TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF
LEADERSHIP APPROACHES OF IN-SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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By
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Carmen Joy Danyluk, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration, has presented a thesis titled, *Teachers’ Perceptions of Leadership Approaches of In-School Administrators*, in an oral examination held on December 7, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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*via ZOOM*
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to collect, analyse, and represent teachers’ stories of experience regarding varied leadership approaches of in-school administrators. In this study, I focused on teachers' perceptions of the role of the in-school administrators as viewed through teachers' experiences of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators and the impact of these perceptions on the teachers’ professional practice. Data collection occurred in two stages: first, an anonymous online survey was completed by 63 participants; and second, one-on-one confidential interviews were conducted with seven participants. All research participants were practicing teachers from southern Saskatchewan schools, and all volunteered to participate. I explored participants’ stories of their experience with in-school administrators using a narrative inquiry methodology, which positioned me and my participants as peers and co-constructors of understanding. Guided by inquiry methodology, I viewed and analyzed the data (participants’ survey responses and personal interview narratives) through an adaptation of McCormack’s Lenses (Dibley, 2011; McCormack, 2004) specifically designed for this study; the three modified lenses focused on the understandings that participants and I co-constructed in the course of interviews (What We Construct), the language participants used to describe their perceptions of various approaches to in-school leadership (How They Describe), and the content of the personal narratives that participants shared as they described their experiences with, and perceptions of, in-school leadership approaches (What They Describe). In general, through the research, I found that teachers perceived the leadership approaches of in-school administrators as a powerful influence on the school climate and on their own professional practice, and that teachers have specific hopes and
expectations for the role of in-school administrators. I conclude this research text by providing a number of recommendations for in-school administrators regarding their leadership approaches, based on participating teachers’ perceptions and experiences.

Keywords: teachers; administrators; leadership; narrative inquiry
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I am grateful to the many leaders in my life who confirm, strengthen and guide me, whether in my work as a teacher or in the work of my life.

And I am deeply grateful for the nourishing grace of Jesus Christ. When I am weak, he is strong. Soli Deo Gloria.
Dedicated to my parents,
the first and formative leaders in my life.

I value the weight and beauty of leadership
because of you.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;I have worked with some very good administrators in my teaching career. These are the ones who support the teachers and help them to grow to be even better at their craft. Sadly, there have also been many others who have done the opposite. Thank goodness for the first group or I may have stopped teaching.&quot;</th>
<th>Survey Respondent #39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I have encountered many, many administrators. A principal's support and encouragement are crucial to the positive atmosphere in a school. When the admin is critical, negative and not doing their job, the atmosphere can be toxic.&quot;</td>
<td>Survey Respondent #22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I have worked for many administrators and the more I appreciate the method with which they interact with me and/or run the school, the better job I want to do for them. It directly affects my teaching efforts.&quot;</td>
<td>Survey Respondent #27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;When teachers feel heard, valued and part of a team, they will work harder. When they feel a lack of support and feel like they are trying harder than their administrator, they will pull back their individual efforts.&quot;</td>
<td>Survey Respondent #13</td>
</tr>
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Teaching has always been a fundamentally relational occupation. Teachers are face-to-face with the struggles and successes of students on a daily basis, and teachers devote their expertise and their energies to these relationships as they support, cajole, encourage, admonish, learn, and instruct. Yet there is another key set of relationships within the school that affect the daily life of the teacher: those that exist between teachers and their in-school administrators (principals and vice-principals). The quotations opening this text demonstrate that in-school administrators’ leadership actions and reactions are observed and experienced by teachers. Moreover, the words of these and other practicing teachers indicate that teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of their in-school administrators can influence the teachers' experience of teaching.
Purpose of the Study

Teachers and in-school administrators, as distinct groups, both seem to expect that in-school administrators will provide support and leadership to teachers. However, though in-school administrators may choose their actions as a deliberate aggregate of their perspectives and leadership philosophies, it is possible that they do not necessarily see the extent of the impact of their professional leadership approaches on the teachers with whom they work. Likewise, even if teachers feel the impetus to cognize the way in which principals and vice-principals approach their leadership roles, they do not often have avenues available to address the influence of these leadership approaches on the teachers’ own practice. So the potential exists for a disconnect between both groups’ perceptions of in-school administrators’ leadership approaches.

Cloud (2006) describes this potential disconnect by comparing it to the wake left behind by a speedboat. Cloud explains how sometimes the person in the wake is waterskiing—successful, invigorated, and challenged. Other times, the person in the wake is being tossed around by the waves—struggling to breathe, helpless, and panicked. The boat that creates the wake is, in Cloud’s examples, the leader of a business or organization:

We leave a wake of people behind us as we move through their lives and their organizations…. Are they more trusting after working with us? Are they more fulfilled as people? Have they grown as a result of being associated with you? …Did your relationship cause them to produce more? Or, are they wounded? Less trusting? Feeling put down, cheated, or manipulated? (pp. 16-18)
To the person in the wake, the leaders' original intentions are somewhat inconsequential because their wake (the impact of their actions) "doesn't lie and it doesn't care about excuses" (p. 17).

Applying this analogy to teacher/in-school administrator relationship, this means that in-school administrators’ chosen approaches to leadership have an effect on teachers—and that teachers may not be affected in the way in which in-school administrators intended. Teachers have perceptions1 of their experiences with in-school administrators’ approaches to leadership, and these perceptions are significant. That which teachers experience as a result of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators must be acknowledged as a very real experience, even if in-school administrators’ perceptions may differ from the teachers’ perceptions. Teachers’ stories of experience—and the way in which they tell their stories—are important and meaning-filled, and they need to be heard. This study responded to the need for these stories to be heard.

My purpose in this study was to collect, analyse, and represent teachers’ stories of experience regarding varied leadership approaches of in-school administrators and to present a qualitative representation of the professional teacher-administrator relationship, complementing quantitative research that already exists in the field. I studied, and here

1 Throughout this study, I use the term ‘perception’ to refer to teachers’ constructions of their experiences with varied approaches to in-school leadership. The term ‘perception’ incorporates the way in which teachers’ views of their personal experiences have been shaped by their own distinct thoughts and beliefs, as well as the way in which teachers understand and recount their experiences. In this study, when teachers tell stories about their experiences with in-school administrators’ approaches to leadership, their viewpoint is shaped by their perception. In a manner of speaking, perception is its own type of experience. It is linked to the concept of ‘perspective’ as both assume the existence of a personal viewpoint; however, ‘perspective’ indicates a time-bound vantage point while ‘perception’ indicates an ongoing, influential filter-like experience.
represent, teachers' perceptions of the teacher-administrator relationship through narrative inquiry rather than through a reductionist, technical study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The complex dynamics of the teacher-administrator relationship should, in my view, be studied and represented through a methodology that allows for, and even embraces, complex and competing perspectives. More to the point, these complex stories of relationship are most transparent when education professionals participating in the study can shape the text used to represent them, both in the initial telling of the stories and in their final representation.

Since the primary focus of the study was to gather the teachers' stories of experience regarding their in-school administrators’ leadership styles and approaches, the significance of this study is that teachers' voices provide the research data, and teacher-participants are co-constructors of the data. The stories of the teachers are the guiding voices in this study. From the initial gathering of data to its final analysis and presentation format, I drew on a narrative inquiry methodology.

The purpose of this study was to provide a written record of what is often only spoken or felt: the stories of experiences from teachers regarding their perception of the impact that their in-school administrators have had on their professional work, perspective, satisfaction, and relationships. This study represents the voices of the teachers as central and vivid, and their experiences with their administrators as significant. In other words, I intended in this study to "legitimize our professional memory" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 36). This study set out to embed teachers' voices into the narratives of schools, and to provide a research text which may allow in-school administrators the opportunity to view and reflect on teachers' perceptions of in-
school administrators’ leadership approaches. Because these perceptions exist, it is crucial that administrators understand how their teachers experience various approaches to in-school leadership.

The significance of this study lies in its demonstration that teachers perceive the leadership approaches of in-school administrators as a powerful influence on the school climate and on teachers’ own professional practice, and that teachers have specific hopes and expectations for the role of in-school administrators. It is my hope that the teachers’ voices represented in this study might shape principals’ and vice-principals’ perceptions of their own leadership approaches and their day-to-day relationships with teachers. It is also my hope that teachers’ voices would be of interest to current and aspiring in-school administrators as they reflect on their own leadership practices. Additionally, the teachers’ voices may inform division staff who make or influence the administration selection process; the teachers’ voices may shed light on the daily, years-long, lived experiences of teachers whose professional work is shaped, restricted, motivated, critiqued, changed, and influenced by—or in spite of—their in-school administrators.

**Research Question**

The guiding question for this research study was: *How do teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators shape teachers’ professional practices?* To that end, this study focused on teachers’ perceptions of the role of the in-school administrators as viewed through teachers’ experiences of the leadership

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2 Included in the scope of the term *teachers' professional practice* are teaching relationships (for example, professional relationships with administrators, other teachers, staff members, and students), participation in the school environment (for example, staff meetings and organized learning groups, meetings with parents and students, extracurricular involvement), teaching practice (for example, planning lessons, preparing activities, teaching students, and assessing student work), personal reactions (reflecting on and considering the daily elements of professional practice), along with the daily experiences of the above.
approaches of in-school administrators and the impact of these perceptions on teachers’ interactions and relationships with the in-school administrators, teachers’ work, and teachers’ professional contentment. This research has, at its centre, teachers' stories of experience with their in-school administrators as told and analysed through a narrative inquiry process.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

It is my intent in this chapter to examine research on the recent and relevant theories of leadership that have influenced discussions of educational administration, along with the general approaches to leadership and qualities of leaders espoused in that research.

In this literature review, I make a case for studying educational leadership, and I make a case for studying educational leadership through narrative inquiry. Both areas of study are established in their own right. There is a wide expanse of research literature on the topic of educational administration, much of it recent and related to the nature of this study (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). That research supports the premise that the nature of the teacher-administrator relationship is a significant part of education systems. Also, current research literature supports the use of narrative methodology in educational settings (Schaafsma, Pagnucci, Wallace, & Stock, 2007; Smadu, 2008). However, while research literature focused on the teacher-administrator relationship exists, it is rarely studied using a qualitative, let alone narrative, methodology. In this review of the literature section, I discuss the wide support in current research for the recognition of the influence of in-school leaders, along with valuing narrative methodology as a suitable and powerful tool for research studies in the field of educational administration.

Through this review, I make a case for focusing my research study on the teacher-administrator relationship through narrative methodology. Though I address these two
areas (educational research on leadership and narrative methodology) in separate sections below, I propose that these areas of study complement each other: narrative methodology can provide a window into different way of knowing about educational leadership.

**Studying Leadership**

Hoy and Miskel (2008), while discussing educational administration, define leadership as "a specialized role and social influence process" which is "comprised of both rational and emotional elements" (p. 421). In-school administrators, as those in this specialized role, are generally expected to possess a certain portfolio of personal traits or skills. Carlton (1987), studying possible variations in perceptions of principals’ leadership skills within their role, uses a scale-based numerical rating system to elicit responses from teachers and principals. The analysis is quantitative, as is the data collection tool, and participants’ voices were not featured in the final representation of the study. Carlton observes how teachers and principals rank common administrator skills (problem analysis, judgment, leadership, stress tolerance, oral communication, written communication, range of interest, educational values, personal motivation, and sensitivity), according to their personal perceptions, then compares these responses with what principals believe that teachers believe. While Carlton views educators’ perceptions as the primary source of information and aims to provide a source of feedback for principals, his study focuses on a concrete list of skills, rather than on the impact of varying leadership approaches on the day-to-day professional lives of the teachers.

Through their extensive research on leadership, particularly in the field of education, Hoy and Miskel (2008) propose that effective leaders have traits and skills that can be combined into three categories: personality traits, motivation traits, and skills.
Though they acknowledge that the list of potential personality traits of effective leaders can be long, they emphasize the traits of self-confidence, stress tolerance, emotional maturity, integrity, and extroversion. They also acknowledge that effective leaders demonstrate motivation, "a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual to initiate work-related behavior and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration (p. 424). Both motivation traits and personality traits can, according to Hoy and Miskel, be developed as leaders reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, Hoy and Miskel also believe that there are certain common skills represented in effective leaders: technical skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills. These traits and skills can be learned, though both also can occur naturally, and "the effectiveness of leadership behaviours depends on the leader having the skills needed to select and execute the needed behaviors in ways that are consistent with the organizational situation" (p. 426).

In a U.K. empirical study about the characteristics of effective school leadership, Day, Harris, and Hadfield (2001) collected data from the viewpoints of various stakeholders in an attempt to avoid “viewing from a particular perspective” (p. 20). To accomplish this, the researchers facilitated twelve case studies, gathering an overwhelming amount of data with the purpose of avoiding bias and of gaining a non-contextual understanding of effective leadership. The Day et al. study focused on the objective qualities of the effective leader regardless of context, rather than the subjective experience felt by those under certain types of leadership. They found that effective leaders tend to have integrity, communicate their values, and view their followers as
competent and capable: “Goals were clear and agreed, communications were good and everyone had high expectations of themselves and others” (p. 32).

After a thorough study of predominantly quantitative literature on leadership, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins’ (2008) study set forward the claim that “almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices” (p. 29): setting the school’s vision and creating practical expectations for teachers, supporting and motivating the teaching staff in order to help teachers develop personally, and creating an organizational environment that actively sets teachers up for success (p. 30). However, beginning in the 1940s, the concept that leaders are only leaders due to the fact that they possess leadership traits was refuted by Ralph M. Stoghill, who proposed that "the trait approach by itself had yielded negligible and confusing results" (as stated in Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 422). Stoghill began to recognize that leadership depends, at least in part, on the situation in which the leader is based. Leithwood et al. (2008) also suggest that leadership practices are best applied in a “contextually sensitive” (p. 31) manner. Hoy and Miskel's analysis of situational factors that affect educational leadership includes consideration of the characteristics of the organization, the followers, and the role of the leader, along with the internal and external environment.

