HOW PRINCIPALS MANAGE THEIR EMOTIONS

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Leadership and Policy Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education Ontario Institute for Studies in Education University of Toronto

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Abstract

This study examines how secondary school principals manage their emotions at work. Specifically, this study used key informant interviews with 13 secondary school principals to identify conditions that lead to emotion-generating situations in their work, and to better understand the strategies they use to manage their emotions. This study also inquired about the supports secondary school principals access to mitigate emotion-generating situations.


Several trends emerged when collecting and analyzing the data. For example, principals use several strategies to manage their emotions beyond those previously reported in the literature. Further, participating principals also reported using strategies associated with all five families of ER found in Gross’ process model to manage their emotions. Principals in this study also described facing conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations, including encountering barriers when advocating for students, system-based challenges, media attention, a lack of support, and managing crises or tragedies in the school community. Although principals in this study did not describe accessing formal professional supports to help them manage their
emotions, they did seek out supports within their schools, often through members of their administrative teams.

This study and its findings contribute to the current research base on principals and their work, and to the emergent line of inquiry exploring the emotional nature of educational leadership. This study also discusses the implications this research could have for secondary school principals’ professional practice, provincial education policies, and administrative theory. Further, this study also provides a solid foundation for several next steps in the research process, including exploring how ER strategies influence perceptions of principal professionalism, further examining the kinds of situations that incite positive emotional responses, and determining the impact of work intensification on how principals manage their emotions.
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. iv
List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... v
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ vi

Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale for the Study ............................................................... 1
  Rationale ............................................................................................................................... 5
  Research Questions .............................................................................................................. 8
  Significance .......................................................................................................................... 9

Situating Principals’ Work: The Principalship in Contemporary Ontario ................................ 11
  Characteristics of Ontario’s Secondary School Principals .................................................... 16

Positionality ............................................................................................................................ 18

Organization .......................................................................................................................... 19

Chapter Summary .................................................................................................................. 21

Chapter 2: A Review of the Relevant Literature .................................................................... 22
  Emotions ............................................................................................................................... 22
  Types of Emotions .............................................................................................................. 24
  Emotional Regulation ......................................................................................................... 26

Strategies Principals Use to Manage Their Emotions ............................................................... 27
  Expressive Suppression ...................................................................................................... 28
  Talking with Colleagues ..................................................................................................... 29
  Distraction ............................................................................................................................ 30
  Reappraisal .......................................................................................................................... 30
  Exercise and Work–Life Balance ......................................................................................... 31
  Drug and/or Alcohol Use .................................................................................................... 31


Factors that Influence How Principals Manage Their Emotions ............................................ 32
  Gender-Based Power Relations .......................................................................................... 32
  Crises and Tragedies ........................................................................................................... 33
  Resistance to Social Justice Approaches to Leadership ....................................................... 34
  Supportive Organizational Climate .................................................................................... 36
  Policy Context ..................................................................................................................... 36
  Workload ............................................................................................................................. 37
  Level of Autonomy .............................................................................................................. 38

Hochschild’s Concept of Emotional Labour ........................................................................... 38
  Surface Acting ...................................................................................................................... 40
  Deep Acting ........................................................................................................................ 41
  Impact of Emotional Labour ............................................................................................... 41

Emotional Intelligence ............................................................................................................ 42
  Concern with Emotional Intelligence as a Construct .......................................................... 44

Changes that have Heightened the Emotional Aspects of Principals’ Work ............................ 45
  Student Diversity ................................................................................................................. 45
  Mental Health and Well-Being ............................................................................................ 46
  Email and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) ........................................ 46
  Accountability ..................................................................................................................... 47
  Labour Strife ....................................................................................................................... 48

Professional Support ............................................................................................................ 49

Chapter Summary .................................................................................................................. 50

Chapter 3: Methodology ....................................................................................................... 53
List of Tables

Table 1. Number of Secondary School Principals Reporting Whether their School is Located in Urban, Suburban, or Rural Communities ................................................................. 70
Table 2. Number of Male and Female Principals in the Sample ................................................. 70
Table 3. Participants’ Highest Level of Education ........................................................................ 71
Table 4. Number of Experienced and Less Experienced Principals in the Sample ...................... 71
Table 5. Characteristics of the Sample ....................................................................................... 72
Table 6. Number of Interactions Conducted Face-to-Face and Over the Telephone.................... 81
List of Figures

Figure 1. Gross’ (2014, 2010) Process Model of Emotional Regulation ................................................. 55
Figure 2. A New Model for How Principals Manage Their Emotions .................................................. 210
Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale for the Study

“From the time immemorial, people have wondered how to manage their emotions”


Emotions are everywhere and, as multiple scholars have argued, can be considered a fundamental part of the human experience (Applebaum, 1992; Callwood, 1986; Fineman, 2003, 2012; Oatley, 2004). Individuals are expected to behave in socially appropriate ways in a variety of public and private social situations, which often involve managing one’s emotions (Callwood, 1986; Fineman, 2003, 2012). The management and regulation of emotions is also a key component of leadership (Beatty, 2000, 2007; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2002; Carr, 1994; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). Given the shift to a more service-oriented economy in the latter half of the 20th century, managing one’s emotions has become an important quality for those employed in professions that involve working with people (Hochschild, 1983). The principalship is no different (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans, Piot, & Ballet, 2011; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010).

This study is important for several reasons. First, the work of principals in contemporary times is highly emotionally charged as many situations occur at the school that generate an emotional output (Beatty, 2000; Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2002; Carr, 1994; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010). For example, when principals are engaged in conversations with parents/guardians who disagree with school practices, decisions and/or policies, the situation can become heated. Principals are also compelled to manage their emotions to avoid encountering
discipline from the school district and/or their supervisory officer. Second, success as a principal is tethered to one’s ability to manage their emotions as the very nature of the position requires it. Principals will feel a variety of emotions throughout the typical work day and the nature of contemporary principals’ work demands that they ensure their emotions do not impact their ability to do their jobs effectively. For example, a principal may be happy that their school won a recent volleyball tournament, but it would not be socially or professional acceptable for the same principal to let that feeling infect what should be a somber meeting with parents/guardians to discuss next steps for a student being expelled from the school. Third, while principals’ work demands that they manage their emotions, suppressing emotions and being inauthentic with one’s feelings is associated with decreased health outcomes (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010). This puts principals in a difficult position as behaviours that contribute to positive group outcomes may be detrimental to their health, potentially leading to emotional exhaustion, burnout, self-doubt and other concerns (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver, Akerjordet, & Furunes, 2013). Finally, there is also evidence that hints that effective leaders are better able to manage emotions than their less successful colleagues (Boyzatis & McKee, 2005).

While managing one’s emotions has likely always been a part of principals’ work, the emotional terrain surrounding principals is changing, requiring principals to be able to effectively manage their emotions to fulfill their job requirements. The recent phenomenon of work intensification and many changes in the current educational climate have heightened and accelerated the need for principals to effectively manage their emotions (Cherniss, 1998; Pollock, 2016; Schmidt, 2010). These changes include: the need to manage multiple accountabilities (Anderson & Rodway-Macri, 2009; Ben Jaafar & Anderson, 2007; Leithwood, 2001; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002; Winton & Pollock, 2013), rising levels of student
diversity (Briscoe & Pollock, 2017; Ryan, 2006, 2007; Shields, 2010), labour strife (Ryan, 2010a; 2010b; Winton & Pollock, 2013), changing perceptions and awareness of mental health and well-being (Frabutt & Speach, 2012; Iachini, Pitner, Morgan, & Rhodes, 2015; Poirel, Lapointe, & Yvon, 2012; Sackney, Noonan, & Miller, 2000), as well as the increased use of contemporary technologies to communicate, such as e-mail and the Internet (Fullan, 2014; Haughey, 2006; Pollock, 2016; Sheninger, 2014). These changes all increasingly require principals to manage both their own emotions and the emotions of others, as do recent changes in provincial policy. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2016) recently approved Program Policy Memoranda (PPM) 159, which mandates that principals engage in, “leadership practices that value the expertise and inclusion of all voices, perspectives and roles” (p. 2). PPM 159 implies that increased consultation, collaboration and communication with all stakeholders will foster conditions that can lead to increased student learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). The increasing emotional intensity in the contemporary principalship is often the result of the work intensification they currently experience (Alberta Teachers’ Association [ATA], 2014; Gronn, 2003; Pollock, 2016; Ryan, 2016; Starr & White, 2008). For example, an emerging body of evidence has implied that these changes have forced principals to alter their practice because of work intensification, leading to increased workloads, role confusion, and lower levels of job satisfaction (Grodzki, 2011; MacMillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2004; Pollock, 2014; Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2015; Cattonar et al., 2007). Emotional responses, such as principal “burnout,” may also be tied to these changes (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). The body of literature described above has suggested that the principalship is more complex now than it has been in the past, at least partially because of the increasingly emotional nature of the position.
This study focuses on how secondary school principals manage their emotions, and all participants are currently employed as secondary school principals in Ontario. There is little information available about the work secondary school principals engage in on a daily basis (Levin, 2011). This lack of knowledge about secondary school principals may be a product of there being fewer secondary school principals available to participate in research. For example, Pollock (2014) found that only 16.4% of principals working in Ontario’s public schools are employed in the secondary panel. However, prior research has hinted at some of the challenges faced by principals working in a secondary school context. For example, secondary school principals report feeling like they do not have enough time to directly engage in instructional leadership activities, and are more likely to delegate instructional leadership activities to other staff members (Louis et al., 2010). Further, principals of secondary schools reported their work involves interacting with several different stakeholders, and that they engage in an average of 6.9 school-community partnerships at their schools (Hauseman, Pollock & Wang, 2017; Pollock, 2014). All of this points to the secondary context placing high emotional demands on principals, and that they are presented with many different situations in which they are required to manage their emotions. These contextual factors led me to focus this study on how secondary school principals manage their emotions.

Given these recent changes in the educational climate, and the particularly emotion-laden nature of the secondary school principalship, it is important to explore secondary school principals’ emotional processes as they are increasingly being asked to manage their own emotions and supervise those of their staff (Cherniss, 1998; Schmidt, 2010). Even though principals are fundamental to both the success of individual schools and the provincial education program as a whole, little is known about how they manage emotions in the workplace (Beatty,
2000; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). Considering that the principalship is a highly emotionally charged position (Beatty, 2000; Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2002; Carr, 1994; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010), and that one needs to be able to effectively manage their emotions to succeed as a contemporary principal, I used key informant interviews with 13 secondary school principals to better understand how they manage their emotions on a daily basis.

**Rationale**

This study seeks to provide insight into how principals manage their emotions and the supports they use to cope with the emotionally burdensome aspects of their position. There have been some attempts to explore the impact or influence of emotions on principals and their daily work, but few that explore how they manage their emotions (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2002; Carr, 1994; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Yamamoto, Gardiner, & Tenuto, 2014). Due to notions of professionalism and the scientific/rationalist roots of administrative theory (see Taylor, 1911), emotions and other subjective leadership qualities have been overlooked for some time in the educational administration literature (Beatty, 2000; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). Even though this has been a topic of scholarly inquiry for almost 20 years (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Crawford, 2009; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010; Yamamoto et al., 2014), Beatty’s (2000) proclamations that, “The emotional experience has not been explored in sufficient depth to date in educational administration research” (p. 331) and, “Emotional processes of the leader her/himself remain virtually uncharted territory” (p. 332) still ring true. This is not to imply that
emotions and managing emotions have not been recognized as an important part of school leadership. For instance, scholars have already questioned the lack of discussion about and emphasis on emotions in principal preparation programs (Bridges, 2012; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace 2010; Zembylas, 2010). More recently, documents such as the Ontario Leadership Framework have acknowledged the importance of emotional resources in the work of school leaders, especially as drivers of school success (Institute for Education Leadership, 2013; Leithwood, 2012). Although Leithwood’s (2012) emphasis on the importance of optimism and managing emotions for principals seems a tacit acknowledgement that the position is emotion-laden, a coherent counterdiscourse has yet to emerge from the literature that fully acknowledges the fundamental role emotions and the ability to manage one’s emotions plays in contemporary school leadership. The success of the “self-help” industry and prevalence of prosperous psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychotherapists suggests there is no “silver bullet” or “quick fix” for easily training people to manage their emotions. The uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of teaching people to manage their emotions may be tied to the lack of academic consideration paid to leaders’ emotions.

The underdeveloped nature of the body of literature exploring the emotional aspects of the principalship is a problem (Beatty, 2000, 2007; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace 2010; Zembylas, 2010). Further, the legislative definitions of principals’ work and roles lack clarity and fail to acknowledge the emotional aspects of the contemporary principalship. Given the recent changes in contemporary principals’ work, and the heavy and intense emotional labour of the position (Beatty, 2000; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Yamamoto et al., 2014), the definitions of what principals actually do in many pieces of Canadian provincial legislation seem outdated (Alberta Education Act [Part 7,
Section 19]; British Columbia School Act [Regulation 265/89, Section 5]; Manitoba, The Public Schools Act [Section 55.1, subsection 1]; Ontario Education Act [Part 10, Section 265]). In terms of offering an apt description of the emotional aspects of the principalship, these definitions are merely superficial.

Although much of the emergent literature on this topic is conceptual in nature (Crawford, 2009; Milley, 2009), some scholars have indicated that managing emotions can be detrimental to a principals’ self-efficacy and well-being. For example, Milley (2009) argued, “Educational leaders may find they have problems with being authentic and living with personal integrity, undermining fundamental expectations people have of them and eroding their legitimacy” (p. 78). Similarly, Kelchtermans et al. (2011) mentioned, “[Principals] often tend to feel that emotions are only idiosyncratic, accidental, temporary, but above all annoying side-effects that need to be controlled and thus played down as much as possible” (p. 95). Further, Crawford (2009) found that, “In a fundamental sense, educational leaders are moved to action by their feelings” (p. 196). Research has also linked leaders’ negative emotional displays with lower levels of perceived effectiveness from their followers (Lewis, 2000). A study of this nature is particularly timely given Pollock’s (2014) recent survey study, where 29% of a sample of more than 1,400 principals indicated they self-medicate in an effort to cope with the emotional toll of their work.

Individuals may find it difficult to control the emotions that arise in emotionally-challenging situations. But managing their emotions may assist them in controlling the behaviour that flows from these emotions (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Managing emotions is a complex process where individuals attempt to project an image that runs counter to the emotions they are actually feeling (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). After encountering an
emotionally challenging situation, individuals, such as principals, need to determine if they are feeling any emotions that need to be managed before continuing their workday. The very nature of the principalship demands that individuals who occupy the role effectively manage their emotions in order to do the job in a professional manner (Armstrong, 2014; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2014).

Like most other individuals, principals manage their emotions in several different ways. For example, individuals can attempt to manage their emotions using a combination of several strategies, such as removing oneself from an emotionally challenging situation and engaging in activities that shift their attention away from their emotions (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Managing one’s emotions may also involve suppressing or masking their true feelings and attempts to outwardly portray a different emotion to the outside world (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Reflecting and reappraising how one feels about situations that generated an emotional response is another way that individuals can manage their emotions (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). When attempting to manage their emotions, individuals may also change how they cope with emotion-generating situations by entering a different emotional state. They may do this by engaging in exercise, or consuming food, alcohol or illegal/prescriptions drugs (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014).

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore how secondary school principals manage their emotions at work. This study also identified the conditions principals experience that can incite emotions in the workplace, and inquired about where principals seek out professional support to cope with an increasingly demanding position. The following research questions guided this inquiry:
1. What conditions lead to secondary school principals experiencing emotion-generating situations?

2. What strategies do secondary school principals employ to manage their emotions?

3. What professional supports are utilized by Ontario secondary school principals to assist in dealing with the emotional content of their daily work?

4. How do Ontario secondary school principals learn to manage their emotions?

Significance

This research is contextualized by an ever-growing body of evidence that has implied principal leadership elicits a fundamental, yet indirect, influence on student learning in schools (Anderson, Moore, & Sun, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, Wahlstrom, & Mascall, 2009; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). Other than an inferred acknowledgement that managing emotions is important for leaders, little is known about the emotions principals experience and how principals manage them (Leithwood, 2012; Stone, Parker, & Wood, 2005; Williams, 2008), despite widespread acknowledgement that emotions are directly tied to the work principals do and the choices they make on a daily basis (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Beatty & Brew, 2004; Blackmore, 2004; Blase & Blase, 2002; Carr, 1994; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Kelchtermans et al., 2011; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Yamamoto et al., 2014). For example, Blackmore (2004) noted that, “Emotions are part of the social glue that hold organizations together as they tap into why individuals make particular choices, how they work with others and relate to the organization and how they evaluate their situation” (p. 444). Further, Blase and Blase (2002) have argued that a lack of self-regulation and inability to manage emotions could undermine all of the positive work a principal does at their school. Similarly, Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004) found that “leaders who are insecure about their own
emotional capacity and identity will create organizational settings, which tend to deprive others of theirs” (pg. 322). All of this evidence hints at the management of emotions being tied to effective leadership (Gooty et al., 2010). Findings from this study will provide valuable insight into how principals manage emotions—a fundamental component of contemporary principals’ work.

Identifying how principals manage their emotions and which supports are available to help them do so is significant to a variety of educational stakeholders. For example, a better understanding of how principals manage their emotions is required for faculties of education and other training programmes to adequately prepare future leaders (Bolton & English, 2010; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). Nearly 20 years ago, Gmelch and Gates (1998) stated that professional development programs and opportunities should help principals develop “self-awareness and understanding of the emotional intensity of administration” (p. 155). Further, Bolton and English (2010) have argued that emotions should be an integral aspect of professional development opportunities for education leaders. For example, they asserted that separating emotions from other learning is inauthentic as it does not reflect principals’ daily decision-making processes. Effective professional development opportunities and preparation programs for current and aspiring principals could lead to more effective school leadership and, in turn, better student outcomes.

The impending retirement of baby-boomers who currently occupy the principalship has the potential to spark a school-level leadership crisis, as teachers and other administrators are increasingly viewing the role as unattractive. In this context, it is unsurprising succession planning has been a popular topic of study both in Canada (Fink & Brayman, 2004, 2006; Normore, 2004; 2006) and internationally since the turn of the century (Kelchtermans et al.,
Policy-makers and school districts need to comprehensively understand the emotional aspects of the principalship to make the position more attractive and implement effective professional supports for current principals. These kinds of professional supports also have the potential to provide current principals with the skills to drive school success without sacrificing their own health and wellbeing by suppressing emotions or engaging in other strategies for managing emotions that are associated with negative outcomes.

Moreover, a more comprehensive understanding of how school leaders manage their emotions will provide potential principal candidates with insight about the demanding nature of the principalship, as well as the knowledge necessary to make an informed decision about pursuing the position. Further, given that emotions are seemingly such a fundamental part of school leadership, how can educational administration be taught—or the “right” candidates be attracted to the position—without a comprehensive understanding of how principals manage their emotions? The topic of principals’ emotion management is important for principal recruitment and preparation, and can help inform the development of more appropriate and better suited professional supports for those currently in the role. Considering there is little empirical research exploring how principals manage their emotions, this topic also holds significance for the academic community (Beatty, 2000; 2007; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace 2010; Zembylas, 2010). Additionally, this study has the potential to further the collective understanding of principals’ health and well-being, which is perhaps the greatest contribution this research could make to the literature. By studying how principals manage their emotions, this research aimed to determine whether Beatty (2000) was correct in her assertion that “the emotional price that school leaders have to pay is just too high” (p. 355).

**Situating Principals’ Work: The Principalship in Contemporary Ontario**
To better understand the emotional nature of the principalship, one needs insight into the duties, tasks, and activities that are expected and demanded of those who occupy the position. Discussion about the content of principals’ work is not new. For example, Eggerton Ryerson, the architect of Ontario’s publicly-funded education system stated that, “It cannot be too often repeated that it is the master that makes the school” (1847, p. 156). In his *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada* (1847), Ryerson also outlined the following desired qualifications and qualities of an effective school master:

- Know much more than he is called upon to teach that he may teach with intelligence and taste;
- Live in a humble sphere, yet have a noble and elevated spirit;
- Dignity of mind necessary to obtain the respect and confidence of families;
- Display a rare mix of gentleness and firmness;
- Be the obsequious servant of none;
- Not ignorant of his rights but thinking more about his duties;
- Maintain a good example and serving to all as a counsellor;
- Satisfied with his situation because it gives him the power of doing good; and
- Made up his mind to live and die in the service of primary instruction which to him is the service of God and his fellow creatures (Ryerson, 1847).

It is difficult to read Ryerson’s (1847) recommendations without noticing his exclusive use of male pronouns, suggesting that the principalship was a position reserved for men. Although many of the more moralistic aspects of the principalship that Ryerson described remain firmly embedded in the position, such as serving as a role model, the principalship has evolved and grown more complex over time (Begley, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Leithwood, Jantzi &
Steinbach, 1999; Cattonar et al., 2007). For example, the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF), a contemporary model of leadership designed to guide administrative practice in the province, is much more comprehensive than Ryerson’s (1847) early ruminations on the role and responsibilities of school leaders. The OLF contains the following five different domains of leadership practices that should comprise principals’ work:

- Setting directions;
- Building relationships;
- Developing the organization;
- Instructional leadership; and
- Securing accountability (Leithwood, 2012; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013).¹

Leithwood (2012) mentioned that, “As the domain labels indicate, the OLF describes a set of shorter term goals that need to be accomplished if the fundamental purposes of the school and school system are to be realized” (p. 5). Each of the domains in the OLF include several different leadership practices. The OLF also contains many evidence-based personal leadership resources (PLRs), defined as key traits or skills associated with effective leadership that principals can use when enacting the leadership practices in each domain (Leithwood, 2012; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). For example, as Pollock (2015) stated:

Evidence suggests that cognitive (problem-solving expertise, knowledge of school and classroom conditions that directly affect student learning, and systems thinking), social (perceiving emotions, managing emotions, and acting in emotionally appropriate ways) and psychological (optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity) PLRs are also associated with effective school leadership. (p. 2)

¹ During the course of this study, the Ontario Ministry of Education solicited proposals for a revised version of the Ontario Leadership Framework that incorporates emerging perspectives on several topics, including inclusion, mental health and wellness, and Aboriginal education. This process began in July 2017 and concluded in March 2018.
Although the social PLRs acknowledge the role of emotions in contemporary principals’ work, emotions also seem to be treated as an afterthought rather than as a legitimate job demand in the OLF.

Pollock and Winton (2016) also noted that the OLF is used as a tool to guide the recruitment and preparation of aspiring principals and the ongoing professional learning of those currently in the position. Although the OLF is intended to guide what principals do on a daily basis, their work is also influenced by other factors unique to the Ontario context, such as the policies and legislative acts that govern education in the province (Armstrong, 2014; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2014). According to Section 265 of Ontario’s Education Act (Milne, 2017; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990), legislated responsibilities, powers, and duties mandated of principals in Ontario can be grouped into the three following areas: leading the instructional program at their school, managing the school organization, and ensuring the health and safety of all staff and students in the school.

Principals are responsible and accountable for several tasks and activities associated with leading the instructional program at their school (Milne, 2017; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990). For example, after reviewing the provincial Education Act, Pollock and Hauseman (2015) found that principals are responsible for engaging in the following practices:

Developing, supervising, evaluating, and being accountable for instructional programs; hiring, supervising, evaluating, and providing professional development opportunities for school staff; supporting student advancement; and evaluating student performance and progress. (p. 216)

At least from a legislative perspective, this quotation indicates that principals’ work involves program development, staffing, and supporting student achievement at their schools. Legislative and policy-based facets of principals’ work also involve several managerial and administrative duties, tasks, and activities. These tasks and responsibilities range from monitoring finances and
expenditures, providing and overseeing extracurricular activities, following up on issues regarding student attendance, and development of the school plan (Pollock & Hauseman, 2015; Pollock, Murakami, & Swapp, 2015). In terms of managerial and administrative responsibilities, principals are also legally obligated to operationalize plans implemented by their employer (the district school board) as well as the provincial government. Additional managerial and administrative responsibilities tied to the principalship in Ontario include registering students at the school, preparing reports on matters of interest to the school, and consulting the school council at least once a year (Milne, 2017; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015; Pollock, Murakami, & Swapp, 2015).

Ontario principals are also chiefly responsible for the health and safety of all students within their schools (Milne, 2017; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). According to the provincial Education Act, principals are to maintain the physical plant and other school property, as well as refuse admittance to anyone whom they feel may have contracted a communicable disease (Milne, 2017; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). Overall, the duties and responsibilities of the principalship nested within Ontario’s provincial education legislation do not fully illustrate the complexity of the principalship, the content of contemporary principals’ work, and the emotionally demanding nature of the position.

It is also important to mention that principals are also responsible for upholding legislative demands that extend beyond their roles and responsibilities described in the Education Act (Leithwood & Azah, 2014). An example of principals’ legal accountability involves obligations to the provincial Ministry of Labour in ensuring both student, and occupational health and safety at the school site.
Characteristics of Ontario’s secondary school principals. Variations in age, gender, ethnicity, experience, educational background, and areas of instructional expertise make Ontario secondary principals a diverse group (Fullan, 2014). A recent survey of over 1,400 Ontario’s public-school principals (Pollock, Wang & Hauseman, 2015) indicated that Ontario principals are diverse in some ways and homogenous in others. For example, 62.8% of survey respondents were female, with male principals representing the remaining 37.2% of respondents. Only 16.4% of respondents were employed in secondary schools, while 77.3% were employed in the elementary panel; 2.9% of principals who responded to the survey worked in both elementary and secondary schools. There was also diversity in the level of education Ontario principals bring to the position. Over half of the principals who responded to the survey (54.3%) had obtained a graduate degree, with lower numbers holding a bachelor degree (41.2%), a professional degree (2.4%), and a terminal degree, such as a doctorate (1.3%). Survey respondents also worked in diverse settings, as school sizes ranged from as low as 25 students to over 2,200 (Pollock, Wang & Hauseman, 2015). The sample of principals who responded to this survey were much less diverse in terms of other demographic characteristics, however; for example, more than 90% of the sample self-identified as Caucasian.

Despite their differences, all principals in Ontario work in the same overarching school system and, for the most part, met similar criteria and requirements before being hired for the position. Aspiring principal candidates must attain certain prerequisites and professional development before they are considered for the position in Ontario (Murakami, Törnsén, & Pollock, 2014; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2012), to become a principal in Ontario’s publicly-funded school system, one must have the following qualifications and experiences:
1. An undergraduate degree;

2. At least five years of experience as a classroom teacher;

3. Certification to teach in three of the four divisions (primary, junior, intermediate, or senior) of Ontario’s publicly-funded school system;

4. Successful completion of at least two additional qualifications with Specialist or Honour Specialist designations, or a Master’s degree; and


The additional qualification courses are, for the most part, one-off professional development opportunities offered by both faculties of education and provincial principal associations. The PQP involves a practicum component and 12 classroom-based modules delivered in two parts over 125 hours of instruction (Ontario Principals’ Council, 2017). Each part of the PQP contains six modules, with a portion of the instructional time often delivered through distance education (Ontario Principal’s Council, 2017). The practicum component is typically completed after finishing the first six modules, and is designed to be an educational experience where principals can apply knowledge learned during the first part of the program to real-world situations (Ontario Principal’s Council, 2017). In addition to the fulfilling the formal qualifications, prospective principals must also uphold moral standards associated with the teaching profession in the province.

Ontario principals are also bound by the ethical guidelines and standards of the profession as identified by the Ontario College of Teachers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2017; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). These four ethical standards (care, respect, trust, and integrity) are designed to ensure that students’ best interests are at the forefront of all decisions educators
make (Ontario College of Teachers, 2017). The Ontario College of Teachers’ standards of practice for the teaching profession include a commitment to students and student learning, professional knowledge, demonstrating leadership in learning communities, professional practice, and ongoing professional learning (Ontario College of Teachers, 2017). It is expected that all Ontario principals demonstrate these standards in their work.

**Positionality**

England (1994) proclaimed, “feminism and poststructuralism have opened up geography to voices other than white, Western, middle-class, heterosexual men” (p. 81). Although England (1994) is a professional geographer, her quotation could be applied to any of the social sciences, including education. The data collection tool in qualitative research is the researcher (Merriam, 2009, Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001; Springer, 2010). As such, it is not unreasonable to presume that several characteristics associated with researchers, including their experiences, political leanings, gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of education, and ethnicity may influence all aspects of a qualitative study (England, 1994; Kezar, 2002). Therefore, positionality, or how researchers situate themselves within a study, is extremely important and must be clearly stated (England, 1994; Merriam et al., 2001).

I self-identify as a white, heterosexual male who has lived in Ontario my whole life. Although I do not have experience as a principal and my career trajectory does not involve becoming a principal, I have always had a keen interest in leadership—as demonstrated by my research experience. Prior to undertaking this research, I had been involved in several research projects exploring system- and school-level leadership. My experiences observing and interviewing principals, as well as assisting in large-scale surveys of principals in Ontario,
ultimately led to my interest in conducting qualitative research to learn more about how secondary school principals manage their emotions at work.

Before moving forward, it is also important to discuss my views on contemporary school leadership. Many scholars have experienced long and productive careers by drawing distinctions between leadership and management (see Bass, 2010; Bennis, 1989; Kotter, 1990; Leithwood, 2012). Evocative words such as visionary, change, creativity, and innovation have been used to describe leaders, while managers are perceived as being focused on planning, control, and efficiency (Bennis, 1989; Kotter, 1990; Leithwood, 2012). Although I do not presuppose that leadership and management are synonymous, my understanding of the literature on both organizational and school leadership is that that effective leadership involves sound management (Fullan, 2014). Effective leaders can appreciate creativity while having their pulse on the fiscal bottom line and attending to other administrative or bureaucratic activities traditionally associated with management.

Emotional regulation is another component of leadership (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Crawford, 2007, 2009; Hochschild, 1983; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). In terms of school-level leadership, principals need to be able to effectively manage their emotions in order to elicit the significant—if indirect—impact on student learning (Anderson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2009; Supovitz et al., 2010). The research design, data collection procedures, as well as the way I interpreted, reported, and organized the findings have undoubtedly been influenced by all the factors, characteristics, and understandings described above.

**Organization**

I have organized this dissertation to provide appropriate background information and knowledge about both the contemporary principalship in the Ontario context and how principals
manage their emotions when working. The rationale for the study and an introduction to this topic have all been included in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 includes a review of the relevant literature, which chiefly discusses the research exploring strategies principals use to manage their emotions, factors that influence how principals manage their emotions and provides a definition for the term “professional support”. The literature review also includes descriptions of Hochschild’s (1983) concept of emotional labour, emotional intelligence, and a short summary of changes in contemporary principals’ work that have heightened the need for principals to effectively manage their emotions to succeed in the position.

Chapter 3 describes both the methodology and conceptual framework used to guide the inquiry. A description of the data collection tools and procedures and the data analysis process are all included in this chapter. Data collection consisted of semistructured interviews with 13 practicing principals employed in 10 different school districts in Ontario, Canada at the time of my research. I analyzed data using the cross-comparative method, meaning that I read, reread, and analyzed transcripts with an openness to emergent and recurrent themes. The third chapter concludes with a brief discussion of any limitations and ethical concerns associated with this study.

Chapter 4 highlights recurrent themes and key ideas to emerge from this research that are related to the first research question, which focused on identifying conditions that incite emotion-generating situations in contemporary principals’ work. I use Gross’ (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013; 2014) process model for emotional regulation throughout Chapter 5 to frame my discussion of how the principals in this study manage their emotions. Beyond simply describing the data, Chapter 5 also identifies the ways in which the findings relate to the conceptual
framework underlining the study. Chapter 6 identifies supports principals in this study access for assistance in managing their emotions, and reports findings related to how participating principals learned to manage their emotions. In Chapter 7, I discuss and interpret my findings related to how principals manage their emotions in relation to the both my conceptual framework and the literature and propose a new model for how principals manage their emotions. The eighth and final chapter concludes with implications for practice, policy, and theory, and suggests next steps and further research that could emerge from the findings of this study.

**Chapter Summary**

In chapter one, I have introduced the study, including listing research questions that guided this inquiry and describing the rationale for conducting this research. This section also highlighted the reasons why this study is important, including the role of emotions in contemporary principals’ work and the fact that success in the position demands the ability to effectively manage one’s emotions. The links between effective leadership and managing emotions (Boyzatis & McKee, 2005; Gooty et al., 2010), and how suppressing emotions is associated with negative outcomes, such as emotional exhaustion are also important reasons for conducting this study (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013). This section has also provided some background information on the principalship in Ontario to contextualize chapter two. In Chapter two, I define emotions and emotional regulation, then focus on summarizing literature related to conditions that incite emotion-generating situations, and the strategies principals use to manage their emotions. The chapter concludes with descriptions of Hochschild’s concept of emotional labour (1983), emotional intelligence and a summary of changes in the educational climate that have heightened and accelerated the need for principals to effectively manage their emotions.
Chapter 2: A Review of the Relevant Literature

The purpose of this research is to explore how principals manage their emotions. As mentioned earlier, this study is important because principals’ work is emotionally charged by its very nature, and success in the role demands effective management of emotions. Effective emotional regulation skills have also been tied to effective leadership (Boyzatis & McKee, 2005; Gooty et al., 2010), but suppressing emotions is also associated with negative outcomes, such as increased emotional exhaustion, burnout and self-doubt (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013).

To provide an appropriate foundation for this research, it is important to explore literature that reports on the role of emotions in educational leadership and the strategies principals use to manage their emotions. As such, this literature review begins with definitions of emotions, types of emotions, and emotional regulation. I then discuss the literature related to the strategies principals use to manage their emotions, and the factors that influence their ability to effectively manage their emotions. This is followed by a description of Hochschild’s (1983) concept of emotional labour, as this concept is central to understanding the impact of emotions in the workplace. This chapter also provides brief descriptions of the changes in contemporary principals’ work that have heightened the emotional aspects of the nature of the role and offers a definition of professional support to clarify the goals of the fourth research question guiding this study.

Emotions

Emotion and emotions are contested terms in the literature, having been described by different scholars as a self-feeling process (Denzin, 2009), an experience (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015), a type of phenomenon (Gooty, et al., 2010; Ryan & Tuters, 2015), and “an influential way of knowing” (Beatty, 2007, p. 334). Indeed, when it comes to emotions, there is a “lack of clarity regarding construct definitions” (Gooty et al., 2010, p. 997). Emotions are particularly important
for leaders, such as principals because they “inform us about others’ behavioural intentions, give us clues as to whether something is good or bad, and script our social behaviour” (Gross, 1998, p. 273). For example, Berkovich and Eyal (2015) stated that, “emotions are affective experiences, such as fear or joy, that emerge when one perceives events or situations to have personal significance because they harm or promote oneself or one’s goals” (p. 130). According to the definition above, emotions manifest in bodily and psychological reactions, and emotional states can last for shorter or longer durations of time (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). Gross (2010) provided a much more dynamic definition of emotions: He argued that emotions refer to, “An astonishing array of happenings—from the mild to the intense, the brief to extended, the simple to the complex, and the private to the public” (p. 499). Within the school leadership field, Kelchtermans et al.’s (2011) analysis “treated emotions as reflecting the particular way in which principals experience their job and enact it” (p. 96). Despite the uncertainty in the literature, Fineman (2003) argued that the following four aspects or characteristics of emotions can be useful when defining the term:

1. Emotions are psychological responses to a stimulus;
2. Emotions are biologically and genetically wired into the body;
3. Emotions and how they are experienced stem from early life experiences so people can have different emotional reactions to similar situations; and
4. Emotions do not occur in isolation, but occur in contexts and settings where they are learned as part of socialization processes.

It is also important to note that individuals can feel more than one emotion at any given time, and the outcomes of the same emotion can also be different depending on contextual factors (Gross, 2014; Oatley, 2004; Rajah, Song, & Arvey, 2011). As Gross stated, “Emotions arise when an
individual attends to and evaluates (appraises) a situation as being relevant to a particular type of currently active goal” (Gross, 2014, p. 4). Although there are individualistic aspects to emotions and the ways in which different people feel, “Emotions are publicly and collaboratively formed” (Zorn & Boler, 2007, p. 137). For example, Ryan and Tuters (2015) have noted that emotions are an inherently social phenomenon, stating that “while emotion has a private element, the emotional process is also public, that is, it is also social” (p. 5). Further, Beatty (2007) indicated that emotions are directly linked to power and are used as a method of social control. For example, “Emotions are not optional, and furthermore, they shape and reflect our experience of ourselves and others and the ability to re-envision our place in the social process” (Beatty, 2007, p. 333). Fineman’s (2003) multipronged definition of emotions seems particularly suited to this study, as it recognizes the situational, social, and political nature of emotional processes (Gill & Arnold, 2015; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Winton & Pollock, 2013; Zorn & Boler, 2007).

Recognizing the political aspects of how principals manage their emotions and the emotional labour in their work was useful during the analysis phase, as the study was conceptualized and conducted in the wake of rather turbulent labour unrest between Ontario’s teacher unions and the provincial government.

**Types of Emotions**

The process(es) individuals use to distinguish the emotions they feel is the subject of intense scholarly debate (Cowen & Keltner, 2017; Ekman, 1992; Gendron & Feldman Barrett, 2009; Lövheim, 2012; Remington, Fabrigar & Visser, 2000; Russell, 1980). Beyond establishing that the ways in which individuals classify their emotional experience as a complex and nuanced process, there is only modest empirical evidence to support how individuals organize their emotional experiences. Currently, the following two approaches are used by scholars to classify
the types of emotions individuals feel: a) discrete emotion theory; and b) viewing emotions using dimensional models. Discrete emotion theory rests on the notion that each emotion one feels is a distinct phenomenon, and that different neural and physiological impulses cause individuals to feel different emotions (Ekman, 1992; Gendron & Feldman Barrett, 2009). Further, discrete emotion theory also posits that individuals have a basic set of emotions that are universal among humans as a species, regardless of culture, upbringing or past experiences (Ekman, 1992; Gendron & Feldman Barrett, 2009). Conversely, dimensional models of emotion propose that all emotions are interconnected, or that the same neural and physiological impulses are responsible for all the emotions one feels (Cowen & Keltner, 2017; Lövheim, 2012; Remington, Fabrigar & Visser, 2000). Cowen and Keltner (2017) devised a dimensional model for classifying the types of emotions people feel after analyzing over 2000 videos of people displaying different emotions. Their analysis identified 27 different varieties of emotions, including admiration, adoration, aesthetic appreciation, amusement, anger, anxiety, awe, awkwardness, boredom, calmness, confusion, craving, disgust, empathic pain, entrancement, excitement, fear, horror, interest, joy, nostalgia, relief, romance, sadness, satisfaction, sexual desire, and surprise (Cowen & Keltner, 2017). Though the different types of emotions are categorized and labelled in Cowen and Keltner’s (2017) model, it should be noted that their data indicates the boundaries between the different emotional states are fuzzy rather than discrete. Characteristics such as age, gender, social class, personality explained a small amount of the variances in the types of emotions individuals feel, suggesting that there are both contextual and universal aspects to how individuals experience and classify emotions (Cowen & Keltner, 2017). Cowen and Keltner’s (2017) model for classifying emotions is utilized in this study because of its comprehensive
nature. For example, the model includes several emotions that principals may or may not feel throughout the workday.

**Emotional Regulation**

Another important concept involved in this study is *emotional regulation* (ER). Gross (1998) offered the most frequently cited definition of ER (Haver et al., 2013): “The processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience these emotions” (p. 275). People can regulate their emotions; ER can also involve maintaining or increasing an emotion rather than avoiding feeling processes altogether (Gross, 2014; 2010; Gross & Thompson, 2007; Gross, Richards, & John, 2006; O’Connor, 2004; Oplatka, 2012). Emotional regulation is accomplished by naturally feeling emotions, or through surface acting and/or deep acting (Haver et al., 2013). Further, Gooty et al. (2010) have argued that ER is a dynamic construct that “involves attempts to influence what emotions one experiences, when and how they are experienced and expressed” (p. 981). As constructs, emotions and emotional regulation are difficult to measure empirically, despite the emergent knowledge that, “ER is especially important for leaders, as studies found that leaders tend to suppress and fake emotions more, as they are expected to act deliberately and rationally” (Rajah et al., 2011, p. 110). Further, Haver et al. (2013) noted, “Emotional regulation is considered a key competence associated with effective and good leadership and is essential in relation to how people deal with negative emotions in order to reduce potentially adverse outcomes” (p. 287). The emotions one feels and one’s ability to effectively manage their emotions is also heavily dependent on context (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Poirel & Yvon, 2014; Rajah et al., 2011). For example, Rajah et al. (2011) noted, “The effectiveness of
leaders in terms of ER depends also in their context, suggesting that a particular regulation strategy can be adaptive in one work situation and maladaptive in another” (p. 289).

However, competencies related to effective ER are simultaneously linked to positive group outcomes, such as improved organizational health and individual follower health, while also bearing responsibility for emotional exhaustion and a host of other negative outcomes for leaders. As Haver et al. (2013) indicated, “Suppression of negative emotions such as anger, annoyance, disappointment, uncertainty, and frustration was a potential hazard to good health and positive job outcomes” (p. 297). Similarly, suppressing emotions and being inauthentic with one’s feelings can lead to negative consequences (Gross et al., 2006). This evidence indicates that principals are placed in an untenable situation, as the behaviours and practices associated with improved group outcomes are also linked to negative consequences for their health. As such, it may be beneficial to ensure principals are aware of positive coping strategies to help manage the emotional labour associated with their work.

