whom.

N/A

14. EXPERIENCE OF INVESTIGATORS WITH THIS TYPE OF RESEARCH

(a) Please provide a brief description of previous experience by (i) the principal investigator/supervisor or sponsor, (ii) the research team and (iii) the people who will have direct contact with the participants. If there has not been previous experience with this type of research, please describe how the principal investigator/research team will be prepared.

The PI is experienced in conducting interviews from working on two research projects that were supervised by professors and two personal research projects that were part of course work. My supervisor, Dr. Jim Ryan, will also guide me through the research process for this project.
15. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Where there is recruitment, please describe how, by whom, and from where the participants will be recruited. Where participant observation is to be used, please explain the form of insertion of the researcher into the research setting (e.g., living in a community, visiting on a bi-weekly basis, attending organized functions). If relevant, describe any translation of recruitment materials, how this will occur and whether or not those people responsible for recruitment will speak the language of the participants.

I will send a recruitment letter (see Appendix C) via email, individually, to each woman Director of Education in Ontario’s English Public School Board (approximately 25 potential participants). Email addresses of Directors of Education are available on each school board’s website. The letter outlines the purpose of the study, and that participants are invited to participate in a one-hour interview. The letter includes the researcher’s contact information and directs people to email the researcher if they are interested in participating (researcher’s email address is included in the recruitment letter). Any questions participants have are going to be answered before an interview date and time is arranged. The participants will contact the researcher directly via email if they are interested in participating in the study at which time the participants will be given a copy of the consent letter via email for their review. Participants will sign two copies of the consent letter before the interview starts when the researcher and participants meet for the interview. All recruitment and interviews are going to take place in English with participants who work in
an English-speaking environment. As such, it is expected that all participants speak English. Thus, there is no need for translation of recruitment materials.

Attach a copy of all posters, advertisements, flyers, letters, e-mail text, or telephone scripts to be used for recruitment as appendices.

16. COMPENSATION

Please see U of T’s Compensation and Reimbursement Guidelines.

(a) Will participants receive compensation for participation?

Financial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-kind</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) If Yes, please provide details and justification for the amount or the value of the compensation offered.

N/A
(c) If No, please explain why compensation is not possible or appropriate.

Compensation is not possible as this is a student project and the budget is very limited. It is also not needed as participants will not be losing any income by participating in the project.

(d) Where there is a withdrawal clause in the research procedure, if participants choose to withdraw, how will compensation be affected?

N/A

SECTION C – DESCRIPTION OF THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

17. POSSIBLE RISKS

(a) Physical risks (including any bodily contact or administration of any substance); Yes ☐ No ☒
(b) Psychological/emotional risks (feeling uncomfortable, embarrassed, anxious or upset); Yes ☒ No ☐

(c) Social risks (including possible loss of status, privacy and/or reputation); and/or Yes ☐ No ☒

(d) Legal risks (potential of apprehension or arrest or being identified as a member of a legally-compromised group). Yes ☐ No ☒

(b) Please briefly describe each of the risks noted above and outline the steps that will be taken to manage and/or minimize them.

There are truly no known risks involved with participation in this study. There is no more risk involved in participating than in every day interactions. Risks will be very minimal given the position and experience of these very accomplished participants. However, women educational leaders are often emotionally or personally invested in the work and often experience challenges (some related to gender, some not) while doing this work. Therefore, talking about their commitment to the work and the challenges they have experienced may cause participants to feel uncomfortable or anxious (to a very minimal extent). Every effort will be made to ensure the comfort of the participants. Participants will be assured that participants’ names/identities will not be revealed through the course of the study of this to reduce stress or anxiety associated with participating in this study. Participants will be assured that they can withdraw from the interview and the study at any time, or not answer any questions they are not comfortable with. All interview participation will be voluntary, and will take place outside of participants’ working hours and removed from their work sites.
18. POSSIBLE BENEFITS

- Describe any potential direct benefits to participants from their involvement in the project
- Describe any potential direct benefits to the community (e.g., capacity building)
- Comment on the potential benefits to the scientific/scholarly community or society that would justify involvement of participants in this study