Since the decline of a solely trait-based approach to understanding leadership in the field of education, other ways of thinking about leadership have taken its place in terms of precedence. Hoy and Miskel (2008) outline several historical and continuing concepts of educational leadership, including instructional leadership which "emphasizes the improvement of teaching and learning in the school's technical core" (p. 433), along with the concept of distributed leadership, which accepts the complexity of school
organizations in its attempt to embrace the leadership demonstrated by various groups within the school.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) also discuss the concept of transformational leadership, a type of leadership that finds its root in “the personal values and beliefs of leaders” (p. 448). Since the 1970s and 1980s, when Downtown, Burns and Bass introduced and reformed the theory of transactional and transformational approaches to leadership, the theory has dominated discussion about the purposes of leadership and measures of leadership success and effectiveness (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Nguni, Sleegers, & Denessen, 2006). The transformational approach to leadership encompasses many of the skills and traits of other leadership approaches:

Transformational leaders are expected to define the need for change, create new visions and muster commitment to the visions, concentrate on long-term goals, inspire followers to transcend their own interests to pursue higher-order goals, change the organization to accommodate their vision rather than work within the existing one, and mentor followers to take greater responsibility for their own development and that of others.

(Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 448)

A wide body of the current literature about leadership in schools focuses on the concept of transformational leadership, and a wider-still body of research discusses in-school leadership that bears strong similarities to the principles of transformational leadership, but does not always draw on the same terminology. Thus, in the discussion that follows, I refer to research studies which examine in-school administration using concepts and issues that are currently discussed by transformational leadership, even
though some of these studies do not explicitly use the language of transformational leadership. Educational research regarding transformational leadership has largely focused on its effects as demonstrated through the role of in-school administrators; Leithwood and Sleegers (2006) believe that “studies exploring this approach to leadership are especially timely as questions about the relative value of instructional and transformational approaches have become of considerable interest to reform-minded policy-makers, as well as to practitioners and researchers” (p. 143).

According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), transformational leaders seek to influence their followers by acting as an admirable model for them, to inspire their followers with high and meaningful standards, to encourage discussions and creativity, and to consider each follower individually. The tenets of transformational leadership are commonly held to be based in relationship and centered on values (Day, et al., 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006), especially when compared to transactional leadership, which focuses on contracts and rewards, and laisse-faire leadership, the defining characteristic of which is avoidance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Day et al. (2001) suggest that “effective leadership is defined and driven by individual value systems” (p. 32).

When discussing their study of Tanzanian primary schools, Nguni, Sleegers, and Denessen (2006) note that transformational approaches to leadership often result in higher rates of teachers’ job satisfaction, teachers’ commitment and identification with school values, and teachers’ voluntary altruistic behaviour within the school. They likewise note that, while transactional approaches to leadership often result in teachers’ willingness to stay committed to their job, there are few or weak positive effects on other areas of the teachers’ professional practice. While Lee and Nie (2014) do not use the
term ‘transformational leadership,’ they demonstrate agreement with the characteristics of transformational leadership in stating, “when teachers feel empowered in their work environments and from the work they do, they would be more likely to feel satisfied with their job and committed towards their organisation and profession” (p. 76). Many additional studies inquire into teachers' job satisfaction and attitudes, noting that these person-centered, subjective factors are largely framed by the influence of the principal's role and/or selected leadership style (Anderman, Belzer, & Smith, 1991; Bogler, 2002; Ismail, 2012; Morton, 2003; Sun, 2004).

The effects of transformational-type approaches to leadership are not, however, only internal. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) recognize that school leaders who exhibit a transformational approach to school leadership affect teachers’ motivation and capacity for their work, along with leaders’ abilities to affect the teachers’ work environment. Lee and Nie (2014) note that teachers’ perceptions of school leaders’ empowering behaviours can affect teachers’ work outcomes. Blase and Blase’s (1999) study also focused on teachers’ perceptions of administration, and highlight the importance of “understanding the meanings human beings construct in the social settings” (p. 131) to study teachers’ perspectives on effective instructional leadership. In their study, they incorporated teachers’ own words into their representation of the data, and challenged principals to reflect on how their behaviours and perspectives affect the way the teachers in their school teach. Similarly, Shore and Walshaw (2016) also dealt in perceptions in their study of the attitudes and expectations of the role of assistant (deputy) principals in New Zealand. They report that assistant principals’ perceptions of the advantages and
limitations of their jobs, and their relationships within their workplace, dramatically affected their perspectives on their roles.

After Leithwood et al.’s (2008) intensive study of relevant literature in the field of school leadership, they state, “school leadership is second only to classroom teacher as an influence on pupil learning” (p. 28), likely because “leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the building” (p. 29). Leithwood et al. conclude that in-school administrators had “quite strong and positive influences on staff members’ motivations, commitments and beliefs concerning the supportiveness of their working conditions” (p. 32). In a thorough and detailed quantitative report, Price (2012) studies how the interpersonal professional relationship between principals and teachers impacts or creates the organizational climate.

Penlington, Kington, and Day (2008) demonstrate that, when a school leader sets a specific, forward-thinking and responsive vision for the school and works to establish a school climate that responds to the needs of the students, teachers generally receive clear direction in their work; they are able to develop professionally, and are thus able to affect student outcomes. Anderman et al. (1991) employ a strictly quantitative focus in their study of principals’ leadership approaches and their effect on teaching staff (particularly the teachers’ perceptions of school climate, and therefore enjoyment of their work), and find that teacher commitment and satisfaction are often contingent on an instructional climate that makes room for teachers to be recognized and feel affiliated (p. 20) and that principals have a “major role in structuring the work environment” (p. 21).

The study of leadership in education is a key and continuing area of interest for researchers. Several studies mentioned above demonstrate that the perceptions and
experiences of teachers and/or administrators are considered valuable, and these studies are commonly positioned qualitatively, sometimes with narrative elements. However, typically, studies about the nature of the professional relationship between teachers and in-school administrators draw on quantitative analyses and representation. The expanse of research on the professional interplay between in-school administrators and teachers indicates that the topic of teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators is both relevant and complex. To capture some of this complexity, I posit that narrative inquiry is a capable, responsive methodology with which to study the topic of teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators.

**Studying Leadership Narratively**

Many researchers have heartily demonstrated that narrative inquiry is an apt methodology with which to study educational experiences (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008; Masuda, Ebersole, & Barrett, 2013; McCormack, 2004; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Schaafsma, Pagnucci, Wallace, & Stock, 2007; Smith, 2012). In other words, narrative inquiry is suited to the complex nature of the teaching experience. In a critical review of a narrative study that focused on new teachers’ perspectives on teaching, Abdallah (2009) lists five reasons why the chosen narrative methodology was appropriate for the research scope: (1) narrative inquiry is equal to the investigation of the complex context(s) of participants; (2) narrative inquiry is equal to a complex, multi-perspectives topic; (3) the narrative experience of teaching should be studied narratively; (4) narrative inquiry facilitates the goal of sketching the big picture rather than examining only a part of it; and (5) teachers’ stories are imbued with their knowledge of context, and this can be expressed in narrative.
Because story is an interpretive action, "narrative inquiry brings education and the educational process to life" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 24). Hamilton et al. also cite Connelly and Clandinin, whose 1990 study, according to Hamilton et al., "recognized the importance of narrative inquiry as a research methodology focusing on how lived life bears on lived educational experiences" (p. 19). Smith (2012) also states that a life history interview approach "offers scope for exploring subjective realities" and that "it allows for profound understandings of the complex reasons that lie beneath people's decisions and actions" (p. 496).

Narrative is often a natural and accepted communication style for teachers (Abdallah, 2009; Schaafsma et al., 2007). Hamilton et al. (2008) state that narrative inquiry "often appeals to teachers and teacher educators who share and learn from one another through exchanges about knowledge, skills, practices, and evolving understandings" (p. 19). Schaafsma et al. relate the realization that narrative is "at the heart of the inquiries that we practicing teachers conduct more and or less formally" (Schaafsma et al., 2007, p. 288). This assertion rings true in my experience; teachers, myself included, tell stories with students ("Someday, you're going to be sitting around a board room table, and you're going to use this!") and of students ("My homeroom student is dealing with a difficult situation at home. Can we make some accommodations on our end?"). We position decisions from 'higher up' within storied understandings ("My cousin in Alberta said that when they encountered something similar, then…"). We even position ourselves in narratives that we tell to other teachers ("Do you have a second for a funny story about those new holistic rubrics?").
Schaafsma et al. (2007) state that the idea “that teachers tell anecdotes when discussing their teaching is common knowledge” (p. 288) but that these anecdotes—the telling of them and the forming of them—are part of our experience of the teaching practice. They conclude, "anecdotal accounts, filled with meaning and significance, seem to serve us better as we research the interactions that constitute teaching and learning in our classrooms" (p. 288). It strikes me that the collective "we” here is neither accidental nor incidental: stories happen in community.

Narrative inquiry positions the researcher as a peer, fellow learner, and co-constructor. Narrative inquiry can be an educational experience in itself, as "narrative inquirers are attuned to the feelings, desires, needs, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions of both self and other" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 20). Netolicky (2015) writes of how she believes stories have an innate capacity for challenging and changing the teachers who experience them: "Stories in my own life—read or told—have provided critical transformative moments for me, shaping my personal modus operandi and impacting on my professional practice as a teacher" (p. 265). McCormack (2004) and Dibley (2011) each use narrative inquiry to position themselves with participants who have similar roles and/or experiences, and they recognize that narrative inquiry gives room for peer-based conversations and understandings. Hargreaves (2005) notes that ethnographic studies can focus on both personal experiences and individuals’ moment-by-moment emotional expressions; this has marked similarities to narrative. The line between ethnographic and narrative is often ambiguous or blurred (Hamilton et al., 2008) because of narrative inquiry’s ability to allow the participants’ environments to be represented in their narratives.
Smith (2012) tells of using life history interviews to explore the perceptions of female secondary school teachers regarding factors that affect their career decisions. She notes that the practice of story-telling frees the participants to determine the weight and meaning of their words "rather than [respond] to a preconceived agenda by the researcher" (p. 488). Smith sees life history, as a form of narrative, as a co-construction between teacher-participants and the researcher since it allows for an incorporation of the participants' perspectives into the nature and structure of the analysis. Masuda et al. (2013) do not name their chosen methodology directly but cite narrative inquiry characteristics of their study. When examining teachers' attitudes toward professional development at different career stages, they chose to collect data through participant interviews: they wanted to "examine discourses" closely, but they also found that the audio recordings of the interviews allowed researchers to examine "the tone and use of language and meaning by participants" (p. 8). The authors describe how, in these interviews, teachers were able to express complex inner conflict, and thus it was the teachers themselves who were able to emphasize what they chose.

Because I constructed my research question with narrative methodology as my guide, I was free to position myself as a co-constructor of understanding with each interview participant. I found that participants —the survey respondents and interview participants— quickly assumed a story-telling framework in their responses. Narrative inquiry proved capable of navigating the complex and personal stories of experience and perceptions which were shared by participants, analysed by me, and represented in this study.
Conclusion of Literature Review

While this literature has shown that there is a substantial body of research studies concerning both in-school leadership and the use of narrative, it has also demonstrated that there is a lack of studies featuring teachers' voices reflecting on leadership, both in the gathered data and in the representation of the data. A shortage of studies exists that examine stories of teachers' experiences with their principals and/or school leaders. A need exists for a study that observes and values teachers' perceptions of the professional all-inclusive impact that an in-school administrator (principal or vice-principal) can have on teachers. This study, through the research question of “How do teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators shape teachers’ professional practices?”, addresses this need.
Chapter 3: Research Design

For my study, I used the guiding principles of narrative inquiry as my methodology, as I worked narratively in my methods of gathering, interpreting, and representing the data.

Methodology

I studied my research question ("How do teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators shape teachers’ professional practices?") through narrative inquiry, in part because narrative inquiry embraces the participant as an active co-constructor and peer in the study. According to Leiblich (2013), people form identity through story, and through stories people assign meaning to their lives. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) add that story-telling creates meaning-filled patterns in our lives. We tell stories back and forth to learn, to fill the space, to trade or offer insight, to show that we understand, and to "enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 44). Clandinin and Connelly recognize that a research participant may change by telling the stories, in addition to having lived the experience of the story; narrative inquiry is "heuristic," enabling the participant to discover rather than to reduce their entire experience to a series of charts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 10). In line with this view of narrative, my role as the researcher in this study was "to be an effective listener and to see the interviewee as a storyteller rather than as a respondent" (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, p. 464).
Narrative inquiry offers affirmation to the existence and acceptance of stories that are continually developing. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write of their struggle to find, in traditional education discourse, "more intuitive ways of coming to terms with life in the classrooms, with life in schools, and with life in other educational landscapes" (p. 18). The authors find narrative inquiry to be responsive: it "carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem, definition and solution." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124, italics in original). Narrative inquirers do not necessarily search for a common meaning created by all participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Thus, narrative inquiry does not require a happy ending—or any ending at all.