**Strategies Principals Use to Manage Their Emotions**

As, Beatty (2000) proposed, “Educational administration researchers can no longer afford to treat the emotions as subordinate, insignificant, or peripheral if we are to explore fully the way leaders are and the way they can be” (p. 334). The emotional components of educational leadership have been paid more scholarly attention since the turn of the last century (Beatty, 2000; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Hargreaves, 2001, 2004; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008; O’Connor, 2004; Oplakta, 2012; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Schmidt, 2010; Stone et al., 2005; Wallace, 2010; Williams, 2008; Yamamoto et al., 2014). For example, the inclusion of emotional self-regulation in the latest version of the Ontario Leadership Framework (Leithwood, 2012) follows widespread agreement in the literature that the principalship places emotional demands on
Reviewing the literature helped identify the strategies principals use to manage their emotions and the factors that can influence their ability to effectively manage their emotions. In my literature review, I identified the following five strategies: expressive suppression (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Crawford, 2007; Cliffe, 2011; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Niesche & Haase, 2012; Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Ryan & Tuters, 2015), talking to colleagues (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Pollock, 2014; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Roffey, 2007; Zembylas, 2010), distraction (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Johnson et al., 2005), reappraisal (Zembylas, 2010), and exercise and work–life balance (Pollock, 2014).

**Expressive suppression.** Expressive suppression is an ER strategy that occurs when individuals suppress their true emotional state; the practice shares similarities with Hochschild’s (1983) surface acting where individuals are “faking” an emotion (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Gross & John, 2003). Principals engaging in what Gross (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) described as expressive suppression to manage their emotions has overwhelming support in the literature (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Crawford, 2007; Cliffe, 2011; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Niesche & Haase, 2012; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Roffey, 2007; Ryan & Tuters, 2015). For example, prior research has found that principals will actively manipulate their perceived emotional state to influence the behaviour of others (Beatty, 2000; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Crawford, 2004; Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Ryan & Tuters, 2015). As Ryan and Tuters (2015) have noted, “In the course of doing their work, administrators spend much time managing how
they feel and expressing (or not expressing) these feelings in order to engender particular emotions in others” (p. 8). Brennan and Mac Ruairc (2011) found that principals’ tendency to engage in expressive suppression can increase the impact of particularly negative situations:

A tendency to regulate and bury emotions by putting on a brave face arduously in the workplace setting. As a result, the emotional experience had a more negative and damaging potential as a result of the inauthentic nature of the leadership practice. (p. 143)

Making efforts to suppress one’s true feelings at work can have negative consequences for principals, such as increasing the intensity of negative emotional experiences. Further, Gronn and Lacey (2004) reported that aspiring principals realized the importance of masking their emotions as they navigated the principal preparation process. Prior research has also indicated that principals can use more positive strategies to manage their emotions at work, such as talking with their colleagues.

**Talking with colleagues.** Talking about the emotionally challenging situations they experience at work with colleagues and close friends is another strategy principals use to manage their emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Johnson et al., 2005; Roffey, 2007; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Zembylas, 2010). For example, Pollock (2014) discovered that talking to colleagues is one of the main strategies principals use to cope with an emotionally draining day. Prior research has also found that principals will only confide their true feelings with individuals whom they trust and who are familiar with their school context (Zembylas, 2010). For example, Zembylas (2010) found that principals will rely on their colleagues to manage their emotions because they are familiar with the school context, work in the same school, and may have had interactions with the same people (Zembylas, 2010). Talking to colleagues also allows for individuals to be exposed to different perspectives, which may change how they feel about an emotionally challenging situation (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Johnson et al., 2005; Zembylas,
Principals may also turn to their colleagues for emotional support (Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Roffey, 2007). Although talking with one’s colleagues is a social ER strategy, prior research has also found that principals can distract themselves by engaging in more solitary activities as a way to manage their emotions.

**Distraction.** Scholars have indicated that principals can manage their emotions by engaging in a variety of activities to distract themselves while involved in, or from thinking about, emotionally challenging situations (Berkovich & Eyal., 2015; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Johnson et al., 2005). For example, Berkovich and Eyal (2015) described how “at times leaders spend time alone or take a break from work to disengage from emotion-eliciting events and recharge their emotional batteries” (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015, p. 149). Similarly, other studies have described how principals engage in distraction to disconnect from an emotionally challenging situation (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Johnson et al., 2005). For example, Johnson et al., (2005) noted that principals engage in several activities to manage their emotions, including writing poetry, seeking solitude, or going for a walk. Prior research also reported that principals can engage in other solitary strategies to manage their emotions, such as reappraisal.

**Reappraisal.** Only one of the studies included in this literature review reported that principals engage in reappraisal to manage their emotions (Zembylas, 2010). Zembylas (2010) conducted a case study of one male principal to determine the emotions he experienced while engaged in social justice leadership at his school. This principal described engaging in reappraisal to assess how his feelings and emotions influence the actions (and interactions) of the people around him. In this way, reappraisal helped him develop a balanced view in emotionally challenging situations, which informed the challenging decisions he made throughout the workday.
**Exercise and work–life balance.** Pollock’s 2014 survey found that principals may manage their emotions by exercising or participating in activities intended to achieve a better work–life balance. For example, the survey found that physical activity and spending time with family are two of the top three ways participating principals cope with an emotionally draining day. In addition to identifying some strategies principals use to manage their emotions, the literature also hinted at seven factors that influence how principals manage their emotions.

**Drug and/or Alcohol Use.** Prior research also indicates that principals may engage in drug and alcohol use as a strategy to manage their emotions (Pollock, 2014; Riley 2017a; 2018). For example, Riley (2017a; 2018) found that most principals maintain a healthy level of alcohol consumption. However, the same study identified that principals working more than 40 hours per week were more likely to consume alcohol and/or tobacco than their peers. Further, a recent large-scale survey of over 1,400 principals conducted in Ontario found that 29% of the sample will self-medicate in an effort to manage the emotional toll associated with their work and workload (Pollock, 2014).


Factors that Influence How Principals Manage Their Emotions

Several factors are involved in both the ways leaders manage emotions and whether those strategies are effective. After reviewing the literature, I identified seven factors that have been found to influence how principals manage their emotions. These factors are:

- Gender-based power relations (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998);
- Crises and tragedies (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Fein & Issacson, 2009; Yamamoto et al., 2014);
- Social justice approaches to leadership (Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010);
- A supportive organizational climate (Beatty, 2000; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Friedman, 2002; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Sayegh, Anthony, & Perrewe, 2004);
- The policy context (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996; 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004);
- Workload (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Whitaker, 1996); and
- The level of autonomy principals have over their daily work (Beatty, 2000; Carr, 1994; Schermuly, Schermuly & Meyer, 2011).

Below, I discuss how each of these factors have been found to influence the strategies principals use to manage their emotions, and whether those strategies are effective.

Gender-based power relations. Certain scholars argue that organizational cultures within schools are highly gendered, which creates unique challenges for women in positions of leadership (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). For
example, Sachs and Blackmore (1998) have argued that an individual’s interactions are governed by several feeling rules. Feeling rules are unwritten social contracts that encourage men and women to mask their true feelings and display emotions that are socially appropriate for a given situation, such as masking anger or pain, and feigning happiness or complicity to act in a professional manner.

Beatty and Brew (2004) also found that power relations can influence how principals manage their emotions. For example, participants in their 2004 study concealed their emotions from followers; the authors stated that “the reasons for remaining silent about one’s inner authentic emotions included fear of seeming to be out of control or stupid, fear of being ridiculed, fear of inviting the crossing of boundaries and losing power in relationships” (Beatty & Brew, 2004, p. 338). This evidence hints at how some principals may use their ER skills to manipulate others and maintain control over the school.

**Crises and tragedies.** One thing principals cannot control are crises and tragedies that occur at the school and affect the school community. Emotions matter for leaders in times of crisis (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Fein & Issacson, 2009; Yamamoto et al., 2014). For example, feelings of fear, anxiety and sadness — can emerge or be exacerbated when principals are managing a crisis at their school (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000). Principals cannot plan for crises or tragedies, and are often forced to react in the moment when these incidents occur at their schools (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Fein & Issacson, 2009; Yamamoto et al., 2014). As such, principals can feel burdened by their responsibilities to serve others during a crisis, as they are expected to place the needs of their staff, students, and community above their own basic needs and/or those of their own families (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Fein & Issacson, 2009). For example, Fein
and Issacson (2009) explored the emotional work of leaders who had experienced school shootings. They found that leaders pay a high emotional toll for shepherding a school through a crisis; all participants in the study indicated that they have emotional scars from the experience (Fein & Issacson, 2009). In their summary of literature describing principals’ reactions to crises and tragedies, Berkovich and Eyal (2015) stated:

Leaders reported that times of crisis exacerbate specific, different types of fears that characterize leadership experiences: fear of failure, fear of change or stagnation, fear of being criticized, fear of being dismissed, and fear of losing one’s professional identity. (p. 137)

Crises and tragedies can incite fear in people, including the principals who are tasked with managing the situations when they occur at a school. The need to react in the moment and the negative emotions, such as fear and sadness associated with crises and tragedies can both influence how principals manage their emotions.

**Resistance to social justice approaches to leadership.** The literature also indicates that principals who practice social justice approaches to leadership may experience challenges managing their emotions and become frustrated when they face resistance (DeMatthews, 2015; Jansen, 2006; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010). Although “success in leaders’ proactive efforts to advance the development and the social reality of students from disadvantaged backgrounds was linked with leaders’ positive emotions” (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015, p. 142), inability to achieve such aims led to negative outcomes, such as self-doubt and emotional exhaustion (Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010). For example, Ryan and Tuters (2015) found that social justice leaders often experience emotions such as awkwardness, fear and sadness when they encounter resistance. Similarly, Theoharis (2008) found,

The resistance to enacting justice clearly became a burden for these principals, and this burden took a significant toll on these leaders, on their bodies, and on their emotional
well-being. As they described the resistance they faced, they were candid about the toll and the discouragement they felt as a result. (p. 333)

The principals in Theoharis’ (2008) study paid an emotional and physical toll because they faced significant resistance to their advocacy for social justice. Zembylas (2010) noted, however, that although the principals in his study mostly mentioned “the negative impact of emotional exhaustion at the personal and professional levels, [the principal] also had pleasant feelings to share from the relationships he developed with students and community members” (p. 619).

Ryan and Tuters (2015) also found that the ability to use emotion can have benefits for principals who practice social justice leadership, as they can use their emotions to manipulate others to achieve social justice goals and aims. In this way, principals can manage their emotions, and how their emotions are perceived by others, to manipulate others’ behaviour. Based on these studies, engaging in social justice leadership can incite sadness, anxiety and fear in principals when they encounter resistance, and calmness joy and relief when they achieve their aims or reflect on the relationships they have built. The very nature of the principalship demands that principals effectively manage emotions, such as those experienced when advocating for social justice (Ryan & Tuters, 2015). For example, it would not be appropriate, and likely a career-limiting move, for a principal to openly question decisions made by the school district related to a particular student or issue, especially in an emotionally charged or unprofessional manner. Similarly, principals may also have to manage positive emotions that occur throughout the school day such as happiness related to the successful social justice efforts. For example, a principal may be happy about the school’s scores on provincial large-scale assessments, but may be forced to temper that enthusiasm when meeting with students and parents about behaviour concerns.
Supportive organizational climate. Unsurprisingly, principals have reported positive feelings and emotions about work when they have a supportive and cooperative organizational climate (Beatty, 2000; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Friedman, 2002; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Sayegh, et al., 2004). Principals have also reported experiencing positive emotions, such as joy, when working with a supportive and collaborative staff (Beatty, 2000; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Gronn & Lacey, 2004). Toxic school climates have had the opposite effect, leading principals to negatively perceive their work and workplace (Carr, 1994; Beatty, 2000). Further, Friedman (2002) indicated that a lack of support and cooperation from teaching staff can lead to principals experiencing emotional exhaustion.

Policy context. Policy context can also influence principals’ ability to effectively manage their emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996; 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Part of a principal’s job in contemporary times is to implement and enforce compliance with district or jurisdictional policy at the school-level, even if they do not agree with the aims or intended outcomes of a given policy. For example, prior research has found that principals can experience emotional distress when forced to implement accountability policies that do not align with their views concerning effective educational practices (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996, 2004). Having to implement policies that are misaligned with their values can lead principals to feel they are being dishonest to their staff (Blackmore, 1996, 2004) and to take less pride in their work (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). When they disagree with a policy, principals may experience and must effectively manage emotions, such as anxiety or confusion, so they can implement the policy as intended, and fulfill their job responsibilities. Even policy changes that are not meant to directly impact principals—such as the Ontario government’s recent decision to limit primary class sizes—can influence how principals manage their emotions.
(Flessa, 2012). For example, the policy decision limiting primary class sizes impacts principals’ ability to effectively staff the school, potentially leading to negative emotions such as anxiety. (Flessa, 2012). Another factor that can be influenced by policy context is principals’ workload.

**Workload.** Principals’ workload also influences whether they can manage their emotions effectively (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmech & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Whitaker, 1996). Principals work long hours (Pollock, 2014), and have reported experiencing emotions, such as fear, anxiety and sadness related to the shrinking timelines and an expanding workload (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmech & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007). For example, Pollock (2014) found that 86.5% of Ontario principals feel they never have enough time to do their work (Pollock, 2014). Further, a recent found that 75% of principals in the United States think that their job has become too complex (Metlife, 2013). Increased duties and responsibilities can lead some principals to suffer from physical and emotional stress, especially when they are asked to work in areas or oversee portfolios where they lack time, skills or experience (Armstrong, 2014). Workload and tight timelines are associated with negative outcomes for principals, including burnout, stress, and emotional exhaustion (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmech & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007). For example, “Administrative task overload and lack of time were among the most significant factors predicting…school administrators’ burnout” (p. 140), and, “Lack of a clear end of the workday contributed to principals’ emotional exhaustion” (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015, p. 140). It can be difficult for principals to effectively manage their emotions when shouldering the burden of a heavy workload with little time left in the day to relax or disconnect from work. The final factor I identified in the literature that influences how principals manage their emotions is the level of autonomy they have over their daily work.
**Level of autonomy.** The level of autonomy principals wield over their work and work environment is the final factor influencing how they manage their emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Beatty, 2000; Carr, 1994; Schermuly et al., 2011). Prior studies have found that a perceived lack of autonomy can lead to principals to experience emotions, such as fear and anger, because they cannot do their job effectively when feeling micromanaged by their supervisory officers (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Beatty, 2000; Carr, 1994; Schermuly et al., 2011). Further, decreased autonomy can lead principals to experience symptoms of emotional exhaustion because they feel less empowered at work (Schermuly et al., 2011). It is important for principals to be able to effectively manage their emotions as they cannot do their jobs effectively when feeling emotionally exhausted, or paralyzed by emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and anger.

In the current era of accountability, oversight and a lack of autonomy are part of the contemporary principalship, highlighting the need for principals to engage in several strategies to mask, conceal or suppress emotional responses and effectively manage their emotions. However, it is important to mention that providing principals with complete autonomy could increase ambiguity about what they should do and how they should complete those tasks and activities, potentially increasing emotional responses. For example, Schwartz (2004) argues that while autonomy is fundamental to an individual’s health and well-being, too much choice can lead to individuals feeling greater levels of anxiety.

Now that I have described the strategies principals use to manage their emotions and the factors influencing how principals manage their emotions in detail, I will discuss Hochschild’s (1983) concept of emotional labour in the next section.

**Hochschild’s (1983) Concept of Emotional Labour**
Because this thesis explores emotions in the workplace, it is appropriate to discuss Hochschild’s (1983) concept of emotional labour as it is related to how principals manage their emotions on a daily basis. Emotional labour is often an unacknowledged job demand, and is associated with expectations that employees will effectively regulate their emotions in the workplace (Hochschild, 1983). For example, few (if any) job descriptions for the principalship acknowledge that principals must be able to effectively manage their emotions to be successful in the role. Coined by Hochschild (1983), emotional labour refers to the process of both managing one’s emotions and perceiving the emotions of others while working. Many professions demand both the ability to perceive the emotional states of other people, and react based on established social norms, or feeling rules. According to Hochschild (1983), “feeling rules are what guide emotion work by establishing the sense of entitlement or obligation that governs emotional exchanges” (1983, p. 56). Feeling rules essentially function as rule reminders: They make people think about and examine their feelings and determine whether the emotions are socially acceptable for a given situation.

It is important to note that, according to Hochschild (1983), emotional labour occurs only in jobs that require personal contact with the public, the production of a state of mind in others, and the monitoring of emotions by supervisors. The principalship fits all three of Hochschild’s (1983) requirements. Principals are also in a unique position: They are not only expected to manage their feelings to find emotions to match the multitude of situations they face as part of their work, but they also are charged with monitoring the emotions of everyone present at the school site (including staff, students, parents/guardians, etc.).

Hochschild (1983) proposed three types of work—cognitive, bodily, and expressive—that involve emotions. Emotion work, which is cognitive in nature, involves situations where
employees try to change their thoughts or ideas to illicit a similar adjustment in their emotional state. *Bodily emotion work* occurs when one makes changes to their physical state to try to influence their emotions. Finally, when people change their expressions or gestures, such as forcing a smile when feeling upset, they are engaging in *expressive emotion work*. Hochschild (1983) also argued that individuals perform emotional labour in the workplace in the following two ways: surface acting and deep acting. I will discuss each in detail below, before discussing the impact emotional labour can have on individuals and their well-being.

**Surface acting.** Surface acting (Hochschild, 1983) is a phenomenon that occurs when there is a fundamental disconnect between the emotion someone shows to other people and what they are actually feeling. Hochschild (1983) noted that surface acting is “disguising what we feel, or pretending to feel what we do not” (p. 33). When engaged in surface acting, one is essentially faking an emotion to meet those feeling rules or social norms discussed earlier. As scholars have argued, this is an unhealthy practice that can lead to higher levels of stress (Hochschild, 1983; Crawford, 2009; Milley, 2009). For example, “Surface actors fake or hide desired emotions, and their felt emotions are thus distinguished from their displayed emotions” (Haver et al., 2013, p. 288). Surface acting can occur at home, at work, or in any situation where one is required to manage or regulate their emotions. For instance, in many service-minded professions, such as education and healthcare, employees are encouraged to cover up “negative” emotions (i.e., anger, sadness, envy, etc.), in an effort to outwardly portray happiness, compassion, and other “positive” emotions to customers and/or other stakeholders. Some people are so adept at surface acting that their real self is “an inner jewel that remains [their] unique possession no matter whose billboard is on [their] back or whose smile is on [their] face” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 34).
**Deep acting.** The other way people perform emotional labour in their work is through deep acting. Deep acting is, in a sense, the portrayal of the emotions one wishes they had when facing a given situation (Hochschild, 1983). Not only must one have experienced the emotion they want to feel, but similar to method acting, the emotion must be real, and in the moment. Deep acting calls for “a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality” (Hochschild, 1983, p.7). As Hochschild (1983) explained, “In deep acting we make feigning easy by making it unnecessary” (p. 33). According to Haver et al. (2013), “Deep acting refers to the process of modifying inner feelings to express appropriate emotions” (p. 288). Deep acting is a part of everyday life as individuals are constantly focusing on what they want to feel and engaging in activities that make them feel that way (Hochschild, 1983). As mentioned above, deep acting occurs when an individual relies on past experiences to reach a desired emotional state—a process akin to method acting—to actually experience the emotions that they show to others (customers, fellow staff, stakeholders, etc.) despite initially not feeling that particular emotion.

**Impact of emotional labour.** Hochschild argued that men and women experience emotional labour in different ways and that emotional states are influenced by social settings (Hochschild, 1983). Workers’ emotions can become reified when their faces and feelings are used as instruments to further an employer’s goals. Emotional strain can be an unintended consequence of this process, as people are constantly trying to balance how others perceive their emotions with how they really feel. As Milley (2009) argued, “Emotions are subject to an economic calculus that aims to exploit them for productivity gains, and an administrative emphasis on managing emotions to support policy implementation and maintain institutional
order” (p. 77). Principals can engage in emotional labour when dealing with their supervisory officers, students, parents/guardians, teachers, and other stakeholders.

When engaging in emotional labour, workers and professionals are compelled to conform to societal norms and institutional feeling rules; a side effect may be that they feel a loss of autonomy and that their wisdom is less valued in a profession that codifies emotion (Hochschild, 1983). When this occurs, Hochschild (1983) argued, one of the following two things will happen: either the worker will suffer from burnout or feel guilty for becoming detached from their job. This seems to be the case for principals. Both Wallace (2010) and Schmidt (2010) indicated that principals are either retiring or burning out due to the heavy emotional toll of their work. Pollock (2014) suggested that many principals are struggling to cope, because separating one’s personal self (who has permission to express true feelings) and the professional self (whose emotional performativity is constrained by feeling rules) can be a difficult and potentially debilitating process (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional labourers such as principals (Grodzki, 2011) can experience identity and role confusion, as “the worker wonders whether her smile and emotional labour that keeps it sincere are really hers” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 133). Those who engage in emotional labour at the workplace often wonder, “how do I really feel?”

The elements of principals’ work that involve emotional labour include, but are not limited to: managing their own emotions and perceiving the emotions of others during discussions with stakeholders such as irate parents/guardians, and masking inner turmoil when experiencing a difficult day. Although these descriptions seem negative, it is important to mention that emotional labour in one’s work is not all bad. For instance, emotional labour is what prevents principals from reacting with anger at the slightest annoyance.

**Emotional Intelligence**
This is a study about how principals manage their emotions and is not about emotional intelligence. However, many readers are likely familiar with Goleman’s (1995; 1998) notion of emotional intelligence, so it is important to briefly define the term and state why focusing on emotional intelligence would not be appropriate for this study.

Emotional intelligence is a term that became popularized in the 1990’s with Goleman’s (1995) bestselling book titled, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More than IQ*. Goleman’s work has been credited with emotional dimensions of leadership becoming more widely recognized (Blackmore, 2011). However, emotional intelligence is a contested term, as there are several competing models and definitions of emotional intelligence in the academic literature, and it seems that the definitions that do exist are subject to change (Cherniss, 2010; Landy, 2005; Locke, 2005; McCleskey, 2014). McCleskey (2014) notes that emotional intelligence is an ill-defined construct, having been described as an ability, a set of emotional or social skills, or a collection of competencies or traits. Goleman (1995; 1998) indicates that emotional intelligence considers one’s ability to monitor their own emotions and those of others, label and identify different emotions and to use information gathered through emotions to drive one’s behaviour and ways of thinking. Similarly, Mayer & Salovey (1997) note that emotional intelligence is:

“the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (pg. 10).

Based on that definition, emotional intelligence is a complex phenomenon. Further, George (2000) indicates that definitions of emotional intelligence usually involve the following four components:

1. Appraisal and expression of emotion;
2. Use of emotions to influence thinking and making decisions;
3. Knowledge of emotions; and
4. Management of one’s emotions.

The present study is only focused on the fourth element of emotional intelligence, though there are several reasons why I refrain from using the emotional intelligence literature as a basis to guide or frame this study.

Concerns with Emotional Intelligence as a Construct. As mentioned above, there are three reasons why I chose to focus exclusively on why principals manage their emotions, rather than assess levels of emotional intelligence or study how principals demonstrate emotional intelligence in practice. First, the conflicting and competing definitions and models of what actually constitutes emotional intelligence makes it difficult to measure the concept, or collect meaningful and legitimate data about the phenomenon (Cherniss, 2010; Landy, 2005; Locke, 2005; McCleskey, 2014). Second, there is currently a lack of reliable empirical evidence to support the various definitions and models of emotional intelligence (Harms & Credé, 2010; Davies et al., 1998; Cherniss, 2010). Further, the evidence that does support emotional intelligence has been questioned. For example, Harms and Credé (2010) note that, “proofs of validity seem to come from measuring constructs that have existed for a long time and are simply being relabelled and recategorized” (pg. 156). Some of these constructs that are included in emotional intelligence are well known personality factors that are well defined in the literature, and already have robust literature bases, such as assertiveness, social competence, self-confidence and stress management (Harms & Credé, 2010; Davies et al., 2010). Third, emotional intelligence does not predict effective leadership or success in a role (Harms & Credé, 2010; Cherniss, 2010; Davies et al., 1998; Landy, 2005; Locke, 2005; McCleskey, 2014). It should be
mentioned that some studies have observed relationships between emotional intelligence and effective leadership, but that relationship disappears when researchers engage in multi-source methods, such as gathering data from leaders and followers (Harms & Credé, 2010).

**Changes that have Heightened the Emotional Aspects of Principals’ Work**

As mentioned earlier, the principalship has likely always involved managing emotions at some level. However, the role of emotions and managing emotions in contemporary principals’ work has only been heightened by both larger societal changes and several changes in the educational climate. For example, larger societal changes influencing the emotional content of contemporary principals’ work include: rising levels of student diversity (Briscoe & Pollock, 2017; Ryan, 2006, 2007; Shields, 2010), changing perceptions and awareness of mental health and well-being (Frabutt & Speach, 2012; Iachini, Pitner, Morgan, & Rhodes, 2015; Poirel et al., 2012; Sackney et al., 2000), as well as the increased use of contemporary technologies to communicate, such as e-mail and the Internet (Fullan, 2014; Haughey, 2006; Pollock, 2016; Pollock & Hauseman, 2018; Sheninger, 2014). The emotional aspects of contemporary principals’ work are also influenced by changes in the educational climate, such as the task of managing multiple accountabilities (Anderson & Rodway-Macri, 2009; Ben Jaafar & Anderson, 2007; Leithwood, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2002; Winton & Pollock, 2013) and navigating labour strife, grievances, and other union issues (Ryan, 2010a; 2010b; Winton & Pollock, 2013). Taken together, these changes to the volume and content of contemporary principals’ work increasingly require principals to manage both their own emotions and the emotions of others.

**Student diversity.** Many Ontario principals work in school contexts that are rapidly diversifying, both in terms of visible differences, but also differences in student learning styles and ability (Shields, 2010). As such, principals are now compelled to address issues of equity,
privilege, and systemic and societal inequities. Contemporary schools are tasked with serving students with an endless variation of individual or unique needs (Canadian Association of Principals, 2014). However, principals often have different understandings of student diversity, which can impact their ability to effectively meet the needs of all students (Briscoe & Pollock, 2017). Further, Hargreaves (2001) cautions that, “several forms of emotional distance and closeness that can threaten emotional understanding among teachers, students, colleagues and parents” (p. 1061). One types of emotional distance and closeness experienced by educators in their interactions with different stakeholder groups is sociocultural distance. Sociocultural distance arises from cross-cultural differences that can lead teachers to stereotype students based on preconceived notions, and vice-versa (Hargreaves, 2001). The threat of, and working through labour strife is another change in contemporary principals’ work that can influence how they manage their emotions.

**Mental health and well-being.** The heightened awareness of mental health and issues concerns is another societal change that can place principals in situations where they may experience emotional responses. Contemporary principals are not only guardians of their own mental health, but they are also tasked with making the school a supportive environment for staff, students and parents who may experience mental health concerns (Leithwood & Azah, 2014). Leithwood & Azah (2014) note that principals tend to focus on the mental health of students, parents and the school community, rather than tending to their own needs.

**E-mail and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).** Recent research demonstrates that the increased use of e-mail and ICT can create situations where principals can experience emotional responses. For example, the nature of e-mail, ICT and remote communications allow opportunities for principals to access information faster than ever before,
which can help them complete work tasks more efficiently and lead to positive emotions, such as high levels of self-confidence or self-efficacy (Gurr, 2000; Pollock, 2014; 2016; Pollock & Hauserman, 2018). However, email can also amplify, escalate and intensify work-related pressures for contemporary principals by speeding up the pace of work and transforming the principalship into a mobile position with no set location or office hours (Pollock & Hauserman, 2018). The immediacy of e-mail can also lead to school district and staff expectations that principals are always available to engage in work-related activities (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2012; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009; Galton & MacBeath, 2002; Hvidston, Hvidston, Range, & Harbour, 2013; Williamson & Myhill, 2008). For example, Pollock (2014) recently found that most Ontario principals receive more than 100 emails per day, and that they spend an average of 11.5 hours per week, or almost 20% of their time at work, reading and responding to email. It may be difficult for principals to effectively manage their emotions when they are constantly managing a full inbox.

Accountability. The accountability context in which contemporary principals work can lead to situations where principals need to effectively manage their emotions to fulfill their job responsibilities. Contemporary principals’ work involves managing multiple accountabilities, which can make it difficult to meet all stakeholder demands, leading principals to feel negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety and sadness (Armstrong, 2014; Pollock & Winton, 2015). Further, principals may experience other emotions, such as confusion, when accountability reporting requirements limit their ability to support teachers (Canadian Association of Principals, 2014). While principals’ work in Ontario involves managing multiple accountabilities, performance-based accountability receives the most attention as they are mandated by jurisdictions to use student performance data to measure overall school effectiveness (Elmore,
Another tension related to accountability that has heightened the emotional nature of the principalship is the number of competing and often overlapping accountability systems and approaches principals are expected to manage as part of their work. Balancing or juggling pressures related to political, legal, bureaucratic, moral, professional, market and management accountabilities when conducting their daily work can create situations where principals may experience positive or negative emotions while on the job (Normore, 2004; Shipps & White, 2009).

**Labour strife.** Unions and the political environment can create situations that lead to emotional responses in contemporary principals. For example, less than 10% of the principals who responded to Pollock’s (2014) survey felt ‘very respected’ by the provincial teacher unions. The literature also supports the notion that unions and labour strife can add to the emotional complexity of contemporary principals’ work (Chernian & Daniel, 2008; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Oplatka, 2017). Principals may experience sadness, anger and other emotions when union contracts limit the amount of time they can spend on formal professional development activities with the school’s teaching staff (Chernian & Daniel, 2008; Winton & Pollock, 2013). Further, grievances and other union concerns prevent principals from engaging in instructional leadership, or other important activities that can aid student outcomes (Chernian & Daniel, 2008; Winton & Pollock, 2013).

This research was conducted during a time of labour strife between the provincial government and the local teacher unions, as many participating principals were facing heightened workload pressures due to unions engaging in a work to rule campaign (a bargaining tactic where employees, such as teachers, only perform fundamental work responsibilities and refrain from other tasks, such as coaching extracurricular activities or writing report cards).
Navigating labour strife and other union concerns can place principals in situations where they may experience emotional responses. For example, operating the school during periods of labour turmoil, such as work to rule, can be a particularly anxious or fearful experience for principals, who may feel that their teaching staff views them as the enemy. It is important that principals effectively manage emotions tied to labour strife as collective bargaining agreements between the teacher unions and school districts outline how principals, as managers, are expected to behave in a professional manner. As such, principals are expected to conceal, suppress or mask their true feelings to develop and maintain a positive school climate for all staff and students.

**Professional Support**

Professional supports are supports provided by an employer to assist employees, such as principals, in strengthening their ability to engage in effective leadership practices and experience greater levels of success in their role (Shoho, Barnett & Tooms, 2010; Riley, 2017b). Access to effective professional supports has been cited as a strong predictor of an individual’s ability to cope with their job demands (Riley, 2017b). For the purposes of this study, professional support includes formal programs and professional development initiatives (Shoho, et al., 2010; Riley, 2017b; Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014). Professional support can also involve informal forms of support, such as peer support (Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014) or relying on colleagues or mentors for advice when engaged in emotionally-challenging situations (Riley, 2017b). The definition of professional support employed in this study does not include supports provided by friends and family members. However, participating principals focused on the importance of social connections, such as friends and family, when discussing how they cope with the emotional toll associated with the role.
Chapter Summary

This chapter has briefly summarized the existing studies that identified factors that influence principals’ ability to effectively manage their emotions the strategies they use to manage their emotions. While the literature base on this topic is not robust, it does hint at several factors potentially influencing how principals manage their emotions. For example, gender-based power relations may create situations or promote structures where it is particularly difficult for female principals to manage their emotions (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). Principals also report challenges managing their emotions in light of crises and tragedies that occur at the school, often sacrificing their own health to support the school community (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Fein & Issacson, 2009; Yamamoto et al., 2014). Principals who practice social justice approaches to leadership often want to make a positive impact on their school and the larger community (DeMatthews, 2015; Jansen, 2006; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010). However, principals who practice social justice leadership can encounter resistance and/or their efforts can fail, which can influence their ability to effectively manage their emotions. A supportive organizational climate (Beatty, 2000; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Friedman, 2002; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Sayegh, et al., 2004) and the policy context in which principals work can both influence how they manage their emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996; 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Further, it can be challenging for principals to engage in healthy strategies for managing their emotions in the face of a heavy and burdensome workload (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmech & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Whitaker, 1996). Finally, the level of autonomy granted to principals when conducting their work has been linked to influencing their ability to effectively manage their emotions (Berkovich
For example, principals who are afforded high levels of autonomy are better able to manage their emotions.

Reviewing the literature also revealed five strategies that principals use to manage their emotions. The most commonly reported strategy principals use to manage their emotions found in the literature is expressive suppression, which occurs when an individual attempts to feign a particular emotion to hide the emotion(s) they are actually feeling in a given moment or situation (Beatty, 2000; Crawford, 2007; Cliffe, 2011; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Niesche & Haase, 2012; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Roffey, 2007; Ryan & Tuters, 2015). Principals also manage their emotions by obtaining a different perspective on emotionally challenging situations by talking with their colleagues (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Pollock, 2014; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Roffey, 2007; Zembylas, 2010), or engaging in reappraisal by reflecting on their emotions to view them, and the situation, in a different manner (Zembylas, 2010). Additional strategies principals use to manage their emotions derived from the literature include engaging in activities that can distract them from their emotions (Berkovich & Eyal., 2015; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Johnson et al., 2005), or activities that promote work-life balance, such as regular exercise (Pollock, 2014).

This chapter included a definition of professional support, and brief descriptions of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; 1998) and Gross’ (2001; 2002; 2013; 2014) process model for ER, the latter of which will be described more fully in chapter three as it is integral to the study’s conceptual framework. I also discussed Hochschild’s (1983) concept of emotional labour. Emotional labour includes three types of emotion work: cognitive, bodily and expressive (Hochschild, 1983). Principals are compelled to engage in each of these types of emotion work as part of the responsibilities tied to their position. Hochschild (1983) identified two strategies,
surface acting and deep acting, that individuals engage in to regulate their emotions. Surface acting occurs when there is a disconnect between what someone is actually feeling, and the emotion displayed to the outside world (Hochschild, 1983). Conversely, deep acting is a process where individuals rely on their past experiences to reach a desired emotional state (Hochschild, 1983). For example, when having a bad day, a principal may think about another time they experienced joy, excitement or satisfaction to quell other emotions that may bubble to the surface. Engaging in emotional labour can impact individuals in several ways, including suffering from burnout (Wallace, 2010; Schmidt, 2010) and role confusion (Grodzki, 2011).

Finally, this chapter concluded with a brief description of larger societal changes and recent shifts in the educational climate that have heightened the emotional aspects of principals’ work, making their ability to effectively manage emotions more important than in the past. These societal changes include rising levels of student diversity (Briscoe & Pollock, 2017; Ryan, 2006, 2007; Shields, 2010), changing perceptions surrounding, and a greater awareness of mental health and wellness (Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2014) and the increased use of email and other information and communications technologies (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2012; Galton & MacBeath, 2002; Hvidston et al., 2013; Pollock & Hauseman, 2018; Williamson & Myhill, 2008). Managing multiple accountabilities (Armstrong, 2014; Pollock & Winton, 2015) and navigating labour strife (Chernian & Daniel, 2008; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Oplatka, 2017) are two changes in the educational climate that have heightened the emotional aspects of the principalship. In the next chapter, I describe the methods I used to gather evidence and the framework I used to guide my inquiry.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the methods and techniques I used to answer my research questions. I also explain the conceptual foundations that informed my data analysis. It is important to note that I received approval from the University of Toronto’s Education Research Ethics Board (EREB) before conducting any research activities.


This study is centred on how secondary school principals manage their emotions. According to Ochsner and Gross (2005), “Emotion regulation involves the initiation of new, or the alteration of ongoing, emotional responses through the action of regulatory processes” (p. 243). I used what Gross identified as the process model of ER (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) to provide the conceptual foundation for my inquiry. The process model includes five families of ER: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014; John & Gross, 2004; Moore, Zoellner, & Mollenholt, 2008; Ochsner & Gross, 2005). These five families of ER are not discrete and have some commonalities. For example, the first four families of ER found in Gross’ (2010) framework are focused on antecedents, meaning they occur before one has appraised a situation and actually starts to feel a given emotion. The antecedent-focused strategies influence whether particular emotional responses are triggered, whereas response-focused strategies occur when doing something to change an existing emotional state (John & Gross, 2004). Response modulation, the final family of ER, falls into this category, meaning these strategies occur when someone feels a certain way and makes attempts to change their emotional state (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). It is worth mentioning that the literature indicates response-focused strategies can be less effective at helping individuals manage their
emotions and be detrimental to one’s physical and emotional health depending on how one engages with them (Gross, 2013; Moore et al., 2008).

This framework provided an ideal launching point for my study as it fully acknowledges the situational nature of both leadership and emotional impulses (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Poirel & Yvon, 2014). For example, the process model of ER presumes that different situations will result in different emotional reactions by different individuals, who will use different strategies to manage the resulting emotions (Gross, 2001; 2002; 2010; 2014). The process model of ER also accounts for contextual factors that can also influence a leaders’ emotional responses to a given event or phenomenon (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013). For example, the process model does not presume that individuals regulate emotions in a vacuum. Rather, the process model of ER acknowledges that social and cultural contexts can inform leaders’ emotional regulation choices and strategies (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). For example, principals may choose to manage their emotions and refrain from yelling at parents/guardians during a heated conversation because of societal expectations tied to professionalism, perceptions of the principalship and the purpose of schooling. Further, ER can be a social phenomenon as principals may manage their emotions by asking for the advice and opinions of others (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Johnson et al., 2005; Roffey, 2007; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Zembylas, 2010). Though this framework does not suggest why individuals engage in different ER strategies under different conditions (e.g., elementary school, secondary school, urban, suburban or rural contexts, etc.), Gross’ (2001; 2002; 2010; 2014) process model of ER was still well-suited for framing my study on how secondary school principals manage their emotions.
Gross’ (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) process model of emotional regulation is displayed in Figure 1. The figure includes a double-sided arrow linking the circles labelled *situation* and *response*, because the ways individuals respond to an emotional situation can create a new situation that may involve another ER process (Gross, 2010, 2014). Each of the five families of emotional regulation are discussed throughout the remainder of this section.

**Figure 1.** Gross’ (2014, 2010) Process Model of Emotional Regulation

**Situation selection.** The first family of ER in the process model is situation selection (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Situation selection “involves taking actions to make it more likely that we’ll be in a situation we expect will give rise to the emotions we’d like to have” (Gross, 2010, p. 501). Gross also defines situation selection as individuals “approaching or avoiding certain people, places, or things so as to regulate emotion” (2002, p. 282). This means that individuals will make decisions to include (or exclude) themselves in certain situations to generate an intended emotional state. For example, “We may actively seek out situations that will provide us contact with friends when we need a chance to vent and/or share positive emotions” (Gross, 2010, p. 501). Individuals make complex choices when using
situation selection to manage their emotions, and these decisions can impact their short- and long-term emotional consequences. For example, on a Sunday afternoon a secondary school principal may opt to watch a football game rather than write a report due for the school board the following morning. The principal may feel good while watching the football game, but may face long-term emotional consequences after being reprimanded by the superintendent for not delivering the report on time. Similarly, principals may engage in situation selection by avoiding a conversation with an angry teacher until said teacher has regained their composure.

Principals could also engage in situation selection by being strategic about how and why they delegate work to specific staff members. For example, the principal may choose to avoid emotionally challenging situations in the future by placing a particularly vocal and engaged teacher on a district committee investigating a topic of interest. Similarly, if a staff member has expertise in a given portfolio where the principals lacks competence, such as occupational health and safety, the principal may select to delegate those tasks to the staff member to avoid emotionally challenging situations, such as legal action, that could result from health and safety concerns.

**Situation modification.** Situation modification is the second family of ER (Gross, 2002, 2010, 2014). Situation modification “operates to tailor a situation so as to modify its emotional impact” (John & Gross, 2004, p. 1304). This strategy is primarily concerned with how people manipulate external factors and antecedent variables that can influence emotional responses (Gross, 2010, 2014). Situation modification is a complex and fallible ER strategy, as “efforts to modify a situation may effectively call a new situation into being” (p. 501). The two main forms of situation selection involve asking others for their opinions about a given situation, or injecting

**Asking Others.** To modify a situation, individuals often require the perspectives of others, such as colleagues, friends, and family. When an individual does not know how to feel about a situation, asking others for opinions can change their feelings (Gross, 2010, 2014); receiving input from others can change how individuals feel about the emotional situations they encounter on a daily basis (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). For example, a principal may have a difficult meeting with a parent, and ask their colleagues or members of administrative team for their input on how the meeting went afterward. The colleague might have viewed the meeting differently, and receiving this feedback may change the principal’s perception of the situation. This strategy demonstrates how ER can be a social process, involving willing or unwilling participants (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). Another strategy associated with situation modification is using humour.

**Humour.** Individuals can and do use humour to overcome adversity or difficult situations in their daily lives (Nezlek & Derks, 2001) When used in social situations, humour is also an ER strategy associated with situation modification. Individuals can engage in humourous interactions with others to change their feelings about a situation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Samson, Glassco, Lee & Gross, 2014). As Samson et al. (2014) noted, “There is emerging empirical evidence that humour moderates stress responses and helps people deal with negative experiences” (p. 571). People who use humour to cope by engaging with external factors, such as colleagues, experienced better social interactions than those who did not use humour in a social manner (Nezlek & Derks, 2011). Situation modification is a social strategy for managing
emotions because it involves external factors; other ER strategies, such as attentional deployment, are more internally focused.