Through participating in this study, participants may become more aware of issues facing women in educational leadership and may advocate to make changes that could potentially benefit the entire school board. Findings will directly inform the field of educational leadership in Canada by providing new information about the pressures women educational leaders in Ontario school boards experience and strategies used to manage these pressures. Further, this project will expose areas in need of future research pertaining to gender in educational leadership. To share new findings and potential areas in need of future research with my academic colleagues, I will present at the annual Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration (CASEA) conference. My research will contribute to current discourse that aims to affect policy (and practice) at the provincial and district level in Ontario, in areas such as recruitment, retention and succession planning for top educational leaders. I will also share my findings with Ontario teacher unions and Ontario school boards to help ensure the results of this study are used to inform the practice of women leaders. Further, I will publish findings based on this study in open access journals and disseminate key information to the broader public through various forms of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, and a research study website).
SECTION D – INFORMED CONSENT

19. CONSENT PROCESS

(a) Describe the process that will be used to obtain informed consent and explain how it will be recorded. Please note that it is the quality of the consent, not the form that is important. The goal is to ensure that potential participants understand to what they are consenting.

(b) If the research involves extraction or collection of personally identifiable information from or about a research participant, please describe how consent from the individuals or authorization from the data custodian (e.g., medical records department, district school board) will be obtained.

Once participants have agreed to participate in the study, I will send the information/consent letter to the participants via email asking for their consent to participate in a one-hour interview. Participants are going to read the letter before they sign it, either before they arrive at the interview (using the copy they were sent via email) or in person before the interview begins (using one of the two hard copies of the consent form that I will give to the participants at the interview). I will also review the consent letter with them orally, answering any questions participants have, before participants sign it. Participants are going to sign two copies of the consent form before the interview begins, one copy is for the researcher, and the other copy is for the participant to keep. The letter will inform participants that the goal of the study is to gain a better understanding of
how women who have made it to top levels of educational leadership have managed pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them, as this can serve to help other women striving towards top levels of educational leadership to manage these pressures. The letter will contain the title of the study as well as the contact information for the researcher and the researcher’s supervisor. The letter will inform the participants that their participation is completely voluntary, that they will be free to withdraw at any time, and that the session will be audio-recorded (with participants’ permission) and transcribed and that they will need to sign for their specific approval of the recording. The letter will inform participants that they will not be judged or evaluated at any point in the study and will not be at risk of harm. They will be informed that they only have to answer the questions they feel comfortable answering.

20. CONSENT DOCUMENTS

(a) Attach an Information Letter/Consent Form

For details about the required elements in the information letter and consent form, please refer to our informed consent guide (http://www.research.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/GUIDE-FOR-INFORMED-CONSENT-April-2010.pdf)

Additional documentation regarding consent should be provided such as:
- screening materials introductory letters, letters of administrative consent or authorization
(b) If any of the information collected in the screening process - prior to full informed consent to participate in the study - is to be retained from those who are later excluded or refuse to participate in the study, please state how potential participants will be informed of this course of action and whether they will have the right to refuse to allow this information to be kept.

N/A

21. COMMUNITY AND/OR ORGANIZATIONAL CONSENT, OR CONSENT BY AN AUTHORIZED PARTY

(a) If the research is taking place within a community or an organization which requires that formal consent be sought prior to the involvement of individual participants, describe how consent will be obtained and attach any relevant documentation. If consent will not be sought, please provide a justification and describe any alternative forms of consultation that may take place.

N/A - because interviews are not going to take place in communities or organizations and the study is not investigating communities or organizations.

(b) If any or all of the participants are children and/or individuals that may lack the capacity to consent, describe the process by which capacity/competency will be assessed and/or, the proposed alternate source of consent.
(c) If an authorized third party will be used to obtain consent:

i) Submit a copy of the permission/information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the alternative consent

ii) Describe the assent process for participants and attach the assent letter.

22. DEBRIEFING and DISSEMINATION

(a) If deception or intentional non-disclosure will be used in the study, provide justification. Please consult the Guidelines for the Use of Deception and Debriefing in Research

(b) Please provide a copy of the written debriefing form, if applicable.
(c) If participants and/or communities will be given the option of withdrawing their data following the debriefing, please describe this process.

N/A

(d) Please describe what information/feedback will be provided to participants and/or communities after their participation in the project is complete (e.g., report, poster presentation, pamphlet, etc.) and note how participants will be able to access this information.

Participants will be given the opportunity of receiving a summary of the findings once it is completed, this option will be outlined in the consent form. Participants can request a copy of a summary of the findings at any point throughout the study by contacting the researcher by email. The consent form has a check box that states: please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion.

23. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

(a) Where applicable, please describe how participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project and outline the procedures that will be followed to allow them to exercise this right.
Participants will be told that they can withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, penalty and judgment, and that they can refuse to answer any question in the interview. This will be outlined in the consent letter that will be reviewed with them and signed prior to their participation in the study.