Narrative inquiry embraces the complexity of human story. An individual might have interpreted a situation through a thick lens of their own experience—unaware of the differing interpretations of other individuals involved in that experience—but that personal interpretation of experience has an undeniable, very real effect on the individual. Thus, narrative methodology “begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell, 2013, p. 70). It encourages the researcher to accept complication and fluidity, resisting the urge for a "good guy" and a "bad guy"; it recognizes that people's lives and experiences are "filled with complexities" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv). Mitchell and Egudo (2003) add, "narrative offers the potential to address ambiguity, uncertainty, complexity and dynamism of individual, group, and organisational phenomena. Narrative analysis can be used to record different viewpoints and interpret collected data to identify similarities and differences in experiences and actions" (p. 5).
People’s "felt experience with the world" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 36) is the literature of their lives; whether their experienced version of events is subjective or even limited (compared to the objective experience) has very little to do with it. After all, the tears one fights back at a key moment in a novel are no less salty than those that sting one’s eyes in a non-fiction biography. In that moment, it is the tears that matter—at first, at least. The analogy extends to lived experiences: Perhaps people will eventually sort out whether their interpretations of events or interactions were fiction or non-fiction, and maybe they will not. They will remember, though, that they cried in that story. Narrative methodology can hold these experiences with an open hand (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); it is “sufficiently open-ended and flexible to harness the complexities of narrators’ lives, offering rich, deep insights into the multilayered and multifarious factors that influence and frame decisions” (Smith, 2012, p. 501). According to Phillips (2011), participants' perspectives on their experiences are valuable and, if treated as such, have transformative capacity.

In my study, I have drawn on narrative methodology because it is best suited to search out, reveal, and represent understandings of my research question: “How do teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators shape teachers’ professional practices?” Clandinin (2006) reasons, "narrative inquiry gives us a research methodology for engaging in [a] study of people’s experiences" (p. 51), and Schaffsma et al. (2007) present narrative inquiry as a deeply storied human science that has the ability to tap into the lived experiences—and the lived consequences, and perceptions of experiences—of people. Narratives and narrative methodology are infused into our ways of thinking and our methods of reflecting on experience; narrative inquiry
is an interactive and relational methodology (Clandinin, 2006). Narrative methodology is, by its nature, all-encompassing; it permeates the entire research process, and therefore it directed my understanding of (1) my data collection method, (2) the way in which I viewed and analysed the collected data, (3) the final representation of the research, and (4) my role as the researcher. I discuss these four understandings below.

First, the use of narrative methodology influenced and shaped the way in which I gathered research data. A more detailed explanation will be forthcoming in the Method section; for now, however, it will suffice to say that I gathered initial data from a large group of teachers through an online survey, and then invited individual teachers into conversation-like interviews with me to supplement, extend, problematize, and/or support the survey data with the narratives of our own professional experiences. I used these teachers’ personal narratives as the primary source of data for my research. Narrative methodology allowed me to focus on the participant(s) and to consider their narratives’ complex context (Clandinin, 2006; Peterson & Langellier, 1997). Conversations are a natural situation for story-telling, and even more so when they are composed of people who regard each other as peers. According to Clandinin (2006), individuals—and narratives—are not formed in solitude but rather in a social context. In story-telling relationships, co-construction happens. Schaafsma et al. (2007) write that narrative is a uniquely shared co-constructed experience, and Clandinin (2006) indicates that personal meaning is assigned through retelling.

In my study, narrative methodology enabled me to position myself in data collection as a co-constructor and peer, rather than as an objective, aloof observer looking for quantitative, ‘valid’ data. When using extensive personal narratives as his primary
source data, Smadu (2008) placed himself within his research subjects' contexts and interacted with them as a peer-researcher. This demonstrates care for both the subject matter and for the research participants. Verhesschen (1999) posits that in narrative methodology, researchers seek understanding and, for understanding to exist, there needs to be a key and caring relationship between the researcher and the subject. In fact, it is unwise and, more to the point, unfeasible for the researcher to try to stand back from the necessary relationship with the participant(s): "narrative inquirers cannot bracket themselves out of the inquiry but rather need to find ways to inquire into participants’ experiences, their own experiences as well as the co-constructed experiences developed through the relational inquiry process" (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47).

Second, narrative methodology directed both my collection and analysis of the data. I was able to employ creative field texts and notes (Clandinin, 2006); I was free to interact with the participants’ stories not only as the co-constructor of knowledge described above, but also as one who has memories and impressions of our recent interactions. Narrative methodology also allowed me to be responsive in my analysis to the meanings that the participants assigned to their stories. Smadu's (2008) study of Saskatchewan principals shows how the data, collected through extensive interviews, was analysed by general coding that resulted in main four themes which informed his conclusions. Practically speaking, the voices of the storytellers chose the themes.

Narrative methodology recognizes the very act of story-telling as a kind of analysis (Schaafsma et al., 2007). The analysis stage in my study is inexorably linked with the data collection stage; I was aware that the way in which participants told their stories, and the stories they chose to tell, were ways of assigning meaning. Narratives
are, in themselves, a text (Peterson & Langellier, 1997). Smadu refers to the study of lived experiences as the study of "the text of life" (Evans, 1999, as cited in Smadu, 2008, p. 10). Clandinin (2006) urges that "we can, by slowing down lives, pause and look to see the narrative structures that characterize ours’ and others’ lives" (p. 51). Narrative methodology does not demand an answer from complex, changing experiences, and it does not rely on quantitative verification. Narrative methodology also allows the analysis of storied data to extend outside written or oral words. Leiblich (2013) and Smith (2012) both use their observations of non-verbal cues and positioning to enhance and expand on their analysis of words. Body language, voice tone, repeated words or phrases, humour, method of expression, and physical positioning can assign and communicate meaning that can support, contradict, or explain oral stories. In connection to my study, the way that participants told their stories was important to me.

Third, just as narrative methodology molded the nature of the data collection and analysis in my study, it also shaped the way in which I approached the final representation of the data. Narrative methodology recognizes the power of common language (Schaafsma et al., 2007); there was no need to make the stories of participants more 'academic' to give them 'validity'. Smadu (2008) used the transcripts of his extensive interviews with principals to find participant-generated themes, and then arranged the text of the transcripts in a story-like representation of these themes. The issue of co-construction appears here again, and narrative methodology embraces that issue. In my research, my job was to use “sensitivity and insight to unpack meaning and demonstrate that meaning in the way that the storyteller intended” (Dibley, 2011, p. 13).
Verhesschen (1999) agrees, proposing that the researcher must engage in fundamental co-construction with the research subject.

Fourth and finally, narrative methodology framed and regulated my role as researcher. The way in which I viewed my role in this research study is a summative effect of the method by which I gathered data, the way in which I viewed and analysed the collected data, the final representation of the research study. My role in this research study was philosophically and practically demonstrated through the data collection, analysis, and representation stages. Narrative methodology allowed me to be responsive to survey responses and the interview participants, while still producing a research piece capable of being accepted by academic bodies (Schaafsma et al., 2007). Like Smith (2012), I was the co-constructor, listener, collector, and narrator of others' stories; like Smadu (2008), I positioned myself in the interviews as a peer teacher-researcher with the participants. My role was “to be an effective listener and to see the interviewee as a storyteller rather than as a respondent” (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007).

Methods

Because narrative inquiry requires "a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or a series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20) and because, like Smith (2007) reasons, the "crux of the dilemma [is to define] the extent to which my role [is] to represent the voices of the participants as opposed to interpret what I [hear]” (p. 494), I structured the method of my study in a way that invited teachers to serve as co-constructors with me in the collection, analysis, and representation of the data.
**Data collection.** I collected data from teachers in two stages, in a method similar to Shore and Walshaw’s (2016) study. The first stage of data collection was an online questionnaire (referred to hereafter as "the online survey" or "the survey") which I sent to a group of teachers in southern Saskatchewan, Canada. The survey was composed of eight questions (see Appendix C) that asked for teachers’ perceptions of their experiences with in-school administrators, along with their perceptions and expectations of the role of in-school administrators. When I received the data, I coded them generally by theme, guided by Smadu’s (2008) discussion of coding by theme according to the reading of the data. Creswell (2013) also proposes the use of open coding in data analysis in grounded theory methodology, and Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Kavanagh and Hickey (2013), and Phillips (2011) point out that the method of open coding is often borrowed in narrative data analysis.

While the survey data provided some insight into the experiences of a wide group of teachers, the survey was intentionally limited in its scope. Its primary purpose was to be an initial, focus-defining set of themes. Until the completion of the second stage of research, however, these themes remained relatively loose and fluid. They later served to guide my discussion with participants in the second stage of research, and, as noted below, were re-coded and themed with the second stage data.

The second stage of data collection began after the online survey was closed. In the second stage of data, I conducted one-on-one interviews with teachers from the same school divisions participating in the first stage. These interviews were semi-structured. I asked teacher-participants a set of prepared interview questions (Appendix E). In addition to these questions, I used the initial themes from the survey data to guide my follow-up or
clarification questions. In total, I interviewed seven teacher-participants. Prior to participation in the interview, each participant completed, signed, and returned an Individual Consent form (Appendix D), which outlined the purpose and nature of the study, its proposed scope and intent, and ethical considerations. I met with each of the seven participants once for approximately one to two hours at a non-threatening, semi-private location. No remuneration was provided to participants, but I offered light refreshments.

**Data analysis and representation.** I transcribed the interviews myself. I saw this as a key step in my approach to narrative methodology. Metaphorically, it was a process of stepping into other people’s shoes and attempting to see through their eyes. Literally, I had to take on their mannerisms, patterns, and dialect fingerprints for the time that I transcribed each person's interview. I had to own their word choices. In my researcher’s journal, I wrote: "Feeling tempted to skip over things that seemed to be a tangent. But it's connected in some way for this person. How? How do I step into their shoes and see it from their perspectives and make those connections too?" Early in the process, I found myself hesitating to sit down with the audio files of the interviews in order to transcribe them because I felt the keen weight of responsibility of holding the words of another person in my hands.

Once I had compiled the survey data and while I was in the process of interviewing teacher-participants, I was faced with beginning the task of analysis and representation. After reviewing the collected data to that point, I found myself drawn to an analysis approach that was defined by McCormack (2005) and used by Dibley (2011). I decided that I would continue to study the data through three lenses to which I refer as
“McCormack’s lenses” throughout the remainder of this study, though I chose to adapt her lenses to accommodate the scope of my research.

I discuss my adaption of McCormack’s (2005) lenses and provide a fuller description of their content in Chapter 4, beginning on page 37. For now, I will state that two lenses, which were driven by my reflections on narrative methodology’s tenets while reviewing the incoming data, focused on the language that interview participants used to describe their perceptions of varied approaches to in-school leadership (Lens Two: How They Describe), and the content of the personal narratives that survey respondents and interview participants shared as they described their experiences with, and perceptions of, in-school leadership approaches (Lens Three: What They Describe). On the advice of my supervisor, I left one lens undefined while I continued to study and reflect on the collected data. This decision gave room for the data to continually influence my choices in analysis; eventually, this lens focused on the understandings that interview participants and I co-constructed in the course of the interviews (Lens One: What We Construct).

A more detailed description of the parameters and purposes of each lens can be found in Chapter 4. Though they began as a method of analysis, these three lenses also became the basic structure for the final representation of the data, driven as they were by the narrative methodology within which I operated.

**Participant Selection**

After I received permission from southern Saskatchewan school boards (see Appendix A), I e-mailed a letter to the school principals (see Appendix B) via their division offices. In this e-mail, which contained a link to the online survey, I asked that the link to the online survey be forwarded to teaching staff per each principal’s sole
discretion. I stated in the e-mail message to principals that they were not obliged to forward the e-mail to their teaching staff. In the message to teachers, delivered via the link to the online survey (Appendix C), I asked teachers to voluntarily participate and informed them that submitting the survey after completing any section of it was implied consent for their data to be used. I assured their anonymity if they chose to participate in this, the first stage of research. Hereafter, teachers who participated in the online survey are referred to as “survey respondents” or “respondents.” Sixty-three survey respondents submitted complete or partially complete surveys.

All teachers who received the survey description and link through the process described above had the opportunity to nominate themselves for participation in individual interviews. They did not have to submit a survey or identify that they had submitted a survey to nominate themselves for the interviews. In the survey description, I included information about the purpose of the interviews. Confidentiality was assured. Teachers who were interested in nominating themselves for an individual interview were asked to contact me through my university e-mail address. I recommended they contact me from a personal, non-work e-mail address and IP address to maintain confidentiality. Hereafter, teachers who participated in the interviews are referred to as “teacher-participants” or “interview participants.”

Seven teacher-participants indicated their interest and took part in individual interviews. They represented elementary, middle years, and secondary education contexts and had a variety of specialities. Their levels of experience in the profession ranged from that of beginning teachers (0-5 years of experience) to experienced teachers (20+ years of experience).
Ethical Considerations

Anonymity and confidentiality. My first ethical responsibility in the solicitation, collection, analysis, and representation of the data collected for this study was to the teachers who agreed to participate in the research. I acknowledged there was the risk of social repercussions for participants in this research if their involvement could be determined, as they were asked to comment on their in-school administrators’ approaches to school leadership, and to assess and share the impact of these approaches on their own interactions and relationships with the in-school administrators, their own work as teachers, and their own professional satisfaction. There was a level of risk for each participant; if they could be identified, they risked personal embarrassment and professional discomfort. If they could be identified, they risked the possibility of affecting their working relationship with in-school administrators. Potential participants were made aware of these risks and the measures I would take to manage these risks in the Individual Consent Form (Appendix D).

Since the nature of this study required teacher-participants to tell personal stories and experiences, and since those experiences happened in the context of the professional relationship between them and their in-school administrators, it was important to me to protect their identities. For the first stage of data collection (the online survey), this meant that I used Qualtrics as a research tool to collect responses anonymously. I set up the Qualtrics data collection in a way that excluded identifiable information such as IP addresses and e-mail addresses. No survey respondents included personal identifiers in their responses, and all responses remained anonymous unless the respondent chose to contact me. In the description of the survey, I recommended that respondents who chose
to complete the survey do so from a non-school division computer and internet connection in order to maintain complete anonymity.