**Attentional deployment.** The third family of ER is attentional deployment (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). This strategy provides an avenue for individuals to change the way they feel without altering any environmental factors, such as the perceptions of others. In this way, attentional deployment is, as Gross (2010) noted, “An internal version of situation selection, in that attention is used to select which of many possible ‘internal situations’ are active for an individual at any point in time” (pp. 502–503). The ER strategies associated with attentional deployment are usually considered maladaptive approaches for managing one’s emotions and are tied to negative outcomes, such as increasing the intensity of emotional responses (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). There are four main forms of attentional deployment identified in the literature: a) distraction, b) rumination, c) worrying, and d) thought suppression (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014).

**Distraction.** Distraction occurs when an individual turns their attention away from a situation or the emotional aspects of the situation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). An example of distraction occurring in principals’ work could be counting ceiling tiles when a conversation with a student, parent, or teacher has taken an upsetting turn. When individuals engage in distraction, they are attempting to avoid thinking about a given event or situation—the opposite of rumination.

**Rumination.** The second form of attentional deployment is rumination. Rumination occurs when an individual has an ongoing focus on an event—and the thoughts or feelings associated with it—well after that situation occurred, such as focusing on what one might have done differently in the moment (Berenbaum, 2010). Gross (2010) found that “rumination on sad
or angry events increases the duration and intensity of the negative emotion” (p. 503). As such, ruminating on negative events is associated with negative outcomes, such as depression (Gross, 2010, 2014). When ruminating, an individual spends a great deal of time thinking about an emotional situation that could have taken place in the immediate past or earlier in their life (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). This means that principals may ruminate about positive and negative emotional situations that have occurred throughout the workday, or even events that occurred earlier in their careers. For example, principals could ruminate on situations where they were unable to help certain students, or use rumination to maintain a celebratory mood after successfully changing teacher instructional practices.

Rumination has been associated with depression and anxiety, and described as a “response style to depressed mood characterized by repetitive thinking about one’s symptoms, their possible causes and consequences” (de Jong, Meyer, Beck, & Riede, 2009, p. 547). Rumination occurs when individuals focus on events or situations that have already occurred, while worrying is when individuals enter repetitive thinking about the future consequences that have arisen from an event or situation.

**Worrying.** Worrying is a common phenomenon that most people experience people in their lives (Berenbaum, 2010; Davey, Hampton, Farrell, & Davidson, 1992; Davey & Meeten, 2016; de Jong et al., 2009). Worrying, the third family of attentional deployment, occurs when individuals feel anxious and dwell on troubling or concerning situations (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). Scholars have described worrying as repetitive thoughts about future consequences, related to attempts to solve a problem that involves one or more potentially negative outcomes (Berenbaum, 2010; de Jong et al., 2009). Specifically, worrying involves three components:

1. Engaging in repetitive thoughts about an event or situation;
2. Repetitive thoughts focusing on an undesirable and uncertain future outcome related to an event or situation; and

3. An individual feeling unpleasant when engaging in the thought process described above (Berenbaum, 2010).

Berenbaum (2010) also explained how worrying is different from rumination. He noted, “In order to worry, one must perceive the prospect of a future undesirable outcome” (Berenbaum, 2010, p. 964). This means that worrying focuses on individuals engaging in repetitive thoughts about negative future consequences that might arise from a given event or situation. The final ER strategy associated with attentional deployment is thought suppression (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014).

**Thought suppression.** Thought suppression can be viewed as the opposite of worrying, as individuals who engage in this strategy seek to manage their emotions by consciously trying to “turn off” their emotions and stop thinking a particular thought or feeling particular emotions associated with a given situation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). Thought suppression does not work, and can be detrimental; it can be paradoxical in nature, in that it can actually lead individuals to think more about the unwanted thoughts they are trying to suppress (Abramowitz, Tolin, & Street, 2001; Najmi & Wegner, 2008; Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000). For example, Wenzlaff and Wegner (2000) lamented that “there is a certain predictability to unwanted thoughts, a grim precision in our mental clockwork returns such thoughts to mind each time we try to suppress them” (p. 60). Further, when thought suppression fails, the unwanted thoughts can return with greater intensity and duration (Najmi & Wegner, 2008). Unlike thought suppression—which involves individuals devoting mental energy to avoid thinking about an event or
situation—ER strategies associated with cognitive change focus on individuals using their thoughts to view an event or situation in a different way.

**Cognitive change.** Cognitive change is the fourth family of ER, and is a strategy people use as a coping mechanism in everyday life (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). Cognitive change allows an individual to select the meaning they want to attach to a given emotional situation; it can be used to decrease an emotion or even transform it (Gross, 2002). Further, “Cognitive change might be used either to generate an emotional response when none was ongoing or to regulate an already triggered response” (Ochsner & Gross, 2005, p. 244). For example, a secondary school principal might initially feel sad about suspending a student for engaging in violent behaviour, but this sadness would change to joy when they reflected upon and reappraised the situation, because they felt they were maintaining a safe school environment. When engaging in cognitive change, individuals can change the way they think about a given situation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). The strategies found within the cognitive change family of ER include a) reappraisal, b) distancing, and c) the use of humour (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). I will discuss each strategy throughout the remainder of this section.

**Reappraisal.** Perhaps the most well-known cognitive change strategy is reappraisal (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). As a method of ER, reappraisal “occurs early, and intervenes before the emotion response tendencies have been fully generated” (Gross & John, 2003, p. 349). Similarly, Gross (2010) noted that “reappraisal intervenes early in the emotion generative process and alters the experiential, behavioural, and psychological components of the emotional response without incurring any appreciable costs” (p. 504). Reappraisal is a “form of cognitive change that involves construing a potentially emotion-eliciting situation in a way that changes its emotional impact” (Gross & John, 2003, p. 349). Reframing emotions through reappraisal is an
effective strategy for paring down emotional responses—including anger—without any negative consequences (Gross 2010, 2014; Gross & John, 2003; Gross et al., 2006; Mauss, Cook, Cheng & Gross, 2007). For example, reappraisal is associated with a decrease in emotional responses, both in the moment and when revisiting recent events (Samson et. al, 2014). An example of reappraisal, offered by Gross and John (2003), could occur “during an intense admissions interview, [when] one might view the give and take as an opportunity to find out how much one likes the school, rather than a test of one’s worth” (p. 349). Principals who use reappraisal as a strategy for managing their emotions are attempting to change they way they think about a situation; other strategies associated with cognitive change focus on individuals trying to take themselves and their emotions out of the situation altogether.

**Distancing.** Distancing is strategy for managing emotions where an individual will try to remove themselves from a situation. When practicing distancing, people will try to disassociate, separate, or isolate themselves and/or their feelings from a situation, which is different from distraction, where individuals will engage in another activity to avoid being present in a situation (Gross, 2002, 2010, 2014). Principals could engage in distancing in several different ways, including simply trying to “tune out,” or hiding behind policy. For example, when suspending a student, principals may follow the district policy and distance themselves from the situation, rather than becoming emotionally invested by trying to come up with alternatives approaches. While distancing is a strategy that some individuals use to prevent themselves from feeling an emotion, strategies associated with response modulation are attempts to change how one feels after already feeling a given emotion.

**Humour.** Scholars have long viewed humour as an effective coping mechanism (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Nezlek & Derks, 2001; Samson & Gross, 2012). As an ER strategy,
use of humour is associated with both situation modification and cognitive change (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). Humour is associated with situation modification when individuals use humour to alter their external environment, such as joking with colleagues. When associated with cognitive change, using humour is a more internal process, where individuals revisit past situations and view them through a different lens (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Samson & Gross, 2012). Engaging in humour can allow individuals to restructure situations so they appear less threatening (Abel, 2002). Further, gaining distance from a situation allows individuals to re-evaluate the situation and view it through a humourous lens (Abel, 2002). Samson and Gross (2012) have also found that positive humour, rather than mean-spirited or self-deprecating humour, is more effective at regulating emotions and can lead individuals to reinterpret events positively.

**Response modulation.** Response modulation is the only one of Gross’ (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) five families of ER that occurs after one has started to feel an emotion, and involves individuals doing something to change the way they feel—such as relaxing, exercising, and using drugs and/or alcohol. In this way, response modulation shares similarities with distraction (Gross, 2010, 2014). Response modulation can pose problems, as not being true to oneself can alienate an individual from both themselves and others (Gross & John, 2003). An example of response modulation could be a principal overeating or overexercising to manage their emotions after a tense, or otherwise upsetting emotional situation at work, such as notifying children’s services about a child who is being physically assaulted by their parents/guardians. Getting enough sleep and maintaining work–life balance, engaging in exercise, and attempting to turn off one’s emotions using expressive suppression are all ER strategies associated with response modulation.
*Sleep/work–life balance.* Engaging in self-care, such as getting enough sleep, eating well, engaging in exercise or physical activity, and making efforts to achieve and attain a work–life balance are all associated with response modulation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). For example, principals may not feel great about a situation that occurred at work, so they will try to get a good night’s sleep, go for a jog, or spend leisure time with friends and family to change their emotional state.

When used in moderation, these are considered adaptive and positive strategies for managing emotions (Gross, 2013). Emotional Regulation strategies associated with response modulation are context-specific, meaning that they can be beneficial in moderation. Sleep, eating, and exercise are all good examples of this phenomenon. It should be noted, however, that individuals can under- or overindulge in sleep, eating, or exercise—all of which could negatively impact their physical and psychological health (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). This is important because ER strategies can influence physical health outcomes, such as cardiovascular health (Gross, 2013). While individuals may engage in physical activity, eat well, or try to get a good night’s sleep to change their emotional state, expressive suppression focuses on concealing an emotional state as opposed to changing it.

*Expressive suppression.* Expressive suppression occurs when individuals suppress their true emotional state, and as such shares similarities with Hochchild’s (1983) notion of surface acting (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Gross & John, 2003). For example, Gross and John (2003) note that expressive suppression is akin to wearing a “poker face” to hide a good hand or bluff an opponent. Similarly, scholars have defined expressive suppression as: “consciously inhibiting emotional expressions while emotionally aroused” (Butler, Egloff & Wilhelm, 2003, p. 48). Expressive suppression is associated with negative health outcomes (Gross & John, 2003;
Moore et al., 2008). As Moore et al. (2008) stated, “Expressive suppression is emerging as a reliably costly strategy associated with negative psychological outcomes” (pp. 997–998). Hiding or faking emotions is associated with negative health outcomes, such as memory loss, reduced life satisfaction, greater depression and social anxiety in response to emotionally charged situations (Gross & John, 2003; Moore et al., 2008).

**Drug and/or Alcohol Use.** It is also worth mentioning that Gross (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) identified drug and/or alcohol use as ER strategies that are part of the response modulation family. Years of prior research support the common-sense notions that alcohol (Dvorak, Sargent, Kilwein, Stevenson, Kuvaas & Williams, 2014; Gross, 1998; Hull & Bond, 1986; Kober, 2015; Steele & Josephs, 1990), tobacco (Brandon, 1994; Gross, 1998) and illegal drugs, such as cocaine (Khantzian, 1987; Gross, 1998; Kober, 2015) can be consumed by individuals in an attempt to alter or manage their emotional state. For example, emotional regulation is considered a key factor associated with individuals engaging in alcohol abuse (Berking, Margraf, Ebert, Wupperman, Hofmann & Junghanns, 2011). In particular, alcohol use can have direct and indirect impacts on one’s ability to manage their emotions (Gross, 1998; Steele & Josephs, 1990). For example, in terms of direct impacts, alcohol use can be shown to decrease anxiety in the short-term (Steele & Josephs, 1990). However, alcohol use can also indirectly encourage individuals to engage in ER strategies associated with attentional deployment (Steele & Josephs, 1990), which are usually associated with negative outcomes, such as depression, self-doubt, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Berenbaum, 2010; Gross, 2010; 2014; Haver et al., 2013; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015). I did probe participants for information regarding their use of drugs and/or alcohol to manage their emotions. However, I have chosen
not to elaborate on those strategies, as the principals in this study denied using drugs or alcohol when attempting to manage their emotions.

Emotional regulation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) is an appropriate guide for this study, as it demonstrates that situational and contextual factors can influence how principals respond to a given situation (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Poirel & Yvon, 2014). For example, Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, (2004) found that emotional situations can create moments that principals may regret, but that not all emotionally charged situations lead to negative consequences. An individual could emerge from an emotionally challenging situation to see the problem or issue from a different perspective and make positive changes—often, they become a better leader for having undergone such a process (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004). Similarly, Berkovich and Eyal (2015) have argued that all affective events are situational, and as such, principals will have different emotional responses to similar emotional stimuli based on the context and situation. Context also influences the types of coping strategies principals use to manage their emotions when working (Poirel & Yvon, 2014).

The conceptual framework was employed prior to data collection and played a fundamental role in developing this study. For example, the data collection process was organized around Gross’ (1998; 2001; 2002; 2010; 2014) five families of ER as the framework informed both the questions and probes found in the interview protocol. The framework was also used to inform the data analysis process as strategies associated with the five families of ER identified by Gross (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) were utilized as initial codes during the open coding phase of analysis. In this section, I have described my conceptual framework in detail. Below, I explain how I designed and conducted this study.
Research Design

Given that my study focused on the feelings and emotions of individuals, I chose to use a qualitative research methodology. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2005), qualitative research is “inquiry grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions and transitory and situational” (p. 555). Further, Merriam (2009) asserted that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). In any qualitative research study, it is important to consider that the researcher’s report will reflect their personal interpretation of the data and that the reader is encouraged to form their own meanings based on what is reported (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Using qualitative research methods allowed me to focus on the principals’ themselves, and as a result enhanced this study. My research offered the participating principals an opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and values, and about how they manage and regulate their emotions while at work.

Sampling. The next phase of the research process involved choosing a strategy to select and recruit principals to participate in this study. As Creswell (2005) stated, “A sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study” (p. 146). Sampling methods allow a researcher to determine the nature (e.g., demographic characteristics, qualities, achievements, profession) of the participants under study (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Springer, 2010). Springer (2010) asserted that “in qualitative research, sampling is informed by the ultimate goal of obtaining rich descriptions of peoples’ beliefs, behaviours, and experiences” (p. 109).
I used purposive sampling to generate the sample for this study (Gall et al., 2005; Springer, 2010; Robson & McCartan, 2016). According to Merriam (2009), “purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 79). Similarly, Robson and McCartan (2016) described purposive sampling as a process whereby “a sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy their specific needs in a project” (p. 281). Inspired by typical case sampling (see Springer, 2010), I used the following additional selection criteria to ensure that the sample reflected the broad range of emotional experiences and situations principals experience on a daily basis: a) each participant had to be currently employed as a school principal at an Ontario district school board; and b) each participant had to have at least five years of experience as a school principal prior to data collection. I decided to limit the sample to principals with at least five years of experience, because the literature illustrates that it can take some time for principals to become familiar with the demands of the position (Leithwood, 2012; Shamir, 2011; Walker, Anderson, Sackney, & Woolf, 2003; Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2006). Further, it felt reasonable to assume that secondary school principals experiencing some growth in practice over time, despite a lack of empirical evidence to justify this claim (Shamir, 2012). For example, Leithwood (2012) presumed that leadership practices and the use of socioemotional personal leadership resources “will evolve as [principals] move through various career stages, specialized assignments, and unique educational environments” (p. 7). As demonstrated above, experienced principals are more likely to be information-rich participants than their neophyte counterparts. Moreover, given that gender can influence emotions, it was important to obtain input from both men and women in the principalship (Beatty, 2000; Blackmore, 2004; Hochschild, 1983; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998; Schmidt, 2010).
also made efforts to ensure that the sample reflected the broad range of experiences that Ontario principals bring to the role (Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2014; Pollock et al., 2015). As such, the sample included a mix of principals working in different socioeconomic and demographic contexts.

As mentioned above, my primary aim during the participant recruitment phase of this study was to obtain a diverse sample that spoke to the broad range of experiences, contexts, and situations faced by contemporary secondary school principals in Ontario. As it was important to identify secondary school principals who would be willing to speak about their emotions and how they manage them, purposive sampling seemed appropriate for recruiting participants for this study. I used one key strategy to recruit the 13 principals who participated in this study. The strategy involved liaising with members of two of the professional associations that represent the interests of principals in the province. The study was conducted at a time of labour unrest in the province of Ontario, and the district school boards were not very interested in having research conducted with their principals. To circumvent this disinterest, I contacted the Ontario Principals’ Council (OPC) and the Catholic Principals Council of Ontario (CPCO) to see if they would allow me to conduct interviews with their members. The OPC sent out a recruitment message for the study to their members through a weekly e-newsletter, asking anyone who was interested in participating in the study to contact me via e-mail. Once they reached out to me to indicate interest, I would contact potential participants by e-mail to schedule the interview and provide them with a copy of the consent form and interview questions. A total of 15 secondary school principals responded to my recruitment strategies and expressed interest in participating in this study. However, two principals initially thought the study focused on how they manage or manipulate the emotions of others, and both declined to participate in the interview once they
realized the study focused on how they manage their own emotions. As such, the final sample included 13 secondary school principals.

**Description of the sample.** A total of 13 secondary school principals in Ontario participated in this study. Although I made attempts to recruit a diverse sample, the sample lacks visible diversity as only one of the participants did not self-identify as Caucasian. However, this lack of diversity is consistent with the larger principal population in Ontario, as 92.5% of respondents to Pollock’s (2014) large-scale survey self-identified as Caucasian. Although not racially and/or ethnically diverse, the sample is geographically and demographically diverse—participants were from 10 school districts located in different geographic and socioeconomic contexts. As displayed in Table 1, nine participants indicated that they are employed in urban schools located in large population centres. Three participants described their school context as rural, and one participant reported that their school is in a suburban area.

Table 1

*Number of Secondary School Principals Reporting Whether their School is Located in Urban, Suburban, or Rural Communities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 displays the ratio of women to men in the sample. Eight of the participants self-identified as male, and the remaining five participants self-identified as female. It is worth mentioning that male principals are overrepresented in this sample: 62.8% of the respondents to Pollock’s (2014) large-scale survey of Ontario principals self-identified as female and only 38.2% self-identified as male.

Table 2

*Number of Male and Female Principals in the Sample*
There was also diversity in terms of the participants’ highest level of formal education. For example, Table 3 shows that eight participants had obtained a master’s degree in education at the time the study was conducted. A total of five participants reported that a bachelor’s degree was the highest level of formal education they had completed. One of the participants was working toward completing their master’s degree when the interview took place. Pollock (2014) found that 54.3% of Ontario public school principals had completed a master’s degree as their highest level of formal education. Therefore, the participants’ levels of education in this study was similar to the larger principal population in Ontario.

Table 3
*Participants’ Highest Level of Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Master’s Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants’ experience ranged from three to 21 years of experience in the role. The average amount of experience across the sample 8.85 years. Table 4 demonstrates that the vast majority of secondary school principals who participated in this study had been in the position for more than five years at the time of interview. This lack of diversity was by design: I sought to interview principals with at least five years of experience, as prior research has demonstrated that it takes time for new principals to navigate the demands of the contemporary principalship (Leithwood, 2012; Shamir, 2011; Walker et al., 2003; Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2006).

Table 4
*Number of Experienced and Less Experienced Principals in the Sample*
Experienced (Five or more years) | Less Experienced
---|---
12 | 1

One principal with fewer than five years of experience was included in the sample because they self-identified as a member of a visibly minoritized group. Despite evidence indicating that Ontario principals are not very ethnically or culturally diverse (Pollock, 2014), it was important to include at least one non-White participant in the sample to better represent the broad range of contexts and experiences that contemporary Ontario principals bring to the position.

In addition to the characteristics described above (e.g., gender, years of experience, and highest level of formal education), the sample also included a mix of secondary school principals working in a broad range of demographic contexts. In terms of school size, one of the participants was employed at a secondary school in an isolated community in Northern Ontario that serves only 150 students. This is in stark contrast to another participant, who worked in a large, comprehensive school that serves approximately 1,900 students in the downtown core in one of Ontario’s largest cities. Table 5 shows that the sample also included principals working in both Catholic and public school boards. Only two of the participating secondary school principals were employed in Catholic district school boards, while the remainder of the sample worked in public district school boards.

Table 5

Characteristics of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Type of School Board</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>School Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>650 students (Grades 7–12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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</table>

My first interview question served as an introduction: I asked participants about their professional journey to the principalship and for some information about their current school. This provided me with information about the participants’ backgrounds, school context, their motivations for becoming a principal, and some insight into their personalities—all of which could influence how they manage their emotions. Below, I have provided brief profiles of each participating principal. I have used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of all secondary school principals who participated in this study.

**Gary.** Gary entered the teaching profession as a second career. Once he became a teacher, Gary was very internally motivated to pursue the principalship, although he did spend time teaching internationally and in other Canadian provinces. Gary’s highest level of education is a bachelor’s degree. He is currently serving as principal of a public school located in a rural community that serves approximately 650 students in Grades 7–12. Throughout his 16 years of experience working as a principal, Gary has been employed at three different schools.
Danielle. Danielle also entered the teaching profession as a second career and obtained her teaching certification when she was in her ‘30s. She only became interested in being a teacher after working in schools as a business owner and health professional. Danielle was encouraged to apply for administration by a principal within her school district. Danielle now has seven years of experience as a principal and is currently employed as a principal in a large, urban public secondary school that serves approximately 1,700 students. She has also obtained a master’s degree.

Stephanie. Stephanie has nine years of experience as a principal and has been employed in that capacity at three different schools. Stephanie has an arts and drama background and had never considered becoming a principal until she was encouraged to apply by senior leadership at her school district. She has obtained a bachelor’s degree and currently works in an urban public school with a student enrolment of approximately 1,300. Stephanie felt her strengths as a principal came from being an instructional leader.

Carl. Carl worked at a large, urban public school. The school serves approximately 1,500 students and is the third largest secondary school in the district. Carl has been a principal for eight years and obtained a master’s degree before becoming a principal. Becoming a principal was always a goal for Carl because of his familial ties to the position. Carl described being inspired and motivated to pursue the principalship because he had a family member who loved working as a vice-principal and passed away before becoming a principal.

Doris. Doris has been a principal for five years and previously served as a vice-principal in the same building for three years before entering the principalship. Doris obtained a master’s degree before becoming principal at her current school, a public secondary school located in a
rural region of Ontario. Doris’ school serves approximately 700 students, with 40–45% having self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI).

**Liam.** Liam began his teaching career working in a private school setting. At the time of interview, he had been involved in public education for quite some time, having five years of experience as a principal. Liam has a master’s degree and currently works as a principal at a large, comprehensive school located in the heart of one of Ontario’s largest cities. The school has three vice-principals. However, the school’s physical plant is crumbling and the building is often in need of repairs. Liam was encouraged to apply for the principalship by one of his past principals.

**Tristan.** Tristan has been a principal for the past three years. He is currently employed at an urban Catholic secondary school located in the centre of one of Ontario’s largest cities. Tristan has a guidance background and took a break from the profession before coming back to teaching and deciding he wanted to become a principal. He obtained a master’s degree before becoming a principal. The school is in an area of what Tristan described as “maybe low- to mid-socioeconomic status.” The school has two vice-principals and an enrolment of approximately 900 students. About a third of the students at the school have exceptionalities or special needs, making it one of the highest needs schools in Tristan’s school district. The school is also located in an older building in need of constant repairs.

**Trevor.** Trevor has been a principal for nine years at the same public school. The highest form of formal education Trevor has completed is a bachelor’s degree. He had never considered being an administrator until the principal of his school was leaving; he was asked to take on the role because he knew the culture of the school. Trevor’s school is located in a rural
Community and serves students in Grades 7–12. Approximately 75% of the school’s 150 students arrive on the bus and 30% self-identify as FNMI.

**Jack.** Jack has been a principal for seven years and has worked in that capacity at two different schools. He is currently employed at a Catholic secondary school located in an urban setting. At the time of data collection, Jack had been at his current school for just over one year. The school’s population includes approximately 1,350 students. Jack indicated that the highest form of formal education he has completed is a bachelor’s degree, but that at the time of interview he was also currently enrolled in a Master’s program.

**Arnold.** Arnold has been the principal at his current school for two years and has five years of experience as a principal. Arnold’s school is located in an urban setting and serves 600 students. Arnold entered the teaching profession as a second career. He has completed a master’s degree.

**Charles.** Charles is employed at a suburban public school that serves an enrolment of approximately 1,100 students in Grades 7–12. Charles has completed a master’s degree. He was actually a student at this school, returned as a teacher for 20 years, and also worked as a vice-principal before being named the principal five years ago. In total, Charles has 12 years of experience as a principal, and this is the second school where Charles has served in that position.

**Cathy.** Cathy is currently the principal of alternative programs within her public school district and has 21 years of experience working as a principal. Cathy’s school is located in an urban setting and serves approximately 400 students. Cathy is very passionate about social justice issues and has spent most of her career working with vulnerable students.

**Heidi.** Heidi serves as the principal of an urban secondary school. The school serves 1,100 students and is located within what Heidi described as an upper-middle-class community.
Heidi has been a principal for eight years and has been employed in that capacity at three different schools in her school district. The highest level of formal education Heidi has completed is a bachelor’s degree.

In this section, I have described the sample—and its individual participants—in detail. Below, I discuss the methods I used to gather data from my study participants.

**Data Collection Method: Interviews**

The data collection method I used in this study consisted of semistructured interviews with 13 current secondary school principals. Interviews, observations, films, books, diaries, paintings, drawings, and newspapers are just some of the many data sources that can be tapped by qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). I used semistructured interviews to explore how principals understand emotions in their work, as this type of interview allowed for the most effective method of collecting and analyzing the data.

I initially considered using observation as a data collection method, because it provides opportunities to ask principals for clarification about their activities, such as how they manage their emotions, in the moment (Bezzina, 1998; Gaziel, 1995; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Knetz & Willower, 1982; Martin & Willower, 1981; Martinko & Gardner, 1984, 1984, 1990; Pollock, 2015; Pollock & Hauseman, 2016; Tulowitzki, 2013; Willis, 1980; Wolcott, 2003). It would have been difficult, however, to collect data about how principals manage their emotions at work because the process of managing one’s emotions and engaging in emotional labour while working can rely on internal processes. As such, the process is designed to be obscured from those with whom the principal is interacting and some aspects may not visible to outsiders (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Gooty et al., 2010; Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Haver et al., 2010;
Hochschild, 1983). I deduced that the most efficient way to access information about how principals manage their emotions was to ask directly.

Developing the interview protocol was the first phase of the data collection process. The framework for this study influenced the interview protocol as questions and probes were also informed by the five families of ER found within Gross’ (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) process model. Interview questions were also informed by the literature and input received during my proposal hearing. Members of the committee suggested that I ask principals about specific situations where they could reflect on their experience and provide information about how they managed their emotions when faced with a similar situation in the past. The next phase of the data collection process involved gaining ethical approval. The University of Toronto’s Education Research Ethics Board (EREB) granted ethical approval for my study in September 2015. Next, I developed communications and recruitment materials to populate the sample. When principals expressed interest in participating in my study, I sent them detailed information, as well as copies of the informed consent form and all data collection tools via e-mail. After selecting participants for the study, the second portion of the data collection process began. I conducted one interview with each participating principal at a mutually agreeable time. I determined that interviews would provide the best opportunity to capture how principals understand the role of emotions in their work, the emotional geographies they transverse, and the emotional labour they engage as part of their role.

Semistructured key informant interviews were my primary form of data collection (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). Interviews are possibly the most common method of data collection utilized in qualitative research studies (Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Springer, 2010). Interviews are a convenient way to collect data; as
Springer (2010) noted: “interviews can be carried out in person, over the phone, by mail or through a computer medium such as e-mail” (p. 390). For this study, I conducted interviews in person and over the phone. I conducted phone interviews in cases where it would have been difficult and expensive to travel to the participants’ school sites. Interview questions asked participating principals about the types of circumstances that provoke intense positive or negative reactions, how they manage these emotions at work, and which supports they can access to cope with the rigors and demands of their position.

Adaptability is perhaps the greatest advantage of interviews as a data collection method (Gall et al., 2005). The quality of data collected through interviews relies on the skill of the interviewer (Gall et al., 2005; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). That in mind, I made every effort to adhere to the Springer’s (2010) seven guidelines for conducting a successful research interview. Those guidelines are:

1. Know your questions and be prepared for the interview;
2. Begin the interview slowly by structuring the interview in a way that allows participants to become comfortable with the process before asking questions that require memory recall or are tied to emotions. This can be done by including a warm-up question;
3. Explain the purpose of the study to participants. Explaining the purpose of the study to participants prior to the start of the interview can allow them to better frame their insights and experiences in a way that best answers the research questions;
4. Avoid asking leading questions or questions with a simple yes or no answer unless they pertain to concrete details (e.g., “So you have been a principal at this school for
five years?”). It is important to avoid asking leading questions because they can compromise the validity and reliability of interview data;

5. Listen closely to what participants are saying during interviews by being attentive and trying not to interrupt them;

6. Be both willing to explore aspects of the research topic in greater detail, but be sure to steer participants back to the original question if they get off topic; and

7. Do not judge participants based on their responses or opinions. (Springer, 2010)

In addition to these guidelines, other scholars have also recommended that research interviewers avoid using jargon, double-barreled questions, and questions that are too long (Robson & McCartan, 2016). By following these guidelines, I attempted to ensure that my collected data answered my research questions and was gathered in an ethical manner.

Semistructured interviews are characterized by “a mix of more and less structured questions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90) and guided by an interview protocol (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). The interview protocol contained 11 open-ended questions, as well as probes for some of the questions. Probes are instructions for the interviewer to encourage a participant to expand on their answer (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). Robson and McCartan (2016) explained, “A probe is a device used to get the interviewee to expand on a response when you have the feeling that he has more to give” (p. 289). I used probes strategically during each interview. For example, if an interview participant provided a detailed and engaging response that touched on how they manage their emotions when suspending a student, I avoided probing further about that situation or scenario.
Given that emotional management is rarely discussed, it is a topic that some may find uncomfortable. I tried to keep the interviews open-ended through probing, framed questions strategically, and asked questions as tactfully as possible. I provided the participating principals with the opportunity to reflect on their inner feelings by reviewing questions prior to the interview, and questions were worded exactly as written in the interview protocol. Semistructured interviews were ideal for this study because the style allowed me “to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). The interviews were quite emotional in nature, as I was often asked to turn off the recorder while participants took a moment to regain their composure while describing situations that led them to experience different emotions and the strategies used to manage those emotions. The longest interview was 43 minutes and 24 seconds, and the shortest was 22 minutes and five seconds in duration. Participating principals were also provided an opportunity to revise interview transcripts for accuracy and to add anything they might have missed during the interview.

Table 6

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Number of Interviews Conducted Face-to-Face and Over the Telephone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 6, six of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and seven of the interviews were conducted over the telephone. Each principal was interviewed once, provided with the questions before the interview occurred, and were asked to review the interview notes for accuracy prior to engaging in data analysis.

Data Analysis
Effective data analysis is an important aspect of any research study (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). By analysis, I refer to a process that consists of “taking the data apart to determine individual responses and then putting it together to summarize it” (Creswell, 2005, p. 10). When selecting my data analysis methods, I knew it was vital to choose effective methods that would enable me to provide a textured and reliable interpretation of principals’ perceptions and understandings of the emotions they experience while working and the strategies they use to manage those emotions. I used coding and memos to analyze the data collected for this study. Each of these tools is described below.

Coding. After I collected my interview data and had transcribed the interviews, I began the analysis process. Qualitative researchers use coding as a way to make sense of the data they collect (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). As Robson and McCartan (2016) have explained, “The process of coding is part of analysis as you are organizing your data into meaningful groups” (p. 471). Creswell (2005) offered a more streamlined definition by stating that coding can be described as: “The process of segmenting data and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (p. 237). Coding begins as an inductive process where the researcher decides which data is important and which data needs to be disregarded (Creswell, 2005; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010).

Open coding the raw data was the first stage of the coding process. When open coding, researchers “form initial categories about the phenomenon being studied” (Creswell, 2005, p. 595). Open coding is an apt term, as researchers are supposed to be open to any interpretations of the data at that point in the analysis process (Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016). To develop initial codes, researchers must be thoroughly familiar with the dataset, and have a first
impression of the important and interesting aspects of the interviews (Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Interview data was organized around the conceptual framework for analysis, so initial codes related to the strategies participating principals use to manage their emotions were derived from strategies associated with the five families of ER identified by Gross (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) in his process model, which served as the framework for this study. As such, this open coding process involved identifying when participants described utilizing strategies associated with situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation to manage their emotions when working.

Once I had broken the data down into broad categories based on Gross’ (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) process model of ER, I began the second stage of the coding process: analytical coding. According to Merriam (2009), analytical coding “goes beyond descriptive codes and comes after interpreting the data and reflecting on what it means” (p. 180). Moreover, the analytical coding process involves “linking together the categories developed through the process of open coding” (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 482). At this stage, my analysis became more deductive as I attempted to draw conclusions from the coded data and categories (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005).

The final stage of the coding process occurred once analytical coding was complete. This involved using the descriptors feature in Dedoose to attach tags to the transcripts to identify participant characteristics in an effort to identify any trends or differences in participant responses. Most codes were applicable across the sample, however, some codes have more than 70% of their responses coming from principals who share certain characteristics. I will briefly
discuss some of the differences in participant responses based on gender, level of education, school size and participants’ perceptions of the population centre surrounding the school.

Gender. As discussed in the previous chapter, gender and the highly gendered cultures within schools could lead to differences in how male and female principals manage their emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Sachs and Blackmore, 1998). In this study, female principals discussed experiencing system-based challenges that can lead to emotion-generating situations more than their male colleagues, especially in terms of pressure to complete their workload. All the excerpts contained in the “pressure to complete workload” code were from responses provided by the female principals that participated in this study. Tragedies and media attention are conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations that were only discussed by male principals. However, tragedies, such as students committing suicide, can occur at any school and the influence of media attention on how principals manage their emotions may be less about gender and more a product of the size of the population centre where the school is located. Few gender-based differences were observed in the distribution of findings related to the strategies principals in this study use to manage their emotions, though female principals discussed engaging in distraction, and the importance of sleep/work-life balance more often than their male colleagues.

Level of Education. There were also differences in the distribution of codes based on the highest level of formal education that participating principals had completed at the time of data collection. In terms of strategies for managing emotions, participants with a master’s degree indicated they engage in sleep or activities to promote a healthy work-life balance and distraction more often than their colleagues with a bachelor’s degree. Principals in this study with a bachelor’s degree described engaging in ER strategies associated with negative outcomes more
often than their peers who have obtained a Master’s degree, including thought suppression, expressive suppression and worrying.

There were also differences in participant responses based on level of education surrounding the conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations in their work. Participating principals who have obtained a master’s degree described dealing with more people-related challenges, media attention and being called out of the building more often than participants with a bachelor’s degree. Participants who indicated their highest level of education is a bachelor’s degree were more likely to state that they describe being under pressure to complete their workload and face system-based challenges compared to their peers with a master’s degree. In terms of how they learned to manage their emotions, more principals in this study with a bachelor’s degree described how they have always had a calm demeanor and had no need to learn to manage their emotions. The principals with master’s degrees as their highest level of formal education discussed how they learned to manage their emotions from their colleagues more often than participants with only bachelor’s degrees.

School Size. When using the descriptors feature in Dedoose, I decided to classify the participants based on the size of their school using the following two categories: a) under 1000 students; and b) over 1000 students. Using these categories to disaggregate the responses revealed some differences between the two groups of principals. For example, when discussing utilized to manage their emotions, principals at secondary schools with fewer than 1000 students directly work with students more than their peers at larger schools. These principals also discussed engaging in distraction, exercise and sleep/work-life balance more than the principals at schools with more than 1000 students. However, principals at schools with more than 1000
students discussed engaging in activities that contribute to student success more often than

principals at smaller schools.

It also appears that principals working in schools with more than 1000 students may be

exposed to more situations that can lead to emotion-generating situations than principals at

smaller schools. For example, principals at schools with more than 1000 students are more likely
to experience challenges related to their workload, being called out of the building, and to
disagree with policy. While principals at smaller secondary schools discussed dealing with

tragedies more than those at larger schools, tragedies can happen anywhere and this distribution
of codes is likely a product of chance rather than the product of a problem only experienced at
larger schools. Principals in this study who work at larger schools with more than 1000 students
also discussed how they have always had a calm demeanor and have not had to learn to manage
their emotions more than the participating principals at schools with less than 1000 students.

*Population Centre Surrounding the School.* There are few differences in the responses
providied by participated principals based on their perceptions of the population centre

surrounding the school. For example, principals who described working in an urban setting
discussed using humour, as well as contributing to the success of their teachers and vice-

principals more often their colleagues employed in suburban or rural regions. Principals working

in regions they described as being rural discussed contributing to student success as a strategy for
managing emotions more often than their peers employed in urban or suburban regions. In terms
of conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations, the media attention faced by urban
principals is the only difference in responses based on the size of the population centre

surrounding the school. I also used another analytical tool, memos, throughout the coding
process; memos are described in the following subsection.
Memos. Creswell (2005) defined memos as “notes the researcher writes throughout the research process to elaborate on ideas about the data and the coded categories” (p. 411). In this study, I used memos to record my thoughts, feelings, reflections, and ideas as they developed throughout the analysis phase. Memos can be important when conducting qualitative data analysis as they can help the researcher obtain new data sources and decide which ideas need to be further developed (Creswell, 2005). The memos were documented in both written form and directly embedded into interview transcripts using NVivo.

The final stage of my research process involved using the codes to answer my research questions. Memos helped me develop a comprehensive understanding of how principals manage their emotions, and the support mechanisms they access to help cope with the challenges of their role.

Legitimacy

Researchers can use several methods and strategies to increase the credibility of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010). For the purposes of this research, legitimacy refers to the ability to “present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, practitioners, and other researchers” (Merriam, 2009, p. 210). When collecting data, efforts were made to include a variety of different principals working in different geographic contexts, with differing levels of education (Springer, 2010). This was done to ensure that the data collected for the study is representative of the broad range of different contexts in which Ontario’s secondary school principals work on a daily basis. Further, the findings of this study are both partially supported by the literature and representative of the working conditions faced by contemporary secondary school principals in Ontario.
it easier to draw inferences about the findings and make accurate conclusions. Another strategy I used to increase the legitimacy of my study was member checking.

**Member checking.** Member checking is another validation strategy common to qualitative research (Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009). Merriam offered a clear definition of member checking: “The idea here is that you solicit feedback on your emerging findings from some of the people that you interviewed” (2009, p. 217). Using member checking provided an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of my collected data. Taking the findings back to the participants for review provided an opportunity to both identify my own biases, and to clarify any misunderstandings in what I heard/observed during data collection. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I provided participants with an opportunity to review and provide feedback on their interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy and legitimacy of the data. However, none of the participants elected to revise their interview transcripts.

**Scope**

This research used a small sample: The data is based on the experiences of 13 individuals. As such, my findings cannot be generalized to the larger secondary school principal population. However, the findings do shed light on conditions that incite emotion-generating situations for contemporary principals, and provide a comprehensive description of the strategies used by the 13 secondary school principals that participated in this study to manage their emotions. I designed the data collection to gain insight into each participant’s experience managing their emotions while working as a school principal, and I sought to preserve the participants’ voices throughout the research process. Further, as described earlier, to increase relatability, efforts were made to maximize variation in the sample on key characteristics that may be related to how principals manage their emotions, such as gender, level of education and
school size. While such efforts do not increase the generalizability of the sample, any findings that hold across the sample are more likely to be generalizable due to the variability in participant characteristics. Participant characteristics were also compared to the general population to develop an understanding of any differences and ensure the sample was not inadvertently skewed in some manner.

There are concerns or limitations associated with the data collection method I used to conduct this research. For example, conducting interviews involves trying to reach a balance between wanting to give full credence to participants’ experiences, while also recognizing the weaknesses or self-reported data. For example, interviews rely on self-reported data, which means participants may leave out information when describing their experiences, or others may exaggerate or inflate their impact on a given situation or phenomenon (Creswell, 2005; Ganellen, 2007; Springer, 2010). Further, “Interview data may be deceptive and provide the perspective the interviewee wants the researcher to hear” (Creswell, 2005, p. 215). Due to social desirability bias, the presence of the interviewee may influence participants’ responses to certain interview questions (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Springer, 2010). For example, some individuals may provide interview responses that emphasize situations where they will be viewed in a positive light, while also underreporting behaviours or situations that the interviewer may perceive as negative or unbecoming (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Springer, 2010).

Moreover, “The validity of findings based on the interview method is highly contingent on the interpersonal skills of the interviewers” (Gall et al., 2005, p. 134). My extensive experience conducting qualitative research interviews, and adhering to established guidelines for conducting successful interviews (e.g., Robson & McCartan, 2016; Springer, 2010) was vital.
when ensuring the legitimacy of the data collected for this study. Further, member checking helped increase the credibility of the interview data.