(b) Indicate what will be done with the participant’s data and any consequences which withdrawal may have on the participant.

If participants choose to withdraw from the study they will be asked if they would like their data and forms to be destroyed, if they choose to have to have their data and forms destroyed this will be done without judgment or consequence for the participants.

(c) If participants will not have the right to withdraw from the project at all, or beyond a certain point, please explain. Ensure this information is included in the consent process and consent form.

N/A

SECTION E – CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY
24. CONFIDENTIALITY

Data security measures must be consistent with UT's Data Security Standards for Personally Identifiable and Other Confidential Data in Research. All identifiable electronic data that is being kept outside of a secure server environment must be encrypted.

(a) Will the data be treated as confidential? Yes ☑️  No ☐

(b) Describe the procedures to be used to protect the confidentiality of participants or informants, where applicable

The identity of the research participants and their school boards will be kept anonymous in all research writing and publication. Participants are informed in the recruitment letter and the consent form that should the data be used in publications and presentations it will remain confidential in these publications as well. Only Directors of Education are going to be interviewed; thus, it is entirely possible, that some Directors could be identified by what they say. In this case, I will take considerable effort to remove identifying information which may even require concealing or changing information to preserve anonymity. Interview audio files will be stored for travel from interview locations to the researchers’ personal office on a Scan Disk Cruzer encrypted memory stick. Audio files will be transferred from the memory stick to a password-protected personal computer on a secured network. Audio files will be encrypted using Checkpoint Full Disk Encryption. Once audio files are transferred to the personal computer they are going to be deleted off of the memory stick. All digital data will be encrypted. The personal computer will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researchers’
Paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researchers' home. Only the researcher will have access to the consent forms, transcripts and all other raw data. Taped interview transcripts will be assigned codes for identification and analysis. Each participant will be assigned a code case number and all documents and data will be numbered using this code, including audio files and transcripts. Should the participant name specific institutions or persons in the interview, these will be given a factitious title or name in the final transcription of the data and not mentioned by name or title in the dissertation or in any publication. Participants' contact information will be kept separate from the data (should they wish to be informed of the results) and they will be informed of this fact through the consent form. The researcher will retain the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Names of school boards, participants, colleagues and politicians will not be identified in the study. All study data and associated files will be stored on a password-protected computer in files that have been encrypted using Checkpoint Full Disk Encryption.

(c) Describe any limitations to protecting the confidentiality of participants whether due to the law, the methods used, or other reasons (e.g., a duty to report)

N/A

25. DATA SECURITY, RETENTION AND ACCESS
(a) Describe how data (including written records, video/audio recordings, artifacts and questionnaires) will be protected during the conduct of the research and dissemination of results.

All project files will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home. Written records (hard copies), audio recordings and questionnaires will also be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home.

(b) Explain how long data or samples will be retained. (If applicable, referring to the standard data retention practice for your discipline) Provide details of their final disposal or storage. Provide a justification if you intend to store your data for an indefinite length of time. If the data may have archival value, discuss how participants will be informed of this possibility during the consent process.

Project materials will be kept for a period of five years to allow appropriate time to write publications out of the data. After five years the files will be deleted and destroyed.

(c) If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, please explain.

N/A
(d) If data will be shared with other researchers or users, please describe how and where the data will be stored and any restrictions that will be made regarding access.

N/A

SECTION F – LEVEL OF RISK AND REVIEW TYPE

See the Instructions for Ethics Review Submission Form for detailed information about the Risk Matrix.

26. RISK MATRIX: REVIEW TYPE BY GROUP VULNERABILITY and RESEARCH RISK

(a) Indicate the Risk Level for this project by checking the intersecting box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Vulnerability</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) Explain/justify the level of research risk and group vulnerability reported above:

There is very little risk associated with participation in this study. Participants are highly educated professional adults who will be asked to engage in interviews in the form of conversations with very minimal foreseeable risk to them. Participants are very capable of making rational and informed decisions about participating. Interviews will occur in a safe location and participants will have the option of stopping at any time they are not comfortable and/or withdrawing consent after participation. Participants will be guaranteed anonymity in any publications and/or presentation that discusses the results of this study. Specifically, pseudonyms will be used in place of participants’ real names, and any details (school names, school board names etc.) that could reveal a participant’s identity will be altered, in order to protect participants’ identities. Data obtained from these interviews is not of a sensitive nature. Although participants may feel slightly uncomfortable discussing challenges they have encountered during their work (pertaining to others’ social expectations of them), participants may find reflecting on the strategies they used to overcome these challenges very useful. Participants may make revelations during their interviews that participants choose to share with other women striving towards top leadership positions. Findings from this study will not only expose areas in need
of future research pertaining to women in educational leadership, but will have value to practitioners as well. Women aspiring toward top leadership positions may benefit from findings which describe the strategies women Directors of Education use to manage pressures associated with leadership. The potential benefits of this study, specifically to women aspiring toward top leadership positions, outweigh the risk of participant discomfort.