I was equally determined to protect the identities of participants in the second stage of data collection, the interviews. Besides the confidentiality measures taken in the nomination process (Participant Selection), I took steps to ensure that the identities of the teacher-participants were protected. First, in the collected data—from transcript analysis to representation—the seven interview participants were assigned pseudonyms. The pseudonyms are Andrea, Billie, Chrissie, Daphne, Eric, Felix, and Georgia. There is no significance to these pseudonyms other than that I chose alphabetical names to reflect the genders of the participants.

After I transcribed the interviews, I sent each teacher-participant a copy of his or her own transcript. At the time of their interview, participants were made aware that this would be my practice. I explained that I would transcribe their interview, highlight or colour any statements or stories that I believed to be a potential identifier (of the participant, the school or school division, or the in-school administrators), and send the otherwise unaltered transcript to the participant's preferred private e-mail address. Below is a relatively standard sample e-mail message that accompanied the transcript:

*Here's the transcript from our interview. As mentioned before, if you'd like to make any edits at this point, you can. A couple notes regarding this:*
  * In the attached transcript, I've highlighted anything that might indicate your identity. The highlighting means that I'd like to keep it in the transcript to inform my research as the concepts were important pieces of your experience, but that in my thesis I won't directly quote it or refer to the specifics. This usually includes names, places, or unique scenarios, and I also watch for other potentially identifying information. Feel free to un-highlight something if you don't think it matters. But also, please feel completely free to highlight anything else as well.*
• Additionally, you can change anything you want. The words and the stories in the transcript are yours and I want you to be represented the way that you want. If you don't like the way you phrased something, if you regret sharing something or if you think of something else to add-- go ahead. You can delete things too. Whatever you send back is the version I'll end up using. Narrative research allows for this type of participant interaction with the transcript. (But if you are happy with how the transcript stands, that's fine too! You are not required to do so.)

Only two participants chose to revise their transcripts after reviewing them. One of these participants checked and affirmed that my perspective regarding identifying information was generally suitable and thus only made minor changes. This participant also requested that the personal pronouns used to refer to in-school administrators were changed in the final representation of the stories so that readers would not be able to identify whether a referred-to principal/vice-principal was male or female. Another participant informed me that I could refer more specifically to situations I had highlighted as potentially identifying. Additionally, as she reviewed her transcript, she recalled another story and added it in an e-mail message to me.

Three other interview participants checked in with me after I sent their transcripts to them for revision. Mainly, they wanted to confirm that no further action was needed on their part if they chose not to revise their transcript. One inquired further about the confidentiality measures I would take, and was satisfied with my response. The last two participants did not respond after I sent their transcripts to them; this was not unexpected as both had indicated earlier that they likely would choose not to revise what they shared.

There is another group of people represented in this study, and they are at a disadvantage because they do not get to represent themselves or review the unaltered transcripts to co-construct the final representation. I recognize that this research is
presented only from the viewpoint and perceptions of teachers, and that in-school administrators—whose leadership approaches are the subject of this study—are not able to explain their perspectives on the stories detailed here, nor are they able to describe their perceptions of experiences with teachers. Therefore, in all stages of research (especially in the final representation of the data) I also endeavoured to honour the principals and vice-principals, whose former or current teachers participated in this study, by protecting their confidentiality. In fact, many teacher-participants attempted to do this as well—even though they were all aware I would strip the final representation of the data of any specific identifying references to people or situations, most participants themselves cloaked the names of in-school administrators and schools as they spoke in our interviews. Perhaps this action was a marked attempt to refrain from throwing their in-school administrators under the bus, so to speak, or maybe they felt it was the experiences themselves that mattered, not the names of their principals and vice-principals.

Whatever the motive, even with this noted deference, I was careful to re-inspect the survey data and transcripts for information that could identify either the teacher-participants, the in-school administrators to which they referred, or specific timelines or physical contexts of which they were a part. For instance, if an interview participant described a progression of specific staffing events (as a fictional example: "First we had a female principal with a male vice-principal, and then she left for a bigger school and we had an all-male administration"), I considered this as potentially identifying as if a participant referred to an in-school administrator by name. It is not my intention that readers of this study speculate about the identities of the in-school administrators whose
leadership approaches were discussed by teacher-participants. The focus of this study is the perceptions of teachers, not the condemnation of in-school administrators.

**Researcher bias.** I recognize I have a perspective on this study which shapes this study. Firstly, when I turn my research question on myself ("How do my perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators shape my own professional practice?") , I have varied responses because I have varied experiences from which to draw. As a full-time, practicing teacher who is in the mid-morning of my career, I have had a total of eight in-school administrators within seven years at three different schools. The close time proximity of these experiences made the tremendous differences in the leadership approaches of these eight administrators even more vivid. Because of this varied experience, I recognize I risked jumping to early conclusions about other teachers' meanings when I heard their stories. I also recognize that my own experiences and priorities determined my perspective while I created the survey, created and asked interview questions, analysed data, and chose a representational form for the study.

Secondly, I am aware that my personal life history and worldview strongly influence my idea of leadership, along with my reaction to leaders. I grew up in a household with two parents who have both held leadership roles in their careers for long periods of time. Knowing the heavy burden they carried because of these professional roles, I have always had sympathy for the difficult (and largely unseen) personal toll that leaders bear. Sometimes, I have dismissed as invalid the opinions of those who criticize their leaders while appearing unaware of the cost of leadership. In my own professional experience, I have often found myself defaulting to a position wherein I assume that my professional leader (in teaching, the in-school administrator) is trying to do his or her best
in a role where people often notice only the worst. This multi-faceted perspective could lead me to disregard or disdain the stories of participants (survey or interview) who demonstrate, to my view, a lack of awareness of the daily pressures of leadership.

Finally, I approach my profession with a Christian worldview and principles, influenced strongly by biblical mandates to respect the secular leaders around me and the employers in my life, to refrain from complaining, and to, as far as it depends on me, live at peace with everyone. Motivated by this worldview and these principles, I have made a concerted effort in my career to not "tell tales" of my in-school administrators unless the stories present a positive or edifying perspective. Given that this study required me to facilitate a survey and interviews wherein I invite people to tell stories of their in-school administrators, I needed to guard myself against 1) controlling the participants’ stories with examples from my own experience, and 2) projecting an attitude of disapproval if participants did not exhibit the professional courtesy to their principals that I have sought to demonstrate in my own career.

Recognizing the ongoing influence of these key potential biases, I reviewed them on occasion throughout the research process to keep my recognition of them current. I also kept a researcher’s journal wherein I logged my thoughts and reactions to the process of this research. Ethical approval for this research study was received from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board (Appendix F).
Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

The analysis of the 47,000 words spoken in interviews by seven participants, in addition to survey data from 63 respondents, seemed daunting to me when I first began my analysis. Then, when I considered that these words were representative of years of perceptions by over 60 teachers who, despite their busy schedules and the demands on their time, decided this topic was meaningful enough for them to participate in either the survey or the interviews or both, I nearly froze. How could I authentically and faithfully represent those experiences, these people? Never mind representation: how could I presume to analyze? The word analysis suddenly seemed cold, sterile, and cheap in the face of lived stories.

I found solace in the process presented by McCormack (2004), who used ‘lenses’ in her analysis of narrative data. To me, her process demonstrated innate connections to a narrative methodology. For one thing, I appreciated the word choice of lenses. I felt that the concepts of transparency, observation, and clarity are embedded in this word. Additionally, in McCormack’s (2004) abstract for her journal article (which provided an overview of her approach to her doctoral research), she referred to "the simultaneous mirror/window quality of [her participants'] narratives" (p. 219). I noted a connection here to the language that McEntyre (2009) uses: “Most of us, most of the time, use language the way we use windows; we look "through" words to ideas, objects, sensations, landscapes of meaning. Occasionally that window glass becomes a mirror, and hearing
our own words, we suddenly recognize something about ourselves. And sometimes words become objects of interest in themselves” (p. 27).

Guided by the stories and experiences I received through data collection, I resolved to align myself with the intent and theory of McCormack’s lenses while using a simplified scope that reflects McEntyre's three uses of language (underlined):

1. What our words make us recognize about ourselves (or our experiences).

McCormack gives ample room for this recognition within her lenses of context and moments. Dibley (2011) interprets McCormack’s lens of context as acceptance that “an individual’s understanding of an experience is influenced by the context in which the experience takes place” (p. 16). She acknowledges the influence of this lens during the storytelling process between participant and researcher. Dibley also recognizes that McCormack’s lens of moments can exist during the storytelling process: “the storyteller comes to a new, previously unrecognized understanding of a fundamental issue” while recalling personal perceptions or experiences (p. 16). I have called this construction\(^3\) of understanding “Lens One: What We Construct”.

2. What words are used. McCormack identifies this as the lenses of language and narrative processes (Dibley, 2011). Dibley suggests that, through the lens of language, the researcher is helped to “focus on the words people use, what influences their choice of words, what they tell and how they tell it” (p. 15). She further discusses the need for the researcher to pay attention to language using the lens of narrative processes, which examines “the ways in which people use and

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\(^3\) I use the term "construction" (or, alternatively, "co-construction") throughout this study to refer to a collaborative, context-driven exchange of information, ideas, perspectives, and learnings between teacher-participants and me, with a goal of coming to a level of recognition about our own professional practice.
structure words to tell stories” (p. 15). I have called the lens reflecting this use of Dibley’s language “Lens Two: How They Describe”.

3. **What is seen through the words.** McCormack would call this a "personal experience narrative" (McCormack, 2004, p. 230). In her extensive research with female post-graduate students, McCormack considers the formation of personal experience narratives to be last step in a journey toward understanding participants’ stories and interpretations of stories (p. 221). In my research, I approach the personal narratives aspect of McCormack’s process with what I call “Lens Three: What They Describe”.

The first lens, *What We Construct*, allows for the interaction between teacher-participant and researcher in the co-construction of knowledge, perception, and belonging. (The term ‘we’ refers to select interview participants and me.) This lens observes what we construct together over the course of an interview. From the start, I viewed my interviews with teachers as a privilege; in time, I learned to view the interviews as a conversation. In this, I was guided by McEntyre (2009) who outlines the idea of conversation that nourishes.

To "converse" originally meant to live among or together, or to act together, to foster community, to commune with. It was a large verb that implied public, cooperative, and deliberate action. When we converse, we act together toward a common end, and we act upon one another. (p. 89)

Those who identify with the constructive nature of narrative methodology understand the nature of knowledge as "individual recollections coalescing around consensus" and that knowledge is accumulated through "vicarious experience" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.
Thus, there is a merging, or harmonizing, of constructed perceptions through the sharing of experiences, and this is what I attempted to represent in the first lens.

The second lens is *How They Describe*. (The term ‘they’ here refers to interview participants.) Language itself is a way of knowing. McCormack's Lenses include the lens of language which "guides the researcher to focus on the words people use, what influences their choices of words, what they tell and how they tell it" (Dibley, 2011, p. 15). For this lens, I focused on two aspects of the way participants tell their stories: the use of figures of speech to describe and the use of repetition.

Finally, through the third lens, I view *What They Describe*. (Here, the term ‘they’ refers to interview participants and survey respondents.) I noted early in the data collection stage that participants and respondents often expressed the "what" through three general types of sharing: experiences, reflections on experiences, and perspectives. The first type of sharing—experiences—is defined here as stories told as a way of answering the question or of exemplifying an opinion, perspective, or belief. Experiences that teachers shared with me were actual, historic occurrences; for the purpose of this research, experiences which were expressed as theoretical, hypothetical, or typified were not included. The second type of sharing—teachers’ reflections on their experiences—included a recounting, reconstructing, or repositioning of the shared story by the teller. The teller situated the story within their own thoughts about the story, the effects of the story, or what they considered to be the point of the story. The third type of sharing—the perspectives that teacher-participants share—included beliefs, opinions, or advice. They tended to be concrete, absolute, directive statements that the participants made, and were often even directed toward former, current, or imagined in-school administrators. I
describe in the introduction to Lens Three: *What They Describe* how I studied and themed the collection of experiences, reflections on experiences, and perspectives that teacher-participants and survey respondents shared with me.

All three lenses worked together in a process of "restorying," a process of "reading the transcript, analysing this story to understand the lived experiences…and then retelling the story" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 330). My (adapted) use of McCormack's Lenses "enable[s] interpretation of any type of individual story and comparison of themes arising across stories, and is highly effective at enabling the researcher to preserve the truthfulness and spirit of the original story" (Dibley, 2011, p. 19). The three lenses also acknowledge both the separateness and togetherness of collegial story-telling: the words, stories, and experiences of individuals are significant, and so is the idea that they specifically drew on those words, told those stories, and shared those experiences with another teacher (myself) who responded with her own words, stories, and experiences.

**Lens One: What We Construct**

The interview process was not one with which I was initially comfortable. I felt I had one chance with each participant and that my shaky interviewing skills or narrow perspective might limit, harm, or distort the participant's involvement. So, at the start of my first participant interview, I found myself acting formally, my mannerisms stilted. I thought that defaulting to an objective, video camera-like attentiveness would free the participant to tell and explain stories with the least amount of interference from me. However, soon I began to see the interviews themselves as a type of nourishing, co-constructing conversation. There were points in every interview where I found myself
nodding in agreement, often with a similar, personal scenario in mind. Once I began to express collegiality toward the interview participants, I became more relaxed and less stilted in my administration of the interviews.

In most cases, participants and I continued chatting after the interview had ended and the recording equipment had been turned off. We spoke informally, discussing people we both knew, university classes we had taken in our Bachelor degrees, plans for the summer, and teaching assignments for the fall. It was collaborative, conversational, and collegial. I began to wonder if there was a place for this type of co-construction in the analysis and representation of the interview data.