Chapter Summary

This study utilizes semi-structured interviews with 13 current secondary school principals in Ontario, Canada to explore how they manage their emotions while working. The sample of secondary school principals that participated in this study was generated using purposive sampling. As I sought a sample that was representative of the broad range of contexts in which Ontario secondary school principals work, efforts were made to include a mix of male and female participants, as well as individuals working in a variety of demographic settings. The sample is also diverse in terms of the highest level of formal education the participants bring to their role as a secondary school principal. However, the sample is not very ethnically diverse as only one participant self-identifies as non-Caucasian. The data analysis process involved the use of codes and memos to make sense of the data and develop a comprehensive understanding of the strategies secondary school principals use to manage their emotions. Legitimacy of the data reported in this study was enhanced through member checking and collecting data from a broad range of principals working in diverse contexts. As this study utilized a qualitative research design, findings are not generalizable to the larger secondary school principal population (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Springer, 2010). However, the findings do provide substantial insights into the conditions that can incite emotion-generating situations for contemporary principals, as well as a comprehensive description of the strategies used by the 13 secondary school principals that participated in this study to manage their emotions. Now that the methodology has been described in detail, it is time to discuss the findings of this study.
Chapter 4: Conditions that Incite Emotion-Generating Situations for Secondary School Principals

In this chapter, I present my findings related to my first research question: What conditions lead to secondary school principals experiencing emotion-generating situations? This chapter provides insight into the situations that can result in secondary school principals experiencing emotional responses in the workplace. Each section is divided into subsections based on themes that emerged during the analysis phase; I have divided the themes into subthemes in an effort to depict of all my participants’ perspectives. For reporting the findings, terms familiar to qualitative researchers, such as some, most, and all are used to indicate the distribution of findings rather than using frequencies, counts or percentages. I am concerned that quantifying the qualitative data gathered for this study may suggest the findings are more generalizable or credible than they are in reality (Maxwell, 2010). For example, Maxwell (2010) mentions that, “numbers can lead to the inference (by either the researcher or the audience) of greater generality for the conclusions than is justified” (Maxwell, 2010, p. 479).

Before moving forward, it is important to note that every one of the secondary school principals who participated in this study indicated that emotions and emotional regulation are key aspects of the contemporary principalship. For example, Carl explained that, to be effective in his role, he must have an emotional connection to the school and a nuanced understanding of his ability to impact others’ emotions:

I'm trying to think in a way as a principal, if you can ever be effective if you don't have an emotional investment in your school. I don't think that there is one. You have to care. You've got to care about the kids, you've got to care about the community, you've got to care about your staff, you've got to care about people you are working with and people you are working for. You've got to have a real understanding of the emotional impact that you have in a leadership role. If you don't demonstrate that kind of compassion, no one is going to follow you... you get emotionally invested in [students]. That's okay, that's good and that's the way it should be.
Carl perceived the emotional investment he has in his school to be positive, as it demonstrates a level of care and compassion for various stakeholders and the school community as a whole. Participants also discussed how emotions and emotional regulation are one of the most important skills involved in being a contemporary secondary school principal. For example, Jack debated whether effectively managing emotions is more important for principals than strong curricular knowledge:

So much of this job is rooted in emotions or emotional connections, relationships—all that kind of stuff—as opposed to the procedural, the paperwork, the curriculum. You can be a genius in all that stuff, but if you can't have healthy emotions, I don't care how strong you are as a curriculum leader or whatever, business manager, whatever you want to call yourself and I'm not sure that than stuff can be taught or learned so the question is, what is the best way to promote administrators who have that ability to be successful in that area?

Jack also discussed how it can be difficult to teach or learn skills related to managing emotions. Many participating principals indicated that the technical or managerial aspects of the position, such as budgeting or adhering to occupational health and safety codes and regulations, can be learned, but that the emotional aspects of their work can be difficult to master. For example, when discussing the role of emotions in the principalship, Jack used the term *emotional intelligence* to describe principals’ ability to manage their emotions, and indicated that it is a skill that can take a long time to develop:

The emotional intelligence part of it, that is something that I think is probably the most important, and it is something that I think is probably something that takes the longest. I'm not going to say, again, it's innate or not, but I do think some people come in at a much higher level than others. I think it's probably the most important part of the role, is to be emotionally intelligent, probably far more so than intellectually intelligent.

According to Jack, principals need to be able to effectively manage their emotions because their work often puts them in situations that have the potential to incite both positive (e.g., excitement, satisfaction) and negative (e.g., fear, anxiety, anger) emotions.
Conditions that Lead to Emotion-Generating Situations

As mentioned earlier, principals are much more likely to discuss negative emotional experiences in their work, rather than the feelings joy, hope, happiness and other positive emotions associated with the contemporary principalship. The principals in this study were no different, indicating that they encounter six types of conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations. Participants indicated that the first condition involves encountering barriers when advocating for students. Principals in this study also spoke of a number of system-based challenges that can make it difficult to manage their emotions. These system-based challenges include managing a growing and expanding workload, the legal aspects of their work and the frequency with which they are called out of the building. Principals also experience conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations when faced with a lack of support from district leadership or the provincial Ministry of Education. Media attention is another condition identified by some of the urban principals that participated in this study. Principals’ work also involves meetings or conversations with individuals who are upset, angry, disobedient or unprofessional, situations that can lead to principals experiencing positive, or more likely, negative, emotions in the workplace. Finally, managing difficult issues, such as tragedies at the school site can also result in emotion-generating situations for the principals that participated in this study. Each of these six conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations will be discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Before moving forward, it is important to once again state that these categories reflect the perceptions of the 13 secondary school principals that participated in this research. These categories that follow are not meant to be exhaustive and that secondary school principals
undoubtedly find themselves in other work-based or work-related situations that may generate a positive or negative emotional response.

**Encountering barriers when advocating for students.** Principals in this study reported experiencing emotion-generating situations when encountering barriers when advocating for students. For example, Cathy states that working with, and for, students in difficult circumstances can teach you about managing your emotions because exposure to such highly emotional situations can take its toll:

> Over my career, I've learned a lot about my personal emotions and managing them because, as I'm identified by my colleagues, and I'll give you my other name, I'm the Mother Teresa of schools and kids, because I believe that there's a solution for every child and that if I can't find one, I'll get down to number thirty-three or number forty-five in solutions for a kid because I believe that every child has to have many chances to be successful. Obviously, that takes you on an emotional journey all the time, because I see a lot of challenges. There's been many, many kids over your career that you learn that you would like to take home, but you cannot take home, because you know what terrible situations they're in. It makes my day and I've had to really learn how to compartmentalize things.

Cathy is willing to try many approaches when advocating for students and attempting to put them in a position where they can be successful. However, Cathy also indicated that advocating for students can be a process that involves several different challenges, and that many emotions can rise to the surface along that journey. Principals in this study indicated that they experience emotions, such as anger and sadness, when their efforts to advocate for, or work with students fail to produce the intended outcomes. Trevor expressed these sentiments when stating:

> I think one thing you realize, too, with students, especially students that may be disengaged and that you're trying to reengage, it's a bit of a roller coaster. It's day to day, week to week, good week, bad week, good day, bad day. A negative or frustrating part is when you've been working with a student many, many times, and maybe you don't get them where they needed to get by a certain date. That's a real negative feeling.

When he is not able to successfully advocate for students or to help them reconnect with the school community or change their behaviour, Trevor experiences challenges managing his
emotions because he feels sadness when he could not help the student. Additional situations that can generate an emotional response for the principals in this study occur when parents/guardians and principals disagree over the most effective strategies or approaches for supporting students and meeting their individual needs. Principals in this study indicated that they can be placed in situations where they must advocate against parents/guardians to defend strategies or approaches that they think are in the best interests of students. For example, Liam described how it can be difficult to be involved in emotionally challenging situations when the school and parents/guardians are not able to collaborate in a successful manner:

Again, it's when the parents are upset with you, and you think that you've treated them fairly or you treated their kid fairly, and they're asking for something either completely unreasonable or they're coming at it from a completely different angle, and it's unfortunate that we're not on this same wave length, and sometimes, it really is a matter of them and me understanding the other side, and we can get to a common understanding, but sometimes parents are not ready or sometimes parents have reasonable concern or sometimes, a parent won't ever agree on something. That's difficult, for sure.

Liam, indicated that he aims to build collaborative relationships with parents/guardians, and that he can experience emotions, such as anger or anxiety, when he is unable to reach common ground with some parents/guardians, which he described as a difficult experience. Similarly, when there is a strained relationship between the school and parents/guardians, other principals in this study also reported challenges managing emotions. Seemingly advocating against parents in order to “do right” by the student can be frustrating for principals because they find a confrontational tone can undermine a positive school climate and cause damage to student well-being. For example, Charles described the frustration he feels when it appears that parents/guardians refuse to collaborate and are not supportive of the school:

I think parents that don’t support the school do a great deal of damage to their kids. There are some parents that have mental health issues that you can just see that they are having a difficult time running their own lives and they have a very difficult time bringing up children and they don’t support the school, so the children have problems in schools. Just
dealing with those parents is probably the most difficult part of the job because we have to be on the same team. If the parents are knocking the school at home the kid is going to come to school with a negative feeling about school and it is really hard to help them be successful in school and in situations like that. There are a fair number of parents like that and I find that frustrating.

For Charles, advocating for students in the shadow of parents/guardians who are not supportive of the school can cause be the source of emotions that can be difficult for him to manage. All 13 secondary school principals that participated in this study indicated experiencing situations that can generate an emotional response when encountering barriers when advocating for students, including trying to work with parents/guardians who are not supportive of the school (or the school’s plan for their child).

Advocating for students can result in emotion-generating situations that can create challenges for principals in this study to effectively manage their emotions when these efforts encounter barriers or ultimately prove unsuccessful. Further, emotions, such as anger and sadness, can be experienced by principals when they feel that they are advocating for students against the interests of parents/guardians. These kinds of confrontations not only present challenges for principals in terms of ER, but can also make it difficult to collaborate on solutions and maintain a positive school climate. In addition to advocating for students, other conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations for principals in this study include navigating system-based challenges that can hinder their ability to effectively manage their emotions.

**System-level challenges.** The provincial education system is a large, complex organization, as are the schools and school districts found within it. As with employees in any large complex organization, principals in this study reported that system-based challenges can create conditions that can both lead to emotion-generating situations. Attempting to manage their emotions in the face of these systems-based challenges can incite feelings of sadness, anger, fear
and other negative emotions in the secondary school principals that participated in this study. While all of the principals in this study described encountering system-level challenges that can lead to emotion-generating situations, female principals discussed these challenges more often than their male peers. Participants described three key themes related to system-level processes or conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations in their daily work. The first system-level challenge is a heavy and intensifying workload. Other system-based challenges that can create conditions that lead to emotion-generating situations for the principals in this study also include a lack of support from district leadership. Finally, two of the urban principals in this study also highlighted how they can experience emotional responses in light of media attention directed at them or the school. Each of these themes are discussed in the remainder of this section.

**Workload.** All of the principals who participated in this study described how the nature and volume of their workload can create conditions that lead to emotion-generating situations. However, the interview data indicates that female principals may face more workload pressures than their male colleagues, potentially heightening conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations. These conditions are related to three distinct themes that emerged from the interview data. The first theme is that the sheer complexity and volume of contemporary principals’ work leads to emotion-generating situations, and that it can be challenging for principals to effectively manage their emotions in the wake of an unrelenting workload. Principals also indicated that the litigious aspects of their workload can lead to emotionally challenging situations, which is the second theme. Finally, the third theme regarding workload-based conditions that can lead to an emotional response in participating principals surrounds the amount of time they are called out of the school for meetings and other activities by the district.
office. Each of these themes are discussed in greater detail throughout the remainder of this section.

*Complexity and volume of principals’ workload.* In the first chapter, I described how principals’ work has intensified, increasing the volume and complexity of tasks for which they are responsible for completing as part of their job. Principals in this study indicated that the increased complexity and volume associated with their workload is a key driver of the emotional intensity they experience at work. For example, Liam works at a busy school and described how he faces competing demands from multiple stakeholders which forces him to play many different roles throughout the school day. He stated:

> I think this place is so busy. I wear a thousand hats a day. I'm the parent, I'm the social worker, I'm the principal and the vice principal, I'm the secretary, I'm the psychologist, I'm the special education teacher… I think because of the pace in this building and the multiple demands, it really is important to manage the emotions, because you want people to feel like they're going to be able to come and talk to you without you blowing up.

Liam indicates that managing his emotions is especially important given the pace and complexity of both his workload and the school in which he works. With contemporary principals playing many different roles at the school-level, they are required to work long hours, leading to emotionally challenging situations. For example, in the following quote, Cathy seemed slightly resentful when describing how her husband thinks she is paid very little for the time, effort and emotional toll she puts into the principalship:

> I spend hours and hours at school. My husband says I probably get paid a dollar an hour. I also put in twelve, fourteen-hour workdays, I work on the weekend… the emotions can take a toll on everyone.

Principals work long hours, late nights and weekends for comparatively little pay. Faced with an expanding and unrelenting workload, many principals can find it difficult to stay upbeat about
Principals have so much to do, that some participants in this described feeling guilty if they were to engage in standard 40-hour work week. For example, Danielle admitted that:

If I left at 5 o’clock I would kind of feel guilty, but I am trying to get used to that. It’s not uncommon that I am here until 6, so I think 8-6 every day. Then I answer my email at night, preparing for anything we need the next day. I always have my blackberry on all weekend just because. So, it seems like a lot that way. Back in the day I used to work all night too, but I refuse to do that now. It probably gets to be too much, and that is a personal thing, but I don’t want to miss anything and come in not knowing. I’d rather know what I’m facing when I come in. So yeah, every single day, that thing is on. I go to be bed somewhere between 11 and 12, so I wouldn’t send anything after 10, but I can still read things, right?

Danielle described how she used to work all night, will now often work past 10pm in the evening, and always has her school cell phone on in an effort to keep up with her workload.

Participating principals also spoke about how workload can lead to emotion-generating situations, and that they experience negative emotions when they perceive that more and more tasks and responsibilities are being transferred onto principals. For example, Heidi expressed anxiety and anger when citing the sheer number of new initiatives that fall under the principals’ portfolio as one area responsible for increasing her workload:

Seemed like there was a lot of downloading to the principals and streamlining at the board office, but that’s okay, the principal can do it, or the minister of education comes up with a new (initiative)... Oh, that's okay. I'll give it to the principals. They can look after it. Principals can look after everything. Well, you know what...we can't do it all if you're giving us all these new initiatives.

As Heidi points out, additional tasks create more work, which impacts quality of life and work–life balance. Participating principals indicated that a lack of work–life balance can create situations where principals experience resentment concerning their work situation. For example, Danielle illustrated the difficulties principals experience balancing an expanding workload with responsibilities in her personal life by describing how she rarely knows when she will be leaving the school to go home each night:
One of the things that probably frustrates me the most is lack of knowing when I am going home at night sometimes. Part of that is me saying, “okay, you’re done, just go home”. It’s easier to keep something fresh in your mind and finish up whatever you were doing, especially when I know first thing in the morning when I come back, I’ll have parents sitting here, or whatever, about whatever the problem is today. So, get the notes typed up, get this done, get that done. Some things do take an entire day, so whatever I was going to do that day didn’t get started, so it’s quiet to stay at night and be able to get some things done. Then I’m not home for dinner or whatever. Then if I do stay late to get work done, other staff who happen to be in the building think, oh good, I can sit in and we can talk about this or about that. “No, I would be at home right now.”

Navigating system-based challenges can create situations where principals are subject to experiencing emotions, such as sadness and anger. For example, Sue stated that being asked to implement too many initiatives at one time puts principals in emotionally challenging situations because it can be difficult to maintain a cohesive vision for the school and generate buy-in from staff:

I think our biggest concern as a group at the moment is initiatives coming down from the ministry, one after the other, after the other and never really having enough time to breathe because staff will look at like it’s the flavor of the month and not do it. It would be really nice to have some breathers after a while to let the people who are so-called professionals who spent years in education and training to do our role, let us do our job.

As Sue states above, being at helm of implementing too many initiatives at one time makes it feel like her focus as a school leader keeps shifting far too often, without an opportunity to consolidate learning from past initiatives. When principals demonstrate the capacity to complete additional tasks or activities, it invites the school district and other stakeholders to further increase principals’ workload. For example, Stephanie stated that her workload is a condition associated with her job that leads to emotion-generating situations as she is now responsible for more and more tasks and activities at the school-level:

Then there’s a workload piece. There’s a bit of philosophy, too, as principals that you’re going to do it no matter what, so it doesn't matter what they give you. Because of the nature of who we are, we just get it done and make it work, which I don't think in the long run is healthy because your workload then becomes quadrupled.
Stephanie discussed how many principals are performance-oriented and that she will make every effort to complete whatever tasks are assigned to her, which can impact health and well-being in the long-term. Similarly, other principals in this study described how increased pressure that work intensification and competing priorities lead to emotion-generating situations in their work. For example, principals in this study indicated that their workload can make them feel tired, angry and anxious, which impacts job performance:

I just think that everyone is managing, and I would talk to my colleagues. They're managing, but I would say that most of them if you ask them don't feel they're doing it well because they're so pulled in so many different directions, it becomes frustrating. When you go back to the emotions, it's frustrating, it's exhausting, it's tiring.

Principals report experiencing anger and anxiety both because of the intensity of their workload, and because the expansion of their role makes it difficult to feel they are doing the job well. Not only is an expanding workload, increased expectations and the high-pressure nature of the job proving difficult for experienced principals to manage, but they may also be making the principalship less desirable for potential administrators. For example, Doris described how the role of the principal has become much more difficult since she entered administration 15 years ago:

I would say that my perspective of an administrator, myself, or a VP or principal has changed over the past...I've been an administrator for now almost 15 years, and I think it's getting a lot more difficult. I don't think it's as attractive as what it used to be, and I think it's because of the pressures on us as administrators. Yeah, that's where I'm leaning right now.

Doris indicates that the principalship has become a tougher job since she entered administration, and she believes the position will continue to become more difficult over the coming years because of a heavy, intense and increasingly complex workload. Other workload related conditions that can incite situations where the secondary school principals that participated in
this study are compelled to manage their emotions are rooted in the legal aspects and accountability associated with contemporary principals’ work.

*Legal aspects of contemporary principals’ workload.* Principals in this study also described how they can experience emotions due to the heightened sense of the legal accountability involved in contemporary principals’ work. For example, Doris indicated that it can be challenging for principals to manage their emotions when they could be legally liable for decisions make at the school-level:

I'm the middle person. Anything that goes wrong in a building no matter who does it or what happens, it all falls on me. That to me is high stress and high anxiety, so every time I'm making a decision or trying to think about stuff through, on the back of my mind I'm always trying to think of, ''Okay, we've got to make sure we don't get into trouble when we do this, or what's the liability around it?"

Doris finds that the potentially litigious aspects of principals’ work can make her feel highly anxious because she (like most principals) entered the profession to make a positive impact on students, and does not want to be the target of a lawsuit. Further conditions surrounding workload that incite emotion-generating situations for principals in this study include legislation that makes principals legally liable and accountable for everything that happens at the school, even though principals lack control over many of those items. Principals roles and responsibilities have expanded to include areas where they lack expertise, such as occupational health and safety. Principals in this study described how being liable for aspects of the school with which they have little knowledge and experience allows negative feelings, such as anxiety to cloud their perceptions. For example, Heidi describes feeling frustration and pressure because she is legally liable for tasks and actions that are outside of her control, such as the condition of the school’s physical plant and other occupational health and safety mandates from the provincial Ministry of Labour:
I guess what I'm thinking, way back when it didn't seem like everything was on the principal's shoulders as much as Ministry of Labour now is, human rights. It seems like it doesn't matter where the problem lies. It all rests on our shoulders. We take more brunt than superintendents. It's because we run the school, yet we don't have a lot of control in terms of running the school. That stuff I find frustrating, but I try not to worry about ... If a lawsuit's going to come, it's going to come. I think that pressure's there, and some people feel that more.

Heidi expressed frustration, and in some cases, emotional distress at having little power or control over working conditions that they are legally liable, responsible and accountable for maintaining. Even though Heidi feels supported by district-leadership, it can still be challenging to manage her emotions in the face of pressure to avoid mistakes and legal concerns. Principals must be in the school to be able to fulfill their legal accountabilities to the Ministry of Labour and other parties.

**Being called out of the building.** Another condition that can lead to emotion-generating situations for participating principals involves system-based challenges stemming from how often they are called out of the school building to engage in meetings or other activities at the behest of the school district. For example, Danielle expressed frustration with the amount of time both she, and members of her administrative team, are called out of the school building to attend mandatory meetings at the district office:

The number of times that we’re called out for mandatory meetings or mandatory training, which is either, a) a waste of time, or b) a repeat of something we have done multiple times, like yesterday they tacked one on at the end of the day. I have done that particular session I think at least 8 or 10 times, and it was mandatory. Our whole admin team had to go and we looked at each other and went, seriously?! I would rather take the money from all of those beautiful glossy brochures and big templates and stuff, and put it into something that is good for the kids. It is a lot of money being wasted on paper and it is a lot of time for administrators to be pulled into rooms to have a meeting.

Danielle finds it challenging to manage her emotions when she is pulled out of the school to attend meetings or training sessions at the district office, especially when the content is
redundant. Principals do not like being called out of the school during operating hours because, as Charles states, he likes to be available in order to deal with issues as they arise:

"I don't like being out of the school. I think if you had talked about maybe a disagreement with the board, I'm the type of person, and that's not a question of the integrity of other administrators, I'm not the type to be at the board office frequently. I like being in the school with the staff and students, and being here on a daily basis."

Charles highlights how he prefers to be at the school during operating hours rather than attending meetings, workshops or committees at the district office because he wants to be at the school working with his staff and students. As Danielle stated earlier, being away from the school for any period of time can exacerbate concerns about workload because less time spent in the school means principals have fewer opportunities to accomplish primary duties and responsibilities associated with the role. Further, principals are also responsible for catching up on any work or situations that occurred while they were away, which can lead to emotionally challenging situations.

Work intensification and expanding workload are conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations for the principals in this study because they are seemingly always working and asked to fill many different roles at the school. The principalship requires a varied skill set, and it can be emotionally challenging for principals to work at a fast pace and play different roles in one school day. Participating principals also cited how legally liabilities and accountabilities tied to the position can lead to feelings such as anger or frustration, while also placing stress on their ability to manage their emotions. For example, principals in this study highlighted how the broad definitions of the principalship in the provincial Education Act states that they are liable and accountable for everything that occurs at the school, even in areas where they have little experience or expertise. As expected, principals in this study report both how the legal aspects of their work can create conditions that lead to situations that can result in an emotion response, and
that it can be difficult to manage their emotions when they could face a lawsuit for negligence, despite being unaware of how to properly perform a task. Further, principals reported working long hours, yet they still described a need to be working more to complete all of their work-related tasks. Principals in this study indicated an unmanageable and unrealistic workload can increase the emotional intensity of their work. The volume and complexity of contemporary workloads make it difficult for principals to manage their emotions, but these challenges are compounded as they have little time to engage in healthy coping strategies. While allowing principals’ workload to spiral out of control may be an indirect result of a lack of institutional support from school districts or provincial Ministry of Education, participating principals also indicated that emotion-generating situations can occur when they feel a lack of support from their employer in more direct ways.

Lack of support from district leadership or the Ministry of Education. Principals in this study also discussed how a lack of support from, or disagreements with their employer is a condition of their employment that can create emotion-generating situations. When describing this lack of support or disagreement, participating principals discussed how they experience emotions, and challenges managing those emotions, in relation to the following themes:

- When district leadership appears disconnected from schools;
- When they have disagreements with their superiors over policy; and
- When it feels they are not being provided with the resources necessary to do their job effectively.

Each of these themes are discussed in further detail throughout the remainder of this section.

District leadership is disconnected from schools. There is a perception among principals in this study that district leadership have been out of the school walls for too long to fully
comprehend the complexity, volume, and emotional labour associated with the contemporary principalship. For example, Doris discussed how she feels annoyed, anxious and vulnerable because district leadership is seemingly disconnected from the school and lacks knowledge and understanding of what it is like leading a contemporary secondary school. She stated that:

Those heighten the stress, anxiety levels, along with being really annoying. A lot that goes on in a busy school that I sometimes think some people at a board office just don't understand, or forget, because they haven't been in the position. Either they've never been in the position, or they just have lost touch with what's going on. I find those more annoying than anything, especially when there's so much to do.

District leaders cannot support Doris if they do not understand the work she does at the school-level, which makes her feel annoyed and anxious in her role because it seems like she is not being supported. The secondary school principals in this study also described how they can experience negative emotions, such as anger, when they are reporting to supervisory officers who have an elementary school background and may not completely understand the realities associated with working in a secondary school context. For example, Stephanie discussed feeling oppressed by the system because her current supervisory officer lacks a comprehensive understanding of the secondary school context:

Everything seems to be in place all the time for that hierarchical structure where it's about power, which always puts you in a place of oppression at some level. As a principal, at some level with that hierarchy, you feel oppressed. It doesn't feel like you're working as a team, or that it's collegial at any level. It seems to always be, "We talk at you, we talk down to you, and we just have lists for you to do." If there's issues with parents or whatever sometimes, too, you're made to feel that you're the problem. That's also because in our system we have a K-12 model, so we often have superintendents that are from elementary who don't necessarily understand what the secondary needs are, or how you deal with some of those issues. If you're in a meeting with them and they're not really supporting you as the principal, they're supporting the parents, then that's pretty stressing.

It can be challenging for Stephanie to manage her emotions when her supervisory officer does not understand the nature and needs of a secondary school, or when the system is not supporting her as a principal. Similarly, Trevor discussed how it feels like the individuals designing policies
and programming may have forgotten what it is like to be in a school on a daily basis. For example, he described how emotion-generating situations can occur when his employer does not understand his working conditions:

The negative would be the converse things like when they forget to realize that there's a lot of things coming from a lot of different directions and it's not getting filtered properly. That would be a frustrating part, is where they may have forgot what a ... I guess some of the feeling would be you may forget what it's like to be within a school and what's going on a day-to-day basis.

Trevor indicated that he does not feel supported when it seems like district leadership does not understand the challenges associated with the contemporary principalship, or the nature of a secondary school context. While participating principals described emotion-generating situations that can occur when district leadership appears disconnected from schools, disagreements with the school district or Ministry of Education over policy can lead to similar situations.

Disagreements over policy. Principals’ work involves navigating system-based challenges, and situations where they disagree with policy decisions enacted by their district or the provincial Ministry of Education can lead to challenges managing situations, such as feeling anger or frustration. For example, principals in this study singled out provincial Regulation 274/12 as a policy that makes it particularly challenging to manage their emotions. Regulation 274/12 is recent policy in Ontario that limits the pool of applicants from which principals can interview for available teaching positions. Principals in this study indicated feeling handcuffed and forced to hire substandard teachers who are not a good fit for the school. For example, when discussing Regulation 274/12, Charles mentioned how this policy has created a values clash in schools as it limits his agency and removes professional judgement from the teacher hiring process:

If you want things in the school, you should ask us, the principals, because if it's good for kids, we'll help you figure out how to make it work, but don't just tell us what needs to be
done without some logical semblance of what needs to happen. It has really tied us in terms of how we could staff our buildings, which is a big part, I think, of what we do in our buildings. To be able to have all these regulations ... Felt it is really unfortunate for the younger teachers. Going back to why the Ministry put it in, I don't ... Well, who knows?

Charles is frustrated by system-level challenges related to Regulation 274/12 because he believes principals had no voice in developing this policy, despite the fact that it has had a tremendous influence on his work in terms of staffing and human resources.

Other conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations for the principals in this study can occur when they are forced to implement policies and procedures that they do not support. For example, Gary stated that, “when I find unreasonable requests are coming my way, I tend to lash out.” Charles also described feeling confusion and disgust when describing situations where he has to implement or operationalize policies or procedures that clash with his personal values. However, Charles indicated that he still follows the wishes of the board and will implement policies or initiatives, even when he does not fully agree with them.

There's always emotions because, at times, obviously there may be a mandate that you're not 100% in favor of, but you still realize, too, you are still carrying out the wishes of the board and sometimes that's not an absolute match and that makes sense. Sure, there's emotions. If there isn’t, then you're dead. If there's no emotion, then you don't care.

Charles highlights how he can experience emotions in the workplace when he really cares about an issue that is impacted by a mandate or policy decision that does not align with his personal views. In the quote above, Charles also highlights how a lack of agency and the shift towards the principalship becoming a compliance-based role can incite situations where he finds it challenging to manage his emotions. Rather than lie to her staff, Danielle described how she manages her emotions by being honest and truthful with teachers when faced with implementing a district or ministry-level mandate that she does not believe in:

There are definitely some times when we feel that we are being told what to do and especially when it is something we don’t believe in. That is really, really hard. When
something is coming down and I don’t believe in it and it’s a must do and I have to sell everyone on something and it’s a must do and I don’t believe in it. So, my own personal theory is that I will be honest with staff and say, “this is what is happening. We can’t get around it, we have to do it and we may not think it’s the best thing in the world to do, but they need information back and that’s our job, is to follow the lead of the board, right? I think that makes more sense than trying to pretend that I think it’s fantastic and going from there.

Danielle highlights the benefits of being honest and truthful with staff, rather than trying to ‘sell’ policies that she does not believe in. Principals in this study used provincial Regulation 274/12 to demonstrate how emotion-generating situations can occur when they disagree over policy with their school district or the Ministry of Education. Disagreements over policy, such as the one described above, can make it challenging for principals to manage their emotions because it leads to a values clash. Further, these policy disagreements highlight how contemporary principals lack agency due to the compliance-based nature of the contemporary principalship.

**Lack of resources.** Participating principals also described how emotion-generating situations can be the result of feeling that they lack the necessary school-level inputs (e.g., human resources, funding, etc.) to fulfill their job description. For example, Heidi described frustration that her school has been unable to replace the school’s flagpole:

I find, this year, a lot of my frustration is really directed more ... Yeah, people, but no, it's not the parents, it's not the kids, it's cutbacks at the board, or asking for a flagpole for over eight months and still don't have one. Those little frustrations drive me nuts: "Let me just go and buy my own flagpole, then, because I think we should have one" kind of thoughts.

Heidi highlighted frustration surrounding perceived “cutbacks” at the district level, which impact her ability to effectively lead the school and maintain a positive school climate. For example, Heidi discussed a situation in her work where managing system-based challenges with building services around resource allocation that led to emotional distress and upset feelings:

I have been emotional sometimes when I get really upset. I have to try to put that in check, but I've lost it emotionally. I've lately cried a couple times that I'm still
embarrassed about, but then after, I'll just pick up ... I mean, I had an issue with building services, and closing rooms, and whatnot that just took me surprise. I didn't like that, that I lost it like that. Then I recomposed, and I would continue that conversation.

This principal described how she was unable to manage their emotions regarding an issue surrounding resource allocation because a lack of resources hampered her ability to do her job effectively. A lack of resources leads to an emotional response for the principals in this study, and makes it difficult for them to manage their emotions because, as with the other system-based challenges cited by the principals in this study, it limits autonomy and interferes with how they conduct their work.

Principals in this study described facing several system-level challenges that lead to emotion-generating situations in their work, and hinder their ability to effectively manage their emotions. Participants indicated that encountering barriers when advocating for students, concerns about workload and a lack of support from their employer are the three system-level challenges that result in experiencing emotion-generating situations in their daily work.

Principals described experiencing feelings such as frustration, despair, sadness and anger when their efforts to advocate for students encounter barriers and/or ultimately prove unsuccessful. Further, negative emotions, such as anger and sadness, can be experienced by principals when they feel that they are advocating for students against the interests of parents/guardians.

Participating principals described challenges managing their emotions due to an increasing and expanding workload, managing the litigious aspects of their work and the amount of time they are called out of their school building for meetings and committee work. The final system-level challenge is a lack of support from the school district or the ministry of education. This lack of support manifests in three ways, including central office staff who are disconnected from contemporary schools, disagreements about policy and a lack of resources. All of these system-level challenges lead to emotion-generating situations, and make it difficult for principals in this
study to manage their emotions because they limit autonomy and interfere with how they conduct their work on a daily basis. While schools can receive media attention for positive reasons, it can also pose challenges for how principals manage their emotions on a daily basis.

**Media attention.** Two principals in the study who are employed in large, metropolitan cities cited media attention as a potential condition that can be a source of emotion-generating situations in their work. One of these principals indicated that media attention can be positive or negative. For example, Liam noted that good media exposure is a great acknowledgment of the work being done at the school. However, he did indicate that some media attention can be intensely negative and undermine efforts to make the school a positive place for all members of the school community. Liam described how media coverage of a court case the school was involved in led to anger and anxiety, but did indicate that both positive and negative emotions can occur when principals are faced with managing media attention directed at the school.

For example, when we ever have a good news story, it's great. We hosted the Bell Let’s Talk kickoff, so that was a huge CTV story. Not this year, but it was a couple of years ago. We were on (local television), and great media, and you're very happy that we're connected to the media that way. I wanted to do a breathalyzer at our prom. For five or four years, we had so many issues about drinking and sending kids in an ambulance, and lots of schools in (the city) do it, but because it was Southern, we hit the news and we went to court, and I lost. That was all over the news, so sure, that can affect your emotions.

Depending on the news story and how the school is portrayed in the media, Liam indicated how his experiences with the media and media attention at the school-level has led to both positive and negative emotions: It seems that media attention can cause emotional responses for principals because they do not control the message. Further, the permanency of the Internet means that a principal’s reputation can be eternally tarnished based on one decision or action made in the course of their entire career. For example, students, colleagues or members of the school community can do an Internet search of a principal’s name and potentially uncover
articles from up to 10 or 15 years ago detailing any supposed wrongdoing. Arnold mentioned that the first website that appears when searching his name on the Internet is a newspaper article from three years ago stating that he lied to students and parents about a student safety issue at the school. When discussing the emotional toll related to this negative media coverage, Arnold appeared distressed, anxious and haunted before asking me to turn off the tape recorder. In the ensuing discussion, Arnold indicated that someone in the school community leaked misinformation to the press in the past, and that he still sees himself as a target and fears reprisal. Whether they perceive themselves as ‘targets’ or not, Arnold and Liam have to wear this negative media coverage everyday because it only takes a simple google search for members of both the school community and the general public to begin judging them and their decision making. This lack of control surrounding their professional reputation or the reputation of their school can make it challenging for principals to manage their emotions. Just as schools and principals are not immune from media attention, they are not resistant to tragedies and the negative emotions that can accompany heart-wrenching incidents. In addition to managing tragedies, participating principals also indicated that working with individuals who are upset, angry, disobedient or unprofessional is another condition that can also lead to emotion-generating situations in their daily work.

**Working with individuals who are upset, angry, disobedient, or unprofessional.**

Working with individuals who are upset, angry, disobedient or unprofessional can lead to emotion-generating situations for those employed in any profession. The contemporary principalship is no different. Indeed, it can be challenging for principals in this study to manage their emotions when they encounter staff who are upset, angry or acting in an unprofessional manner. Similarly, it can be challenging for participants to manage their emotions when engaged
in meetings, conversations and other emotion-generating situations that involve
parents/guardians that are upset or angry at the school. Each of these conditions that can lead to
emotion-generating situations in contemporary principals’ work will be discussed in the
remainder of this section.

**Staff.** Part of contemporary principals’ work involves engaging in activities designed to
create, maintain and sustain safe and supportive learning environments for all staff, students and
stakeholders. Principals in this study indicated that they can experience emotion-generating
situations, and that it can be difficult, or challenging to manage their emotions when the actions
of staff members compromise the fragile nature of that positive learning climate. For example,
Heidi indicated that it can be challenging to manage her emotions when members of her staff say
disparaging comments about some of the students at her school:

I think one of the most challenging parts of my job, an emotional job, my upsetness at
night, or when I’m talking to my team, is mainly about teachers. It’s not about kids. Every
day I have to sit and hear teachers say really awful things about kids, when they have no
idea what that child is walking through.

Heidi experiences sadness and anxiety when hearing disparaging, and often unprofessional
comments that her staff make about students at the school. Principals in this study also discussed
how interacting with teachers about scheduling and teaching assignments can result in
unprofessional behaviour that incites emotion-generating situations. For example, Liam
described a situation where he raised his voice at a teacher for continually harassing him to
change the courses they were assigned to teach in the next academic year. He contextualized the
incident by describing time-tabling as a very laborious process that requires a great deal of time
and precision as every teacher’s qualifications must be weighed against the needs of the school.
As the following quote demonstrates, Liam specified that he became angry with a teacher who
continued to harass him to change her teaching schedule for the coming academic year:
She was really anxious, and I guess she wanted me to comfort her and to encourage her and reassure her. I don't have...I don't want to do that..."you're going to get what you're going to get, and we'll try our best." She wasn't happy with that, and she kept coming back. I think maybe on her fourth time coming back, I said, "Enough." I don't think I raised my voice, but I certainly got angry, and she left. I'm She like, "Wow, I've now done that," what I said I would never do, I did. We're fine now, but in my mind whenever I pass her, I always say, "that's the teacher I yelled at," and I hate that.

Despite feeling like he was justified in becoming angry with a teacher for continually harassing him about her teaching assignment, Liam regrets that he was unable to manage his emotions in that situation and remembers that he yelled at that teacher whenever he sees her in the hallway. Principals in this study highlighted how they can effectively manage their emotions with most staff regardless of the emotional intensity of a given situation. However, similar to the situation described by Liam, other participating principals noted that they can experience emotion-generating situations when concerned that a staff member may complain about their actions or practices to their union. For example, Derek discussed how he has to be careful in his dealings with one teacher at his school because he is worried that the teacher will complain about his actions and practices.

It's only one (teacher). It's so frustrating. It's funny, I have to be so careful around her now. I'm always on the positive with her, just in case--of what she accuses me of next. Thankfully, I've not really lost my composure. Today, I did again this morning when this teacher was complaining about late start. I said to her, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to go off on you like that." It was morning, it was blah blah blah. She told it was fine. "Oh good, because I was afraid as well." We usually work things out like that.

Tristan describes how he became frustrated with a teacher who vocally and vehemently disagreed with a district-level school safety decision that resulted in a late start that school day because of icy roads and sidewalks in the area that surrounds the school community. Principals in this study discussed how they can experience situations that lead to emotional responses in the face of colleagues who are angry, upset or behave in an unprofessional manner. Participating principals also discussed how failure to effectively manage their emotions can create additional
emotion-generating, and emotionally challenging situations as they attempt to apologize to that staff member and smooth over any residual tension that remains from when they were unable to effectively manage their emotions. In the situation described above, Tristan indicates that it was easier for him to simply apologize for his behaviour, despite feeling like he was justified in how he acted towards the staff member:

The only (teacher) I've ever actually lost my temper with is that person, four times, no one else in the school. I've actually had to go to her, and even then, when I'm apologizing and I'm the one that's actually - on my knees groveling for forgiveness, even though I really shouldn't have to, but just to get us back to normal, to be civil. I've done that. Usually, I don't.

Tristan describes how he can feel anxious and angry when apologizing for not being able to manage his emotions in past interactions. Perhaps principals find it challenging to navigate emotion-generating situations that arise when teachers and other staff at the school become angry, upset or act in an unprofessional manner because they work so hard to support their staff members. For example, Danielle insisted that she feels inundated by colleagues asking for support, which can lead to emotion-generating situations in her daily work:

Some of the things that hinder me managing my emotions at work would be the inundation by my colleagues to help them. Sometimes I'm just running short on the ability to help A, B, C, and D, and don't be surprised if you hear my, I've told them not to put any calls through, but the constant inundation of emails and calls from my colleagues saying, "Can you help me problem-solve around this? Can you help me problem-solve around that?" Every time I get those calls it's always a horrific story. It's like, "Can you help me with Bobby? And here's the story." That's one story for them but I would get stories from potentially, over the course of a year, a hundred different schools. They would only hear their story, and that's a single story in their school, where I would hear all the stories. That hinders, at times, my ability to manage my job, and time, and emotions.

Feeling like she is constantly being asked to help colleagues solve their problems creates situations where Danielle experiences negative emotions because it hinders her ability to complete other work tasks.
Principals in this study indicated that being faced with teachers or other staff members who are angry, upset or acting in an unprofessional manner is a condition of their employment that can lead to emotion-generating situations. Situations where they hear staff saying disparaging comments about students, having teachers harass them about teaching assignments and being concerned that a staff member will complain about their behaviour are examples of emotion-generating situations where it can be challenging for principals in this study to maintain their composure and effectively manage their emotions. Further, an inability to manage their emotions in a given situation can be problematic for principals because it can make them feel like they need to apologize for their behaviour, thereby creating an additional emotion-generating situation. In addition to interacting with teachers and staff at the school who appear angry, upset or act in an unprofessional manner, principals in this study also indicated that working with parents/guardians who are at odds with the school is a condition that can lead to emotion-generating situations.

**Parents/guardians.** Principals can experience emotion-generating situations when their work conditions involve interacting with parents/guardians who disagree with the approach taken, or decisions made at the school level. For example, Trevor indicated that he feels frustrated when parents do not support the school because he makes decisions in an effort to improve students’ academic and nonacademic outcomes:

> If I find people are working with me and we are all working towards bettering kids’ lives, all is good. When I have run into difficult people, difficult parents, agencies, public agencies that work with schools, when I we are at odds with each other, I find that pretty frustrating.

Engaging in disagreements with parents/guardians concerning the best interests of students can create situations where Trevor feels frustrated. Participating principals also described allowing parents who are angry or upset an opportunity to vent their frustrations, while still trying to keep
the meeting on task and focused on the needs of the students. For example, Doris indicated that she tries to take notes and actively listen when conversations with parents/guardians become heated:

> When I'm in a meeting, if it's getting heated, I will just listen and let them vent, and take notes, and try and keep the meeting on the reason we initially set out to meet, which I would hope is just the student. Taking notes. Sometimes when I don't feel like I'm getting anywhere, then I will get the parents to deal with one of the vice principals. The other thing that I do when I feel like a situation has gotten past me, and I'm not making any impact is I will email my SO and just give him the heads up that this parent might be contacting him, and then basically make sure that I have all my notes down as to what I have done to try and deal with the situation. Again, it's really frustrating dealing with those because it takes away from so many other things that I could be doing.