(Please note that the final determination of Review Type and level of monitoring will be made by the reviewing University of Toronto REB)

Based on the level of risk, these are the types of ethics review that an application may receive:

- Risk level = 1: Delegated Review;  
- Risk level = 2 or 3: Full Board Review

For both delegated and full reviews (SSH&E, HS, or HIV), please submit one electronic copy of your application and all appendices (e.g., recruitment, information/consent and debriefing materials, and study instruments) as a single Word document or a pdf. Do not submit your entire research proposal. Please ensure that the electronic signatures are in place and e-mail to new.ethics.protocols@utoronto.ca
The deadline for delegated review (SSH&E or HS) is EVERY Monday, or first business day of the week, by 4 pm. Information about full REB meeting and submission due dates are posted on our website (SSH&E, HS or HIV).

HIV REB reviews all applications at full board level but applies proportionate review based on the level of risk.

All other submissions (e.g., amendments, adverse events, and continuing review submissions) should be sent to ethics.review@utoronto.ca

SECTION G – SIGNATURES

27. PRIVACY REGULATIONS

My signature as Investigator, in Section G of this application form, confirms that I am aware of, understand, and will comply with all relevant laws governing the collection and use of personally identifiable information in research. I understand that for research involving extraction or collection of personally identifiable information, provincial, national and/or international laws may apply and that any apparent mishandling of personally identifiable information must be reported to the Office of Research Ethics.

For U of T student researchers, my signature confirms that I am a registered student in good standing with the University of Toronto. My project has been reviewed and approved by my advisory committee or equivalent (where
applicable). If my status as a student changes, I will inform the Office of Research Ethics.

Signature of Investigator: _______________________________
Date: June 7, 2015

***For Graduate Students, the signature of the Faculty Supervisor is required. For Post-Doctoral Fellows and Visiting Professors or Researchers, the signature of the Faculty Sponsor is required. In addition to the supervisor/sponsor, the chair or the dean of the UoT sponsor’s/supervisor’s department is required to approve and sign the form***

As the UofT Faculty Supervisor of this project, my signature confirms that I have reviewed and approve the scientific merit of the research project and this ethics application submission. I will provide the necessary supervision to the student researcher throughout the project, to ensure that all procedures performed under the research project will be conducted in accordance with relevant University, provincial, national or international policies and regulations that govern research involving human subjects. This includes ensuring that the level of risk inherent to the project is managed by the level of research experience that the student has, combined with the extent of oversight that will be provided by the Faculty Supervisor and/or On-site Supervisor.
As the UofT **Faculty Sponsor** for this project, my signature confirms that I have reviewed and approve of the research project and will assume responsibility, as the University representative, for this research project. I will ensure that all procedures performed under the project will be conducted in accordance with all relevant University, provincial, national or international policies and regulations that govern research involving human participants.

Signature of Faculty Supervisor/Sponsor: ______________________  
Date:

As the **Departmental Chair/Dean**, my signature confirms that I am aware of the **requirements for scholarly review** and that the ethics application for this research has received appropriate review prior to submission.

In addition, my administrative unit will follow guidelines and procedures to ensure compliance with all relevant University, provincial, national or international policies and regulations that govern research involving human participants. My signature also reflects the willingness of the department, faculty or division to administer the research funds, if there are any, in accordance with University, regulatory agency and sponsor agency policies.
Print Name of Departmental Chair/Dean (or designate): 

Signature of Departmental Chair/Dean: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
(or authorized designate)
Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Participants

Personal information

H. Name ______________________________________
I. School Board ________________________________
J. Number of Years as a Director _____________
K. Age_____ 
L. Marital Status ______________________________
M. Number of Children (and ages) _____________
N. Complete a brief history of your Career Path on this timeline

|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|

10. What social expectations do you think others have about leaders? (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?)

11. What social expectations do you think others have about women? (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?)

12. What social expectations do you think others have about women leaders (Prompts: Behaviors/characteristics? Role in workforce/home? Appearance?)

13. Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, based on other people’s expectations of you? (Prompts: Can you give me a specific example?)

14. Have you ever felt pressure to behave in certain ways in your role as a leader, because you’re a woman?
15. How have you managed these pressures? What strategies have you used?

16. What hindered/prevented (formal and/or informal) you in managing these pressures? (Prompts: Prohibitive policies/procedures? Unsupportive Spouse? Unsupportive bosses?)

17. What supports (formal and/or informal) helped you in managing these pressures? (Prompts: Books/courses/professional development? Supportive spouse? Mentor? Policies?)

18. What advice might you give another woman striving towards a top educational leadership position?
Appendix B

Informed Consent Letter

To appear on OISE/UT letter head

[Date]

Dear Director:

My name is Katie Higginbottom, my supervisor’s name is Dr Jim Ryan. I am a student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am requesting your cooperation as a voluntary participant in a study entitled: How women Directors of Education manage the pressures of leadership, in which I will examine how women Directors of Education in Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards manage pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them. This study is being completed as fulfillment of the thesis research requirement for the doctoral program at OISE/UT in the department of Theory and Policy Studies.

The purpose of this study is to investigate (through interviews) the pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders women Directors of Education face, and the strategies these women use to manage those pressures. This research has a number of objectives, including: (1) exploring what pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them, women Directors of Education experience; (2) exploring how these pressures affect women Directors of Education; (3) exploring what strategies women Directors of Education use to manage these pressures; (4) exploring what helps women Directors of Education manage these pressures; and (5) exploring what hinders women Directors of Education in managing these pressures. Results from the study will be written up in the form of a doctoral thesis and scholarly and professional journal articles for possible publication. Results will also be submitted for presentation at academic conference and used for publications in academic journals. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature about women in educational leadership.
in Canada. There is a substantial amount of research available that looks at women in mid-level leadership positions in education, such as the principal position.

Participants may benefit from sharing their experiences with managing pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders. They may also learn from the conversations about how to change their behaviors in the future to better manage these pressures. Benefits of this study also include that the results will be used to inform both educational leadership theory and practice. As there is a limited body of literature regarding women top level educational leaders in Canada – this study will contribute to that body of knowledge. The results could also be used to inform personal practice and professional development for women striving towards top level of educational leadership, hopefully providing women with helpful information about how to manage pressures they experience associated with others’ social expectations of them.

This research project will begin with interviews with 15 women Directors of Education from Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards. I am proposing to conduct an in-depth interview with you, lasting approximately one hour in length. Interviews will be semi-structured, like a conversation. The questions will ask about the pressures you experience associated with others’ social expectations of you, how you understand those pressures, what strategies you use to manage those pressures, what helps you manage those pressures and what hinders you in managing those pressures.

I am approaching you to ask you for your consent to participate. There is no known harm associated with your participation in this research. You may withdraw answers, decline to comment or withdraw your entire participation in this study at any time, if you withdraw from the study you will be asked if you would like your data destroyed. If you request your data to be destroyed all of your paper data will be shredded and digital data will be deleted. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be judged or evaluated at any time. You will be asked if you agree to have the interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription. You have the choice of declining. Because research results are far more accurate with the use of interview transcriptions during data analysis, if you decline I may decide to interview someone who
does agree to be audio recorded. If you agree to be audio recorded, you will be sent your interview transcript via email within four weeks of your interview. You will have two months to review your transcript and send any changes to the researcher via email. You may be asked to participate in a second interview if you feel you have more information to add to the study that was not addressed in the initial interview. Your audio file and transcription will be assigned a code to keep your identity anonymous. Your identity will remain anonymous and any names you use in the interview will be kept anonymous as well. Any names of organizations that you mention will also be kept anonymous. The information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet and stored on a password protected computer in a locked cabinet in the researchers’ home office. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. All computer files will be deleted and all paper files will be shredded.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this research. Benefits include sharing personal experiences and practices and gaining reflection and insight into practices and their associated outcomes.

There will be no compensation for participation. If you are interested in participating in this research or if you have any questions about it, please contact me by email at k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca. you may also contact my supervisor at jim.ryan@utoronto.ca. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 416-946-3237 or by e-mail at ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

You can also 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.

If you would like to participate in this study please sign below and return a copy to me. Please keep a copy for your records.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Katie Higginbottom

Dr. Jim Ryan
Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

OISE/University of Toronto

234 Hickory St, Whitby, ON

252 Bloor St West, 6th Floor, Toronto, ON

L1N 3X8, Canada

M5S 1V6, Canada

1-905-220-7042

1-416-978-115

k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca

Jim.ryan@utoronto.ca

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ___________________________ School Board:

_____________________________

Signed: ___________________________ Date:

_____________________________

Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion:

____

In the case that you would like to be informed of the results of the study, your contact information will be kept separate from the data.