After only two participant interviews, I had already been pondering the use of McCormack's lenses (2004), modified for the scope of this research. I had identified two lenses (How They Describe, What They Describe) and, at the encouragement of my supervisor, had left room for the yet unnamed, undetermined lens (see p. 29). As I learned to situate myself alongside participants in the process of the interviews, I began to share some of my thoughts, recollections, or experiences. I noticed a curious pattern begin to develop. The other teachers took time to affirm my story, often with exclamatory phrases (yeah, absolutely, exactly) and often returned to his or her own experiences—expanding on a previously shared story and honing in on a layer of meaning or emphasizing a previous point (mine or theirs) by adding a new story. Simply, we both made sense of our experiences by braiding them in with the other's experiences. I had my last lens: How We Construct.

There were many times over the course of the interviews that this co-constructed realization happened, but I chose only three exchanges to analyze and represent here. My
selection process followed three criteria. First, the content of the exchange had to be generally typical or symbolic of the wider body of exchanges. Second, I factored in a necessary awareness of confidentiality issues; the representation of these instances would necessarily include my side of the conversation. I found as I reviewed the transcripts that I was not as deliberate in my avoidance of potentially identifying details as the participants tended to be as since, at the time of the interviews, I did not anticipate that I would include direct quotations from myself. The third and final criterion in the selection of the three exchanges, described below, was that one or both of us realized something because of our shared experiences.

Felix. A key feature of my interview with Felix, demonstrated in this section, is that Felix and I kept adding on to the other's sentences. We even started our add-on statements with mainly conjunctions (or, and, because), sometimes pairing them with affirmative interjections (yeah, absolutely, I know). In a way, we literally created sentences—and sense—collaboratively. The section of the transcript reproduced below, which was situated within a few minutes of the start of the interview, shows a progression toward personal pronouns that are more collaborative: at the start of this section, both Felix and I talked about teachers in an individual sense (you, the singular they, the teacher, a person, me) but midway through we both switched to the collaborative (we, the plural you). We increasingly approached the interview like a collaborative conversation.

Felix: Once [an issue that a principal has with a teacher is] taken personally and presented personally, then you, the employee, would take it personally and then [the principal would] somehow have some power over [the teacher].... I don't know that someone would necessarily operate in that way but it's entirely possible given emotion and human condition.

Researcher: Yeah, or even if it's not reality, the teacher may live with that hanging over their head.
Felix: Absolutely. And feel like they're always being judged after that. ...A lot of the time you can read a lot of things a person is saying through their tone of voice. ...It always puts me off when you hear things said in a certain way. It's like, "Did I do something?"

Researcher: I know! Because, I think, as teachers we're kind of confronted with our mistakes all the time, right? ...You're seeing the repercussions of basically everything we do wrong.

Felix: Yeah, yeah.

Researcher: And if we live with that anyways, and when someone comes in and their tone of voice is judging or condemning or pointing fingers or even...

Felix: Condescending. Especially condescending. Yep. And we are. We're on all the time. And so no matter what you're doing, you're under some form of scrutiny.

This excerpt is from the section of the interview when Felix responded to the question "What's the ideal communication style for a principal?" Just before this excerpt, he started his response by noting some practical, bullet-like tips ("Frankness. Honesty") and stated that he sees a clear, consistent professionalism—both in delivery and in content—as an ideal approach. He stated that he sees the antithesis of professionalism as the demonstration of negative emotion: "You can't take it out from a place of anger. ...You can state your feelings on the subject but you have to keep your delivery of it professional more so than emotional."

In the above excerpt, though, he moved to a quick realization that demonstrations of negative emotion from in-school administrators are, for him, indicators of scrutiny and judgment and that he labels this appraisal as condescension. His reasons for this progression became clear immediately after the excerpt above; he indicated three times in quick succession that he acts as his own toughest critic. He expressed, "I take it as something I'm doing wrong when a student is absolutely crashing and burning... I haven't
found the way to necessarily reach that kid.” He added, “I generally look at it from my own standpoint as a problem with what I'm doing.” As illustrated in the above excerpt from the transcript, in my interpretation, Felix and I moved in co-operation from the idea of literal external communication to implied internal communication. Then Felix was free to connect the ideas of his perception of an in-school administrator's judgment with his own self-talk and self-judgment.

**Georgia.** In my interview with Georgia, I often supplied words or phrases, offering them as examples or extensions of what Georgia was saying, and she either accepted them or clarified them. In the section of the transcript reproduced below, we each expressed something that is similar (in this excerpt, the perceived unfairness of an unequal work situation that could be prevented by an administrator) and then we each presented a unique perspective or concern that is, for us, the important take-away. For me, it was the hope that I would be known as a teacher who wants critique for the purpose of doing good work in the future; for Georgia, it was the desire to see teachers know that they are recognized and valued for good work in the past. We both employed the use of imagined dialogue, sometimes supplying words from the in-school administrators and sometimes demonstrating what we would say.

Georgia: ...Sometimes I feel like the people who are really good at their job get penalized for being good at their job. So, like, "We have a new kid, I know that you have more kids in your class than So-and-so, but they're better off in your class..." so you keep dumping on the people who are good, right? And I've seen that—

Researcher: Draining your resources.

Georgia: Right. ...Yeah, that can demoralize a staff too, when it's like, "Well, why does this person not have to pull their weight?" "Why don't they have to step up and deal with this?" Kind of bailing those teachers out or making their lives easier because they're not good at their job instead of making them do their job.
"You haven't helped with any extra-curricular this year. You need to step up and help." Yeah, that's frustrating to me... just being too wishy-washy when we're all just, "oh, come on! Just haul this person in there!" (Laughs)

Researcher, mimicking: "Everybody knows!"

Georgia: Yeah, yeah, exactly! And I don't know the conversations that go on behind closed doors but you get a sense of whether someone's being held to task or not.

Researcher: ...I just want to know that someone has the gumption to be, like, "Hey, here's where you failed and here's where you can do better, because I believe in you as a teacher and I know that you could be better."

Georgia: Yeah, yeah. Or even just recognizing those people who do lots of good stuff, right? So much of that just goes unnoticed.

Georgia used strong, clear descriptive words in her analysis here: penalized, dumping, demoralize, bailing, haul, held to task. I began to pick up this characteristic as I reflected my agreement back to her with words like draining, gumption, and failed. We also created a pattern of conversation development in this short section: statement, expansion, agreement. For example, Georgia said that teachers who do their job well get more work (statement). I expanded this concept by suggesting that principals who do this drain their resources (expansion), and Georgia replied, "Right, yeah" (agreement). This pattern is demonstrated three times in the excerpt above. Georgia and I had co-created a rhythm of collegiality while constructing an overview of what happens when good principals turn "wishy-washy."

Andrea. Andrea was forthright in her interview, and we both seemed to find it easy to be transparent with each other. Even so, at the beginning of our conversation, both of us tested the strength of the ice, so to speak, before standing on it. This testing is demonstrated in the excerpt of the interview transcribed below, in which we both supplied words for each other or looked to the other person for acceptance of our
meaning. At two points, I supplied my interpretation of what Andrea said using different words. My intonation in these moments was a searching one; one statement even ends on an upturned note (noted by a question mark) as I invited her clarification.

Additionally, Andrea used some doubt phrases ("I don't know" "That wasn't a very good answer") to situate her experiences more tentatively while awaiting my feedback. In both cases, we each replied to the other with affirmation words. In fact, in the course of this excerpt, we each in turn added a clarifying, extending phrase to the end of a statement made by the other person. At the end, we also employed the same play-acting device as we quoted our own internal dialogue.

Andrea: I think if the administrators aren't good leaders, whatever form that takes, I think it can lead to either teachers who do whatever they want. Or, I've had administrators who just seem to have a clique around them. ....It seems to lead to sort of an inaccessibility, and since you're not part of that, you're not really as important. So I think it can lead to negativity on a staff that way.

Researcher: So when you said that they're not good leaders, what are you picturing?

Andrea: I don't know. I guess someone who doesn't work hard, doesn't take control of the situation, doesn't support me, doesn't back you up and have control of what's going on, and [who doesn't] know what's going on. I guess like that.

Researcher: So you're saying it's not a particular style.

Andrea, agreeing: No.

Researcher: It's this finger on the pulse of what's going on?

Andrea: Right! Because I think that good leaders look a lot of different ways. And I think good leaders connect to a lot of different people, because there's no one person that can connect to everyone.... But I think that good leaders have—I don't know—they have styles that are accessible to most people and that make you want to work for them. Like, if I don't want to work for you, I'm not going to. I mean, my love for my students only takes me so far.

Researcher: To burnout, if you don't have support.
Andrea: Well, yeah, exactly. I don't know, that wasn't a very good answer.

Researcher: No, I think that's—I totally resonate with that. ... I think you nailed it. It's the internal: "am I supported by you? Can I trust you as a person to have my best interests?"

Andrea: Right, yeah! "Can I speak freely with you?"

Andrea's final piece of mimicked dialogue ("Can I speak freely with you?") indicated that she sees a level of perceived safety that springs from a positive connection with an in-school administrator. In this part of our conversation, she and I collaboratively discussed of actions or habits that would indicate to us that an in-school administrator was trustworthy and supportive, and who could provide that positive connection and professional safety. Based on the back-and-forth conversation in this excerpt, where Andrea and I used both negative and positive examples, I can generate this list of desired actions/habits from the in-school administrators: accessible in schedule and in attitude, hard-working, ready to support and defend teachers, keen knowledge of how the staff and students are doing, ability to connect to many different types of people without prizing one type over others, inspires loyalty and hard work, clearly has best interests of staff as a priority, and is a safe resource for staff seeking advice. The back-and-forth nature of this excerpt, with each of us seemingly affirmed and spurred on by the other person's perspective, demonstrates a progression of realization and refinement of our values. In other words, Andrea and I co-created a realization of our ideal ‘job description’ for in-school administrators.

**Lens Two: How They Describe**

I engaged in the analysis of the data collected from interviews in a second way through the lens *How They Describe*. I watched and listened how teacher-participants
used language to clarify, strengthen, emphasize, or expound. In the end, I chose to represent participants’ language choices by focusing on two forms of their language: figures of speech and repetition of words. I determined these two forms of language for analysis after observing their prevalence in the interviews.

**Figures of speech.** In my view, our propensity to represent our perceptions of the world by reducing or explaining concepts with vivid or non-literal language is an attempt to communicate meaning and value. Typically, figure of speech can be imbued with a positive or negative value and, when figures of speech are clear, listeners are likely to understand speakers’ views of the concept, either because the figures of speech are commonly recognized in the shared culture of the listeners and speakers, or because of the vividness of the chosen language. For instance, when an interview participant described a principal as "one of the old boys," even emphasizing that "he was a good old boy and all that," it would be clear to most native English listeners that she did not mean "boy" as in innocent, young, or energetic and that she didn't mean "good" to mean positive. In two apt phrases using a recognized figure of speech, she created a picture of an environment where there existed an inner circle of male influencers who had a natural advantage in a system that had been created around them and who did not necessarily have sympathy or awareness of the struggles that others might face in that system. She did not have to say all that, however: she drew on a figure of speech and I understood.

Similarly, when the language of a figure of speech is particularly vivid, its meaning does not necessarily need years of cultural acceptance to be clear. For example, when a survey respondent said that a principal has the propensity to "bow down to their parents' every wish," it is clear from context and the strength of the phrasing *(bow, every*
wish) that the teacher wished that the principal wouldn't, in fact, bend to the demands of parents and viewed this deference as misplaced, at the very least.

When teacher-participants used figures of speech to express meaning and value, they mostly relied on metaphors and similes, and occasionally hyperbole and allusions. (Though repetition of words or phrases can be considered a figure of speech, I have separated it from other figures of speech due to its dominance in the transcripts, and have examined more closely as the second form of language.) Yet regardless of which type of figure of speech was employed, clear topics quickly emerged from the data. Collectively, teacher-participants in the interviews tended to used figures of speech to present their perceptions on the following topics:

1. Motivations of in-school administrators
2. Pressures facing in-school administrators and the administrators’ attitudes or actions in response to these pressures
3. Expectations for the role of in-school administrators
4. Personal experiences due to in-school administrators’ approaches to leadership

These topics were, of course, partially guided by the interview questions I asked of teacher-participants; no participants used figures of speech to explain their opinions on the topic of course syllabi, for instance, because that was not the subject of our interviews. However, these topics were constructed across questions. For example, the topic of perceived motivations of in-school administrators emerged for me within a couple minutes into some teacher-participants' interviews and it emerged near the end of other interviews, despite the facts that (1) I asked the interview questions in the same
order (with one exception), and (2) none of my prepared interview questions centered on the motivations of in-school administrators. Less than 10% of figures of speech used by teacher-participants in the interviews were outside these four topics (outlined in the numbered list above).

**Figures of speech describing teachers’ perceptions of in-school administrators’ motivations.** The figures of speech which were used by teacher-participants to describe their perceptions of the motivation of in-school administrators centred primarily on the idea of in-school administrators using their role as leverage for a promotion or as a way to advance their personal careers. Teachers uniformly viewed this as a negative motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Another thing that makes me crazy with some administrators, they want to climb the ladder, they want to get a promotion.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;We’re a bit of a stepping stone.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;We feel that we’re just a rung on the ladder.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;I think that’s another reason I love [my current administrators], is that I don’t feel that they’re ladder-climbers.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;I’ve seen administrators…coming in and being super gung-ho and seems to be on everyone’s side and seems like a good leader and then, over the next couple years it seems like, ‘oh, you just really want to climb the ladder! You’re just trying to get a promotion.’&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seemed that teachers felt dismissed or used by in-school administrators when they perceived that the administrator had higher ambitions than their school had to offer. One teacher-participant summarized the perceived casual dismissal of the school and staff by mimicking, with comically dismissive faux-candor, what an in-school administrator seemed to believe: "Oh, you're just a stop on my administrative climb."