Even engaging in this passive kind of behaviour can incite negative emotions, such as anger, as Doris finds it difficult to stay calm when faced with an individual yelling at her when she could be practicing instructional leadership or engaging in a variety of other tasks that may benefit student learning or improve school safety. Sometimes situations with angry or upset parents/guardians can become so intense that the principal has to simply hang up the phone or walk away, lest they risk failing to manage their emotions and exacerbate the situation. For example, Heidi described how she used to experience challenges managing her emotions when being attacked or berated by parents/guardians who are angry or upset with the school or her decision-making. She describes how she has learned to protect herself by ending conversations when it feels like she is being attacked:

> I'm trying to think of any other time where I might have ... Usually with parents. I've never ... I've gotten better, though, too, with parents. At the beginning ... If they want to yell and scream, I cut things off, whereas young principals don't know they can do that. I'm not going to spend twenty minutes on a phone conversation, or have somebody in my office that just wants to berate me. That's not what we're about. That's not going to help anybody. I have gotten stronger in terms of just saying, "You know what? This is over. This is done." Again, I might not have been able to do that my first couple years.
Heidi highlights how she has learned to hang up the phone or end a meeting when a parent/guardian is yelling at her, which helps her to manage her emotions by ending stressful situations. Principals in this study indicated that they experience emotion-generating situations in their work when faced with parents/guardians who are upset with dealing with parents who are upset or angry with the school. For example, Tristan mentioned that, “When the foul language comes from the parent, it's very difficult. There, it's hard to manage the emotions, for sure.” In addition to receiving verbal abuse, principals in this study indicated that emotion-generating situations can occur when working with angry parents/guardians because they are not able to collaborate towards producing the best outcomes for students. However, participating principals discussed how they have learned to hang up the phone or end conversations with angry parents/guardians as a strategy for maintaining their ability to effectively manage their emotions by removing themselves from a stressful, emotion-laden situation. Managing tragedies and other difficult issues can lead to additional stressful and emotion-generating situations for the secondary school principals in this study.

**Tragedies or difficult issues.** School-level tragedies are the final type of condition that participating principals associated with creating emotion-generating activities in their daily work. Tragedies are emotionally charged situations by their very nature. Often occurring suddenly or with little warning, it can be challenging for principals to effectively manage their emotions when faced with navigating tragedies that occur at the school site, or within the school community. By their very nature, tragedies are associated with negative emotions, such as confusion, anger, sadness and disgust. Principals cannot plan for these tragedies and are often forced to react in the moment to ensure the safety of staff, students and members of their school community. For example, Charles shared how one of his secretaries suffered a massive heart
attack while at the school and he had to reach quickly and perform CPR in an effort to save her life:

Very rarely is there a surprise. Your surprises come if there's tragedies in the building. I had a situation this year where one of my secretaries had a massive heart attack at her desk at 8:30 in the morning and I did CPR. You can’t manage those. You have to react to those. In most cases, you're being proactive. You know in a pretty firm way what's coming down the pipe next, and it's those situations that I talked about, those emergencies that you can’t control but you know periodically they will come.

In addition to the emotions that may be associated with potentially losing a valued staff member, Charles stated that tragedies or emergencies create incite emotions in principals because they cannot plan for them. School-level tragedies can also make it difficult for principals to manage their emotions because they must place their other responsibilities aside, be reactive and make tactful decisions in the moment. Though tragedies can occur at schools and other workplaces every day, principals have little control over when or if they happen. Principals are also tasked with taking the lead in helping the school recover from tragic events, including the death of students or staff members. For example, Jack captured the difficulty he experienced overcoming negative emotions, such as anxiety, fear and sadness, while shepherding the school through the mourning process after the death of a student:

Obviously, any kind of death or tragedy in the school community (leads to negative emotions). I dealt with a death at (my last school) that was really, really difficult because I think, especially for adolescents, it reminds them that they're not invincible. I think they think they're invincible and when something happens to one of their own, I think it shakes them a bit. Suicide's another issue that we are dealing with far too often and actually at my wife's school in (a large city), she's a guidance counsellor, they had a kid that suicided I think in the new term, earlier this year and then the whole school community is on the knife's edge for the next few weeks. Worried about copycats, worried about kids wanting to capitalize on the sensationalism of taking your own life.

After learning of the death of a student at his prior school, Jack both highlighted that he experienced fear of other students contemplating suicide when helping staff and students cope with losing a member of the school community. Similarly, Cathy revealed that tragedies, such as
students contemplating suicide is a highly emotional aspect her work. Further, these are feelings that can be compounded for Cathy as the rest of the school community looks to her for leadership in the aftermath of these tragic situations:

That I can't get stuck in that emotional well of sadness, and I can't move, and it freezes you. I've really had to pay attention to that, your emotions at school, and be cognizant of that. Dealing with kids who contemplated suicide, and leading a school, and how do I do this, and how do I be the brave, positive face, no matter what the situation is that's going on, takes a lot of thinking. Sometimes I have to close my door in my office and I have to compose myself, even in the face of some really challenging situations, and figure out how I'm going to come out. I always have to be the leader and the one who is going to lead the staff and keep everyone going through, no matter what emotional situations that we find out about in school. That's pretty much framed my entire career.

Cathy indicated that leading staff and students through tragedies that occur within the school community can be a particularly intense emotion-generating situation. Similarly, other principals in the sample spoke of the emotional toll associated with leading the school past deaths in the school community. For example, Liam described how a recent suicide by a student at his school was devastating to both the larger school community, and him personally:

In October, we had a suicide, so that obviously has an emotional impact on whomever is running the school and teachers and secretaries. The whole school community was rocked by the suicide, but that was a real blow, especially because we have been doing so much work around mental health awareness and anti-stigma programs and relationships and trying to build community, and that was a real shock to us. The kid was an involved kid, so that's another high emotion situation, for sure.

Liam discussed how the recent tragic death of a student via suicide was an situation that incited emotions because the student was involved in the school community and because he, and the school community, had been making efforts to promote positive mental health. When these tragic situations occur, principals face challenges managing their emotions because they can be operating from a state of shock and tragedies are unpredictable events, forcing principals to be reactive.
Chapter Summary

Principals in this study identified several conditions in their daily work that can incite emotion-generating situations. Conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations for principals in this study include encountering barriers when advocating for students, and navigating system-based challenges, such as an expanding and relentless workload, the litigious nature of their work and the frequency with which they are called out of the building for meetings or committee work. Female principals discussed facing system-based challenges and pressure to complete their workload more often than their male peers. Participating principals that had obtained a master’s degree described being called out of their building for district-level meetings and committees more often than principals with bachelor’s degrees. Principals with bachelor’s degrees also described encountering more system-based challenges than their peers that had obtained master’s degrees. Participating principals also discussed how emotionally challenging situations can occur when faced with a perceived lack of support from their employer (e.g., the school district or provincial Ministry of Education) or negative media attention on themselves or the school. Unsurprisingly, principals in this study also highlighted how engaging in communication with individuals who are upset, angry, disobedient or unprofessional can lead to emotionally challenging situations. Finally, tragedies can also lead to emotion-generating situations for principals in this study because they are unpredictable events that force principals to be reactive. Now that I have discussed the conditions that can lead to situations where principals experience emotions that need to be managed, the next chapter provides insight into the strategies that principals in this study utilized to manage their emotions.
Chapter 5: Strategies Secondary School Principals Use to Manage Their Emotions

As part of the interviews, I asked the participating secondary school principals to describe the strategies and approaches they use to manage their emotions in the workplace on a daily basis. I have used Gross’ (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) Process Model for Emotional Regulation to frame findings related to this research question. Principals in this study reported employing ER strategies associated with all five of the following families of ER found within Gross’ (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) Process Model for Emotional Regulation:

- Situation selection;
- Situation modification;
- Attentional deployment;
- Cognitive change; and
- Response modulation.

In this chapter, I discuss my findings related to how principals manage their emotions; I have presented them in order according to the list above.

**Situation Selection.** Situation selection is an ER strategy that occurs when individuals make decisions to place themselves in situations that are more likely to result in them feeling a desired emotion (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Essentially, if someone uses situation selection when they feel anxious or overwhelmed, they will make an effort to engage in tasks or activities that make them feel opposite emotions, such as happiness or joy (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). All principals who participated in this study discussed using situation selection to manage emotions encountered in their work. However, participating principals described practicing situation selection in an effort to manage their emotions in five different ways. The five ways that principals in this study reported using situation selection to
manage their emotions include: connecting with students, modeling optimism and positivity, manipulating the emotions of others, and contributing to the success of others and structuring the workday. Each of these five ways that participating principals utilize situation selection to manage their emotions are described in the remainder of this section.

Connecting with Students: A major theme in the interview data was principals practicing situation selection by connecting with students in their schools when they experience an emotionally challenging day or feel negative emotions. For example, Heidi described choosing to spend time with students, especially those enrolled in special education classes, because she knows engaging in those activities will lead to her feeling positive emotions:

I know the classes that make me feel better to go in. The special-needs classes are fun. There are some teachers that do such cool stuff with the kids, and they're so engaged, and so welcoming. Those will be the classes I go to when I really need a fix. I know I'm supposed to be visiting every class equally, but…I go to the places that make me feel good.

When she feels upset, Heidi knows that connecting with students will brighten her mood, so she uses situation selection by choosing to visit classrooms and interact with students before engaging in other tasks or activities. Using situation selection to connect with students at school also had other benefits for principals in this study, such as contributing to a positive school climate. For example, Charles provides students with a small gift on their birthdays because he enjoys connecting with students. When discussing how he selects situations to interact with students each school day, Charles stated that:

…On a daily basis I'll visit the classroom and there might be three, four, five birthdays in the school. Every one of those children will get a birthday cupcake and a party hat and a pencil and a lanyard saying, “You know what? I care about you as an individual and we're going to celebrate you.”

Charles celebrates student birthdays in part because it allows him to demonstrate care and connect (or reconnect) with students at his school. Other principals in this study also described
engaging in situation selection throughout the school day to connect with students because these interactions incite positive emotions. For example, Doris indicated that she will carve out time to connect with students when she experiences an emotionally challenging day because she enjoys working with and supporting students:

I went into teaching because I really enjoyed working with students, but as I go along the administrative ladder, I feel completely disconnected to students. I see them in the hallway. I try to talk with them and work with them when I can, and support them.

Doris explained that she selects situations to support and connect with students because it is an aspect of the job that she enjoys. Participants also used situation selection as a strategy to manage emotions beyond deciding to connect with students when they experience emotionally-challenging situations

*Modeling Optimism and Positivity:* Some principals in this study indicated that they use situation selection to model optimism and positivity for staff, students and other stakeholders. Carl described using situation selection to create situations where he is more likely to genuinely feel positive emotions. For example, Carl chooses to eschew what he actually feels at school and, instead, models positivity and an optimistic outlook; he feels this approach can actually make him and others at the school feel happier:

If the principal sneezes, the school catches a cold. So, yeah, you manage your emotions; yeah, you are always on; yeah, you are the face of the organization. You might be having a crappy day or things might be going to hell for you, you might be upset but you are always happy, you are always pleased to be there. You have to put that forward. Behaviours change beliefs too. It's amazing—if you go into the school and you behave like you are happy, pretty soon you are going to feel pretty happy. You can manage your own beliefs by…manag[ing] your behaviour…I find if you spend time with kids you are going to be happy anyway.

Carl explained that he uses situation selection by “faking it until he feels it.” Carl cloaks how he really feels behind a veil of inauthentic positivity and optimism, which can influence his emotions and actually make him start to feel the positive emotions he feigns for staff, students,
and other stakeholders. While modeling optimism and positivity can have an indirect impact on the emotional state of others at the school, principals in this study also reported engaging in situation selection that directly involves influencing, or manipulating the emotions of others.

**Manipulating the Emotions of Others:** Tristan described using situation selection as a strategic tool to influence both his and others’ emotions. For example, Tristan chooses to start all meetings on a lighter note to disarm any anger or tension those in attendance might be experiencing. By discarding his own emotional baggage and taking on a collegial tone in meetings, Tristan uses surface acting to help create a situation that is more likely to lead to positive, rather than negative, emotions for himself and all others involved. Tristan elaborated on using surface acting and situation selection in his approach to meetings:

I remind myself before any meeting I have, parent or whatever, I always want to start off on a lighter tone. Either making a joke or just having some nice small talk, and then launching into it very delicately. Again, finding areas where we can agree on. I know it sounds terribly manipulative, but complimenting them. That disarms them a bit, too. Like I said, listening to people.

Tristan indicated that, although it may seem manipulative, he chooses to use surface acting to create situations that are more likely to lead to positive emotions for both parties when tasked with meeting unhappy stakeholders. Using surface acting to assist in situation selection by eliciting the desired emotional outcomes in students, staff and other stakeholders, was common among principals in this study. For example, Jack described the following situation where he appeared angrier than he was and intentionally slammed the door to his office to send a message to several students who were in the office regarding a discipline concern:

The one situation I can think of was dealing with a student and there were other students in the outer office…and the kid went into my office and intentionally I slammed the door. When I slammed the door, all the blinds on the back of the door came crashing down and it was a big effect thing but I did it intentionally because I wanted the kids out there, because it was only myself with the other vice-principal with six or seven kids that were all kind of losing their shit and the vice-principal had the aggressor and I took the next
biggest fish. Then the other ones right there losing their minds by the secretaries, it made a point and, yeah, I think I used my size and my title and all that to an advantage. I think it really rattled the secretaries, so afterwards I called them in and I closed the door and I had a big smile on my face and I said, "Just so you know that was all for effect. I wasn't mad," and they said, "Okay, good, ‘cause we were really worried."

Jack practiced situation selection when he performed a behaviour designed to rattle the students in the office and set the tone for his meetings with them. In this situation, Jack was strategically surface acting to influence the behaviour of the students who were misbehaving in the school’s main office.

Some principals in this study discussed working in communities where teaching staff do not have a comprehensive or nuanced understanding of the challenges some of their students face. Heidi indicated that she experiences anger, confusion and sadness, when dealing with teachers who refuse to acknowledge some of the mitigating factors surrounding students’ behaviour; her school is in an urban community with a high proportion of students coming from low-income households. Heidi described strategically using situation selection to help her teaching faculty become more empathetic to students’ experiences. In this way, Heidi can avoid situations in her work that she finds particularly emotionally challenging, and evade the emotions those situations can incite:

Sometimes I strategically set things up, so that the staff can gain empathy, because I don't want them to feel sorry for kids, but I want you to have some empathy because, I hate to say this, but 90% of the teachers I work with grew up with a white picket fence in a middle-class home, where there probably was a table to do your homework at. There probably was food on a regular basis. I don't want them to make excuses for kids, because there's no excuse for not being a respectful, caring person. But it's the appreciation of that, and how you treat them, and how you treat them fairly, and how you don't create that anxiety with the kids, so that we can move them forward.

Heidi uses situation selection as an emotional management tool when she becomes frustrated when teachers at her school fail to accurately comprehend the challenges her students face. In doing so, Heidi not only avoids feeling angry or sad, but can also experience happiness,
validation, and other positive emotions when teachers at her school become more empathetic, and students are treated equitably. Principals in this study indicated that they tend to manage their emotions by selecting or creating situations where they are likely to experience positive emotions at work, such as contributing to the success of others at the school, such as students, teachers and their vice-principals.

**Contributing to the success of others.** During the interviews, the secondary school principals that participated in this study highlighted the positive emotions they reported feeling when they have contributed to the success of students, teachers and vice-principals at their school. All 13 principals in the sample reported seeking out, or selecting, situations where they harnessed their efforts and energy in a way that contributes to the success of others in the school, such as students, teachers and their vice-principals. By contributing to the success of students, teachers and vice-principals, principals create situations which incite positive emotions in their daily work.

**Contributing to the success of students.** All of the secondary school principals that participated in this study stated that situations in their work that involve positive emotional responses occur when they have an opportunity to contribute to student success. For these principals, the opportunity to assist students is an intrinsic benefit associated with the position that fills them with positive emotions such as joy and hope, which can be very rewarding. For example, Cathy discussed the following situation where she was visited by a former student who wanted to thank her for helping her graduate secondary school and cope during a difficult time:

> Every day I have to sit and hear teachers say really awful things about kids, when they have no idea what that child is walking through. Seeing this young lady graduate from school, and she said some pretty impactful things, she whispered in my ear on the stage when I gave her diploma. And then the following year she goes off to college in Toronto, again living on her own. All kinds of distractions that could have got her there, and her constantly being in contact with me by email to just let me know how things were going,
and her coming by to visit me when school was done that following year, in May or June, where she just came back to (visit)...and wanted to say hi to me, and say how important it was that I did that.

Cathy experienced positive emotions when a past student thanked her for having a positive impact on both her academic career and life as a whole. Many secondary school principals that participated in this study also recounted similar stories to the one shared by Cathy. Participating principals indicated that they experienced feelings of validation when they able to make a difference in the lives of students, especially those who are dealing with barriers or difficult situations. For example, Doris shared that the most positive work experiences she has had as a principal occur when she has an opportunity to connect with students on a personal level and help them succeed:

Some of my high triumphs are getting kids over their barriers, their own drive to be successful, because they're beaten down by their family or personal situation. Just working with kids, one-to-one, all the time, throughout my career, getting to know them, getting to know a little piece of who they are, and then being able to connect to them has been one of the biggest successes.

Doris described how getting to know students and helping them achieve positive academic and nonacademic outcomes creates situations that incite positive emotions. Principals that participated in this study have witnessed students, “fall through the cracks” and recognize that they have the power to make decisions that can have a large influence on the students who attend their school. Carl expressed that he feels school is the last hope for some students and that he is in a position as the principal to provide students with opportunities to change their lives and experience success. For example, Carl stated:

I just love watching people grow and have hope. It's a place where... you're kind of the last bastion. When (students) come to you in the end, you're the person that can make all those choices and decisions to give them hope and to get on a good pathway and to really change their lives. I think that's a pretty cool thing to be able to do, and I think that's neat in the role.
Carl indicated that he, as a principal, has the power to make decisions and provide opportunities that can influence the lives of students at his school in a constructive manner, which can lead to situations that incite positive emotions.

However, principals in this study also recognized that a great sense of responsibility and accountability to students is tied to the principals’ ability to wield power in their work. For example, Carl went on to discuss how the importance of the principals’ role in creating a positive school climate and ability to create positive change in the lives of students is magnified as schools are one of the few remaining experiences or institutions that is common to the vast majority of individuals in society:

I can do things and effect positive change as a principal that I could never have done in the classroom as a teacher or even as a vice principal. You are the captain of your ship and you can set a direction with that ship and bring everybody on board to get to that next place wherever it is you need to go. Which is a great, great place to go. I can't say enough about how great the principalship is to have positive changes for kids. Education is such a foundational element of our society, this is where we grow and change and learn and evolve and we have all been through it. It's one of the last common shared experiences that we have as a nation. Kids aren't going to church anymore, they are declining in numbers. Kids are not in Beaver, Cubs, Scouts, Guides, Sparks anything with the same...Kids are not as much into organized sports in our communities as much as they are and yet we all have the common background of going through the public education system or virtually all of us do. We have a real chance to shape what we do and the people that help do that the most are the principals in schools. It's a huge responsibility.

The secondary school principals in this study indicated that opportunities to help students succeed creates situations that incite positive emotions and is one of the key intrinsic benefits associated with the principalship. Contributing to student success and helping them overcome difficult personal circumstances or barriers also benefits principals by increasing feelings of resilience and positivity. For example, Arnold stated that his focus on students and desire to make the school successful helps him manage emotions that occur throughout the workday:

Some people can kind of brush it off, and some people own it and take it home with them. I think I’m somewhere in the middle. I’m cursed with a horrible memory and
blessed with a horrible memory. I want to make it a success and whenever I leave this room I put my game face on and I make sure the kids know that they’re loved and valued. I try and do the same with the teachers, but really the focus is the students.

Arnold highlighted how creating a positive school climate where students are loved and feel valued helps him create situations in his work that are associated with positive emotions, including joy, adoration and admiration. The opportunity to contribute to student success was reported as a key driver of situations that incite positive emotions, such as joy and admiration, in the secondary school principals that participated in this study. Principals also work with teachers and contributing to constructive changes in pedagogical practice is another possibility associated with principals’ ability to manage their emotions.

*Contributing to teacher success.* Contributing to the success of teachers at their school create situations that lead to positive emotions in the secondary school principals that participated in this study. The opportunity to be an instructional leader and help teachers become better at their job is an exciting part of the principalship. Stephanie stated that feelings of excitement and engagement can be contagious when a teacher make positive changes to their pedagogical practices:

I think the feeling is just…it's exciting. Also, I think you feel good for that person. It's almost like if you go and you do…they say everybody should be doing some type of activism work, some type of volunteer work because that feeds the spirit. I think in our profession, those are the types of things that feed the spirit because when you're able to teach somebody and to move them, and they come out on the other side and they've learned and grown and they're excited and engaged, it's contagious, too.

Helping teachers change their practice can lead to situations where principals, and others at the school, experience positive emotions in their work, including excitement, engagement and pride. Participating principals indicated that they experience positive emotions in relation to contributing to changes in teacher practice because these teaching methods and strategies ultimately have a positive impact on students and student learning. For example, Doris indicates
that she feels proud when teachers at her school make efforts to improve instructional practice because positive changes can impact everyone at the school, including students:

I'm proud of these teachers when you're going through stuff, and explaining to them, working with them how it benefits their practice, or in the end the student, right? Yeah, pretty proud of them, pretty happy that they're working and being diligent about it, and hopefully learning something along the way that's going to benefit everybody at the end of the day…that, and working with a student that may not have been where they needed to be and getting somewhere where they should be. With a staff member, that's probably a highlight of a year, perhaps.

Contributing to teacher success can be a very rewarding experience and lead to positive emotions for the secondary principals that participated in this study. However, principals in this study did indicate that affecting change in relation to teacher pedagogical practice is not a common occurrence in their daily work. For example, Tristan referred to situations where he can contribute to teacher success by helping change instructional practices as, “gems that happen very rarely.” Because these moments are rare, principals feel a need to celebrate when teachers make positive changes in their practice. Doris referred to such occurrences as a highlight of the year. Participating principals also indicated that it can be a great deal of work to support teachers when they are attempting to change their practice, which was cited as another reason why principals experience positive emotions when contributing to teacher success. Trevor discussed how these situations can be very rewarding:

When [teachers] do get through something, it's a really positive emotion that happens there. It's like the more work you have to work with someone and it turns out to be successful for them, the more reward you get out of it. It's like what you put in as far as the emotion is what you get out.

Trevor notes that successfully working with teachers to change their pedagogical practices and approach to the classroom can be very rewarding experiences for him, especially when it takes more time and energy to achieve the desired outcomes. Pride, excitement and engagement are some of the positive emotions that the secondary school principals in this study discussed.
experiencing when they have opportunities to practice instructional leadership and contribute to the success of their teaching staff. As helping teachers change their pedagogical practices was described as a rare phenomenon for the participating principals, principals’ support in this area mostly focused on helping teachers better manage different situations they encounter in the classroom. The principals in this study indicated that it is their job to support everyone at the school, including students, teachers and vice-principals. This section concludes with a description of the possibilities associated with principals’ ability to manage their emotions when involved in situations where they have an opportunity to support the vice-principals on their staff and contribute to their success.

**Contributing to the success of vice-principals.** A smaller theme that emerged from the data involves principals feeling emotions, such as happiness and joy when they can contribute to the success of vice-principals in their school. Principals in this study indicated that it is their job to support their vice-principals and they feel positive emotions when they are able to perform that job demand successfully. For example, Carl stated that:

> When you are dealing with VPs, your role as a principal is to help them grow and achieve whatever leadership goal they want to. If they want to move on to a principalship then you've got to support them in that particular role. If you feel they are ready for that particular role. If they want to be the best VP that they can be, then you support them in that particular role, regardless of what they want to do. I have both scenarios with my vice principals. It’s an interesting thing.

Carl experiences positive emotions when he can effectively support his vice-principals and contribute to their success by preparing them for the principalship and/or helping them develop the necessary skills and abilities to thrive in their current role. Similarly, Stephanie described the principals’ ability to create change for vice-principals as one of the most exciting aspects of her job:
As a principal, I can create change for my vice principals and for staff and students. That to me is, I think, what's great about that role, and probably why I think it's one of the better roles. I think it's even better than being superintendent at some level. Again, for me it's really neat to have all these vice principals who've been working with me on the new building because they wanted to do that because they wanted to be part of a learning and growth process. So, I've been able to watch them learn about that and develop a new set of skills.

Stephanie was in the midst of planning to open a new school when the interview occurred and found that delegating aspects of the process provided a unique opportunity for her to contribute to the success of her incoming vice-principals by allowing them to engage in new work-related tasks and develop new skills.

Successfully supporting students, teachers and their vice-principals succeed makes it easier to manage their emotions because it demonstrates that the work they are doing at the school-level is having a positive impact on those around them. Supporting others at the school-level also helps principals in this study effectively manage their emotions because they entered the administration, and the teaching profession, to have a positive impact on students’ academic and nonacademic outcomes.

*Structuring the Workday*: Principals in this study indicated that they will engage in situation selection by structuring their workday. For example, Liam indicated that when he is angry or feeling anxious, he will choose to close his door and structure his workday in a way that limits the potential for perpetuating those emotions:

There are days if I'm upset, I will...If I need to, I know I'm going to blow up or whatever, I close my door and sometimes, I just need to do that or I'll structure my day so that I only see people that I need to see.

When feeling angry or anxious, Liam will select situations where he can isolate himself so that he does not risk further exposure to those emotions. All 13 principals who participated in this study described using situation selection as a strategy to manage their emotions at work. Participants described selecting situations where they can work with students when feeling angry
or anxious at work because they enjoy working with youth and find these interactions help them manage their emotions and move past emotionally challenging situations. It should also be mentioned that principals at schools with fewer than 1000 students indicated that they work with students more than their peers employed at larger schools.

Participants reported using situation selection and surface acting in tandem to appear as if they feel a desired emotion, which allows them to manipulate others and strategically accomplish hidden goals or aims. Selecting situations where they can successfully support students, teachers and their vice-principals succeed makes it easier for principals to manage their emotions because it demonstrates that the work they are doing at the school-level is having a positive impact on those around them. Selecting situations where they can support others at the school-level also helps principals in this study effectively manage their emotions because they entered administration, and the teaching profession, to have a positive impact on students’ academic and nonacademic outcomes. However, rather than contributing to changes in teacher practice, participating principals indicated that they primarily contribute to the success of their teachers in by helping them manage different situations they encounter in the school and/or classroom.

Principals in this study also engage in situation selection by structuring their workday to both increase the potential for experiencing joy, admiration and other positive emotions, by connecting with students. Further, the potential for experiencing fear, anxiety, anger and other negative emotions can be muted by the principal choosing to avoid others and close their office door. However, situation selection may not always be an appropriate ER strategy due to the unpredictable nature of contemporary principals’ work. For example, day-long meetings at the district office provide principals with little opportunity to connect with students or seek solitude.
Rather than engage in situation selection, principals may be forced to utilize other ER strategies, such as modifying a situation to manage their emotions and change how they are feeling.

**Situation modification.** Situation modification involves an individual engaging in actions and activities to change how they feel about a given situation or event. All 13 of the secondary school principals interviewed for this study described modifying situations to manage their emotions. The two strategies associated with situation modification that participating principals use to manage their emotions include: a) asking others for their perspectives and opinions, and b) injecting humour into the situation. I discuss how principals in this study use these strategies to manage their emotions in the following subsections.

**Asking others.** To modify how they feel about a situation and effectively manage their emotions, individuals often elicit the perspectives of others—such as colleagues, friends, and family. Receiving input from others can change how principals feel about the emotional situations they encounter in their daily work. All of the participating principals indicated that they will often ask others to share their opinions and perspectives on situations that occur in the workplace. However, participating principals also described being strategic about who they involve in conversations about the emotional aspects of their work. For example, Trevor revealed that he will ask other members of his administrative team:

> I think having a sounding board, someone usually that's within administration or that understands that, it's very helpful because they see or they know the frustrations and the pressures and those sorts of things.

When asking others for input and perspective to manage his emotions, Trevor finds it helpful to engage other administrators in these conversations because they have experiential and practical understandings of the challenges and frustrations connected to school leadership. Connecting
with a small group of trusted colleagues to ask their opinions on sensitive or emotional matters was a common theme among participants’ responses.

Further, Cathy indicated that she regularly asks others for input—usually on a daily or weekly basis—because venting and getting feedback and validation from a small group of trusted colleagues helps her effectively manage her emotions. Cathy explained that she feels comfortable letting her guard down and expressing her true emotions amongst this key group of trusted staff:

I also engage in a lot of conversations with my team. In any school I’ve been in, I’ve always surrounded myself with a small team of key people. That key group, [I] probably touch base with [them] daily. Formally touch base with, minimally, on a minimum basis, weekly…to have a sounding board to run things past, because even in front of my staff or whatever, I'm emotional—but I'm passionately emotional, not showing that I may be upset about the same situation or whatever. But having that sounding board small group, where I can express my emotions. Sometimes I'm very open with them and I let it all hang out and say, "I'm so mad about this," or, "I'm so upset about this." They validate what I'm feeling and help me get back on board, problem-solving. That would be another way that I cope with the stress and emotions of the job.

Asking others about various school-based situations helps Cathy manage her emotions because it allows others to validate her feelings about an event or situation where she experienced an emotional response. Asking others also provides Cathy with an opportunity to take a break from surface acting so she can be authentic around a small group of trusted colleagues. Similarly, Gary explained that meeting with colleagues to discuss the challenges and frustrations of the contemporary principalship manages his emotions by keeping him from “going over the edge”:

You certainly need people to be able to talk to. Again, colleagues. If I didn't have mine at home, I mean, I'd be calling, and we still do. I call colleagues a lot. We bounce ideas off each other. Again, that probably depends on the board. Mine's a nice small board. There's only 13 high-school principals, so we're a small, tight-knit group to kind of bounce things off each other, and, in my board, I have a very supportive…I feel our superintendents are extremely supportive. That's really key, too. If I felt like I didn't have their support, and they're just dealing with some of these issues, that would put me over the edge, I'm sure, at times, but no. They seem to always have my back.
Asking for advice and insight from his principal colleagues helps Gary cope with the emotional toll of his position because it makes him feel supported. Many participants used the term *venting* when describing how they ask others as a strategy to manage their emotions, demonstrating how ER can be a social process involving willing or unwilling participants. Asking others and venting about their work can also be a positive experience for principals, because displays of authenticity demonstrate a high level of trust in their colleagues. For example, Carl described the ability to shed surface acting and vent with vice-principals as a “beautiful thing”:

> The beautiful thing about having an admin colleague is the ability to close the door and vent. You vent about a kid, you vent about a parent, vent about a teacher, just vent. That's positive because that also demonstrates trust with them. As long as you have a trusting relationship with your admin team.

Carl described feeling comfortable venting with his administrative team because they have a trusting relationship. When discussing asking others as an emotional regulation strategy to modify their feelings about a situation, principals in this study often described using inappropriate language in the heat of the moment. Considering that secondary school principals, and educators as a whole, are held to a higher standard of behaviour than those in other sectors, it is important that they can trust those to whom they vent, especially when engaging in undesirable behaviours, such as swearing. However, participating principals expressed that using inappropriate language can indicate to others that they need support managing or letting go of an emotionally challenging or draining situation. For example, Heidi finds that using inappropriate language when asking others and confiding in them has been beneficial because it provided an immediate release of pent up emotions:

> The f-word was in my head all the time. I remember going into my… I was lucky enough to have a VP. We were a two-VP school. I would just go, "Fuck!", because it was just one of those you have to keep it all on the inside, in a sense. It was very beneficial, and it is for everyone, to have somebody they can vent to, but I just remember always it was one of those you think you know until you get in it, and it's very heavy, very busy.
For the participating principals, asking others can take the form of venting; venting often includes using inappropriate language to signify the extent of their frustration and helps them avoid keeping emotions bottled up inside.

For the principals in this study, the importance of asking others, particularly trusted members of their administrative team, as a strategy to manage emotions cannot be understated. For example, Tristan openly mused about how difficult and isolating it would feel to be a single administrator in the school because of the importance he places on being able to vent to his vice-principals: “That's why I couldn't imagine working in elementary school when you're the only principal, there's no VP. I go to them all the time to debrief or vent.” Similarly, Doris explained that she encourages members of her team to ask others and vent when necessary. In her experience, Doris finds that individuals need to express their emotions before they can start to heal and move on from an emotional situation:

You really can only take so much of that. Quite often, if I go through that or a colleague goes through that, we need a bit of debriefing time with someone. What I find is that doesn't happen. It's just assumed that we've got this armour plate around us so that if somebody is accusing you of things, it's apparently okay to take that and not let it affect you. That's just not true.

Doris has found that asking others is an effective strategy for managing her emotions; the process ensures that her staff members have time to debrief after an emotional situation as a way to unburden themselves and move on from the situation and the related emotions. However, while providing a release of emotional energy in the short-term, principals venting and engaging in appropriate language to manage their emotions may hollow out notions of professionalism surrounding the principalship. Further, the trusted colleagues that principals use to engage in venting may be unwilling to take on positions of leadership after hearing the unvarnished truth about the emotional toll associated with the position.
Significantly, asking others also provides an opportunity for individuals to gather an array of diverse opinions and perspectives, which can help manage their emotions by viewing a situation in a different way. This was true for principals in this study. For example, Danielle described how she will often ask a variety of different individuals:

The other thing is, too, is that I do not always have all the answers, so I personally like to bring in groups of people and I don’t always hand pick them, I just kind of put it out there and whoever shows up, shows up. We can try to work through things and say, “What do you think of this, what do you think of that.” That way I get input or can get an idea of something I wouldn’t have really realized before, and I like that!

When asking others about emotional situations, Danielle described inviting a broad range of individuals to participate because she gets the opportunity to hear fresh and diverse perspectives on a given event or situation. Principals in this study also discussed how asking others has influenced the ways they manage their emotions in emotionally charged or challenging situations. For example, Stephanie explained that asking others has led her to reconsider how she handles situations that can incite emotional responses. Over time, Stephanie has learned to delegate some emotionally challenging situations to staff members to reduce her level of anxiety, decrease emotional labour, and effectively manage her emotions:

It was really learning to let go of the control and to delegate stuff off. Because the more I tried to control everything, the harder that was and the more stressing that was, so there was a real learning curve for me. Again, that didn't happen without having those critical friends around me.

By using asking others as a strategy to manage her emotions, Stephanie was confronted with feedback about the unhealthy nature of her approach to leadership; as result, she now she tries to delegate some emotionally challenging situations that occur in the school. Other participants also discussed modifying situations and managing their emotions by asking others. For example, Gary explains: “I try to use my team to talk with [students and parents], so they are not always getting the bad news from me or getting advice from me.” Charles also highlighted the
importance of developing leaders at the school who can help him shoulder the burden of emotional labour:

If you have developing around you a circle of leaders, then at times you can say, “You know what?” to the leader that is capable of saying, “Can you take this one right now? I need you to respond to this right now for me.” That's where that relationship building that having those experts all around you, then it is not as stressful as if you are trying to go it alone. Going it alone isn’t a good thing.

Rather than risking his health and well-being by attempting to shield staff from emotionally challenging situations, Charles develops leaders and surrounds himself with experts in different areas to distribute the emotional labour associated with contemporary school leadership.

Principals in this sample discussed how asking others can serve as an important and effective strategy for managing their emotions because it allows them to get different perspectives on a situation, which can change how they feel about that situation. However, Heidi named principals’ expanding workload as a reason why opportunities to ask others and engage with trusted colleagues are increasingly scarce at her school board:

[Within my school board], the principals would get together every other Friday after work for a drink and a chance to defuse. I find many more people are too busy to even think about that. I really do worry a lot about my colleagues in terms of…we try to keep that line of communication open, but sometimes they're too busy to even consider that.

Although asking others can be an effective emotional regulation strategy, Heidi indicated that opportunities to engage in this strategy are dwindling because of work intensification.

Asking others is a strategy used by principals to manage their emotions as the opinions and insights of others can modify how they feel about an emotional situation. Principals in this study reported relying on a small group of trusted people with whom they feel comfortable shedding surface acting and expressing how they really feel. When principals express their true emotions, others can validate their feelings and provide them with fresh perspectives on a situation. Asking others also provides the opportunity to release emotions through venting about
the emotional content of their work. Involving staff in conversations concerning emotionally charged situations also provides as opportunities to develop leaders, in addition to being an effective ER strategy. However, this ER strategy also highlighted how managing one’s emotions can take on a social dimension that involves willing or unwilling participants. Further, principals in this study reported that they are engage in venting or using inappropriate language when asking others, two behaviours that could hollow out notions of professionalism surrounding the principalship. Another strategy principals can use to modify situations is through the strategic use of humour.

Using humour. Laughter, specifically the strategic use of humour, may very well be the best medicine for principals in this study. Indeed, principals in this sample discussed using humour as a way to manage their emotions and modify potentially emotionally challenging situations. For example, Stephanie indicates that when she makes a mistake, or when an emotional situation occurs, laughter and humour can be the best way to manage anger, anxiety and other negative emotions that may occur in the moment:

Once the mistake is done, it's more about how we deal with the mistake, that skill set. All of those things, I think, ease the stress in a building. I think also, too, just good old-fashioned laughter. Seriously, we need to learn to not take things seriously and to laugh a lot more at stuff. I think that's a good place to be to help deal with stress.

By not taking her work too seriously and having a sense of humour in the workplace, Stephanie is better able to manage her emotions because laughter provides an outlet for any emotions she may encounter throughout the workday. Using humour also allows principals to see situations that can incite emotional responses from a different perspective. Heidi described how humour can make her work fun, especially when she is involved in emotionally-challenging situations:

I'm trying to think of how else I would manage my emotions. A lot of humour. A lot of finding things fun about the day. You have to. Office staff. My office supervisor. That's a
key relationship. Keeping it professional, but you can still put a lot of humour in the day. That's how I operate, especially the crazy days. You might go crazy if you didn't.

It should be made clear that Heidi is not laughing at the students. Rather, she is attempting to find moments of levity in what can be a challenging and emotionally draining role. As demonstrated above, humour can be an important coping mechanism for principals. Further, Danielle mentioned that a supervisory officer at her school board suggested that she become a principal because she has a sense of humour. After indicating that she was initially confused by that comment, Danielle now understands that a sense of humour is important because principals need to maintain resilience and optimism in the face of a variety of emotionally challenging situations in their daily work:

It makes perfect sense because you have to be able to see the positive in things and you have to be able to let things slide off you and you have to have a sense of humour to get through some of the situations that we face.

Danielle described being tapped her on the shoulder by a supervisory officer who said she should become a principal because of her sense of humour, which would be beneficial in dealing with the emotionally challenging situations secondary school principals encounter in their daily work. Finding ways to laugh at aspects of their job in a professional manner helps principals manage their emotions because humour injects fun into the workday and serves as a release valve of sorts, allowing emotions to pass and limiting available energy for rumination or other ER strategies associated with negative outcomes.

Situation modification is a popular approach to managing emotions employed by principals that participated in this research. The two ways in which these principals attempt to modify situations to change how they are feeling include asking others and using humour. Asking others allows principals to manage their emotions by gathering different perspectives on a situation, which can either validate their feelings or cause them to reconsider their stance and
change how they feel. Further, asking others provides principals with rare opportunities to vent and shed surface acting by expressing their true feelings, as well as develop leadership skills in staff and colleagues. The other way participating principals indicated employing situation modification to manage their emotions is through the use of humour. Using humour in a positive, rather than mean or self-deprecating, manner allows principals to have fun in the role, while also providing an outlet for releasing emotions in a healthy and productive manner. While situation modification strategies, such as asking others and using humour involve principals sharing their feelings with others to manage their emotions, other emotional regulation strategies, such as those associated with attentional deployment are far less social.

**Attentional deployment.** As mentioned above, attentional deployment is perhaps the least social approach to managing emotions utilized by the secondary school principals that participated in this study. Attentional deployment is something that an individual does on their own, as strategies associated with this family of ER do not involve sharing feelings or changing environmental factors, such as the insights of others. Rather, ER strategies associated with attentional deployment can be linked to negative consequences because they involve individuals either isolating themselves from others or disengaging from a situation altogether. Principals in this study identified four strategies linked to attentional deployment that they utilize to manage emotions encountered in their daily work. These strategies include a) rumination, b) distraction, c) thought suppression and d) worrying. Each of these strategies principals use to manage their emotions will be discussed throughout the remainder of this section.

**Rumination.** Rumination refers to a process where individuals continually think about negative emotional situations or experiences (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Rather than reflecting on a difficult day, which can be viewed as a part of the principals’ role as a
reflective-practitioner, rumination is a repetitive process involving feelings of regret or
disappointment. A total of 11 of the 13 principals in the study indicated that they engage in
rumination to manage their emotions. There is no statute of limitations on rumination, as
individuals, including principals in this study, can ruminate on events that occurred yesterday,
For example, Danielle indicated that she still ruminates on situations that occurred over the
course of her career when she did not follow her instincts making decisions and the students
involved experienced negative outcomes:

If it is something I don’t agree with, like somebody has been suspended and I don’t get a
good feeling, I was taught a long time ago, follow that feeling, that gut feeling, that
feeling in your chest, and only twice since I have been in admin have I not followed that
feeling and both times I’ve been wrong… I would rather lean on the side of making a
mistake siding with the kid, than to go the other way and find out I was wrong and it has
really changed a person’s life for the negative.

Danielle highlights how she ruminates on decisions that have had negative consequences for the
students involved. This self-critical mentality expressed by principals in this study creates
opportunity for doubts, leading to rumination. For example, Tristan lamented the fact that he
rarely receives positive feedback, leading him to ruminate about whether he is making (or has
made) the “right” decisions:

I tend to be really self critical. When I'm back home, I think back on the day. I'm like,
"Oh, damn, I should've done it that way." To check in, to confront this person, but am I
too chicken? Am I trying to just maintain peace? It's like, "Oh my God." There's so many
different variables and things you've got to do. All of that combined. In this job, you
never get positive feedback. It's so rare. That's why you're like, "Am I doing a good job?"
You can't tell. I was talking to my principal mentor about this, and the only time ... Your
positive feedback is the silence, is the lack of negative feedback.