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

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

To appear on OISE/UT letter head

[Date]

Dear Director:

My name is Katie Higginbottom, my supervisor’s name is Dr Jim Ryan. I am a student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am requesting your cooperation as a voluntary participant in a study entitled: *How women Directors of Education manage the pressures of leadership*, in which I will examine how women Directors of Education in Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards manage pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them. **This study is being completed as fulfillment of the thesis research requirement for the doctoral program at OISE/UT in the department of Theory and Policy Studies.**

The purpose of this study is to investigate (through interviews) the pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders women Directors of Education face, and the strategies these women use to manage those pressures. This research has a number of objectives, including: (1) exploring what pressures associated with others’ social expectations of them, women Directors of Education experience; (2) exploring how these pressures affect women Directors of Education; (3) exploring what strategies women Directors of Education use to manage these pressures; (4) exploring what helps women Directors of Education manage these pressures; and (5) exploring what hinders women Directors of Education in managing these pressures. Results from the study will be written up in the form of a doctoral thesis and scholarly and professional journal articles for possible publication. Results will also be submitted for presentation at academic conference and used for publications in academic journals. **This study will contribute to the growing body of literature about women in educational leadership**
in Canada. There is a substantial amount of research available that looks at women in mid-level leadership positions in education, such as the principal position.

Participants may benefit from sharing their experiences with managing pressures associated with others’ social expectations of women leaders. They may also learn from the conversations about how to change their behaviors in the future to better manage these pressures. Benefits of this study also include that the results will be used to inform both educational leadership theory and practice. As there is a limited body of literature regarding women top level educational leaders in Canada – this study will contribute to that body of knowledge. The results could also be used to inform personal practice and professional development for women striving towards top level of educational leadership, hopefully providing women with helpful information about how to manage pressures they experience associated with others’ social expectations of them.

This research project will begin with interviews with 15 women Directors of Education from Ontario’s (English) Public School Boards. I am proposing to conduct an in-depth interview with you, lasting approximately one hour in length. Interviews will be semi-structured, like a conversation. The questions will ask about the pressures you experience associated with others’ social expectations of you, how you understand those pressures, what strategies you use to manage those pressures, what helps you manage those pressures and what hinders you in managing those pressures.

I am approaching you to ask you for your consent to participate. There is no known harm associated with your participation in this research. You may withdraw answers, decline to comment or withdraw your entire participation in this study at any time, if you withdraw from the study you will be asked if you would like your data destroyed. If you request your data to be destroyed all of your paper data will be shredded and digital data will be deleted. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be judged or evaluated at any time. You will be asked if you agree to have the interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription. You have the choice of declining. Because research results are far more accurate with the use of interview transcriptions during data analysis, if you decline I may decide to interview someone who
does agree to be audio recorded. If you agree to be audio recorded, you will be sent your interview transcript via email within four weeks of your interview. You will have two months to review your transcript and send any changes to the researcher via email. You may be asked to participate in a second interview if you feel you have more information to add to the study that was not addressed in the initial interview. Your audio file and transcription will be assigned a code to keep your identity anonymous. Your identity will remain anonymous and any names you use in the interview will be kept anonymous as well. Any names of organizations that you mention will also be kept anonymous. The information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet and stored on a password protected computer in a locked cabinet in the researchers’ home office. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. All computer files will be deleted and all paper files will be shredded.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this research. Benefits include sharing personal experiences and practices and gaining reflection and insight into practices and their associated outcomes.

There will be no compensation for participation. If you are interested in participating in this research or if you have any questions about it, please contact me by email at k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca, you may also contact my supervisor at jim.ryan@utoronto.ca. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 416-946-3237 or by e-mail at ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

You can also 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.

If you would like to participate in this study please sign below and return a copy to me. Please keep a copy for your records.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Katie Higginbottom                                      Dr. Jim Ryan
Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

Professor, Theory and Policy Studies in Education

OISE/University of Toronto

234 Hickory St, Whitby, ON

252 Bloor St West, 6th Floor, Toronto, ON

L1N 3X8, Canada

M5S 1V6, Canada

1-905-220-7042

1-416-978-115

k.higginbottom@mail.utoronto.ca

Jim.ryan@utoronto.ca