Many teacher-participants questioned whether or not an in-school administrator could feel invested in a school and the staff if this motivation was present, stating that administrators who plan to move on tend to "keep everything at an arm's length."
Additionally, there was a belief that classroom teachers who chose to remain as classroom teachers could be perceived negatively because "you're not clawing your way to the top like everyone else is at their jobs."

Some teachers used figures of speech that expressed their perception that in-school administrators might be motivated by their ability to dominate school agendas to accomplish personal goals. For example, one participant recognized that in-school administrators may have personal areas of passion—whether curricular, systemic, or other—but that teachers do as well, and that administrators must give space and power to this: "you can't stomp out their fire just because you don't like it." Another participant expanded on this idea when describing the inappropriate presentation of the in-school administrator's personal motives or emotions: "You start to have sort of this playground dynamic as you're the tough kid, I'm not the tough kid." The teacher-participants acknowledged that, in these situations, the power belongs to the administrator; they balked at the idea of this power being used to promote only the administrator's motivations and purposes.

Only one teacher-participant used a positively phrased figure of speech to describe a perceived (and appreciated) motivation: "It was also refreshing for me to know that an administrator wanted to keep his finger on the pulse of what actually does go on in the classroom." The same acknowledged situational power of the administrator is implied in this statement—the principal is allowed and able to keep close watch over the practices of the teacher—but the emphasis is on the desire ("an administrator wanted to") and on the motive (knowing "what actually does go on in the classroom"). The teachers in these statements are clear actors as well; they are the agents and determiners of what
"actually does go on in the classroom" and the administrator in this situation seems to acknowledge that.

Figures of speech describing teachers’ perceptions of pressures facing in-school administrators, and their attitudes and actions in response. With uniformity, the teacher-participants used figures of speech to express that they are sympathetic to the perceived difficult and tenuous role that in-school administrators must play. Frequently, participants referred to the perceived competition of priorities presented to in-school administrators by their school board, their staff, the students, and the general community.

Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:
- In-school administrators are "just juggling a lot."
- "We saw the ability our admin had [to be able] to juggle a lot of tasks."
- The principal is, or has to be, "on top of everything."
- "It becomes this dance" for the administrator.
- "It's that double-edged sword."
- "You're on the hook again."
- "They're just burnt out."
- "They carry so much on their shoulders."

There was a clear trend toward using figures of speech to describe a systemic hierarchy that in-school administrators must learn to work within.

Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:
- "When policy is handed down from the top, you have to play ball."
- "…from the top down."
- "You need to play ball and you need to toe the company line while still trying to play ball."
- "…toe the company line."
- The principal is "not where the buck stops."
- "There also is this push to be a ladder-climber, right?"
- The system is "breeding administrators."
- As an in-school administrator, "you're on an island."

Noting this, participants also demonstrated acknowledgement, phrased and intoned sympathetically, of the complexity of the in-school administrator's competing roles.
Interestingly, the only negatively-situated figures of speech used to describe the pressures facing in-school administrators were used when the teacher had a perception that the in-school administrator did not take these pressures seriously. One participant described her perception of a principal who was "breezing in [and] breezing out" of the school as a perception that "they don't know what's going on or don't care or are not invested in it." Another interview participant expressed the perception that in-school administrators who were "just toeing the line for the sake of toeing it" did not demonstrate to teachers that they were critically analyzing the competing priorities for the school.

*Figures of speech describing teachers’ expectations of the role of in-school administrators.* Teacher-participants also used figures of speech to outline their expectations for the role of the in-school administrator. In this topic grouping, positively-phrased figures of speech outnumbered negatively-phrased figures of speech by 5:1. Teachers seemed to gravitate toward figures of speech to accomplish one of two purposes: to praise current or past administrators that, teachers felt, fulfilled their roles effectively, or to express an unfulfilled craving for that role to be filled in a satisfying way. These two opposing tacts (to celebrate or to express longing) operated as two sides of the same coin and thus provided a clear overview of teacher-participants' expectations for the role of the in-school administrator. These expectations fall into three general categories.

First, teachers expected that in-school administrators be ready and willing to defend their teachers personally and professionally. Teachers regularly expressed their
hope that this would be their administrator's default reaction, and that the felt knowledge of the administrator's support was liberating and life-giving.

Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:
- Through good organization, a principal was "instilling a sense of-- that they have your back."
- "You should, as an administrator, just have your teacher's back and then go from there."
- A principal inspired confidence by verbally saying "that I have your back."
- "He really does have staff members' backs. Even when it's at his expense, he's really backed up his staff, which is wonderful."
- "They've got your back."
- "…that they had your back."
- "…that they had my back."
- Supportive administrators are willing to have teachers "make me the face of this."
- One teacher hoped for an administrator's willingness, "if need be, to take the bullet" by publicly supporting a teacher's decision.
- A participant expressed a desire to know that a principal would state that "I stand behind their [the teacher's] methods".
- Another teacher did not want to wonder "are you [the principal] going to back me up with this parent?" when making a judgment call.

The second expectation that teacher-participants had for the role of the in-school administrator emerged to me when I observed that teacher-participants placed a high emphasis on the administrator's role in setting a high standard for both teachers and students in the school. In-school administrators who set clear, reasonable, and high expectations were viewed as effective and trustworthy. Many of the figures of speech used here were laden with action-based words (raised, set, told, fighting, driving force, and build, for instance).
Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:
- A principal's unwavering standards "just kind of raised the bar. And I think that that administrator set the bar high for students and staff and told students and staff, 'here's where the bar is. Rise to it.'"
- An administrator who was seen as effective regularly talked about "raising the standard and setting the bar high."
- A demonstration of confidence in the administration is seen in the statement that "even when an administrator and I don't necessarily see eye-to-eye, I know that we're both fighting for what's best for the kid."
- One participant stated explicitly that the administrator role "needs to be the driving force behind that [the climate of the school]."
- An in-school administrator was labeled as "really good" because of their ability to "build them [students and teachers] up in some way."

Finally, participants used figures of speech to express, in different ways, that they admired in-school administrators who, in their role at the school, were able to demonstrate a skillful and appropriate control within the school. I often heard teacher-participants express, directly or indirectly through their vivid and creative figures of speech, that this type of control takes courage, initiative, and connection.

Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:
- It's "kind of like in parenting. I don't always know what I'm supposed to be doing but I know that I'm the one who's supposed to be stopping this kid from doing that, so I'm going to have to step in and do it."
- "You're willing to get your hands dirty."
- "Just really being a leader. Leading the ship. Getting it into your own head: I am the leader here."
- "Someone who can direct traffic..."
- In-school administrators should "be able to foster" a positive mindset in the teaching staff.
- An in-school administrator needs the ability and willingness to "defuse the situation" and who can "take the fire out of the situation" and "cool the flames."
- "I just like a straight-shooter."
- "A manager"
- "I had an administrator once who regularly popped into the classroom."
- It was appreciated when a principal "opened up those lines of communication."
- "You've got somebody who has their finger on the pulse of the community."
- "...someone who knows how to put out fires when need be."

Meanwhile, in-school administrators who required teachers to set their own standards, who did not enforce standards, or who did not provide sufficient and consistent direction, were seen as dismissive or negligent. These figures of speech demonstrate that,
in these scenarios, teachers perceived a certain abandonment of authority. For example, one teacher participant recalled that a principal told him "'that's your baby, you just do it.' And I didn't need that, right? I was a young teacher… I want someone else to be the expert. I want someone to make good decisions for me." Another teacher described a principal who regularly flouted standard procedure as someone who was "putting the cart before the horse." A different teacher expressed her perception that principals who saw that certain teachers were not "pull[ing] their weight" but kept "bailing those teachers out" were "just being too wishy-washy."

**Figures of speech describing teachers’ personal experiences due to their perceptions of in-school administrators’ approaches to leadership.** In the last of four topics addressed by teacher-participants through the use of figures of speech (as listed on p. 50), teacher-participants regularly relied on figures of speech to describe their personal experiences due to their perceptions of in-school administrators’ approaches to leadership. When in-school administrators engaged in leadership approaches that teachers perceived as harmful or negative, the effect on the teachers was personal, immediate, and weighty:

*Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:*
  - “You feel so deflated and unsupported and stepped on.”
  - "We had become very, very toxic."
  - One participant felt "constrained and chained" when in-school administrators limited teacher autonomy.
  - "There feels like there's an inner circle."
  - Teachers "are burnt out."
  - "You're going down the tubes."
  - "That's another piece of the puzzle that really disheartens me."
  - "The ripple effect can have huge consequences."
  - "I clam up."
Likewise, figures of speech were also used to describe the felt effects of leadership approaches that were perceived as positive and supportive. One teacher-participant referred several times to "the golden years" to describe a period of time when teaching felt safe, effective, and meaningful due to the firm guidance of the in-school administration team. Another teacher-participant celebrated that "I've never felt babysat. …I've never felt like I was going to get thrown under the bus" because her own professionalism was trusted. Others noted the effect of perceived positive leadership approaches on the entire staff team.

Collected figure of speech responses from interview participants on this topic:
- The administration "made us feel like a unified body."
- An administrator who employs leadership approaches that are viewed as positive has his or her staff "firing on all cylinders."
- A participant praised a team of in-school administrators who created a community that "was very much a small town feel."
- The high standards set by an incoming principal "bled into the staff and it bled very quickly."

Repetition of words. In addition to viewing figures of speech, I also viewed participants’ repetition of words through the lens How They Describe. For the purpose of this section, I defined "repetition of words" as vocabulary-based concepts or base phrases that are repeated in short order by the interview participant, apparently for emphasis. I defined "short order" as a small time segment of the interview. On average, this worked out to about one paragraph of the interview transcript or less than a minute of the audio recording. I recognize this was a decision that limits the scope of this section. However, it also gave the opportunity to highlight words which the interview-participant chose (consciously or unconsciously) to repeat with a staccato-like effect. I viewed this repetition as a sort of circling around, a pondering of, a pausing near, and a strengthening
of the ideas presented by these teachers. Each interview participant demonstrated this pattern of repetition.

I have further imposed myself and my perspectives on this process by selecting only two or three examples of repetition from each participant, when participants had an average of 10-12 examples of repeated phrases or words, according to the parameters that I defined above. One stage of this decision-making was practical: I chose to eliminate repetitions that have already appeared in my analysis of figures of speech. For example, the ideas of ladder-climbing, of an in-school administrator having a teacher's back, or raising a bar were often repeated, and by more than one participant, but these have already been presented in the previous section. Having decided this, the next stage of decision making involved a survey of all participants' repeated phrases. I chose to select a wide variety of examples, even though many participants had some repetition of words in common with other participants. I made this choice to present the broadest possible scope of the issues raised by as many disparate voices as were entrusted to me during the interview process.

In the previous section, I chose to delineate the figures of speech by topic rather than by speaker. Most participants spoke to several of these topics, but I focused on the topics (and their associated figures of speech) in order to outline key areas of emphasis throughout all interviews. However, in the following section, I have chosen to present the participants one by one. In my view, the participants' personal areas of repetition draw attention to ideas that are significant to them; in a manner of speaking, the repetitions of the participants tell a story. For ease of identification during reading, I have added underlining to the repeated words/concepts or phrases in each story.
Andrea. Andrea told me a story about a time in her career when a student acted toward her in a defiant manner. When she spoke to the student, he upped his defiance. "And I was, like, lost my mind. So I told my co-teacher and he did nothing about it and I told the principal and they did nothing about it. And I was like, 'Seriously? That's allowed? Get me out of this building.'" Directly after sharing this story, she shared another, similar story: a student acted in an offensive way toward her. "And I took it to the [supervising] teacher" and found no support with him. "So I took it to the principal" who also declined to act on her behalf. Andrea felt that she was acted against by students, and she reacted with actions of her own. Her view of her actions is seen in her repetition of "I took it to" or "I told" four times within several sentences. Yet there was no action from the in-school administrators (they “did nothing”). Andrea peppered these stories with statements about her reaction: "I was so angry," "And I was, like, that's offensive," and "That's not okay."

Andrea shared her next repetition about half an hour after she shared those initial stories, but the content was linked to the second situation described above. She narrated for me how she had evaluated the initial situation with the principal who had done nothing to back her up and had decided that she needed to act diplomatically. "I needed them to support me [in a certain initiative] so I did whatever I could do get that support. Not, like, being all buddy-buddy or anything, but was probably nicer to him than I would have been if he wasn't my administrator." However, two years after the incident and this internal decision, she had an issue with a student who was "just being horrible." After dealing with the student herself with no results, she sent the student to the principal for the rest of class. Based solely on a short phone call from Andrea, the administrator dealt
with the student so directly and thoroughly that "[a]t that point, I was like, 'Okay, I trust you again because you've shown me that you really do support me.'" For Andrea, support from the in-school administrator created trust. Inaction was, to her, the opposite of support.

**Billie.** Where Andrea's repetitions involved action or inaction from the in-school administrator, Billie's repeated words often centered on the in-school administrator's level of insight. Within moments of starting the interview, she brought up the need for the in-school administrator to have the ability to be cognizant of the dynamics of the staff. She stated the administrator would need "to recognize when we don't need that meeting, or to recognize when we need to shut a meeting down, or to recognize who isn't speaking in a meeting," among other abilities. A short time later, she added another repetition that also emphasized the in-school administrator's understanding. She expressed, "I would like for an administrator to just assume that teachers on staff are at a certain level—and a high level. And then assume that I'm doing my job to the best of my abilities, and go from there. And if you find out that I'm not, then that's a different conversation but assume that I am." Billie wanted the administrator to maintain a sort of caring vigilance that worked in tandem with the administrator's default perception of professionalism of the teaching staff. She wanted a level of professional trust.