In the absence of positive feedback, Tristan is left to dwell on whether he is a good principal and
questions decisions made throughout the school day. While principals in this study described
many situations in their work that can lead to positive emotions, they tended to dwell on, and
ruminate about the rare situations where they made a decision that lead to them experiencing negative emotions, such as regret. For example, Trevor points out that he tends to ruminate on situations that incite negative emotions, rather than the multitude of positive emotions that occur throughout the workday:

Negative ones would be more where if occasionally things do happen that aren't always as positive. The negative part there would be if someone dwells on that. It's one of those things where you have 10 positives and one negative, you remember the negative thing.

Trevor highlights how he ruminates to manage his emotions by dwelling on situations that incite negative emotions, despite the multitude of positive experiences he has been involved in as a secondary school principal. Similarly, Arnold discussed how he feels like a target of bullying by teachers at his school. During the interview, he ruminated about a situation where he experienced negative emotions because his name and the school appeared in the local newspaper because of a decision he made to support student safety:

Google my name and something comes up where I asked teachers to lie about a health and safety issue in the school. I didn’t. I didn’t even come close to it. There is a grain of truth in the story and some elements, but as far as asking teachers to lie, not even close. This was two or three years ago, you google by name and that is like the second item that comes up. It hurts! It hurts! For trying to do the right thing…every three years leadership roles come up and people have to reapply for their job. If we change the model of the leadership roles, like math department head, English department head, etc., if you change it and the position someone has held for three years or six years is no longer there or them to apply for, they see it as their position and they are outraged. If it is still there and they don’t get it, they freak! They have so many tools at their disposal to make the principals’ life miserable, sometimes they use them, which isn’t nice.

Arnold indicated that he still ruminates about negative emotions stemming from situations where he feels bullied by teachers at his school, such as when his name appeared in the newspaper.

Other principals that participated in this study also stated that it can be difficult to not ruminate about whether they are making the “right” decisions for the students. For example, many principals in this study reported ruminating about staffing decisions because they can have a
profound influence on students and the potential learning that can take place at the school.

Because of the importance of staffing, principals reported ruminating about the staffing decisions they make as part of their role. For example, Liam discussed a situation where he changed a teaching assignment and ruminated about whether he made a fair decision once the teacher indicated he was not happy with the modification to their schedule:

Last week, for example, I had a teacher, he would like to be teaching something that he's doing this year, and I don't think I'm going to have him doing it again, I want to change his assignment. I didn't feel that ... He didn't do a bad job, but he didn't wow us, and I think I have a lot of people who want that position and who would be better in that role, and he's a good classroom teacher, and he can go into the classroom again. He's been in a non-classroom role. He was really upset about that and there's an emotion. I felt ... I go home, and at night, I'm thinking, "Oh God, did I do the wrong thing? Should I have given him another shot? Should I have been more ... Like, in October, should I have said, "I'm not seeing much from you?" But, I think I was fair. That's the type of emotion where that's high emotion for me. I worry about the teacher, I worry about him being upset. He now thinks I don't like him, which is not the case.

As an emotional regulation strategy, rumination can occur with situations that happened yesterday, last week, last year, or even further in the past. Liam emphasised that he ruminates about how he is perceived by members of his staff when he makes decisions that fly in the face of their wishes, but have the potential to benefit students. While simply dwelling on a situation can have negative consequences it can be associated with positive outcomes for the principals in this study. For example, in the quote above, it appears that Liam felt affirmed in his decision to change teaching assignments after ruminating about it. Similarly, Jack indicated that he will ruminate in an effort to reflect and learn from his mistakes, but that regrets can stay with him, even years after a situation or event occurred. He emphasized that he still thinks about individual students that he was not able to help:

Oh yeah, and I reflect on it often...how did I handle that situation, could it have been handled better? And that helps me be better the next time I run into that situation. I do an awful lot of reflection in this role. So yeah, lots of regrets...Most kids tend to work it out, but there are a few I think of that I wasn’t able to help.
Though Jack still ruminates and regrets past situations that resulted in negative outcomes for individual students, he reports engaging in this behaviour to make sure that he does not repeat the same mistake twice.

Principals in this study discussed ruminating about actions they have take and decisions they have made, which they may regret, such as situations when they did not follow their instincts. Participating principals mostly described rumination is usually associated with negative outcomes when used as a strategy to manage emotions. However, engaging in rumination can also be a positive experience for some principals in this study, as they can be affirmed in their decision-making after contemplating their actions, their decisions and the outcomes of a given situation. Rumination allows principals an opportunity to relive situations, which is different than other emotional regulation strategies associated with attentional deployment where individuals seek an escape, such as distraction, to manage their emotions.

**Distraction.** Distraction is another strategy for managing one’s emotions associated with attentional deployment. Female principals in this study were more likely to discuss engaging in distraction to manage their emotions, as were the participants that had obtained master’s degrees. Further, principals at schools with fewer than 1000 students also reported engaging in distraction more often than their colleagues employed at larger schools. When engaging in distraction, individuals will direct their attention to other matters when faced with emotionally challenging situations (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Principals in this study pointed to engaging in distraction to manage their emotions by connecting with friends, family or students at the school. For example, Cathy mentioned that she will distract herself when faced with emotionally challenging situations by sending a quick, positive text message or email to her spouse or children:
When I can't manage those emotions, I work for fourteen, but I always work for fourteen hours a day. Things that help me manage my, other things that help me manage my emotions at work? Probably, because of social media, the ability to touch base with my kids, now that they're older and have a quick text or a quick, happy message between them and myself, or my husband and myself, is another positive way to help manage emotions at school, at work, when things aren't going so well.

Taking a short moment to connect with friends and family is a way that Cathy utilizes distraction to manage her emotions by giving herself a break from emotionally challenging situations. Emotionally challenging situations, and situations that can lead to negative emotions can be difficult to manage, so principals indicated using distraction to refocus and become re-engaged in their work. Another way that participating principals use distraction to manage their emotions is by taking notes. For example, Doris indicated that she will simply take notes when faced with a meeting where individuals are becoming heated, which helps her manage her emotions:

   There's different strategies that I would use. I'll walk away, or just take a few deep breaths and listen through it, or I just make notes while somebody is going off the handle. Yeah, I think all of us, we're human, so of course we're going to manage emotions at work. It's part of the job.

Doris finds that taking notes keeps her focused on the task at hand when faced with situations that can incite negative emotions, such as meetings with stakeholders who feel slighted.

   Principals use distraction as a strategy for managing their emotions when they feel a need to disconnect from a situation because it would be unhealthy or unproductive to ‘live’ in that moment. Visualizing beautiful scenery or connecting with friends, family or students, are some of the ways that principals distract themselves from situations in an effort to manage their emotions. In this way, principals are able to manage their emotion and escape from emotionally challenging situations. However, sometimes distraction is not an effective emotional regulation strategy, leaving principals to worry about situations they cannot influence.
Worry. Worrying is a potentially unhealthy strategy for managing emotions found within the attentional deployment family of emotional regulation (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Worrying was mentioned as an ER strategy more often by principals who had obtained a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of formal education. Worrying, at least for the principals that participated in this study, involves a fear of failure and making mistakes. For example, Heidi talked at length about how she feels pressure to be perfect and that the expectations placed on contemporary principals leads her to feel anxious and uneasy:

It seems like we're not allowed to be human and make mistakes, because you don't know if the Ministry of Labour is going to call you out on it. You don't know if some parent is going to call you out on it. It's just they expect you to be able to be perfect, and so I think, yeah, the things are still there, but it's that pressure of that expectation that nothing can go wrong on your watch, because that's only going to come back and backfire on you. Even though I feel supported, but that's where I feel there's a pressure.

Heidi discussed how expectations for contemporary principals seem unrealistic and that she worries about the consequences that could occur if she makes mistakes. Similar to how they described engaging in rumination, principals in this study also discussed worrying about the future success of students who they were unable to help achieve positive outcomes. For example, Trevor described working with students as an emotional rollercoaster filled with positive and negative experiences or situations. When a student he is working with does not achieve intended outcomes, Trevor indicated that he often experiences fear and anxiety because he worries about the student and their future:

I think one thing you realize, too, with students, especially students that may be disengaged and that you're trying to reengage, it's a bit of a roller coaster. It's day to day, week to week, good week, bad week, good day, bad day. A negative or frustrating part is when you've been working with a student many, many, many times, and maybe you don't get them where they needed to get by a certain date. That's a real negative feeling.

Trevor worries about students when he is not able to reconnect them with the school community, or help them achieve intended outcomes. Principals in this study indicated worrying is a strategy
they use to manage their emotions when faced with unrealistic expectations concerning their workload and when they are unable to help students succeed. While worrying involves repetitive thoughts about an event or situation, thought suppression focuses on active attempts to avoid thinking about an event or situation altogether. Thought suppression is the final attentional deployment strategy principals reported using to manage their emotions.

*Thought suppression.* Thought suppression occurs when individuals essentially try to turn off their feelings (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Thought suppression is another ER strategy mentioned most by principals who had obtained a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of formal education. Principals who participated in this research identified utilizing thought suppression to manage their emotions. Thought suppression occurs at home for the secondary school principals in this study as the emotional labour associated with their position can make it feel like they have given all their emotional energy to the school and are left emotionally drained when work ends. Cathy described using thought suppression to manage her emotions because it provides an opportunity to recharge her mind and rest her emotions:

I didn't think that I could manage because I was this career person who was never home. Walking at six AM and walking at nine o'clock at night, with your dog, and looking forward to that, was another way to manage my emotions. Again, that was alone, zen time, where you can just concentrate on nothingness but walking the dog. Like I said, there’s just times where I can sit in a chair and think of nothingness.

Cathy indicates that she looks forward to walking her dog because it provides an opportunity to turn off her mind and suppress thoughts, which helps to manage her emotions. Principals in this study also view policies and standards, such as mandatory suspensions, as opportunities to engage in thought suppression. For example, Trevor mentioned that policies and other directives shield himself and his emotions, making situations far less emotionally challenging:

I think you try and leave emotion out of it and just talk about the facts and what needs to happen, and the progression of the things we've done, and to try and make things
successful... I think you try and keep it as little emotional in that as possible... you may have to bite your tongue, but again, you just try and keep emotion out of it and deal with just the facts and the next steps as to what's going to make them successful.

Trevor describes how he tries to purposely use policy as a barrier to engage in thought suppression and prevent himself from exhibiting or feeling any emotions in the moment.

Participating principals indicated utilizing thought suppression because turning off their mind and emotions can provide an opportunity to rest and recharge. Further, principals in this study also described hiding behind policies to keep their personal emotions out of emotionally-challenging situations.

Principals in this study discussed using attentional deployment to manage their emotions through rumination, distraction, worrying and thought suppression. Dwelling on past decisions characterized how participating principals engaged in rumination, a practice they utilize when managing emotions that arise from feeling regret regarding the outcomes of a situation. However, some participants did indicate feeling validated when confirming that they took the appropriate actions when ruminating to manage their emotions. Ruminating involves reliving a situation, but sometimes principals want to manage their emotions by escaping from a given situation or experience through distracting themselves by visualizing a situation or briefly connecting with friends and family. Principals also reported engaging in attentional deployment by worrying about challenges in their work, such as managing an intensifying workload. Thought suppression is the final ER strategy related to attentional deployment utilized by principals in this study. Participants in this study considered thought suppression to involve turning off their emotions by engaging in menial tasks or using policy to shield themselves from allowing their emotions to enter a situation. Rather than allowing the outcomes of a situation to characterize how they feel about it, cognitive change is a family of ER strategies that principals can use to change their feelings in a more proactive manner.
Cognitive change. When managing their emotions, individuals can select the kind of meaning they want to attribute to a situation. Cognitive change occurs when somebody tries to change how they feel about a situation to change its emotional impact (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Participating principals mentioned attempting to transform or change how they are feeling by utilizing cognitive change through reappraising how they feel about a situation, distancing themselves from the situation, or using humour to alter the emotional meaning ascribed to a situation. The following section describes how participating principals reported using each of the three strategies associated with cognitive change (reappraisal, distancing and humour) to manage their emotions.

Reappraisal. When attempting to manage emotions, reappraisal involves assessing a situation in a way that changes its emotional impact (Gross 2010, 2014; Gross & John, 2003; Gross et al., 2006; Mauss et al., 2007). Principals in this study indicated that reappraisal is a common emotional regulation strategy utilized in their daily work. A total of 11 of the 13 interviewees discussed instances where they have engaged in reappraisal to manage their emotions. For example, Danielle discussed how she learned to reappraise situations after gaining experience as a principal:

I think the first couple of years being in admin, you never know the job until you do it, right? I think it’s a lot of toughening up, a lot of finger-pointing, name calling, all this kind of stuff. While they teach you it’s not about you, it’s hard to really feel that it’s not about us. A person is right in front of you, they’re screaming right in front you, they are being pointed, they are calling your name and it really does come down to that the person in front of you is angry, upset, frustrated or whatever about their own issue and I happen to be the one standing here.

Danielle indicated that she reflects on, and reappraises emotionally-challenging situations encountered in her work, rather than wearing the emotional labour that can occur when dealing with people who are upset about an issue. In addition to serving as an ER strategy that principals
can use to help manage their emotions, reappraisal can also help them determine the root causes of emotionally draining situations. For example, Stephanie discussed how using reappraisal can help her better understand where stakeholders are coming from when they have complaints:

It's still very hard sometimes. I've learned to also realize where people are coming from and saying this is never going to go over right, anyways. I definitely improved, but still have a ways to go.

Similar to Danielle’s response, Stephanie also indicated that managing emotions using reappraisal is a skill that principals need to practice, and will refine over time. Reappraisal was connected to empathy by participating principals because it provides an opportunity to put themselves in someone else’s position and realize why some issues are important to various stakeholders. For example, Charles explains that he tries to take time to reappraise situations and avoid making rash or quick decisions:

I guess the other piece is not hurrying to the end result. Making sure that you pause and don't try to get to the answer right away. Be honest with people. Say, “You know what? I need some time to reflect and I need some time to get back to you.” I just had a very pointed email from a parent this morning about a half page around the challenges with her daughter right now, because the literacy tests have just come out. You know what? You're empathetic, you share with them that you also feel that, you give empathy toward that child that's really bombed an EQAO test and she can’t understand why, etc. You share that empathy, but then say to that parent, “You know what? I got your child’s interest at heart here. Give me some time so that I can get back to you and give you the what’s next.

Charles manages his emotions by using reappraisal to change his feelings and better understand stakeholder concerns. The ability to empathize with stakeholders, such as parents or guardians, is particularly important for the principals in this study as they interact with individuals who can have pressure points, past experiences and/or mental health concerns that can drive their emotional responses. For example, Stephanie discussed how engaging in reappraisal modifies or transforms her emotions by taking herself and her feelings out of a situation:
I think because you're dealing with people all the time, if you're not managing your emotions, then every situation becomes about you, and it's not about you. Because other people are coming at you with so much emotion, that if you have all yours and theirs and let's say a child is angry, you're over tired, you're angry because of what just happened beforehand, then you're starting to yell at the child. The child's yelling at you. Then the next thing you know what happens, in most situations, the child gets suspended. It had nothing to do with the child. You were the one that was overly emotional in the first place.

Stephanie indicates that reappraising her feelings and managing her emotions is important because principals are facing work intensification, a phenomenon that can colour their emotional state. Reappraisal helps principals manage their emotions by helping them develop a better understanding of the emotional baggage that stakeholders bring to their encounters. For example, Jack stated that it is important for him to manage his emotions and reappraise how he feels about situations because:

Some parents we deal with have significant mental health issues, some parents we deal with have significant pressures in other parts of their life and all of that has a potential to come in to bear in the conversation that we're having here.” Sometimes you come into a situation where a parent is just off the charts pissed off and we're looking at it saying I don't see this at that big of an issue but you find out down the road that the last school that the kid was at, this happened, the principal did this and we're being painted with the broad brush and that makes some sense.

Contemporary principals deal with individuals who carry emotional baggage, face daily pressures and are potentially managing mental health issues. As such, Jack indicates that it is important for him to use reappraisal to manage his emotions when engaged in conversations with parents who have concerns with the school. Reappraisal helps principals to empathize with others, both acting as a strategy to manage their emotions, and offering an avenue for reflection, which can also lead to continued growth and learning in the role. Carl described how he engages in reappraisal to learn from how he managed his emotions in specific emotionally challenging situations in the past to devise strategies for how he may approach the similar situations differently in the future:
If you look back on a scenario and say ... you should look back on any scenario that you engage in. I would look back on that with reflection to grow as you are a professional. If that situation comes to me again, what would I do differently? What did I learn from it? If you spend your time beating yourself up, you are not going to feel happy about yourself, you are just going to spiral. If you actually look back and say, "Okay, I did this, this felt right at the time, turns out it wasn't. What would I do differently next time? That's reflection and that's growth and that's learning.

Carl highlights how reappraising his feelings helps him reflect on, and learn from situations encountered in his daily work.

Reappraisal appears to be an effective strategy used by principals in this study to manage their emotions. Participating principals reported that engaging in reappraisal provides opportunities to empathize with others by developing a better understanding of the emotional baggage, past experiences and other issues that can drive situations or encounters. Reappraisal also allows the secondary school principals in this study an opportunity to reflect on emotional situations in their work and identify lessons learned that can be applied to similar situations if they arise in the future. Data also indicates that reappraisal is a skill that sharpens over time. Principals in this study also reported developing and strengthening other emotional regulation strategies associated with cognitive change, such as distancing.

**Distancing.** When practicing distancing, people manage their emotions by trying to disassociate, separate or isolate themselves and/or their feelings from situations that could generate emotional responses (Gross, 2002, 2010, 2014). Principals in this study indicated that they engage in distancing in several different ways, including simply trying to “tune out” or taking on different types of work roles outside of the education sector. For example, Tristan described managing his emotions by distancing himself from emotionally challenging situations, such as a parent spitting on him because they are so angry. Tristan indicated that it is easier to
distance himself and his feelings from a situation when he realizes it is impossible to compromise with individuals who are determined to lambaste either him or his staff:

I realize after I say something that I'm like, "What am I doing?" I try to be as reflective as possible in the moment and just try to calm myself down. There was one moment where this woman, she went totally off on me. I think she has mental health issues. She was almost pretty much spitting on me because she was screaming. I was with all these other staff members, they were all there to help me, and at that point, I just completely shut down. There was no use in getting angry...there’s nothing you can do.

Tristan utilizes distancing to manage his emotions because it helps him to isolate his emotional state from situations that can incite emotional responses, allowing him to stay calm, cool and collected in the face of the emotional labour inherent in the contemporary principalship. Other principals in this study reported creating distance between themselves and the emotional toll involved in the contemporary principalship by taking on work outside of their roles and responsibilities at the school. For example, Charles glowingly discussed how he is involved with the local municipal government. Having interests outside of the school assists Charles in managing his emotions as it provides an opportunity to generate distance between himself and some school-based situations that were emotionally draining:

I am involved with city council...That allows you to go elsewhere and perhaps not just dwell on an issue. It allows you to release that issue or those concerns for a piece of time, and then what you come back to them, you're probably better prepared to deal with a situation and see it from a little bit of a distance as opposed to being right on top of it.

Charles has taken on a role with the local city council to distance himself from the emotional aspects of the principalship and refrain from dwelling on issues or emotional situations that occur at the school. Principals in this study indicated that distancing involves the ability to not take actions or situations personally. For example, Trevor described how he distances himself from situations so as to not take the outcome or an individual’s behaviour personally:

I think one thing I've learned that at least works for me, you can't take things personally. When something happens within a school and a behaviour isn't what it should be, you
can't take that personally. I think when dealing with a situation like that, with a student, repeated or whatever, at some point it may irk you or whatever, but I think you have to try and keep that out of it. … if you don't know something is coming or it's a sudden emotional attack or something to that effect, that can hinder how you respond to it, but it's one of those things you really, I think through practice, you control those things and try and be the calmest person in the room.

Trevor has found that distancing can be an effective strategy for managing his emotions as generating distance allows him to avoid dwelling on situations or taking them personally.

Similarly, Stephanie also indicated that she attempts to distance herself from the emotional aspects of being a secondary school principal:

> Emotionally, too, I think it's hard because you are constantly managing people's energy. That's why I say all the time, leadership is just about managing people's energy, and that energy you absorb a lot of it. Unless you can get to a place where you say it's not about you, unless you can eventually get yourself to that place which probably only happens when you've done the job for six, seven, maybe I don't know, ten years or something, it's hard place to be as a new principal because then you're absorbing ... You take on all the emotional needs of the building, and you wear all of that stuff, right?

Distancing prevents Stephanie from addressing the emotional needs of others in the school.

Distancing is an ER strategy used by most principals that participated in this research.

Participating principals utilized distancing to manage their emotions by engaging in mindfulness techniques and taking on work roles outside of their duties and responsibilities as an educator.

Further, some principals also described using distancing to support surface acting through efforts to turn off their emotions when faced with emotionally challenging situations. Principals in this study did highlight how using distancing to manage their emotions takes time and practice, and that they have become more skilled using this emotional regulation strategy as they have grown as principals. The previous strategies principals use to manage their emotions that are associated with cognitive change, such as reappraisal and distancing, involve internal processes to influence or transform how or what they are feeling about a situation. The final emotional regulation
strategy found within the cognitive change family of emotional regulation is similar as it relies on individuals using humour to internally manage their emotions.

**Humour.** Before moving forward, it is worth mentioning that the use of humour was also reported as a strategy for managing emotions when participating principals discussed situation modification (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). The importance of humour and laughter is also found within Gross’ (2004; 2010) cognitive change family of emotional regulation. When discussed as a strategy within cognitive change, individuals use humour to avoid furthering emotions they may experience after dealing with a serious issue, or are engaged in emotionally-challenging situations (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Nezlek & Derks, 2001; Samson & Gross, 2012). For example, Tristan described how he uses humour to manage his emotions when faced with individuals who are angry at him, or the school in general:

> We absolutely laugh. I’ve got it to where we can laugh. Sometimes we're like, "Oh my God, can you believe this?" and we can laugh about it. We definitely do that. We do have a lot of laughs in here. Most of the time, for me, the challenge of containing the anger, whether it be an email where this person is just absolutely angry, a student, sometimes a phone call from a parent.

Managing his emotions can be challenging for Tristan when dealing with angry stakeholders, so he utilizes humour to inject a sense of levity into his work. Other principals in this study indicated that they use humour to change how they feel about a situation. Participating principals reported using humour to manage their emotions by selecting the emotional impact they want to derive from a given situation. For example, Trevor indicated that principals’ work involves challenging situations and humour can seem like the only place to turn because of its potential to reduce emotional responses brought on by those challenging situations:

> Humour is a big part of it. At some point, some things become funny and some things ...Because if you don't look at it that way, you don't know where to turn because you bend down this road. Sometimes you just have to laugh at it or make fun of it, and then it takes
the edge off it, and then you can deal with it, because I know at some point, we also say, "This isn't funny anymore," like when it goes even the next stage.

Trevor highlights how he uses humour to manage his emotions when faced with challenging situations found in his daily work. Using humour in this way allows principals to select the meaning they want to associate with a given situation.

In addition to humour, principals in this study utilize strategies linked to cognitive change, such as reappraisal and distancing to manage their emotions. Reappraisal and distancing are cognitive change strategies that principals become more effective at using over time and through practice. Reappraisal provides principals with opportunities to empathize with stakeholders, reflect on emotional situations in their work and identify lessons learned that can help them navigate similar situations they may encounter in the future. Taking on additional work some main ways principals in this study conveyed how they use distancing to manage their emotions. While ER strategies associated with cognitive change mostly contain strategies that principals can use to influence how they are going to feel about a situation, response modulation involves ways they can manage their emotions once principals have already started feeling an emotion.

**Response modulation.** Response modulation refers to a group of emotional regulation strategies that involve individuals engaging in activities to change how they are feeling (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). A response-focused strategy for managing emotions, response modulation is related to distraction and attentional deployment, though strategies associated with response modulation occur after an individual is already feeling an emotion. All principals in this study indicated that they use response modulation to manage their emotions in the following three ways: a) sleep and work–life balance, b) exercise and c) expressive
suppression. How principals utilize these three strategies for managing their emotions will be discussed in the following section.

**Sleep and work–life balance.** Principals in this study indicated that they will try to get enough sleep or engage in activities that can promote work-life balance as a proactive strategy so they can better manage their emotions, rather than using it to regulate an emotion they are already feeling. For example, getting an adequate amount of sleep and maintaining a healthy work–life balance are ER strategies associated with response modulation utilized by principals in this study to aid in managing their emotions on a daily basis. Principals in this study that had obtained master’s degrees or self-identified as female were most likely to indicate that they engaged in proactive strategies to better manage their emotions, such as getting enough sleep or participating in activities to promote a healthy work-life balance. Principals at schools with fewer than 1000 students were also more likely to discuss how getting enough sleep or engaging in activities that promote work-life balance help them effectively manage their emotions. Participating principals indicated they aim to achieve work–life balance by spending time with friends and family to cope with the emotional toll associated with the principalship. For example, Cathy pointed to being present with her children and family as an effective strategy for managing her emotions:

> The other way I coped when my kids were younger was that when I was home, when I talk about housecleaning, that's something I never did. I never did a lot of cooking, either. It was because when I was home with my family, I was with them a hundred percent of the time, playing. When my kids were young, we played together. Unlike parents who are trying to balance things, I didn't really try to balance the cooking and the cleaning with my being a parent. For the times I was home, I spent all my time playing, and sitting on the floor, and talking to them, and reading, and playing games, and taking them places, and going to their practices, and all those kinds of things when I could.

Cathy highlights how she tries to be available and spend time with her children because it allows her to manage her emotions by disconnecting from her work as a secondary school principal.
Spending time with friends and family helps participating principals re-charge. Similarly, Stephanie discussed how she will not do any work tasks or activities on Sunday because she uses this time to disconnect from the principalship and spend time with friends and family:

You can email me as much as you want on a Sunday but I need some of my time, and I need some time with my partner. That's sacred time. It's like you said to me that day, "No, I'm not calling you on a Sunday, we've agreed that that's sacred time." It was a good reminder for me, "Oh, yeah, you're right... It's also eating healthy, so I'm really trying to make sure that I stop myself to eat, that I prepare healthy meals, drinking water.

Stephanie highlights how her attempts to maintain a healthy work–life balance include spending time with friends and family, preparing healthy meals and disconnecting from work tasks on Sundays.

Maintaining regular sleep patterns and searching for work–life balance are self-care strategies participating principals engage in to assist them in managing their emotions. For example, Cathy spoke about how she can become more easily frustrated and experiences difficulty managing her emotions if she is not getting enough sleep:

If I am really, really tired that would be a challenge because you don’t have the same resilience. If I have had no sleep for quite a long period of time, and I am one of those people who will go on a little bit of sleep and then that's it, I crash, right. If I am really, really, really tired and things aren’t going well, chances are if I’m going to lose my cool it will be then. So, I show a bit of emotion or there I will be something really sad or I’m really frustrated, so either the tears will come or I start to swear. That would be my biggie, is lack of sleep and how do we make sure that, when we go home at night, we aren’t thinking of all those things that are so frustrating.

Cathy highlights how she can become more easily frustrated by her daily work and experiences challenges managing her emotions when she is suffering from sleep deprivation. Similarly, Heidi described how she struggles to manage her emotions if she experienced difficulty sleeping the night before:

I know enough that if I haven't had enough sleep, or I'm under the weather. The day I lost it with the building services, I had debated even coming into work, because I'd had a terrible night. I was coming down with something...If I'm not feeling that I can handle
the day ... Again, it's happened a few times, because I just didn't get sleep. I was ... I know a lot of people just still push through things, because they think that's the noble thing to do, or come to school sick. I don't think that does anybody any good.

Without an adequate amount of sleep, Heidi also finds it difficult to manage her emotions. Other principals in this study agreed that they need to take care of themselves to perform their work functions, including managing their emotions, to the best of their ability.

Principals who refrain from sleeping or engaging in activities to balance work and their personal life risk having their work performance suffer. For example, when he becomes too invested in his work, Carl finds that he is reactive and prone to making bad decisions when he is emotionally drained or burnt out:

You have to look after yourself. You've got to know when your own batteries are running out and figure out what you need to do. You've got to take the vacations, take the lieu time, look after your own mental health and physical health, those two go hand in hand. You've got to recognize when you are getting low on either of those things and take some action around that. That's easier said than to do, 100% easier said than to do. If you don't, then you are going to make a snap decision or reacting emotionally or saying something you shouldn't have.

By attempting to balance his personal life and work responsibilities, Carl indicates that he is better able to manage his emotions and perform his work tasks and activities at a higher level. Failure to achieve an adequate amount of sleep or attain work–life balance can have dire consequences for principals in this study. For example, Heidi lamented that many of her colleagues are taking stress leaves by stating, “I know there's a lot of stress leaves for principals.” Further, Doris explained that she has learned to balance her personal life and work responsibilities over the course of her career, but that many of her colleagues have not, and risk burning out:

I know that I can walk away and it's not done, and that's okay. Not all my colleagues are like that, and some of my colleagues are working from 5:00, 5:30 in the morning till 11:00 every night. They're younger than I am, but at some point, I think to myself, “You're going to burn out, and that's not right, either.”
Doris highlights how many of her colleagues are risking their health by working long hours.

Danielle also described her colleagues as a group who look tired, are not getting enough sleep, are too busy to engage in self-care and struggle to balance their work and personal life:

What I notice as the years have gone by and we sit in these principals’ meetings is that people are looking exhausted. People who came in fresh faced and energetic and full of ideas look exhausted. Gaining weight because we sit, sit, sit. I’m not a good person to sit very much.

Since becoming a principal, Danielle has noticed that she has gained weight and that her colleagues seem tired and beaten down by the emotional labour inherent in the role. Other principals in this study indicated that principals are responsible for placing themselves in situations where they can better manage their emotions, including making decisions that help them attain work–life balance. For example, Charles stated that an inability to manage his emotions could be blamed on several factors, but that work–life balance is ultimately his responsibility:

You can blame it on too much work, you can blame it on too much sleep, you can blame it on the board office. In the end, the person that has to manage it and balance it is yourself. Certainly, at different times of the year there's lots of demands placed on you as an administrator from beyond the walls of the school by senior administration. But, in the end, you in the role, you have to be able to balance.

Trevor also described how he attempts to achieve work–life balance by rarely discussing issues in his personal life and attempting to leave his work at the school once he arrives home at the end of the day:

I'm fairly private at work even though we're a small community. I don't cross the two much. I try very hard when I go home that I'm home, and that I did what I could that day, or I might have been frustrated, I try not to take it home because that's somewhat disastrous…it's not always easy. It does take a … You might go home very tired or very emotionally drained or whatever it is, but I find it best not even…You just don't talk about it, the day-to-day issues.
By disconnecting from work when he is, “off-the-clock,” Trevor finds it easier to move on from challenging situations and effectively manage his emotions. While Trevor attempts to build barriers between work and his personal life to manage his emotions, he also finds it necessary to prevent issues in his personal life from influencing his emotional state at work:

I sometimes have situations at home that upset me and I find it difficult to shut off home when I am at work. But it is a requirement. I have to maintain a balanced and steady approach. As I mentioned before, I have a happy workplace and always want to maintain that and have a happy persona. I would say 95% of the time I am very content and happy at work and at home, too, so it is fortunate that I don’t carry a lot of burdens with me. So, no, it really isn’t that big of an issue.

Trevor indicates that he is usually an optimistic person, but that it is sometimes difficult to prevent issues in his personal life from impacting how he feels when at work.

In addition to erecting walls between work and their personal life, principals in this study described several ways in which getting an adequate amount of sleep and/or maintaining work–life balance serves as a proactive strategy that helps them manage their emotions. For example, principals in this study described carving out time to spend with friends and family to take a break from the demands of being a contemporary principal. Principals in this study also highlighted some of the consequences that can arise when they refrain from making efforts to maintain regular sleep patterns and/or engage in activities to achieve a healthy work–life balance. Perhaps experiencing these consequences earlier in their careers has led these principals to use sleep and maintaining work-life balance as proactive strategies that help them effectively manage their emotions. These consequences include becoming more easily frustrated and being less effective at managing their emotions, both of which can comprise job performance. Participating principals also indicated that their job performance can suffer if they engage in a more sedentary lifestyle and refrain from exercise and physical activity.
Exercise. Another way that principals in this study utilize response modulation to manage their emotions is engaging in physical activity and exercise. Participating principals reported that they will engage in exercise to serve as a proactive strategy that can help them manage their emotions more effectively, serve as an outlet to manage emotions that arise throughout the workday, and as a method of self-care. For example, Doris mentioned that, “I try to make sure I exercise every day”, as engaging in exercise helps her to maintain composure throughout the school day. Similarly, Stephanie stated that exercise is something she does to manage her emotions at work, and that she will exercise in the morning because it is nice to start the day doing something for her own benefit:

I think one of the things to manage them at work, what happens outside becomes really important. For me, usually I'm exercising in the morning so I've done something for myself in the morning.

Stephanie takes care of herself and increases her ability to manage emotions by engaging in physical activity each morning before the beginning of the school day. Once she has taken this proactive opportunity to engage in self-care, Stephanie feels prepared to deal with the various emotionally challenging situations that can occur throughout the school day. Carl also highlighted how he exercises in the morning, even if he does not enjoy waking up early to do so:

I've lost 15 pounds because I've been walking at five o'clock in the morning everyday. I hate to get up a five in the morning but there is no other time in the day for me. This is not a complaint; I knew what I signed up for. When you get into the school, your day is not your own. It's at the service of other people. It has to be, because that's the role. You are at the service of other people all the way through the end.

Principals serve students, staff and other stakeholders throughout the school day, so the morning is often the only time they have to engage in exercise. Health benefits and having an outlet to manage their emotions are two reasons why participating principals find that exercise is an important part of their daily routine. However, principals in this study also provided other
reasons why exercise helps them manage their emotions. For example, Liam goes to the gym at
the school or takes a jog when he has the opportunity because it helps shed any residual emotions
that linger from the workday before going home for the evening:

There's my gym bag. I certainly…We have a weight room, and I will go up and use the
weight room from time to time. I try to go once or twice a week. If I need to…I haven't
for a long time, but certainly in my first couple of years, I would throw on my running
shoes and go for a run before I went home and got angry at my kids and my wife. I think
it's a really important part to have some physical activity as a stress reducer.

Liam highlights how exercise helps him to manage his emotions by buffering friends and family
from the emotional toll associated with the principalship. Charles also described how, for him,
engaging in exercise goes beyond fitness and allows him to take a break from his responsibilities
as a secondary school principal:

The other piece that's very helpful for me is I know that at times I have to take a break
from what I'm doing in the role. For me, the best break is I will do an hour and a bit
fitness workout, and come back…Not only is it a fitness workout. You're rehearsing in
your mind things that are coming up, things that you're dealing with, and so you come
back with a refreshed look on when you come back and sit in the chair. It's a different
look. You've processed it before you speak to it or write to it.

Exercise provides Charles with an opportunity to take a step back, think about a situation, assess
all of the different options available and gain a different perspective on the emotionally
challenging situations he encounters on a daily basis.

Though principals in this study are aware of the positive benefits exercise can have for
their ability to manage emotions (in addition to their physical health), principals are willing to
forego it when they become particularly busy. For example, Jack finds that he often stops, or
reduces the amount of exercise he engages in when his workload increases. By not exercising,
Jack’s ability to manage his emotions decreases, leading to feelings of anxiety and more
situations that can incite emotional responses, both at school and at home:
I went through a period time at my previous school when I was really busy when I was president of the association and running that school at the same time. The school was a difficult school to run. I didn't get to the gym, I wasn't eating properly, I wasn't sleeping well and no one at work noticed but certainly I was pretty short at home sometimes and I just got to that point where I'm just probably too irritable because I wasn't taking care of my school. More recently, I've been sleeping better, I've been exercising more, I'm in better shape, I'm eating better so I think that allows me to I guess manage my emotions better and be stronger when I need to be stronger and controlled.

Jack mentioned that when he becomes busy with work demands, he often avoids exercising to manage his emotions because does not feel like he has the time needed to engage in tasks that are not directly related to work responsibilities. Jack, as well as the other principals in this study, highlighted the need for the cathartic release that they receive from engaging in exercise. For example, when Jack refrains from participating in exercise or physical activity, emotions can seep into his daily work, resulting in outbursts or being short and terse when in conversations with stakeholders.

Engaging in regular exercise serves as a proactive approach that helps participating principals manage their emotions more effectively. Further, exercise assists principals in this study in achieving work–life balance by allowing them to access an outlet for releasing emotions. Exercising also provides opportunities for principals to reflect on various situations faced throughout the school day. In these ways, exercise helps principals to manage their emotions (in addition to being beneficial for their physical health). Exercise is associated with a number of well known mental and physical benefits. However, expressive suppression, which is the final emotional regulation strategy associated with response modulation utilized by principals in this study, has been linked to a variety of negative health and psychosocial outcomes.

Expressive suppression. Expressive suppression is the final emotional regulation strategy associated with response modulation utilized by principals in this study (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). As mention in chapter two, expressive suppression is very similar to
Hochschild’s (1983) notion of surface acting, and occurs when individuals suppress their true emotional state, and are ‘faking’ an emotion (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Principals in this study who had obtained a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of formal education spoke about using expressive suppression as an ER strategy more often than their peers with master’s degrees. When engaging in expressive suppression, participating principals indicate that they make efforts to limit their facial expressions, lest they ‘crack’ and show others how they really feel about a given situation. For example, Heidi indicated that she feels quite confident and capable suppressing feelings of sadness that could occur throughout the workday:

That emotion of being upset, or crying, or sad, or depressed, I've been able to deal with pretty effectively, in terms of a leader. Probably someone, a psychologist, looking upon me, might say, “You probably need to let it out a little more than you do.”

Heidi feels she can effectively suppress feelings of sadness in her daily work. Participating principals feel it is important for them to suppress their emotions because they set the emotional tone of the school. For example, Danielle indicates that she feels a need to suppress her emotions to model a calm demeanor for staff and students, especially when she is nervous or apprehensive about an emotionally challenging issue or situation:

Perception is everything. If there is an emergency going on and I’m flipping out, people aren’t going to have faith that things will turn out well. I can be really upset about something and my heart can be pounding, but I can’t show it on my face because you need to keep people calm, that’s my job.

Danielle feels it is part of her job to stay calm in the face of emotionally charged or otherwise challenging situations, and will make efforts to suppress her emotional state to maintain and model that sense of calm.

The need for principals to manage their emotions by suppressing their true feelings extends beyond their relationships with staff and students to include interactions with their supervisory officers. However, it can be problematic when principals suppress their true
emotions around their superiors. For example, if a principal is really struggling, they may deem it necessary to hide physical, emotional or mental health concerns from their supervisory officer, which may make them less likely to seek out supports. Doris indicates this may be learned behaviour as she fears receiving a negative reaction if she gives voice to her challenges and struggles:

The other side to that is there is this: I feel this unwritten expectation that if you let it be known that you're having a hard time with something or you're struggling, then that's looked upon as negative.

In her experience, Doris is concerned about being perceived in a negative light by her superiors if she speaks up about the issues or challenges she faces in the role. However, Carl finds fault with principals who fail to communicate if they are struggling or having difficulty in the role. Carl indicates that this failure to communicate may be a product of the stigma surrounding mental health and wellness amongst principals:

The fault lies with the principals who won't communicate. (The principal) who won't say those sort of things because no one wants to feel weak or lesser or anything along those lines. That's the problem with the profession as well. I guess you only build that up by establishing those trusting caring, relationships so you can have that conversation without prejudice with your superintendent and say "Hey I'm struggling, I've got this going on."

More and more principals, I understand from OPC, go on leave or mental health leave or have higher rates of cancer or higher rates of heart disease those sort of things. I'm sure there is a multiplicity of factors that tie into that. You've got to have a good working relationship with your S.O. (supervisory officer) and establish trust with your S.O. you demonstrate that and they demonstrate that for you, just like working with any other boss.

Carl highlights the importance of having a trusting relationship with his superiors so he is not forced to feign competency and engage in expressive suppression to manage his emotions and avoid expressing his doubts, challenges or frustrations. For example, Carl expanded on his previous comment by stating that other principals may engage in expressive suppression around their supervisory officers to portray that they are a strong and effective leader:
I would suggest that principals kind of under report their own stresses to their bosses because they don't want to be seen as second rate, they don't want to be talked about that sort of thing.

Principals in this study indicated that they may engage in expressive suppression and mask how they really feel because they do not want to be portrayed as weak or ineffective. Principals in this study will also suppress their emotions to maintain their composure and a sense of calm when faced with emotionally charged or challenging situations. Expressive suppression is an ER strategy that participants engage in by masking their true emotions and feelings from their superiors. This could be learned behaviour as participating principals did indicate that they perceive there to a stigma surrounding mental health and wellness concerns within the principalship. Further, some participants indicated that expressive suppression can be used by principals to hide that they are struggling under work intensification and buckling under the emotional toll inherent in the contemporary principalship.

Participating principals indicated several ways that they utilize strategies associated with response modulation both as a proactive strategy that puts them in a position to better manage their emotions, and as an outlet to manage their emotions. For example, principals in this study highlighted the importance of getting enough sleep and maintaining a healthy work–life balance to be able to effectively manage their emotions. Erecting barriers between work responsibilities and their personal lives can also help principals better manage their emotions on a daily basis. Principals in this study also cautioned that negative consequences can result from failure to get enough sleep and/or engage in activities to maintain a healthy work–life balance, which may explain why many of them use these strategies in a proactive manner. These consequences include becoming more easily frustrated, irritability, and being less effective at managing their emotions, all of which can comprise job performance. Exercise is another strategy principals use
to manage their emotions their emotions in a proactive manner, as it serves as an outlet for emotional energy. While sleeping, maintaining a healthy work–life balance and engaging in exercise are all seemingly healthy strategies for managing emotions, expressive suppression is not (Gross, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Expressive suppression refers to individuals feigning feelings while hiding their true emotions, and is a form of emotional labour. Principals in this study reported engaging in expressive suppression to maintain and model a sense of calm for students, staff and other stakeholders, by hiding how they really feel behind a seemingly calm demeanor.

**Chapter Summary**

When asked to describe how they manage their emotions, principals in this study reported utilizing strategies associated with all five families of ER found within Gross’ (2014, 2010) process model for ER. These five families of ER include situation selection; situation modification; attentional deployment; cognitive change; and response modulation. The five families of ER are not discrete, and it seems that there is some overlap between the strategies in practice. Female principals, principals with master’s degrees and those employed at schools with fewer than 1000 students discussed engaging in distraction or activities to promote work-life balance as strategies to manage their emotions more often than their peers. Otherwise, responses to questions about how principals manage their emotions were evenly distributed across responses. Principals in this study described managing their emotions by making conscious decisions to select situations that are likely to place them in a positive emotional state, especially when experiencing intense emotions, such as fear or sadness, or after being involved in emotionally-challenging situations. Connecting with students, modeling optimism and positivity, manipulating the emotions of others, and contributing to the success of others and structuring the
workday are the five ways that principals in this study reported using situation selection to
manage their emotions. As is mentioned earlier, participating principals indicated that they
primarily support teachers in terms of managing different situations they encounter in the school
and/or classroom, rather than contributing to changes in teacher practice. Situation modification
is a strategy used by participating principals to change the emotional impact of an event or
situation. For example, principals in this study will ask others for their perspectives and/or use
humour to modify the emotions they associate with a given situation. Participating principals
indicated that will often engage in venting or use inappropriate language when asking others as
an ER strategy, which may have implications for notions of professionalism surrounding the
principalship. Additional strategies principals use to manage their emotions are linked to
attentional deployment, including ruminating about an event or situation or distracting
themselves from thinking about the emotional aspects of their daily work. Principals in this study
also engaged in attentional deployment when making efforts to turn off their emotions through
thought suppression, or by worrying about an emotional event or situation. Cognitive change is
the fourth family of ER and occurs when somebody tries to change how they feel about a
situation to change its emotional impact. Participating principals mentioned utilizing cognitive
change through reappraising how they feel about a situation, distancing themselves from a
situation, or using humour to alter the emotional meaning ascribed to a situation. Consistent with
response modulation, participating principals indicated it is easier to manage their emotions
when they are getting enough sleep, exercising and maintaining a healthy work–life balance.
Expressive suppression is a less healthy approach to utilizing response modulation to manage
emotions that involves principals hiding their true feelings behind a mask that portrays a calm
demeanor for the world, even when principals are feeling apprehensive, nervous or angry. This
chapter has been dedicated to developing a better understanding of the strategies these principals use to manage their emotions. Now that we know how principals manage their emotions and why they engage in the strategies described above, it is appropriate to discuss the supports they receive to assist their ability to effectively managing their emotions.
Chapter 6: Supports and Learning

The preceding chapter focused on describing the various strategies principals in this study utilize to manage their emotions, and why they engage in those strategies. However, principals indicated that they may seek out supports when attempting to manage their emotions at work and described how they learned to manage their emotions. As such, chapter 6 presents findings related to the third and fourth research questions that guided this study:

3. What professional supports are utilized by Ontario secondary school principals to assist in dealing with the emotional content of their daily work?

4. How do Ontario secondary school principals learn to manage their emotions?

The findings are presented in the same order in which the research questions are listed above. That means this chapter begins with a description of the supports principals in this study utilize to assist them in managing their emotions, such as relying on members of their administrative team are described in detail. Then this chapter concludes with a short explanation of how principals in this study learned to manage their emotions.

Professional Supports

Principals in this study refrained from identifying any formalized professional supports, such as policies, programs or resources to assist them in managing their emotions or the emotional content of their daily work. Rather, as described earlier, principals highlighted how a lack of professional support from their school district or the Ministry of Education can create conditions and situations that can make it difficult for them to effectively manage their emotions. This lack of professional support centred on principals experiencing a values clash when they disagree with policies that they are forced to implement policies at the school. Participating
principals also reported that it can be difficult to manage their emotions when they are not provided with the human or fiscal resources necessary to do their job effectively.

Interview data indicates that principals in this study access different informal professional supports to assist them in managing their emotions at work, including the importance of informal professional support of their administrative team in helping them manage their emotions. Participating principals also discussed seeking advice from their superintendent as an informal professional support when seeking assistance on how to effectively manage their emotions.

While this section is not designed to provide an all-inclusive listing of the supports accessed by secondary school principals across the province to effectively manage their emotions, it can offer information about where principals seek out supports and how they are utilized.

**Administrative team.** All of the secondary school principals who participated in this study discussed how they rely on their administrative team, such as vice-principals, for support managing their emotions. Support from the administrative team in terms of managing emotions can resemble discussions with a critical friend. For example, Doris appreciates how she has a strong team of vice-principals who support her ability to manage her emotions:

> I guess the helpful thing that I have here is I've got a strong VP team in place. When there's something going on, we all sit and talk about it, so everyone knows what's going on, and then they're not blindsided. That's very helpful.

Doris described how she can strategize with her vice-principals and ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding any issues or concerns, which supports her ability to effectively manager her emotions. In the same vein, Tristan revealed that he finds it difficult to envision being employed as an elementary school principal with no administrative colleagues to turn to for professional support when trying to effectively manage his emotions: “I couldn't imagine working in elementary school when you're the only principal, there's no VP. I go to them all the
time to debrief or vent”. Tristan’s vice-principals support his ability to manage his emotions to such an extent that he could not see himself working in a smaller elementary school where those informal professional supports are not available.

Other principals indicated that they develop a level of trust over time when working with members of their administrative team, which makes them feel comfortable being authentic and sharing their emotions with them. Like most principals in this study, Cathy indicated that she only feels comfortable sharing her true emotional state with a small group of trusted colleagues:

In terms of emotions, I’m very, everyone knows how enthusiastic and passionate I am about my job. But I’m probably really careful about being sad around people. I get upset, but only with that small circle of people, and they know I’m upset about something, but not sad.

When she is upset, Cathy receives support managing her emotions from a select group of colleagues who she trusts because she does not want other stakeholders to know when she is sad. Principals in this study also described how they tend to rely on informal professional support from their administrative team to manage their emotions in intense situations, such as when there is labour unrest at the school. For example, Danielle indicated that she needed to depend on her administrative team for professional support when teachers at her school were engaged in strike actions:

The team is everything. Honestly, when being a principal in the school you really have to depend on your team, because sadly, and the strike that happened didn’t help, some schools are an “us versus them.”

Danielle discussed how she relied on members of her team to help her manage her emotions while navigating the turbulent waters of recent labour unrest between the province and the teacher unions. Based on these findings, principals feel comfortable turning to their vice-principals for support managing their emotions because they have shared the same working conditions and have a nuanced understanding of the school community and the various
individuals or situations that can incite positive or negative emotions within that building. After discussing the professional support received from her vice-principals in terms of managing emotions, Stephanie indicated that she finds it troubling that her school board is attempting to eliminate vice-principal positions:

It depends where you're at. There are buildings that are emotionally draining for some principals, and other principals get buildings that it's sleepy hollow. That's the inequity at some level, too, and there's no real support. Right now, the big fight for the principals is because they're trying to give us less vice principals, then who should be getting more? Vocational schools. Like at [my previous school], you can't take vice principals away from that building.

When answering the question about supports she utilizes to manage her emotions, Stephanie discussed the importance of vice-principal supports and highlighted how she is concerned with her school district’s decision to eradicate vice-principal positions from some of their more emotionally draining schools.

Principals in this study also highlighted how their administrative team supports them in managing their emotions through delegating. This form of support in managing emotions manifests itself when principals feel that they can depend on their vice-principals to undertake tasks or responsibilities when their workload leaves them feeling anxious. For example, Charles discussed how his work is less stressful when he can count on members of his administrative team to help him operate the school:

Once again, too, if you have developing around you a circle of leaders, then at times you can say, “You know what?” to the leader that is capable of saying, “Can you take this one right now? I need you to respond to this right now for me.” That's where that relationship building that having those experts all around you, then it is not as stressful as if you are trying to go it alone. Going it alone isn’t a good thing.

Charles described how he tries to develop leaders in the school by delegating tasks and activities so they can gain valuable leadership experience. Having individuals in the school who can be trusted to perform various tasks, activities or practices supports Charles in in managing his
emotions as it reduces his workload and does not feel like he is solely responsible for operating the school.

**Support staff.** Other principals in this study discussed how they can also be authentic with their support staff. Similar to members of their administrative team, principals also feel comfortable turning to support staff, such as the secretaries who work in the main office, for informal professional support managing their emotions because they work within the same school context. This means that the secretaries and office staff understand some of the issues on the principals’ plate and work with some of the difficult personalities within the school community. For example, Tristan described how the head secretary and office staff act as informal supports in managing his emotions because they understand the school context and the various personalities, especially teachers, that he deals with as part of his daily work:

There's certain people on staff where you have to still be careful, for sure about what you say, but you can be a little more authentic with them about your frustrations. Especially if it's about people who are well known to have certain reputations…Funny enough, it's the support staff here that you tend to commiserate with. Our student supervisors who walk the halls, the secretaries here, they're the ones that I go to because I feel like, especially if it's about teachers, I think sometimes they understand, too. That's why. They're a support for me, for sure.

Because of their comprehensive knowledge of the school context and community, Tristan finds that his support staff, such as the head secretary and office staff, support him in managing his emotions in the workplace because they understand some of the struggles associated with working in that particular school context. Supervisory officers are another group that may provide supports for principals in this study as they should have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and possibilities faced by contemporary principals.

**Supervisory officers.** Some principals in this study indicated they rely on their supervisory officer for support in assisting them to effectively manage their emotions. For
example, Carl described how he feels supported when his supervisory officer understands his workload:

What makes you feel good is when you have support and there is a genuine concern for your physical and mental health. Also, knowing that at certain times of the year, you're more inundated with stuff and initiatives, and to filter initiatives and to filter things, that not everything necessarily has to get to you or that you have to partake in. Those are positive things.

Carl feels supported by his supervisory officer when they display a genuine concern for his easing his workload during busy times, because it demonstrates a level of care for his physical and mental health. Tristan, the less experienced principal who participated in the study, also described relying on his supervisory officer for advice and support managing his emotions through more of a mentor-mentee relationship. When describing his relationship with his supervisory officer, Tristan shared that it has been a positive situation because his mentor has shared good advice with him:

We've got a really good relationship, so that I can just say, "I'm frustrated with this." Or I'll say, "I know I shouldn't be doing this." He'll be like, "Yeah, that's something you should learn to do." He has some nuggets of advice for me. It's been always even keel with us.

Tristan seeks out support from his supervisory officer because he offers him tips, tricks and advice that makes it easier to both perform his job demands and effectively manage his emotions. It should be mentioned that not all principals in this study were as confident in the ability of their supervisory officer to provide them with support and assistance in managing their emotions. For example, Stephanie described how it can be emotionally challenging when those superintendent supports described by Tristan and Carl are not in place. The relationship between Stephanie and her supervisory officer appears far less collegial and far more hierarchical in nature:
Again, part of the emotional component has a lot to do with who's in your building, again, what systems are in place, who your superintendent is. So emotionally right now I struggle with my superintendent because she's so new. She, I think, is overwhelmed, so she's never ever getting back to me. So, those types of thing begin to create stress.

Stephanie highlights how it can be difficult to manage her emotions when she does not feel supported by her supervisory officer. Another experienced principal in the sample discussed how his relationship with his supervisory officer essentially involves following orders and doing what he is told. For example, Trevor finds that better communication from his supervisory officer would go a long way in supporting his ability to effectively manage his emotions at work:

I find for the most part, we do what we're told. It would be nice if there was more of a collegial type relationship, but I understand there's a lot of stuff that goes on at the board level that's inherent just to the board level, but sometimes it would be nice if the communication was better, and then I think that there would be more positive relationships built than not.

Rather than describing a collaborative and collegial relationship with his supervisory officer, Trevor discussed how a focus on compliance and a lack of support could hinder his ability to effectively manage his emotions. Based on these findings, the supervisory officer can help or hinder principals’ ability to manage their emotions. Secondary school principals in this study highlight how superintendents can buoy their ability to manage emotions by providing useful advice, understanding the context of the schools in which they work, and displaying a genuine concern for their mental and physical health.

**Summary of Professional Supports**

The main source of professional support principals in this study rely on to manage their emotions are members of their administrative team and support staff. Participants also reported that their supervisory officer can help or hinder their ability to manage their emotions. It seems that principals are more willing to access informal professional supports for assistance in managing their emotions from those who they trust. For example, it does not appear that the
principals in this study are comfortable accessing formalized supports offered by school districts or the professional associations for assistance in managing their emotions. Rather, principals in this study prefer to confide in a small group of individuals at their school, such as vice-principals and support staff, who understand the challenges and opportunities inherent in being employed at a particular school site. Perhaps the ways in which contemporary principals have learned to manage their emotions can shed further light on the supports Ontario principals use to deal with and manage their emotions at work.

Learning

All principals in this study agreed that the ability to manage one’s emotions is a fundamental ability necessary for contemporary school leadership. However, participants described developing skills and strategies for managing their emotions in a variety of different ways. Principals in this study described the following three ways that they have learned to manage their emotions: a) experience in the role; b) they have a naturally calm demeanor and have always been good at managing their emotions; and c) the advice and influence of colleagues and close friends. Similar to the nature of the supports principals access in order to help them manage their emotions, formal programs or initiatives aimed at building emotional regulation skills were absent from the responses provided by principals who participated in this study. Each of these ways that participating principals have learned to manage their emotions will be discussed throughout the remainder of this section.

Experience in the role. All 13 of the principals that participated in this research have learned to manage their emotions through their experience in the role because the principalship continually offers opportunities to strengthen their ability to manage their own emotions. For example, Arnold spoke about how his prior actions and past situations impact the way he
manages his emotions, simply stating that, “my past experiences influence how I manage my emotions”. Previous experiences play a role in how Arnold manages his emotions. Similarly, Carl indicated that he has learned to manage his emotions because of past experiences where he had to deal with the consequences that arose when he did not effectively manage his emotions. Carl stated that he has learned to manage his emotions, “by not managing my emotions. Lots of good decisions come from making bad decisions before hand. Nothing good comes of not managing your emotions.” Carl highlights how dealing with the fallout from situations where he has not been able to manage his emotions has taught him how important ER is for contemporary principals. Other principals in the study also pointed to their past experiences as providing opportunities for them to learn to manage their emotions. For example, Jack feels like after so many years in the role he feels he has seen a variety of different situations, and can use his past decisions and experiences as guides for how to handle similar situations when they occur. Jack described a process where he looks for ways to improve his practice and develop strategies to better manage his emotions by reflecting on his prior experiences:

I guess you try and get better each and every time and you also learn from your experiences. You do something and you're like, oh shit that didn't play out like the way I wanted it to so you develop a different skill set or a little bit better emotional intelligence and experience is the best teacher…a lot of different conflicts, a lot of parents, lots of kids, and I find that the different people, you change the face but the problem is the same I think so each school that I've been at, you can compartmentalize the problems into these different chunks and they all kind of fit into a particular category so I think experience of making mistakes, learning from your mistakes and finding new ways to move.

Jack discussed how he has developed new ER skills and strategies by learning from his mistakes and experiences as a principal. Other participating principals indicated that skills they developed, and experiences that occurred prior to becoming a principal have helped them manage their emotions. For example, Heidi mentioned how her experience as a guidance counsellor prior to
becoming an administrator has helped her become adept at managing her emotions because the role involves working with a variety of stakeholders other than students:

   I had my background in guidance, which is a good stepping stone in terms of administration, I think, because you still have to deal with people in a different situation than teaching students.

Heidi thinks that that the different situations and individuals she was exposed to in her prior role as a guidance counselor helped her learn to manage her emotions. It is also important to highlight how principals view developing or strengthening their ability to regulate or manage their own emotions as an ongoing process. For example, Trevor discussed how he is learning to manage his emotions more effectively every day:

   I would say it’s an ongoing thing. I think it’s one of those skills or one of those things you need to…It’s everyday part of work, and so it’s something you need to really have as part of your repertoire. You deal with a lot of different people, from the students, parents, staff, outside agencies, just community people. Pretty much all your communications with those I think involves an emotional side of it or an emotional intelligence with it.

Trevor finds that he is constantly learning to better manage his emotions because every aspect of his work that is focused on communicating with others, such as e-mail or meetings, involves emotions and ER. Trevor’s response highlights how important ER and managing emotions is for contemporary principals.

   Their experiences in the role is something all principals in this study pointed to when asked how they have learned to manage their emotions. Participants discussed how they are influenced by their past experiences, such as Carl’s comment describing how he has learned to manage his emotions in the present by not effectively managing his emotions in past situations.

Similarly, other principals who participated in the interviews described developing ER skills and strategies by learning from their mistakes. Some participants also discussed how they are always learning to manage their emotions as the principalship is an unpredictable and dynamic position
involving numerous responsibilities and stakeholders. This last sentiment is a far cry from some principals in the sample who indicated that they have always had a calm demeanor and have not had to learn any new skills or strategies for managing their emotions since becoming a principal.

**Naturally calm demeanour.** While some participating principals described the growth and development of new skills and strategies for managing their emotions since they entered the principalship, others indicated that they have always been calm people who rarely have issues managing their emotions. For example, Heidi finds that being a principal is suited to her disposition as she has never been good at sharing her emotions and likes to keep her inner thoughts and feelings hidden from others. While not expressing one’s emotions may not always serve as an effective ER strategy, she stated that, “Growing up, I was never good at sharing my emotions, so I’ve always been one to keep things hidden. For me, this role was, okay, it’s just me being me.” Similarly, Sue finds that the principalship encourages her to suppress her true feelings, which is a practice she has always engaged in.

Gary also reported that he has always been a calm, level-headed person. He stated that the principalship is not a good job for individuals who have difficulty managing emotions because the role can be akin to being on an emotional rollercoaster:

I think it is the type of job where if you are emotional you aren’t very well-suited for the job. I have always been fairly level, always. Even since I was a child, I have always just been. There are some people that have highs and lows all the time and I am just kind of a boring old straight line. I am not ever too low and I think that is an idea personality for this type of job because there are an awful lot of opportunities to get too high or get too low, which sometimes prevents you from dealing with situations as they should be dealt with, dealing with them well.

Gary shared that he thinks that individuals who have difficulty managing their emotions will experience challenges in the principalship because he finds that an absence of effective ER strategies can prevent principals from dealing with some situations effectively. Some principals
in the study discussed how their experiences playing sports have taught them to be calm in the face of pressure and to ‘roll with the punches’. For example, Charles mentioned how playing basketball taught him to control his emotions to attain peak performance on the court. Then Charles discussed how he has been able to transfer the emotional regulation skills learned playing sports into his role as a secondary school principal:

I can kind of compare this to a sport. I've played a lot of sports in my life. I've played a lot of basketball in life, I played the university level. We all know that in sporting venues, you're going to have your ebbs and flows in a game and you're going to have to control your emotions in that heat of the moment in order to be the most efficient and productive. The same thing here. That's where I gained a lot of my experience from being involved in athletics, the idea that you know at times it's going to be rough, it's going to be busy, there's going to be a lot of heat but you know that if you stay calm that you're going to be the best you can be without getting into that anxiety piece.

Charles finds that his past experience playing basketball at a high level has prepared him for situations where he is forced to manage his emotions as a principal. In Charles’ case, it seems like his experience being involved in pressure-packed situations on the basketball court has provided him with the ability to stay calm and manage his emotions when faced with high pressure situations in his work as a principal.

The notion that some individuals, including principals have the innate ability to effectively manage their emotions (and the tacit acknowledgement that some do not) was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. For example, Jack opened up about how some administrators, ‘get’ the emotional part of running a school, while others simply are not programmed in a way to fully understand the importance of managing emotions in contemporary principals’ work. For example, Jack highlights how his new vice-principal naturally had the ability to write e-mails in a cordial manner or to be polite with others, and that he did not have to teach the new vice-principal these skills:
I didn't teach him to write emails to teachers to get them to volunteer for things. He just knew it. Whereas I've worked with other people where you try to teach them and they don't get it. They just don't see it, they don't understand it, they don't understand why you need to start off an email that's asking for something with something nice. They just blurt it out. I need you to do this and that I think, when you evaluate the emotional aspect of this job, I think it's different for different people depending on how that individual is wired. You'll interview me and I think I'm very positive about the job and I love it and, yeah emotions are part of it, but it doesn't have the potential to break me. Whereas I think you might interview someone else and they'll be like, it's killing me. I can't do it.

Jacks finds his new vice-principal is inherently good at managing his emotions, skills and strategies that help him get what he wants. Jack also elaborated about how principals need to be effective at managing emotions in order to be a successful principal:

I think the one thing that I think is really interesting and I don't know if it's going to be part of your study or not is, in my opinion, a lot of the skill set that is required to do this job, because so much of this job is rooted in emotions or emotional connections, relationships, all that kind of stuff, as opposed to the procedural, the paperwork, the curriculum. You can be a genius and all the stuff but, if you can't have healthy emotions, I don't care how strong you are as a curriculum leader or whatever, business manager, whatever you want to call yourself and I'm not sure that than stuff can be taught or learned so the question is, what is the best way to promote administrators who have that ability to be successful in that area? How do you identify that, how you interview for that?

At the end of this quote, Jack brings up good questions around how the skills required of contemporary principals focus on emotional capabilities, but that it can be difficult for school districts to identify prospective principals with effective ER abilities. Throughout his time as a principal, Jack has found that anyone can learn the technical pieces of the role, such as occupational health and safety guidelines, or become more knowledgeable about the curriculum. However, the relationship piece that involves managing emotions is what Jack finds to be perhaps the most important aspect of the principalship, and that it can be difficult for some individuals to fully grasp the significance of the emotional aspects of the role.

Some principals in this study indicated that they have always been good at managing their emotions because they possess, and have always possessed a calm demeanor. These
participants cited past experience, such as playing sports as children, as pivotal to them maintaining a sense of calm in the face of the emotionally challenging situations they face in their work as secondary school principals. These principals also harbour the belief that being a secondary school principal in contemporary times would be a difficult job for somebody who lacks the ability to effectively manage their emotions. Principals who lack confidence in their abilities to manage their emotions may seek out advice from, or emulate colleagues who have a higher capacity for, or better understanding of the emotional aspects of the principalship.

**Advice and influence of colleagues and close friends.** Participating principals also described learning to manage their emotions by following the advice or the example of colleagues and mentors. Principals in this study indicated they will turn to colleagues or mentors for advice on how to manage their emotions or maintain composure in a given situation. For example, Tristan discussed how he is always learning new ways to manage his emotions at work from listening to the experience of his colleagues and the strategies they have employed to effectively manage their emotions:

> I'm always still learning. Always, I'll never stop learning to do that. Close friends, probably. Listen to them and their stories at work, their stories in leadership. My principal colleagues, learning from them about what they do. Learning about what not to do from them, as well...really, it's just that advice of staying as quiet and calm as possible. I think that's really the key to almost everything.

Tristan learns how to manage his emotions at work by both listening to the advice of colleagues and attempting to follow their example. Jack also highlighted the influence of colleagues and learning from every person he works with when describing how he has learned to manage his emotions:

> I think the influence of others that I've worked with, I've worked with some tremendous administrators, principals, secretaries, teachers, and you learn from every single person you work with.
Working alongside individuals who can effectively manage emotions exposed Jack to many different ER strategies. However, some principals in this study took a different tack when discussing the influence of colleagues on how they have learned to manage their emotions. For example, rather than describing a colleague she wished to emulate, Doris spoke at length about her experiences working for a principal who struggled with the emotional aspects of the principalship. Doris did not enjoy working under a principal who could not manage their emotions effectively, essentially providing her with an example of what not to do when it comes to managing emotions as a secondary school principal:

It's interesting, because I had a principal when I was first starting off with teaching who did not manage her emotions. She was a very negative person to work for, and created a really negative attitude with the teaching staff and the students. It was a very uncomfortable place to work, the building that she supervised, but it taught me a lot about what not to do. I guess that's part of it. I think it's just my personality. I may look cool and calm on the outside, but more than likely I'm not on the inside, but that's what I portray, which I think in the end is better because it tends to defuse situations that may or may not have gotten out of hand.

Doris describes how she has learned to manage her emotions based on her experiences working for a principal who struggled to effectively manager their emotions. In this way, Doris has learned what not to do, and makes efforts to surface act by staying calm on the outside, regardless of her internal feelings. Doris engages in this surface acting because she does not want to let her negative feelings infect the school community.

**Summary of How Principals Learned to Manage Their Emotions**

Principals in this study described how they have learned to manage their emotions primarily through experience in the role. All but one of the principals in the interview sample had more than five years or experience in the role, and many felt like they had been involved in several emotionally challenging situations. Principals in this study described how they reflect on those past experiences, especially situations where they did not manage their emotions.
effectively, to improve their practice. The second way principals in this study learned to manage their emotions is through the advice and/or influence of colleagues. While some colleagues provide good advice, or serve as an exemplar, some principals indicated that they have learned how to manage their emotions by working with colleagues who could not do so. Many principals in this study also stated that they have always been able to manage their emotions because they have always been calm individuals with a relaxed demeanor.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed findings related to the third, and fourth research questions that guided this study:

3. What professional supports are utilized by Ontario secondary school principals to assist in dealing with the emotional content of their daily work?

4. How do Ontario secondary school principals learn to manage their emotions?

The third research question inquired about the professional supports utilized by secondary school principals to better manage their emotions. Principals in this study tend to seek out professional supports within their school, with most indicating that they rely on their administrative team, such as their vice-principals, for support managing their emotions at work. Smaller numbers of participating principals also indicated that they seek out professional supports from their supervisory officer. Principals described turning to these groups for professional support managing their emotions because they share the same working conditions and possess a nuanced understanding of the school community and the various individuals or situations that can incite emotional responses within that building. It is interesting that principals in this study did not describe or share seeking out professional supports from either external
organizations or any of the education stakeholders in the province (e.g., Ministry of Education, professional principal associations, etc.).

Principals in this study were also asked to share how they learned to manage their emotions. They all discussed how their ability to manage their emotions have been honed through experience in the role of principal. For example, most principals in this study indicated that they had learned to manage their emotions based on situations when they did not manage their emotions effectively. Some participants also highlighted how they did not have to learn to manage their emotions because they have always had a calm demeanor, or that learning has occurred based on the advice or influence of colleagues. In the following chapter, I will discuss and interpret the findings related to how principals manage their emotions in relation to the both the conceptual framework that guides this study and the literature.
Chapter 7: Discussion of Findings

This study is unique as it explores how principals manage their emotions. It is the first study to engage in an in-depth exploration of how principals manage their emotions while being employed in a position that is highly emotionally charged and demands a capacity for the effective management of both positive and negative emotional responses. Though effective emotional regulation skills have also been tied to effective leadership (Boyzatis & McKee, 2005), emotional exhaustion, burnout and other negative outcomes have been associated with suppressing one’s emotions (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013). This means that the skills principals need to practice effective leadership may be detrimental to their health. Throughout this chapter I discuss and interpret the findings related to, and propose a new model for how principals manage their emotions. Principals in this study indicate that they engage in several different strategies to manage their emotions, including some that are associated with positive outcomes, such as using humour. However, participants also engage in distraction or rumination to manage their emotions, which can be associated with negative outcomes, such as emotional exhaustion (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). Participating principals also report using strategies to manage their emotions associated with all five families of ER found in Gross’ process model of ER (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). Principals in this study also face several challenges managing their emotions and are provided with few formalized supports to assist in developing and refining their ER strategies and approaches. First, the conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations in contemporary principals’ work are considered in relation to the literature. Based on the findings of this study and the distribution of responses, I have added “Level of Education” as a condition that can lead to emotion-generating situations for contemporary principals. After that, I take a moment to reflect on how the principals in this study engage in emotional labour before
concluding this chapter with a description of the model for how principals manage their emotions that emerged from this study.

**Conditions that Lead to Emotion-Generating Situations**

As mentioned earlier, principals’ work involves conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations. For example, the findings of this study suggest that a principal’s level of formal education and the size of the school they are employed at could be conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations in their work. Further, the literature indicates these conditions include notions of gender and power (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998), guiding the school through crises or tragedies (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Fein & Issacson; Yamamoto et al., 2011), advocating for students (Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010), policy tensions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), workload (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Whitaker, 1996) and the level of autonomy they have over their work (Beatty, 2000; Carr, 1994; Schermuly et al., 2011). The findings of this study will be discussed in relation to each of these factors.

**Level of Education.** The level of formal education obtained by participating principals accounted for the most pronounced differences in responses across the sample. For example, principals in this study with a master’s degree discussed engaging in activities to promote a healthy work-life balance more often than their peers with lower levels of formal education. Further, principals with a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of formal education discussed engaging in ER strategies associated with negative outcomes in the literature (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013), such as thought suppression, expressive suppression and worrying more.
often than others in the sample. These findings could indicate that engaging in graduate study through a master’s degree program helps principals develop skills and abilities to manage their emotions using strategies that are effective and positive in nature.

The conditions that lead to emotion-generating situations for participating principals also appear to be linked to their highest level of formal education. Those principals with a master’s degree described being called out of the building for meetings or committees at the district office more often than their colleagues, indicating that their superiors may want to leverage skills and abilities gained during graduate study. Principals in this study with a master’s degree also discussed encountering challenges with people more often than their colleagues with a bachelor’s degree. However, it is hard to speculate about what this finding means or why it is important without more information from participating principals regarding the context surrounding these incidents.

**School Size.** Principals at schools with fewer than 1000 students indicated that they engage in distraction, as well as sleep and activities to promote work-life balance to manage their emotions more often than their peers employed at schools with more than 1000 students. This finding could indicate that principals at schools with more than 1000 students have greater responsibilities and less time to engage in these kinds of activities to effectively manage their emotions. Further, principals in this study who are employed at schools with more than 1000 students also seem to be exposed to a greater preponderance of conditions that could lead to emotion-generating situations. For example, principals with more than 1000 students at their school discussed disagreeing with policy, being called out of the building and facing a relentless workload more often than their peers employed at smaller schools. Though additional research would be needed to determine why this relationship is present, these findings seem to indicate
that school size could be related to the nature of conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations at the school-level.

**Gender.** Past research that has considered the intersections between emotions, gender and leadership argue that conforming to societal feeling rules that dictate appropriate forms of behaviour can create unique challenges for female principals (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). According to some scholars, it may be more socially acceptable for male principals to become angry in the heat of the moment when compared to their female peers (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). In this study, female principals discussed engaging in distraction and participating in activities that can promote work-life balance to manage their emotions more than their male colleagues. Female principals also discussed encountering system-based challenges that can make it difficult to effectively manage their emotions more often than their male colleagues. Further, none of the male principals described feeling under pressure to complete their workload, while it was mentioned by all female principals that participated in this study. These findings seem to provide some support for prior evidence that identified female principals’ work is fraught with unique challenges not encountered by their male colleagues (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). Though these findings seem significant, they should be interpreted with caution due to this study’s small sample size. Further, female principals also described how system-based challenges can make it difficult to effectively manage their emotions. However, it was surprising that there were not more differences in the distribution of responses based on participants’ gender, especially in terms of the strategies principals use to manage their emotions. While the findings from this study do not refute those reported by Beatty and Brew (2004) and Sachs and Blackmore (1998), issues related to gender and power did not emerge as a key theme when analyzing the types of strategies different
principals use to manage their emotions on a daily basis. The notion that principals across the province are engaging in similar kinds of work, such as emotional management processes, seems to support recent findings reported by Pollock (2014) highlighting how contemporary policies and leadership frameworks have standardized the principalship in Ontario.

**Crises and tragedies.** As has been reported elsewhere, managing school-level crises, wounding experiences, and tragedies can make it difficult for secondary school principals to effectively manage their emotions (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Fein & Issacson; 2009; Yamamoto et al., 2011). Fein and Issacson (2009) describe how principals pay a high personal toll during times of crisis, neglecting themselves and their family to hold up the school and the school community. The principals in this study were no different, describing the emotional toll and long hours associated with managing a crisis or tragedy at the school site. However, this study extends the findings previously reported by Fein and Issacson (2009) by highlighting how it is challenging for principals to manage their emotions in light of crises and tragedies because they are forced to react in the moment. For example, it is impossible for principals to plan for having to provide CPR to a staff member who has just suffered a massive heart attack, or to hear news that a member of the school community has passed away. Based on these findings, it seems that principals could benefit from additional supports when tasked with navigating the school through crises or tragedies. The fact that principals in this study also indicated that they do not access any formalized supports for assistance managing their emotions can contribute to challenges in that area.

**Encountering barriers or resistance when advocating for students.** Principals in this study described how it can be difficult to manage their emotions, and that they can experience emotional responses, when encountering barriers or resistance when advocating for the students
at their school. These findings are reminiscent of emotions reported by principals when they engage in social justice efforts and face resistance from members of the school community or district leaders (Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010). These findings also support prior research that identified how principals can experience positive emotions and high levels of satisfaction when their social justice efforts are successful and they are able to effect positive change (Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Theoharis, 2008; Zembylas, 2010). In addition to advocating for students, policies and the policy context in which principals’ work can also influence how they manage their emotions.

**Policy context.** Findings from this study also provide further evidence that principals’ emotions can be influenced by the policy context in which they work (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 1996, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). When discussing the impact of policy, the secondary school principals that participated in this study focused their discussion on Regulation 274/12, a relatively recent provincial directive that impacts principals’ autonomy when hiring teachers. Rather than simply hiring the best teacher for a given job, Regulation 274/12 compels principals to only interview the five most senior qualified applicants. This policy seems to have struck an emotional chord and led to a values clash for many of the principals in this study. Regulation 274/12 does not align with the vision of public education espoused by the principals in this study, so it be challenging to effectively manage their emotions when implementing the policy. For example, participating principals indicate that Regulation 274/12 can lead to feelings such as frustration, anger and disappointment as staff are essentially being placed in their schools, even if they are not a good match for the school or student population. Other recent research conducted in Ontario also points to similar concerns principals have with
Regulation 274/12. For example, Leithwood and Azah (2014) note Regulation 274/12 can lead to principals and vice-principals experiencing hiring challenges, an increased workload and that it distracts from a school improvement focus (Leithwood & Azah, 2014). Similarly, Pollock (2014) found that adhering to the demands of Regulation 274/12 are both time consuming and diverts principals’ attention away from teaching and learning. Further, Regulation 274/12 can also represent a loss of autonomy, forcing principals to hire lower quality teaching faculty and serves as a barrier to creating a more diverse and representative teaching force in the province (Pollock, 2014). These unintended consequences from a policy decision in which principals had little voice can make it challenging for principals in this study to effectively manage their emotions when hiring teachers. When discussing policy, principals in this study focused their attention on the impact and their experiences with Regulation 274/12. However, there are undoubtedly other policies that influence how secondary school principals manage their emotions at work. For example, parent engagement policies, collective bargaining agreements between the school district and the various provincial teacher unions, as well as public accountability mechanisms all heighten the importance of contemporary principals being able to effectively manage their emotions.

Workload. Workload has been cited as a factor that influences principals’ ability to manage their emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Whitaker, 1996). Prior research indicates that principals are better able to effectively manage their emotions when workload is manageable, but that it can be difficult to achieve work-life balance (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Kokkinos, 2007; Whitaker, 1996). The findings from this study point to principals’ ability to effectively manage their emotions being influenced by work intensification. In a previous
chapter, I mentioned several ways in which contemporary principals’ work is changing, heightening the need for principals to be able to successfully manage their emotions (Pollock, 2014; Pollock et al., 2015). For example, it can be emotionally challenging for principals to be responsible and accountable for almost everything that occurs at their school, including occupational health and safety, the budget and student mental health concerns, all areas where they may have little to no training or experience.

All of the principals in this study discussed the importance of relying on members of their administrative team for support in effectively managing their emotions. Participating principals also indicated that they delegate tasks and activities to others in an effort to cope with challenges managing their emotions related to workload demands (Leithwood & Levin, 2005; Spillane, 2005). For example, Charles discussed how his work is less emotionally-challenging when he can count on members of his administrative team to help him operate the school.

Participating principals describe taking the notion of delegating one step further. During the interviews, the secondary school principals in this study highlighted how delegating tasks or activities, can distribute the emotional labour associated with those tasks and activities amongst the rest of their administrative team or teaching faculty (Hochschild, 1983). In this way, principals engage in delegating tasks or activities to mitigate workload challenges associated with ER.

**Autonomy.** Participating principals’ perceptions of eroding autonomy over their work and working conditions, and how that influences their ability to effectively manage their emotions is one of the more interesting findings to emerge from this study. On one hand, data from this study points to a perceived reduction in principals’ autonomy as a key factor contributing to many of the challenges principals face managing their emotions (Beatty, 2000;
Carr, 1994; Schermuly et al., 2011). For example, both the volume and pace of contemporary secondary school principals’ work limits autonomy. Further, mandates and time sensitive tasks or activities may impinge on principals’ ability to engage in self-directed work. For example, principals in this study highlighted how their perceptions of autonomy are also influenced by policies, such as Regulation 274/12. Participants in this study indicated that Regulation 274/12 directly impacts their autonomy by decreasing flexibility in terms of human resources. However, participating principals also discussed the ease and usefulness of deferring to policy to explain their actions and distance themselves from emotionally-challenging situations. Based on this finding, perhaps principals would be overwhelmed by the multitude of choices, and increased workload, that would arise from having complete autonomy over their work. For example, total autonomy would eliminate principals’ ability to shield themselves and their emotions behind policy, potentially increasing the occurrence of situations that can generate sadness, anxiety, fear, confusion and other emotions (Schwartz, 2004).

Legal frameworks and accountabilities are another factor that can create challenges for principals’ ability to effectively manage their emotions. Laws that involve schools and schooling are almost always well conceived and serve an important purpose (e.g., occupational health and safety laws ensure that all schools are safe places to learn and work). However, principals in this study describe living in fear of lawsuits from the provincial Ministry of Labour for failing to maintain the school’s physical plant. When principals are scared, it can be challenging to effectively manage their emotions.

Being called out of the building for meetings at the district office also limits autonomy in three ways. First, meetings at the district office means more time that principals are being directly observed and supervised by their supervisory officers. Second, principals in this study
have less time to move forward with their plan and vision for the school because of time spent away from the school site. Finally, being called out of the school building also limits principals’ autonomy by increasing workload as they need to catch up on anything that occurred at the school during the time they were away. Similarly, other system-based challenges, such as a lack of resources, limits autonomy because it places boundaries, both fiscal and human, on what principals can do in the school.

Media attention is another factor that can make it difficult for principals to effectively manage their emotions due, in part, to a loss of autonomy. Principals in this study describe feeling wounded by media stories published about them or their school. Part of the reason why they are wounded is due to the permanency of the internet. For example, Arnold described how a negative media story is the first link that appears when somebody “googles” his name. Negative media attention makes principals act from a position of fear because they are not in control of the message or how it is shared over the Internet or social media. Further, they are not in control of how negative media exposure can impact their credibility and their career. In this way, negative media attention not only has implications for how principals manage their emotions, but could also impact job satisfaction and lead to other negative outcomes, such as emotional exhaustion and burnout (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Friedman, 2002; Gmech & Gates, 1998; Gross et al., 2006; Haver et al., 2013; Kokkinos, 2007; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). Emotional labour, another job demand experienced by contemporary principals (Blackmore, 1996; Milley, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015), can also lead to some of the negative outcomes described above.

**Strategies Principals Use to Manage Their Emotions**

Several strategies principals use to manage their emotions have been identified in the literature. For example, prior research has found that principals will manage their emotions by attempting to turn off their emotional reactions using expressive suppression (Ackerman &
Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Beatty, 2000; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Crawford, 2007; Cliffe, 2011; Gronn & Lacey, 2004; Niesche & Haase, 2012; Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Ryan & Tuters, 2015). Other previously reported strategies principals use to manage their emotions include talking to colleagues (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Pratt-Adams & Maguire, 2009; Roffey, 2007; Zembylas, 2010), distracting themselves from an emotionally challenging situation (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; Johnson et al., 2005) and reappraising a situation to change its emotional impact (Zembylas, 2010). Participating principals reported engaging in all of the strategies mentioned above in an effort to manage their emotions.

However, the findings of this study probe the emotional terrain of secondary school principals more deeply than the previous studies. The participants indicate utilizing a variety of strategies to manage their emotions, including many that have not been previously identified in the literature. For example, participating principals manage their emotions using strategies associated with all five families found in Gross’ process model of ER (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014): situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation.

**Situation selection.** Situation selection is a key strategy used by principals in this study to manage their emotions. For example, participants find it easier to effectively manage emotions when able to successfully support members of the school community (e.g., students, teachers, and vice-principals), and will make efforts to engage in those situations to reaffirm that they are having a positive impact. Another way participating principals use situation selection to manage their emotions is by structuring the workday. For example, principals may choose to limit emotion-generating situations by avoiding some individuals or situations, or to increase the potential for experiencing positive emotions, such as scheduling time to connect with students.
**Situation modification.** Situation modification is an ER strategy that individuals use to manage their emotions by making an effort to change the conditions surrounding the situation, which changes their feelings. For example, principals in this study engage in situation modification by asking others to provide their thoughts and insights on a challenging or emotion-generating situation, and by injecting humour and levity into their workday. Participating principals describe feeling validated, or to reconsider their stance on a situation based on the advice provided by trusted colleagues, which helps them effectively manage their emotions. Asking others also allows principals an opportunity to vent and express their true feelings with a group of trusted colleagues. Using humour is the other strategy associated with situation modification utilized by principals in this study. Injecting non-detrimental humour into the workday allowed participating principals to release emotions in a positive way, which helps them effectively manage their emotions.