Billie expressed that she would readily extend this professional trust. In another example of repetition, Billie said her opinion of in-school administrators is likely to change from negative to positive "where you see that decisions are really made because the administrator is looking out for the best interests of the staff and/or students. I think that really sways my opinion." When she had confidence in an administrator, it was
because "even when I didn't agree, I knew that it was, 'okay, this is best for somebody.' Maybe it's not me or maybe I don't think it's the kid, but this administrator has showed that they made decisions on what's best for the kids, not based on what's most convenient or what's going to take the least amount of time and effort." She valued the knowledge that "we're both fighting for what's best for the kid. We just think what's best for the kid is different." Not only did Billie express her desire to trust her in-school administrator, but she also stated that she would willingly defer to the administrator's approach if she knew that she and her in-school administrator had the same goal. To reach this point, however, she needed to know that her administrator had feet-on-the-ground insight regarding the students and school, and that her administrator would prioritize care of students above personal considerations.

**Chrissie.** Chrissie also focused on the in-school administrator's awareness (she even repeated Billie's word "recognize"), but her repetition centered more on recognition of teachers' actions within the school than on recognition of staff dynamics. For her, feedback from in-school administrators regarding her involvement was important: "I so appreciated that because sometimes I don't know if people, or if admin recognize what I do. …I was very surprised that he had been noticing things that I never thought he would have been. So that made me feel really supported, like, 'oh, someone's noticing, appreciating.'" Noticing, for Chrissie, seemed to be paired closely with appreciation.

Chrissie paired another two concepts together in a different example of repetition. She believed that "with our demographic, I feel that there needs to be empathy balanced with firm consequences." She clarified her statement by ruling out leniency as a possible demonstration of empathy ("that really puts a strain on the rest of the staff"), then noted
that the administrators have the burden of creating and implementing these standards and that, when they don't, it's possible to not have "the firm consequence side at all." She realized how this creates a situation where teachers "need to pick up the slack" and "wonder if that's really the tone that the admin wants to set and if they're going to be, you know, striving to implement firm consequences then are they going to be at odds with the administration?"

_Daphne._ Daphne also noted that in-school administrators need to notice, but she flipped the viewfinder around when she linked the ability to notice with the practice of being seen. "I'm sorry, but there's no way you can do your job well if you're not in the building to see some parents [before and after school]." Good principals, in her accounting, will "come in [the classroom] to see" what is going on, and they create places and habits that allow them to see and be seen. "You see [the principal] out on the playground, always visible. That's an excellent habit of [the principal's]—visibility for everybody." She stated that "definitely the visibility" habit is essential to leadership. "If they're gone to meetings, that's fine, but let the staff know so we're not running around looking for them. …Just…being visible."

Visibility needs to be "honoured," in Daphne's words, and so does she. She expressed that she feels better equipped and supported for her job when she sees an in-school administrator "valuing my opinion. Not just telling me we're going to do something but…involving my input and asking for my opinion, valuing my opinion, taking some of my suggestions. It's not just asking for the sake of asking, it's listening. …And so, just value, feeling valued." The result of this visible valuing is that Daphne
"feel[s] positive about what I'm doing. I must be doing something right. ... [The principal] makes me feel like that."

**Eric.** The visibility, awareness, and support provided by the in-school administrator must be authentic, though. Eric stated that there are "people who are good leaders… I think it's [being] authentic in the schools…. It comes down to that authenticity. You can tell the people that are critical thinkers, that think for themselves, that want to do it." Eric sees the antithesis of authenticity as "the ones that are in it for themselves, that are only doing it for themselves."

Eric further believed that "you kind of get what you give. If you live in a culture of fear, then you get a culture that's afraid, and when people are afraid, people don't perform. They're afraid to perform." This fear can manifest itself in job performance, as Eric noted above. However, he was also careful to point out that, for him, the fear quickly becomes internal. He stated that when there is a perception that in-school administrators are covertly criticising the teaching staff, "what am I worrying about? I'm not worrying about whatever the thing is that I'm dealing with. I'm worrying about what the implications are. …So I'm worrying more about how it's going to affect me instead of worrying about [the real issue]. …Instead I'm worrying about myself."

**Felix.** Felix explained that "there is a difference" between "being there for the school community" and "just being there," and he thought that it came down to in-school administrators’ intentions. "It's not just due diligence. It's actually being vested. Like, having a vested interest and taking some ownership in it." Further, "it's the vested interest" that makes teachers and students alike feel supported. If an in-school administrator is actually invested in the people of the school, people know, Felix
believed, because non-investment is on public display: "There's the body language, vocal inflection, things that seem to point to that you don't want to be available. That you don't have time for this."

While he prized the idea of authentic presence, a hint of covert criticism is to Felix, like Eric, an unsettling perception. "I personally can take tones of voice—even if it's being done professionally—and I'll read into it. Maybe it was there or maybe it was not, but there are certain things that you can read from people with their tone of voice...."

For him, the perception that something was being thought about him but not said to him was disconcerting. "You can read a lot of things a person is saying through their tone of voice." He allowed that some in-school administrators may not "understand the nuance of speech" and that these people "don't use it in a manipulative way." However, he explained that the effect of unintentional behaviours feels no differently than if his in-school administrators had acted intentionally: "It always puts me off when you hear things said in a certain way. It's like, 'Did I do something?'

Georgia. Georgia repeated the word tone as well, but she expanded its definition to refer to the climate that an in-school administrator sets within the school setting. Speaking of an administrator that she called "a strong leader," she stated that "I'm sure the kids can tell when she's there and when she's not" based on the tone in the building. "If something's going to go awry or kids are going to go wild, it's a day when she's not there. I don't know. There's just a different tone in the building when she's there and when she's not. There's just that comfort." Students are not the only ones affected by the in-building presence of the principal: "The tone of the staff is that you want to do well."

Georgia saw this modeled, top-down tone-setting in other schools as well. "It's
interesting, you can walk into schools and you can get, I can get a sense of a school in about five seconds. … You just get kind of a general feeling, whether it's a nice place to be." She saw a distinct and intrinsic connection between the tone a strong leader sets and the teaching staff's trust in that leader. "The tone of the staff is that you want to do well. You want to work harder for someone who's a strong leader. Like, you want to do your job better if you know that you believe in and trust and appreciate the person you're working for. That just kind of comes hand-in-hand."

Trust was another concept repeated by Georgia, and it was presented as another two-way street. "I feel supported and valued" by her in-school administrator when the administrator extends trust to her by "asking my opinion…delegating committees…asking you to lead things, which means that she kind of trusts that you are, you know, worthy of doing that." To Georgia, this was an indication that the in-school administrator can "just trust my professionalism." She summarized: "She just trusted me so much. … I guess, for me, trust is a big one and so if I trust them and I know that they trust me, then you just approach things differently because you don't feel like you have to validate everything that you're saying to them." Trust is validating and, in a sense, in-school administrators’ validation of their staff saturates the school atmosphere.

**Lens Three: What They Describe**

Unlike Lenses One and Two, through which I focused on the process and the form of the shared narratives, I used the third lens of analysis, *What They Describe*, to focus on the content of what survey respondents and interview participants described. In another departure from Lenses One and Two, Lens Three is the only lens in which the survey data is represented in this study, and the survey data played a critical role in the
analysis of the interview data. I began to theme the survey data before the interview stage of data collection had begun. Those themes provided me with temporary viewing places from which to study the interview data. Later, the interview data reflected back on the survey data and affected my understanding of it.

In my view, it is important to describe in detail how the theming of the survey data affected the final analysis and representation to be presented here. Initially, I attempted several methods of viewing and organizing the survey response data. I arranged and re-arranged the responses, considering different coding options: by question, by respondent, or by key words and concepts. Finally, I settled into a theming practice for the survey data that, I think, worked harmoniously with the data and with my temperament:

- I read, re-read, and read again.
- As I read the survey data, I began to sketch out common themes and their defining characteristics. I considered a ‘theme’ to be any significant recurrence of central topic—any characteristics that were repeated by one or more survey respondent. I did not yet label the themes or name the characteristics. All themes were related to the respondents’ expectations and perceptions of the role of the in-school administrator, as per my guiding question (*How do teachers’ perceptions of the leadership approaches of in-school administrators shape teachers’ professional practices?*).
- Once I had the general concepts of the data grouped into themes (still without a label or name for the theme), I started analysing the features of these themed groups of data, and proceeded to flesh out definitions for the themes based on
their features. I began to use interview data to advise the survey data, clarifying the boundaries and scope of these themes.

• After refining the definitions of the themes, I named the themes: a professional approach to leadership, a purposeful approach to leadership, a presence-based approach to leadership. (English teacher though I am, I did not force these themes to arrive alliterated.)

• I edited the definitions for these three theme categories to make them more precise and explicit. I referred to the survey data and the interview data to guide this revision process.

• Using these themes, I re-engaged with all the responses to survey questions 2, 4, and 7 of the survey (see Appendix C) and colour-coded all survey responses that fit, without my coercion, into these themes. I checked the responses against my created definitions as I went. (Over 90% of the survey data fit into one or more of the themes, likely because the definitions of the themes were created from the responses in the first place.)

• I acknowledged that survey questions 2, 4, and 7 elicited responses from survey respondents about their perceptions of the role of the in-school administrator that the respondents specifically considered to be positive or neutral, so I checked my completed coding and the theme definitions against the other survey questions.

• I re-typed all colour-coded responses in their three themes (a professional approach to leadership, a purposeful approach to leadership, a presence-based approach to leadership) in order to better interact with them.
• Within the three themes, I grouped like survey responses together and pooled them, summarized and categorized, into the summary paragraphs presented in the sections below. These summary paragraphs introduce and position the interview data which follows them.

• I colour-coded interview data that fit into the three themes.

It was during this theming process that I came to truly appreciate the juxtaposition of the survey responses (generally short, declarative statements from a wide group of teachers, presumably from many schools) with the stories shared through interviews (deeper and more detailed, more personal, and with the ability to express more emotion, from a more limited group of participants who met with me face-to-face).

Therefore, I have organized the data on the next pages in the following manner. I have created three sections, one each of the three themes that emerged from the data (a professional approach to leadership, a purposeful approach to leadership, a presence-based approach to leadership). I have started each section with a series of statements about that section’s theme in paragraph form; these statements are pooled and summarized data derived directly from the survey. (Even when these sentences do not directly state "survey data says" or "survey respondents indicate" this information came directly from the data created by participants and observed by me. I have chosen to refrain from repeating these citing phrases to avoid awkward and repetitive syntax.)

Offset throughout the text of each of the three sections, I have also included a small number of direct quotations from survey respondents.

After each section’s summary paragraphs of survey data, I have positioned extensive excerpts from interview transcripts; these quotations from interview
participants relate to the themes composed through the survey data. Because I have chosen interview responses that correlate with the themes of each section, the voices of some interview participants may be represented more frequently in one section than another, depending on participants’ own areas of focus. I have positioned interview participants’ voices in a deliberately conversational format: these interview quotations ‘respond’ to the survey data which immediately precede them, but these interview quotations also ‘respond’ to each other. In summary, the survey data (in paragraph form) set the perspective for the interview data, and the interview data (in block quotation form) describe the survey data more vividly.

**A professional approach to leadership.** Teachers in this study viewed a professional approach to in-school leadership as critical and appreciated. The survey data regularly featured praise for in-school administrators who 1) were professional themselves and 2) operated under the assumption that teachers were professionals.

First, the survey results indicated that teachers want the in-school administrator to be the professional leader in the building. Survey respondents regularly stated that, when an in-school administrator is perceived to be professional, they believe the administrator's goal is to help teachers improve their own professional practice and be successful in their career regardless of the school/classroom circumstances they face. They fleshed out their concepts of professionalism in leadership by giving examples of expected or hoped-for leadership approaches, and this list (condensed here) could be viewed as reading like a job description.

"I wish the primary role of the principal was to work more closely with his/her own staff members in improving their practice."

*Survey Respondent #26"
• Provide support and assistance to the teachers in the areas of, for example, curriculum, instructional practice, and interactions with students and families

• Train and monitor teachers

• Act as a sounding board for teachers in instruction as well as for general guidance and perspective

• Provide definite direction and directives

• Be decisive and make sure the decisions are acted upon

• Maintain honest, open communication with teachers, community, and students with the goal of consistent, intentional messaging

• Demonstrate exemplary management skills

• Be a hard worker

• Set a high standard of professionalism by example, and consistently expect all teachers to rise to the standard of professional behaviour.

Survey respondents believed the concepts outlined above to be key features of a professional approach to in-school leadership, and interview participants described similar beliefs:

Billie

Within months of the new leadership being there, it was like people know that they would be held accountable for their words and actions and they wanted the leaders to know that "I'm doing a good job." And it just kind of raised the bar. And I think that that administrator set the bar high for students and staff and told students and staff, "here's where the bar is. Rise to it." And they certainly did. And not to say that every single person but, like, overall there was a huge staff buy-in to new school policies and those kind of things. And not everybody always agreed with it, and even I myself didn't agree with some things, but I respected the leadership to the point of, like, "they know what they're doing and I don't know if I necessarily agree with this but I will confer to their judgment and their wisdom."
Chrissie

It's a high calling, right? ...and teachers are held in high regard in public and, yeah. So I feel I have a high expectation of myself because I'm a teacher and just because of the way I choose to generally live my life, but yeah, just hearing things about, like, maybe how administrators live outside of school—that affects the way I think of them sometimes.

Felix

When a real problem has to happen or when serious conversations about scheduling, passing or failing, getting expelled because of behaviour, all that stuff—they're the face. ...That's where you have to have all [that] dispassionate, good body language—very matter-of-fact and not so emotionally involved in the situation. You just have to present facts as plainly and as comfortably as they are.