**Attentional deployment.** Rather than focusing on an emotion-generating situation, participating principals may engage in ER strategies for managing emotions associated with the attentional deployment, such as rumination, distraction, worrying and thought suppression. For the most part, principals in this study indicated they feel regret when ruminating about, or replaying past decisions and situations experienced in their daily work that resulted in outcomes they regret. However, some participants indicated that ruminating on a situation can make them feel validated about decisions they have made. Principals in this study also engage in attentional deployment to manage their emotions through distraction. For example, counting the ceiling tiles during a conversation with an aggressive parent or briefly connecting with friends and family are two ways participating principals manage their emotions using distraction. Worrying about challenges in their work, such as managing an intensifying workload, is another way principals
in this study engage in attentional deployment. Finally, participating principals also discussed managing their emotions using thought suppression, which essentially involves attempts to use policy or engaging in menial tasks to disconnect from a situation and turn off one’s emotional responses.

**Cognitive change.** Principals in this study also reported managing their emotions using strategies linked to cognitive change, such as reappraisal and distancing. Reappraisal involves principals empathizing with stakeholders and reflecting on the emotional situations encountered in their daily work to identify lessons learned that can applied to similar situations in the future. Principals in this study also manage their emotions by distancing themselves from a situation by taking on roles and responsibilities outside of the school. Humour is another strategy associated with cognitive change utilized by participating principals to manage their emotions. While humour is also part of the situation modification family of ER, in terms of cognitive change, individuals use humour to dispel emotions they may be feeling, whereas in situation modification, individuals use humour to insulate themselves prior to feeling a given emotion.

**Response modulation.** Principals in this study described using many of the strategies principals use to manage their emotions that are associated with response modification, such as getting enough sleep and engaging in regular exercise, in a proactive manner. By engaging in sleep, exercise and activities that can promote a healthy work-life balance, participating principals are able to manage their emotions more effectively. For example, engaging in regular exercise allows principals an opportunity to erect barriers between their work and personal lives, while also providing an outlet for releasing emotions. However, principals in this study also described managing their emotions using expressive suppression. Expressive suppression refers
to individuals feigning feelings while hiding their true emotions to maintain and model a sense of calm for students, staff and other stakeholders.

**Impact of Managing Emotions on Principals**

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the principalship has always involved managing emotions. However, past studies have not considered how the ER strategies principals engage in can impact their health and well-being and/or job performance (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). Some of the ER strategies principals engage in are linked with positive outcomes, such as reappraisal and response modulation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014), while suppressing emotions through thought or expressive suppression is associated with negative consequences (Gross et al., 2006; Haver et al., 2013). Findings from this study demonstrate that even experienced principals have the capacity to engage in maladaptive or negative ER strategies that can have a detrimental impact on their health and well-being. For example, many principals in this sample described being wounded by emotionally challenging situations encountered in their work. One principal described being victimized (and continually revictimized) by the permanency of media stories critical of him or his decision-making posted on the Internet, while other indicate they ruminate about decisions they made that led to negative consequences for students.

It is interesting that even with their high levels of knowledge and experience, principals in this study still engage in negative strategies to manage their emotions. If these experienced principals can demonstrate the capacity to manage their emotions in a maladaptive or negative manner, this means that other principals, especially those who are struggling, could demonstrate similar tendencies. Current research confirms this. Pollock (2014) surveyed over 1400 principals in Ontario and found that 29% self-medicate in an effort to cope with the emotional toll of their
work. Principals in Pollock’s (2014) study did not indicate how they engage in self-medication (e.g., eating, exercise, alcohol use, illegal and prescription drug use, etc.). None of the principals in this study discussed managing their emotions by self-medicating. The ultimate question surrounds how we can best support secondary school principals so they are more likely to engage in ER strategies associated with positive outcomes and avoid burnout or other negative consequences.

**Emotional labour.** Emotional labour, the result of being involved in emotionally challenging situations, is another aspect of contemporary principals’ work that often causes them to engage in the different ER strategies found in Gross’ process model (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014). Studies exploring the impact of emotional labour on contemporary school leaders tend to focus on the experiences of female principals (Blackmore, 2006; Ryan & Tuters, 2015; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). In this study, both male and female principals engaged in emotional labour as part of their daily work. Participating principals described engaging in surface acting, such as using expressive suppression to manage their emotions. Principals in this study also discussed how they feign experiencing several different emotions, such as anger, frustration, joy and happiness as part of their daily work. The principals in this study also discuss how they utilize ER strategies that are more aligned with deep acting, such as reappraisal and other strategies associated with the cognitive change. For example, principals indicating that they continue to reflect on, and reappraise emotionally challenging situations they have experienced throughout their careers speaks to principals’ capacity to engage in deep acting.

The principals in this study are also involved in every type of emotion work described by Hochschild (1983): bodily, cognitive and expressive. For example, participating principals describe engaging in bodily emotion work by making efforts to change their physical state to
strategically create the appearance of a given emotion. During the interviews, Doris recounted how she distracts herself from feeling emotions in the middle of heated conversations by taking deep breaths to maintain a calm demeanor. Principals in this study also engaged in bodily emotion work in other ways. For example, Jack described feigning anger, as well as using his size and stature to evoke feelings of fear in students who were misbehaving in the school’s main office.

As has been reported elsewhere, the cognitive emotion work principals engage in is, for the most part, concealed (Ryan & Tuters, 2015). However, principals in this study highlight two ways they engage in cognitive emotion work as part of their employment. First, these secondary school principals are constantly aware of their emotional state and make conscious decisions to engage in activities to regulate their emotions. As principals make efforts to engage in situation selection and other ER strategies, their emotional state can fluctuate like a barometer throughout the day. If the principals in this study are unable to shake a negative emotion, they make concerted efforts to change their emotional state after the fact, by engaging in activities or strategies associated with response modulation, such as engaging in exercise, watching tv/movies and spending time with friends and family. Principals in this study also seem keenly self-aware of how engaging in ER strategies associated with response modulation activities can serve a preventative function. Time spent away from work activities allows principals to focus on themselves and disconnect from the emotional toll associated with their jobs. Finally, principals in this study also engage in cognitive emotion work when they replay, ruminate, reappraise and worry about and events that occurred earlier in the day, that week, or even several years ago. For example, Trevor tends to ruminate about negative events that occurred throughout the workday, while often forgetting many of the positives. Similarly, others described how they worry about
the fate of students who could not help. These forms of cognitive emotion work are associated with the ER strategies found with the attentional deployment and cognitive change families of ER found in Gross’ (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) process model.

Though not the focus of this study, participating principals also indicate they are strategic about masking their true emotions and feigning different emotions to provoke a desired emotional state in others (Ryan & Tuters, 2015). In this way, managing their emotions to manipulate the emotions of others is part of principals’ cognitive emotion work. Similarly, Ryan and Tuters (2015) described how principals will strategically manage their emotions to manipulate the emotions experienced by others. For example, they found that principals will mask their true feelings to generate desired emotions in others while strategically controlling their own emotions to produce that outcome (Ryan & Tuters, 2015). Though none of the principals in this study intend to manipulate the emotions of others for purely social justice aims, it was found that principals across the sample can engage in ER strategies, such as expressive suppression, designed to manipulate the emotions of others. All types of principals, regardless of gender, years of experience and level of education engage in cognitive emotion work by using their ER skills and strategies to manipulate, or influence the emotions experienced by others.

Principals in this study are acutely aware of not only their own emotional state, which is private and veiled from the public, but also the emotions that they portray for the public through their facial expressions, posture, gestures and body language. This is consistent with expressive emotion work, which involves one changing their expressions to alter their inner feelings (Hochschild, 1983). For example, Carl discussed he puts a smile on his face when he enters the school and pretends to be happy, and eventually he begins to feel more positive. By engaging in
expressive emotion work, the principals in this study subscribe to the notion that behaviours can change beliefs.

**Professional learning.** Though the participants in this study did highlighted situations where they have engaged in negative ER strategies or have simply not been able to effectively manage their emotions, they also described engaging in positive ER strategies. When asked how they learned to manage their emotions, most principals in this study indicated that learning occurred either through experience in the role. None of the participants pointed to the PQP or similar professional learning as helping them develop skills and strategies to effectively manage their emotions. This is similar to past research, which has identified a lack of emotional content in principals’ preparation and professional learning (Bolton & English, 2010; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). Further, Pollock (2014) found that 78% of principals needed to develop skills related to emotional intelligence after becoming a principal. What Pollock’s (2014) research demonstrates is that we need to pay more attention to ER and one’s ability to manage emotions in the principal preparation and recruitment processes. Similarly, principals in this study discussed how individuals with low levels of emotional intelligence would struggle in the role.

These findings have the potential to impact current principal recruitment processes. For example, school districts may benefit from an understanding that the contemporary principalship is an emotion-laden position that requires a high degree of self-awareness. Then school districts could use the interview process to ask principal candidates to identify scenarios where their emotions had a positive or negative impact on their work, as well as situations where they were able and/or unable to effectively manage their emotions. Gathering data about how prospective principals manage their emotions during the recruitment process will help school districts ensure
that their school-level leaders have the ER skills necessary to be successful. School districts could also ask principal candidates’ references the same kinds of questions during the principal recruitment process. Principal recruitment and succession planning has become more important for contemporary school districts (Fink & Brayman, 2004; 2006; Normore, 2004; 2006). As members of the baby boom generation begin to retire, there is a need to ensure that the next generation of school leaders have the skills to fulfill the various job demands expected of contemporary principals (Fink & Brayman, 2004; 2006; Normore, 2004; 2006). Therefore, it is vital that school districts identify, prioritize and develop the right candidates for the principalship who have skills, such as effective ER strategies, that are suited to the job demands currently associated with the role. Based on the findings of this study and others (Pollock, 2014), it would be highly beneficial for prospective secondary school principals to have skills and strategies to effectively manage or regulate their emotions prior to entering administration.

**A New Model for How Principals Manage Their Emotions**

Based on the findings of this study, I propose a tentative model for how principals manage their emotions. The model consists of five components. It begins with the conditions that can generate emotions that are present in contemporary principals’ work, including encountering barriers when advocating for students, navigating system-based challenges, a lack of support from district leadership or the provincial Ministry of Education, media attention, working with individuals who are upset, angry, disobedient or unprofessional and dealing with tragedies or crises. After encountering conditions that can lead to situations that can generate emotions, contextual factors, such as the type of school and the size of the school where a principal works, and the principals’ personal factors, such as gender and level of education influence whether the principal feels an emotion tied to that experience (or experiences). The type of emotion they feel
(Cowen & Keltman, 2017) then determines whether the principal engages in one (or more) of the strategies found in Gross’ (2001; 2002; 2010; 2014) process model of ER. The dotted lines between the type of emotion, and the two iterations of Gross’ (2001; 2002; 2010; 2014) process model represents the various feedback loops and chain reactions that can occur when an individual, such as a principal, engages in ER strategies to manage their emotions. For example, sometimes principals may engage in an ER strategy that is unsuccessful, forcing them to select another ER strategy in Gross’ (2001; 2002; 2010; 2014) framework. Further, sometimes engaging in an ER strategy can result in additional types of emotions that need to be managed. These new emotions can be distinct, or tied to the initial emotion that needed to be managed. The concept of emotional labour is found at the bottom of the model as it provides a foundation for how principals manage their emotions, as it can influence conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations, the principals’ personal and contextual factors, and the types of emotions one may feel when working.

**Figure 2. A New Model for How Principals Manage Their Emotions**

![Figure 2](image-url)
Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an opportunity to discuss and interpret some of the findings that emerged from this study. I began with a discussion of how the findings of this study support and extend previous research exploring the strategies and methods principals use to manage their emotions. Then I described how some of the challenges principals in this study experience managing their emotions are considered in relation to the literature, before reflecting on how the principals in this study engage in emotional labour. This chapter concluded with a description of a new model for how principals manage their emotions that emerged from this study. Chapter Eight offers some final conclusions and discusses implications that this study can have for secondary school principals’ professional practice, provincial education policies and administrative theory. The final chapter also looks at how this study can inform further research investigating how principals manage their emotions.
Chapter 8: Summary of the Study, Implications, and Concluding Comments

The purpose of this research was to determine the ways in which secondary school principals manage their emotions. Gross’ (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) process model of ER was used to guide this portion of the study. The study also looked at some of the challenges secondary school principals face in managing their emotions at work. Finally, the study sought to inquire about the formal supports utilized by Ontario secondary school principals to assist in dealing with the emotional content of their daily work. This chapter begins with a summary of the study, including a brief description of the research questions, methodology and findings. Then I take the opportunity to discuss implications this study has for secondary school principals’ professional practice, provincial education policies, administrative theory and further research on this topic. After the implications, this chapter, and the study, conclude with some final thoughts.

Summary of the Study

The following research questions were initially used to guide this study: a) What situations are principals involved in that incite positive and/or negative emotions? b) What strategies do principals employ to manage their emotions? c) What are some of the challenges principals face in managing their emotions at work? d) What professional supports are utilized by Ontario secondary school principals to assist in dealing with the emotional content of their daily work? However, during the analysis phase it became evident that the interviews I conducted with the participating secondary school principals did not generate sufficient data to attempt to answer the first research question listed above, which inquired about the situations in principals’ work that can incite positive or negative emotions. Participating principals used the interview questions that inquired about work-based situations that can provoke positive or emotions to discuss and expand on the challenges they face managing their emotions at work.
After conducting and analyzing the interview data, it does appear that determining the situations that incite positive or negative emotions in secondary school principals is beyond the scope of this research. However, different research methods, such as observations, may generate data that would help answer this research question in a more comprehensive manner, provided participants are willing to let the researcher inside their emotional world (Pollock & Hauseman, 2016).

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology because it provided an opportunity to gather detailed data about how principals interpret their experiences managing their emotions as part of their work (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005). Qualitative research was appropriate for this study as it focused on documenting the feelings and emotions experienced by individuals. The data collection method employed in this study was semistructured interviews because they allow researchers to both confirm existing understandings, but also probe respondents for emergent themes or trends related to the research questions. A total of 13 secondary school principals participated in the interviews, which lasted between 22 and 43 minutes.

Efforts were made to recruit a diverse group of secondary school principals to participate in this study to reflect the fact that Ontario principals are employed in several different contexts. For example, the sample contained secondary school principals working in different geographic and demographic contexts, a mix of males and females and varied educational backgrounds. A total of six interviews were conducted face-to-face and seven of the interviews were conducted over the telephone. Each principal was interviewed once, provided the questions before the interview occurred, and were asked to review the interview notes for accuracy prior to engaging in data analysis. Data analysis involved using coding and memos, two analytical tools commonly used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Robson & McCartan, 2016;
Springer, 2010). I engaged in open coding during the first stage of the data analysis process, which involved forming initial categories while reviewing qualitative data (Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Analytical coding occurred during the second stage of the analysis process (Creswell, 2005; Gall et al., 2005; Merriam, 2009; Robson & McCartan, 2016). The analytical coding involved linking together and making conclusions based on the categories that emerged from the coding process. The remainder of this summary will focus on the findings for each of the research questions that guided this study.

**Research question #1: What conditions lead to secondary school principals experiencing emotion-generating situations?** While the principals who participated in this research reported experiencing joy, happiness, excitement, pride, and other positive emotions as part of their daily work, they also described several conditions that can lead to emotion-generating and emotionally challenging situations.

Participating principals described six conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations in their work. Encountering barriers when advocating for students is the first condition that can lead to emotion-generating situations. The second condition involves navigating system-based issues, including managing a growing and expanding workload, the legal aspects of their work and the frequency with which they are called out of the building. Principals in this study also highlighted how a lack of support from district leadership or the provincial Ministry of Education is the third type of condition that can incite emotion-generating situations in their work. Negative media attention is another condition identified by some of the urban principals that participated in this study. Meetings or conversations with individuals who are upset, angry, disobedient or unprofessional is another aspect of principals’ work which can make incite positive or negative emotions, and make it challenging to effectively manage those emotions.
Further, principals in this study described how navigating tragedies and other difficult events can also lead to them experiencing emotion-generating situations.

**Research question #2: What strategies do secondary school principals employ to manage their emotions?** Gross’ (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) process model of ER was used to frame the findings related to this research question. Principals in this study described how they use a variety of strategies to manage their emotions at work, including those associated with all five families of ER identified by Gross (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) in the process model of ER. These five families of ER include situation selection; situation modification; attentional deployment; cognitive change; and response modulation. Situation selection was utilized by principals in this study as they make conscious decisions to engage in tasks or activities that will put them in a positive emotional state, especially after experiencing emotionally challenging situations or feelings of anger, sadness, anxiety, fear or confusion. In this way, situation selection helps principals effectively manage their emotions by helping them gravitate to situations that are likely to inspire positive emotions, while simultaneously avoiding situations that may provoke negative emotional responses.

Principals in this study also discussed using strategies associated with situation modification, which is the second of the five families of ER found within Gross’ (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) process model. Asking others for their opinions and injecting humour into otherwise emotionally challenging situations are the two ways in which participating principals modify situations to manage their emotions.

Attentional deployment is a family of ER that includes several maladaptive strategies for managing one’s emotions, including ruminating about an emotionally challenging situation, engage in distraction, thought suppression and worrying. All participating principals described at
least one situation where they have engaged in at least one of the ER strategies associated with attentional deployment.

Principals in this study also described utilizing ER strategies related to cognitive change. Cognitive change involves an individual trying to change how they feel about a situation to modify its emotional impact. Participating principals engaged in cognitive change by reappraising their thoughts and feelings about a situation, making attempts to distance themselves from a situation, or through the use of humour to adjust the emotional impact associated with a situation.

Getting enough sleep, engaging in regular exercise and trying to maintain a healthy work–life balance are all additional strategies principals use in an effort to manage their emotions. All of the strategies mentioned above are consistent with response modulation, which is Gross’ (2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) fifth and final family of ER. Response modulation also includes expressive suppression, a less healthy approach to utilizing response modulation to manage emotions that involves principals masking their true feelings and portraying a calm demeanor for the world, even when principals are feeling apprehensive, nervous or angry. Consistent with response modulation, participating principals indicated it is easier to manage their emotions when they are getting enough sleep, exercising and maintaining a healthy work–life balance.

Research Question #3: What formal supports are utilized by Ontario school principals to assist in dealing with the emotional content of their daily work? Principals in this study indicated that they are more likely to access supports related to ER from individuals who they trust. Based on the data gathered for this study, it does not appear that the principals in this study are comfortable accessing formalized supports offered by school districts or the
professional associations for assistance in managing their emotions. Rather, principals in this study prefer to confide in a small group of individuals at their school who understand the challenges and opportunities inherent in being employed at that particular school site. For example, participating principals reported that the main source of support they rely on to manage their emotions are members of their administrative team, such as vice-principals, or support staff. Participants also reported that their supervisory officer can help or hinder their ability to manage their emotions.

**Research Question #4: How do Ontario secondary school principals learn to manage their emotions?** When asked how they learned to manage their emotions, the principals in this study did not refer to any formalized programming or professional learning. Rather, almost all of the principals who were interviewed indicated that they have learned to manage their emotions primarily through experience. Most principals described how they have dealt with a variety of different situations since becoming a principal, and that experience helps them manage similar situations as they arise. Gathering advice, or learning from colleagues is the second way principals in this study described learning to manage their emotions. However, several principals also stated that they have always been able to manage their emotions because they have always been calm individuals with a relaxed demeanor.

**Legitimacy**

In addition to collecting data from a broad range of principals working in a variety of different contexts, member checking was employed to increase the quality and legitimacy of the data collected for this study. Member checking involves sharing, and obtaining feedback on the findings from individuals who participated in the study to ensure the accuracy and legitimacy of
all data collected. Now that the study has been summarized, the implications that the findings have for practice, policy, theory and future research will be discussed next.

Implications for Practice

The practical nature of this study led to several recommendations and implications for practice. However, before moving forward it is important to note that these implications for practice should be read with caution as the findings of this study are based on interviews with only 13 secondary school principals. Other principals may have different experiences navigating the emotional terrain of the contemporary principalship and may utilize additional strategies to manage their emotions than those reported in this study. The first implication involves how the secondary school principals in this study have demonstrated that they have the capacity to engage in coping strategies and ways of managing their emotions that quell the effects of emotional labour. These strategies include situation selection, asking the opinions of others and engaging in humour, exercise, sleep or other forms of response modulation (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014; Nezlek & Derks, 2001; Samson & Gross, 2012). However, these same principals also display a tendency to occasionally engage in ER strategies which are considered maladaptive in the literature, including distraction, worry, rumination and thought suppression (Berenbaum, 2010; Davey, Hampton, Farrell & Davidson, 1992; Davey & Meeten 2016; de Jong, Meyer, Beck & Riede 2009; Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014). As such, I suggest focusing on emotions, ER and the impact of emotional labour in principal preparation programs and professional learning opportunities for current principals. Such a focus can promote effective and healthier coping strategies when principals are faced with emotionally challenging or emotionally draining situations. Introducing current and aspiring principals to Gross’ process model for ER (Gross, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2014) would familiarize them with evidence-based and
positive strategies for managing their emotions, and the language necessary to begin engaging in this process.

The second implication for practice to emerge from this study is that contemporary principals need to be able to talk about their work and how they are feeling in order to effectively manage their emotions in a positive manner. This implication speaks to the importance of formal and informal principal networks and professional learning communities. Principals in this study indicate that they rely on others, such as their administrative team or trusted colleagues to assist them in managing their emotions. Professional networks can fill the void when principals are placed at schools where they do not feel comfortable venting or sharing their emotions with members of their administrative team. However, findings from this study suggest that it is simply not enough for the Ministry of Education, school districts or professional associations to simply offer a program and assume that contemporary secondary school principals will participate. The networks or programs need to be made available and principals have to be made aware of them, but they need to feel comfortable reaching out for this kind of professional learning and support. Further, it may also be beneficial for school districts or the Ministry of Education to provide dedicated time for principals to engage in this kind of professional learning.

As principals in Ontario have reported spending over 11 hours on e-mail every week, which is more time than any other form of communication (Pollock, 2014), the importance of opportunities for principals to connect and share problems or practice cannot be understated. As administrator talk continues to be replaced by text, such as e-mail and text messaging (Haughey, 2006; Pollock & Hauseman, 2018), it may be more difficult for principals to develop trusting relationships with colleagues outside of their school site (Pollock, 2016). This underscores the need for effective professional learning communities, such as principal networks and
mentoring programs specifically for principals. Recently retired administrators may have a role to play at either the district-level or through the professional associations by mentoring new and aspiring principals and acting as a critical friend.

Work intensification may be partially responsible for creating the complex work environments in which principals ply their trade. Contemporary principals, including those who participated in this study, are tasked with engaging in activities with which they have little training or experience, such as budgeting and occupational health and safety. Principals in this study also indicated that engaging in these tasks makes it more difficult to manage their emotions because it takes time away from areas they want to be engaged in, such as opportunities to practice instructional leadership and working to develop skills in students, teachers and their administrative team.

It is also worth mentioning that there appears to be a level of stigma with the principals in this study regarding their own mental health and well-being. Principals who use their health benefits, take lieu days or occasionally call in sick to work should be acknowledged for taking proactive steps to maintain their ability to manage their emotions rather than being portrayed as “weak” or not a team player. This stigma speaks to a lack of support from the employer. For example, not one of the principals in this study discussed their school district or the Ministry of Education when asked about supports that assist them in managing their emotions.

The culture of the contemporary principalship needs to change so that principals who are suffering feel empowered to reach out beyond their immediate colleagues for supports, especially in light of work intensification and the tragedies principals can experience as part of their work (Fein & Issacson, 2009; Yamamoto et al., 2014). When dealing with tragedies, principals in this study described how they focus on buffering the school community from the
impact of tragic events, and will often they distract themselves by taking on greater work responsibilities, rather than demonstrate concern for their own health and well-being. This finding demonstrates that even in times of extreme emotional intensity, these secondary school principals often lack professional supports.

Discussing the culture surrounding the contemporary principalship is an important implication for practice to emerge from this study as principals have a responsibility to model healthy leadership practices for their staff and the public. Aspiring and potential principals may be compelled to pursue a different career trajectory after bearing witness to the emotional labour associated with the principalship (Blackmore, 1996; Milley, 2009; Ryan & Tuters, 2015). Further, the principalship may be even less attractive to educators who see their leaders engaging in maladaptive strategies to cope with the emotional toll associated with the position.

Considering that Ontario is currently heading towards a leadership crisis as the baby boom generation heads into retirement (Fink & Brayman, 2004; 2006; Normore, 2004; 2006), it is particularly important for the principalship to be sustainable for those currently in the role and attractive to those considering a career as an administrator.

The findings of this study also have more direct implications for how prospective principals are prepared for the position. Another implication for practice relates to how the findings of this study could better inform prospective principals about the position, and influence their decision-making processes related to pursuing a career as a principal. Prospective principals need to understand that they aspire for a job where they will likely work upwards of 55 hours per week (ATA, 2014; Pollock, 2014; Pollock et al., 2015), where the workload can be overwhelming (Armstrong, 2014; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2016) and opportunities to engage in instructional leadership are too few (Fullan, 2014; Pollock et al., 2015; Stewart, 2006).
Principals in this study also described experiencing emotions, such as fear and anxiety, due to the fact they can face lawsuits from the provincial Ministry of Labour regarding occupational health and safety concerns. According to the principals who participated in this study, all of the challenges listed above can make it difficult to manage their emotions. Disseminating information about the true nature of the contemporary principalship may encourage some individuals who lack strategies to effectively manage their emotions to refrain from self-selecting for the position.

**Implications for Policy**

Several implications related to contemporary educational policies in Ontario emerged from this study. Perhaps the most important of these implications involves secondary school principals reporting that it can be difficult to manage their emotions when they disagree with the policies or initiatives they are tasked with implementing. Principals in this study described experiencing a values clash when discussing Regulation 274/12, a relatively new policy designed to address the surplus of underemployed teachers in the province. While the policy may be well intentioned, participants indicate that it has resulted in numerous unintended consequences for principals, many of which can influence their ability to manage their emotions. For example, Regulation 274/12 compels principals to hire (or at least consider hiring) candidates who may be unsuitable for their school or student population. This puts principals in a difficult position, as their professional judgement should steer principals towards hiring the best qualified candidates who will provide a high level of care and concern for students and their unique needs. Regulation 274/12 also creates situations where principals may experience negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety and confusion, as it strips away their autonomy in terms of staffing the school. Findings from this study point to principals experiencing difficulty managing their emotions when they
are legally responsible and accountable for staffing, and other school functions they have little control over.

Policy implications for the Ministry of Education arising from this study go well beyond the impact of Regulation 274/12 on principals’ ability to manage their emotions. Principals are currently working within a context of work intensification, characterized by an expansion of the complexity and volume of their work, extended work hours, working at a fast pace, increased bureaucratic responsibilities, an amplified reliance on email and text messaging, as well as serving an increasingly diverse student population (ATA, 2012, 2014; Green, 2004; Pollock, 2016). Further, the principalship is not well defined in the Education Act, leaving principals responsible for everything that occurs at the school site. The secondary school principals who participated in this study indicated it can be emotionally challenging to be accountable for items, such as the school budget or occupational health and safety when they do not have experience as an accountant or plant manager. Policy-makers, educators and members of the taxpaying public need to decide what they want from contemporary principals. Do we want real instructional leaders who have the time and expertise to visit classroom and build teaching capacity at the school-level? Are principals simply glorified plant managers whose time is best spent inspecting footwear, conducting ladder training and stamping out other workplace hazards? Or, should the contemporary principal be more of a bureaucrat, crunching numbers to ensure that the school does not run an illegal budget deficit? Many of these new job demands brought on by work intensification have increased the customer-service oriented aspects of the principalship (e.g., parent engagement policy, school councils, student recruitment, fundraising). For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2016) recently approved PPM 159, which mandates collaborative professionalism throughout the provincial school system. As this policy calls for leaders, such as
principals, to engage in increased consultation, collaboration, and communication with all stakeholders (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016), it has the potential to place principals in additional situations where it may be necessary to manage their emotions. These changes hint at a desire for principals to serve a function akin to that of a community organizer and serve as the public face of their respective schools. With this in mind, it is no wonder why the secondary school principals in this study highlighted how the pace, intensity, volume and complexity of their workload makes it challenging to manage their emotions on a daily basis.

Research tells us that principals can have a significant, if indirect, impact on student learning (Anderson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2009; Supovitz et al., 2010). By saddling principals with competing priorities and job demands unrelated to student learning, school districts and the Ministry of Education may be syphoning away the potential positive impacts and influence associated with the principalship. As such, efforts should be made to better define the principalship in provincial-level policies so the position is no longer viewed as a catch all for implementing new provincial initiatives or as an opportunity for school districts to download tasks and responsibilities from central office personnel. Further, principals should also be included in decision-processes regarding the implementation of policies, such as Regulation 274/12, that directly affect them and the work they do on a daily basis.

This study also has policy implications for the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), a regulatory body whose mandate includes developing, reviewing and approving professional learning opportunities for teachers, principals and other educators across the province (Ontario College of Teachers, 2017). Data from this study points to principals’ perceptions that one’s ability to effectively manage emotions is a tacit skill owed to either a calm demeanor or honed through experience navigating the emotional riptide that is the contemporary principalship.
Given that the findings of this study indicate that the contemporary principalship involves a great deal of ER, it may be useful for the OCT to revise the Principal Qualification Program (PQP) to include opportunities for principals to develop effective coping strategies for managing emotions and/or emotionally draining situations. It seems important that such professional learning opportunities be mandated for all principals, so those who lack these skills or have underdeveloped ER strategies can receive support without feeling stigmatized. Service providers that deliver the PQP, such as the professional associations for principals in the province (e.g., the Ontario Principals’ Council and Catholic Principals’ Council of Ontario) and the faculties of education may also be interested in how the findings of this study relate to current preparatory and ongoing professional learning opportunities for Ontario principals. Right now, it appears that principal preparation programs and professional learning opportunities for practicing administrators are missing an opportunity to assist current and aspiring principals in developing effective and adaptive ER strategies (Bolton & English, 2010; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010). However, it is worth mentioning that if their work continues intensifying, even principals with the most diverse and effective ER strategies may have trouble keeping up with the physical and emotional demands of the role.

**Implications for Theory**

This study also resulted in several implications related to administrative theory. As has been stated previously throughout this study, the literature base related to how principals manage their emotions is underdeveloped (Beatty, 2000, 2007; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace 2010; Zembylas, 2010). This topic is gaining more scholarly attention as managerial and functionalist approaches to school leadership are being challenged by more contemporary models and approaches, such as those rooted in social justice (DeMatthews, 2015; Jansen, 2006;
Emotions also seem to be treated as an afterthought in the OLF, a contemporary model of leadership designed to guide administrative practice in the province (Leithwood, 2012; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). The OLF does acknowledge that emotions are involved in school leadership through a set of evidence-based personal leadership resources intended to drive effective school leadership (Leithwood, 2012; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). However, no strategies for effectively managing one’s emotions are contained within the OLF document. Perhaps the intention nested with the OLF is that the positive ER strategies described throughout this study are how resilience and the other PLRs, such as optimism, self-efficacy and problem solving are operationalized by contemporary principals in their work (Leithwood, 2012; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). While the inclusion of ER within the personal leadership resources does provide a good starting point, the findings of this study suggest the OLF does not go far enough in acknowledging that ER has become a fundamental job demand for contemporary principals to be effective in their role.

Similarly, ER is absent from most models of contemporary leadership. The findings from this study could be used to inform new models of leadership that acknowledge the important and fundamental role emotions play in the contemporary principalship.

Implications for Future Research and Next Steps

There is an emergent and increasingly robust body of literature aimed at determining what principals actually engage in on daily basis and the motivation behind their actions (ATA, 2012; Horng et al., 2010; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2016; Pollock et al., 2015). However, much of this research fails to acknowledge the role emotions play in contemporary principals’ work. The findings of this study suggest that work intensification inhibits principals’
ability to manage their emotions. This study, along with some recent publications on similar
topics, seeks to shine a light on the emotional aspects of the principalship in contemporary times
(Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Crawford, 2009; Milley, 2009; Schmidt, 2010; Wallace, 2010;
Yamamoto et al., 2014). Based on the evidence from this study, ER is a fundamental work task
associated with the contemporary principalship and is worthy of additional study. This study also
contributes to emergent lines of inquiry exploring the changing nature of principals’ work (ATA,
2012; Horng et al., 2010; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; Pollock, 2016; Pollock et al., 2015) and the
ways in which leaders, such as principals, manage their emotions in the workplace (Beatty, 2000,
2007; Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Blackmore, 2004; Blase & Blase, 1992; Carr, 1994; Crawford,
Throughout the research process, I also made an effort to identify next steps for further research
on this topic, as well as aspects of the study that could be modified or would warrant changes if
conducting this, or a similar study, in the future.

The first implication I would like to address in this subsection focuses on the small
sample size and lack of diversity among the secondary school principals that participated in this
study. Similar to most research conducted on principals in Canada, this study involved a small
sample size and utilized qualitative research methods, such as interviews (Pollock & Hauseman,
2015). Though this study sought input from Ontario secondary school principals working in a
range of different school contexts, this research project resulted in a small exploratory study,
designed to generate initial data regarding how secondary school principals manage their
emotions. While I personally do not have the time or resources to speak with every secondary
school principal in the province about how they manage emotions, obtaining input from a greater
number of current principals would have been beneficial in further validating and triangulating the experiences and ER strategies employed by the 13 principals that participated in this study.

The fact that participating secondary school principals were willing to speak about how they manage their emotions speaks to their capacity to engage in ER strategies that are associated with positive outcomes, such as situation selection or situation modification. It may also be beneficial for future research to focus on principals who are struggling to manage their emotions. For example, as mentioned earlier, Pollock (2014) found that 29% of principals self-medicate in an effort to deal with the emotionally draining aspects of their work. Conducting a study that focuses solely on principals who are struggling would allow researchers to identify factors or practices associated with principals who are less able to manage their emotions in a positive manner. It would be particularly interesting to explore how vice-principal support and other factors related to school context mediate or moderate principals’ abilities to effectively manage their emotions and engage in positive coping strategies.

After conducting the present study, I am also left wondering about how elementary school principals approach ER and if they utilize similar strategies described by the secondary school principals who participated in this study. For example, secondary school principals in this study indicated that they often attempt to manage their emotions by venting with trusted colleagues, such as those found on their administrative teams. Elementary school principals often lack the administrative supports available to secondary school principals, such as a compliment of vice-principals and other support staff, which may limit their ability to engage in these kinds of ER strategies (O’Connor, 2004). As such, it would be interesting to conduct this same study with elementary school principals to assess whether school panel is a contextual factor that impacts the ways in which principals to manage their emotions.
On the whole, more qualitative and quantitative research data is necessary to better understand how emotions influence principals, their effectiveness and the quality of decisions they make. Right now, this study and recent evidence hints at principals facing challenges managing their emotions because they feel a lack of support from their employer, and are burdened and overwhelmed by workload (Cattonar et al., 2007; Grodzki, 2011; Leithwood & Azah, 2014; MacMillan et al., 2004; Pollock, 2014; Pollock et al., 2015). More large-scale research exploring the principalship in Ontario and Canada will assist in developing a knowledge base to better understand how the ability to manage emotions intersects with other changes in contemporary principals’ work. A broader and more diverse knowledge base can also potentially provide additional avenues of support for current principals. Recent research projects conducted by Pollock (2014), Leithwood and Azah (2014), Armstrong (2014), and the Alberta Teachers’ Association (2014) provide a good starting point for moving forward with this line of inquiry.

While this study was solely designed with the purpose of exploring how principals manage their emotions, future research on this topic could consider identifying factors or reasons why principals engage in different ER strategies. For example, this study did not inquire about “why” an individual may use one or more ER strategies to manage their emotions in one situation, and other strategies in different situations. Some principals in this study indicated that they may suppress their emotions and engage in surface acting by masking how they feel because they do not want to be portrayed as weak or ineffective. Conducting research into why principals engage in the different strategies could determine if suppressing emotions and surface acting in a conscious effort to demonstrate strength and competence is widespread throughout the profession. If empirical evidence demonstrates that a significant portion of current principals engage in ER to buffer themselves from perceptions of weakness, the earlier discussion on
changing the culture of the principalship found in the implications for practice section of this chapter will take on greater significance. Studying this topic could also be beneficial to current and aspiring principals by identifying different ER strategies that are effective for different principals under different conditions (e.g., elementary school, secondary school, urban, suburban or rural contexts, etc.).

Rather than casting a wide net as was done with this study, it would may also be interesting to conduct similar research using a case study approach, with an in-depth focus on how secondary school principals from one school district or one region of the province manage their emotions. Being able to compare and contrast findings from this study and a more focused study on how secondary school principals manage their emotions conducted within a particular region or district would allow for an initial examination of how local and contextual factors influence ER.

It is also worth mentioning that issues related to inclusion and diversity are largely absent from, and are not addressed in this study. All but one of the 13 participating secondary school principals involved in this study self-identified as Caucasian. This lack of diversity is representative of the larger principal population in Ontario. For example, Pollock’s (2014) conducted a large-scale survey of Ontario’s public school principal population and found that 93% of respondents self-identified as Caucasian. Though the sample for this study is largely representative of the larger principal population in Ontario, if I was conducting this study again, I would likely make additional efforts to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds. This would allow for a better exploration into how principals’ emotional responses and ER strategies can be influenced by notions culture and privilege. Further, the sample is primarily composed of
men, who accounted for eight of the 13 participants. The remaining five participants self-identified as female. In further studies, it would be preferable to attain better gender balance.

**Conclusion**

This study is important for several reasons, including the fact that principals’ work is emotionally charged by its very nature, and success in the role demands effective management of emotions. Further, effective leadership has also been associated with the ability to effectively manage emotions, though but suppressing emotions is also associated with emotional exhaustion, burnout, self-doubt and other negative outcomes (Gooty et al., 2010; Haver et al., 2013). The secondary school principals involved in this study highlight many conditions that can lead to emotion-generating situations in their daily work, such as workload, managing tragedies at the school site, and encountering barriers when advocating for students. These, and additional conditions, can result in both male and female secondary school principals experiencing emotional labour as their work involves bodily, cognitive and expressive emotion work. It is also important to mention that the findings from this study deviate from the literature (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998) as issues related to gender and power failed to emerge as a factor influencing the strategies that participating principals use to manage their emotions on a daily basis. Perhaps the largest factor influencing how principals manage their emotions at work is related to their level of autonomy and whether they can apply their professional judgement in the workplace. The provincial Ministry of Education, school districts and professional associations can harness the evidence to develop meaningful professional learning opportunities surrounding strategies to strengthen secondary school principals’ ER skills and strategies. Further, this research provides incoming and aspiring school leaders with an accurate representation of the heavy emotional work involved in the contemporary principalship.
It was also determined that the 13 secondary school principals that participated in this study engage in several different strategies to manage their emotions. The strategies principals identified are consistent with the five families of ER found within Gross’ (1998, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2013, 2014) Process Model of Emotional Regulation. These strategies include situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. While some of the strategies, such as expressive suppression or asking the opinions of others, have been documented in prior research, many strategies these principals engage in to manage their emotions have not been previously reported in the literature. For example, situation selection, thought suppression, rumination and worrying are just some of the strategies secondary school principals in this study used to effectively managing their emotions that have not been reported in prior research. Some of these strategies, such as asking the opinions of others, are associated with positive outcomes, but principals in this study also report engaging in ER strategies associated with negative outcomes, such ruminating about emotionally challenging situations.

It is important that our leaders, including secondary school principals, are healthy, happy and able to operate at full capacity. The latter is impossible if principals are struggling to manage their emotions. Continuing to cultivate a sensitivity to the heavy emotional burden shouldered by contemporary secondary school principals can help to end the stigma surrounding their mental health and wellness, and ultimately change the culture within the profession. Only then can secondary school principals maximize their influence on students and student achievement.


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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

How Principals Manage Their Emotions

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your current school and your professional journey to the principalship?

2. Can you talk about the emotional aspects of the contemporary principalship?

3. Can you describe the positive and/or negative emotions you have felt (or would feel) when faced with the following scenarios:
   a) Suspending a student because of repeated discipline concerns or conduct violations;
   b) Meeting with that student’s parent to discuss the situation and develop a plan for the student’s return to the school setting;
   c) Experiencing success working with teachers to change their practice;
   d) Receiving a second reminder e-mail from the district office/ministry asking for an overdue report that has yet to be completed. (dealing with tight deadlines)

   [probe about whether, how, and why they would (or had to) manage emotions in each of the scenarios]

4. Can you describe situations in your work which incite positive and/or negative emotions, or when a situation where you had to change a situation to suit your feelings when dealing with:
   a) teachers;
   b) students;
   c) parents/guardians; and
   d) your superintendent and/or district leadership.

5. Do you ever find it necessary to manage your emotions (mask how you really feel) how at work?

6. Why do you find it necessary to manage your emotions at work?

7. Do you ever face challenges in managing your emotions at work? If so, how do you go about maintaining your composure and getting on with your work day?

8. What factors help or hinder how you manage your emotions at work?

9. Let’s say that you are unable to manage your emotions well in a given situation or haven’t in the past. What do you do, or did you do to rectify the situation?
10. How did you learn to manage your emotions?

11. Thank you for your time. Is there anything you would like to add?