Georgia

I think in the recent times, so much of it is just having someone who keeps people calm. I've had quite a few where they're just stable and calm no matter what, to the point where I would say, "If So-and-so ever gets worried, we're hitting the deck." (Laughs) "If she comes with even a little bit of worry on her face, we're going down." So I think no matter what is going on, if they can kind of keep it together.

Felix

If something's happening with students, that a teacher has been a part of [and] they're kind of at their wit's end and don't know what to do next, [the administrator] can step in because they have better mitigating skills for taking that situation, taking the fire out of the situation. Again, if parents are involved in that kind of situation, they can cool the flames and that kind of thing.

Billie

We saw the ability our admin had to juggle a lot of tasks. And that instilled some confidence. Even just little things. Like, we had a weekly memo that went out to everybody that said, "Let's celebrate these things, and here's what's coming up, and this person had a baby and congratulations, and...." So just on a personal level, bringing us together as a staff.

Daphne

The one that I have right now is fabulous. Almost everything is immediate communication. ...So you feel that you're listened to. Often she'll come to the room and speak to you face to face to say, you know, "I got your email. This is what I'm going to do. What do you think about this?" And, so instant communication but a lot of face to face communication, and just acknowledging emails! When you send them a question you expect an answer, and of course there's some administrators who—you could wait
weeks and never hear from them. You would have to go to them and say, "Did you get my email?"

The above section described, through survey data and interview responses, that these teachers wanted in-school administrators to approach leadership in a professional manner. However, teachers did not only want in-school administrators to be professionals: they wished that in-school administrators would actively assume that they, the teachers, are also professionals. Survey respondents outlined what this looks like to them: that in-school administrators give room for teachers to make professional, autonomous decisions in their classrooms and then assume, unless proved otherwise, that those decisions were well-informed and well-intentioned. Though the desired expectation of professionalism may seem to be at odds with the desire that in-school administrators require an increased level of professionalism from the teaching staff, it is not. The survey data indicated that respondents simply wanted the in-school administrator's default position to be in the teacher's corner—and the respondents also wanted all teachers to earn this trust. When the teacher's method or instruction was questioned by a student or parent or when the teacher had a concern or an issue, respondents wanted the in-school administrators to trust their perspective and motives.

This two-way professional trust, respondents suggested, springs at least in part from the in-school administrators' ability to see and appreciate the hard work and dedication demonstrated daily by these teachers, and vice-versa. It results in a virtuous circle: according to survey respondents, if an administrator trusts a teacher, the administrator will "have the teacher's back." Further—and it may
seem like splitting hairs to say it, but the survey respondents were clear that there is a distinction—teachers need to feel confident in their knowledge that the administrator will have their backs. If the administrator has the teacher's back and the teacher knows it, the teacher feels a sense of security. The result of this perception of security is a sense of ownership, empowerment, and professional care. Some survey respondents linked this sense of security with the perception that the in-school administrator is willing to hear and promote teachers' voices, which the survey respondents viewed as a gesture of acknowledged professionalism.

**Andrea**

*Well, first of all, knowing that if you go to them, they're going to back you up. Not that a teacher always needs to be backed up because sometimes they've done something that's not great. But knowing that they're going to have the wisdom to say, “Yes, this is a circumstance where you need to be backed up.” So I think that really makes you feel better equipped as a teacher—knowing that the choices you make are supported. That gives me a really big confidence boost and I think it also makes me take ownership because they trust me to do this.*

**Eric**

*I’ve had principals where I knew, no matter what, that as long as they knew that they could trust that what I was doing was best for a kid, that they had my back. And I’ve had other principals where it’s like, “Well, how’s this going to make me look?”*

**Daphne**

*I was subbing a few years ago at a school and one of the students was incredibly rude to me. ...When I went to speak to the principal afterwards, instead of him backing me up, ...the principal just kept justifying that student’s behaviours. So I made the decision that I would never ever go back to that school. If I was going to be subbing, I wouldn’t go to that school. Because I felt that I didn’t deserve to be treated that way.*

**Billie**

*...When we just see administration taking away more and more decisions that teachers make, it makes us think they have less and less confidence in our ability to make a decision that is not based in selfishness or trying to be lazy or something, you know? ...And that doesn’t feel good to go to work. And it doesn’t motivate me to do well. I do, because I have other*
motivations for that, but teachers who don't have other motivations aren't doing that because there's nobody checking up on you and what does it matter? ...It just really deflates a person.

Chrissie
It doesn't take much to destroy any trust you've built, which is unfortunate. And makes you feel like, "Okay, I'm on my own here." Or when you go requiring support with a student and a meeting maybe happens behind your back with parents or whatever. That doesn't feel good. Yeah. And makes you feel less of a professional. Your voice is taken away.

Eric
Show me the respect because I'm a person who is very good with criticism. I find I am, and if you think that I need to change something, I'm going to. Well, I'm at least going to be able to explain why I'm doing that. But if you give it to me in a stack and say, "This is wrong..." [When a principal criticized a deliberate professional decision Eric made] it put me into a self-preservation mode where I dreaded coming to work, I dreaded making decisions, I dreaded anything because of the fear that it wasn't going to be what they wanted.

Andrea
Oh, I think I'm going to question myself a lot more. And I'm not going to take risks, and I'm not going to go out on a limb for a kid. ...So, yeah, I think it limits you a lot if you don't know that your administration isn't going to be there for you if something bad happens.

Billie
Yeah, I know of staff members who have had parents call the office and the office would call the teacher basically to defend themselves. And it's like, "No, you should, as an administrator, just have your teacher's back and then go from there. And, like, maybe get their side of the story but not in a "defend yourself, you're being accused of this" [way]."

Eric
Give me respect, I guess, is the biggest thing. And also, when you ask the question of "why," it's not that condescending "why would you have done it this way?" It's like, "hey, just looking at this and wondering why this is going on like this."... If I trust you, then essentially I respect you. If I don't trust you, I don't know that—it's not that I would be that disobedient, insubordinate—that's not what I'm going to do, but I won't be as passionate in that conviction that I have towards it, to want to. I'll do it, but you're not going to get the passion.

Georgia
Yeah, I guess for me trust is a big one and so if I trust them and I know that they trust me, then you just approach things differently because you don’t feel like you have to validate everything that you’re saying to them or apologize or whatever. I’ve always had really good support with parents. I’ve never felt like I was going to get thrown under the bus in a meeting with parents. For teachers, I think that’s a big one. Like, "Are you going to back me up with this parent?" And this one that I have right now, in particular, not only backs us up but she handles it for us. She’d be, like, "No, no, no. I’m calling that parent, and I’m going to talk to them and you’re going to keep teaching. I’m going to go handle this."

Felix

Yeah, just being able to listen and then being able to offer solutions. Or other opportunities. Or, again, "make me the face of this." You know, “if there’s a problem, send it to me. Like, or send an email to somebody and CC me so they know I am on page with this. I support what you’re going to say here.” Or “here’s how I think you should do this. Do it like that—attach my name.” Or “I will talk to them, whatever it is, whatever is necessary.” ...To actually be the supportive angle, and if need be to take the bullet. To be like, “no, no, this is my person and I trust what you’re doing and I stand behind their methods of doing so, so—you shut up.”

(Laughs)

Andrea

I think they need to be good leaders. I think they need to be stern but open-minded. Like, I think that they need to have a goal and move towards it but also be willing to take advice and to sort of be guided by the teachers. And I also think it's really, really important for them to allow for their teachers to be professional. Like, to allow for teachers to make some professional choices.

A purposeful approach to leadership. Next, the themed data collected from the online surveys demonstrated that survey respondents hoped that their in-school administrators were purposeful. In my interpretation, the concepts best reflecting the nature of this are intentionality and integrity.

Respondents saw intentionality as a sort of clear-sightedness combined with rational judgment. For instance, survey respondents cited experiences when in-school administrators (particularly, in this case, principals) were
able to comprehend and evaluate directives, initiatives, and policies that "came down" from higher administrations, recognize the potential effects on staff and students, and make practical, agenda-driven decisions regarding the operation of the school. In some cases, it seemed to respondents as though the in-school administrator had remarkable foresight; some respondents attributed this to the wisdom of experience, others believed it to be a skill (natural or learned), and others indicated that this ability spoke to in-school administrators’ attentiveness to the education system and the school community. Survey respondents frequently indicated their appreciation of the ability of in-school administrators to note and manage conflicting purposes, and then communicate a purposeful agenda (both to the school board and the teachers) for the good of the school community. The voices of interview participants, in the interview excerpts below, describe detailed perceptions of this leadership approach:

Daphne

*Our board members are often in the school. [The principal] seems to encourage that and welcome that. ...So I feel ours is an excellent mediator.*

Eric

*[If] my administrator comes over and tells me that they agree 100% with what's going on somewhere else, I know they're not being real. ...I think the best principal I ever had that did that was one that essentially came in and said, "... how are we going to work with it? Because we have to do what they're asking, it doesn't fit necessarily in our school, so we've got this area in-between where we have to come up with something." ...[If] people [see] that you're willing to get your hands dirty and do it with them? I don't see the pushback.*

Felix

*It's like having four separate fences. They stand in the middle and can't take any one of the corners but have to be able to take all the corners at the same time. Pretty paradoxical if they're good at their job. ...And I don't think I've ever seen anyone do it well to the extent that they can play both sides of the fence, and keep both sides of the fence happy while still delivering the bottom line. ...Like, you just have to do what you have to do*
and help other people to understand that this isn't personal but that this is the way it's going to be.

Chrissie
For me, I appreciate directness. I want to know what your expectation is of me and then I want to go do it, because I'm a rule follower. And I don't have time in my day to second-guess and to wonder if I'm doing things correctly or not. I don't know. I just like a straight-shooter.

Georgia
I just—I like having someone to report to. I like having a boss. (Laughs) I like having someone after me. Like, “I don’t know, go ask So-and-so.” I don’t like to be where the line ends. To be like, “Oh, that’s me.” …I don’t like to be the one who gives—if I don’t know the answer, then who does? Like, if I have an irate parent, I can handle them but I know I can tell So-and-so the next day. “Oh, and by the way, this person’s coming because they’re ticked off” (Laughs).

Billie
Yeah, the admin is the last stop, you know what I mean? If I’ve tried everything as a teacher and I take it to you, you have to have a plan. You have to have something else to contribute to this or why did I ever…?

Georgia
I listen to teachers that are burnt out or I have a few friends who are resigning this year, and I listen to them talk and I keep saying to them, "It's not like that everywhere! I'm listening to the whole climate of your school and how things are run and don't take your situation and assume that all other situations are like that. Because I think that the leadership makes a huge difference, because it's a hard job. It's a hard job right now and it's messy and if you don't have someone strong leading you, you're going down the tubes. There's no hope, right? There's not someone to be like, "It's going to be fine, we're going to get through this, we're going to figure this out." So if you don't have that, forget it!

Daphne
I want to know that my administration is working as hard as I am, if not harder. So the ones that come at twenty to 9, and leave at, well, quarter to four, I'm sorry, but there's no way you can be doing your job well....But I've seen principals just sit back and do nothing.

Eric
[If] people are backed up, constantly building people up—I think we have a lot more strength as a collective. Does that mean you have to, you know, you can't have tough conversations? No ... I think you have very tough conversations but it's from a strength-based side. ...Because most people
are willing to do it—if they don’t feel that they’re going to be, you know, spit out the back. I think that’s the biggest thing.

Daphne
We were a cohesive group but we were so upset with the principal—and the lack of direction, lack of consistency, lack of communication, lack of standing up for us—that we had become very, very toxic. Every time that we were around each other, all we could talk about was the inability of that principal to function. And we said, “We’re in a toxic situation.” But the principal wasn’t going anywhere. So it affected the whole climate of the school. And it was such a negative, toxic place to be that, I think, health-wise it was affecting a lot of us physically as well as emotionally. When your leader is not leading and it’s up to you pull everything together and so many of us were feeling, like, “We can only do so much.”

Chrissie
If people are generally being treated that way then whether it affected me directly or not, I will feel like even if I were to go to that person or that principal or vice-principal for support, I likely won’t receive support—so I just won’t [go]. Yeah, there’s nothing quite so deflating as that. Oh, but then, on the other hand—say, the principal who was calling me to a high standard and saying, “Hey, I want this for you and I see this in you”—I felt very safe to go to him and say, “Hey, I have this idea!” Or, “what do you think of...?” ...Talk can be hugely valuable if you’re backing it up with actions, and I’ve experienced that and have thrived under that kind of leadership.

Eric
I think part of it is someone that’s actually been involved and actually done that role, so that—what’s the word I’m looking for?—they can’t just, they have to be able to do what they’re saying. It’s an important part. And I think that part of it is, when I started we had a group of principals that were really nice people [but] spent two or three years in the classroom at the very most. And I think that what they were asking and what their expectations were—they had no idea.

Georgia
Maybe when they’re first in leadership they take staff more personally than they do towards the end. I don’t know. I don’t know how—from what I see, you get a sense of who’s a rational person. Like, who, if they’re concerned, you should be concerned. And who is just never going to be happy, and who—doesn’t matter what we do for this person—they’re always going to be.... There’s a little bit of that. But yeah, you have to have some hard and fast personality traits to just, like, “This is the way that it is. I’m sorry that you don’t like it.” And there’s no training for that, for them.
Billie

And a strong sense of, I don’t know, a strong—not necessarily personality, but a strong sense of direction for the school and the goals, and to be in it for the long haul, not to be just like, “Oh, you’re just a stop on my administrative climb” but “I’m here to invest in these students and these teachers, and I want to make this school a good place.”

Felix

I’ve found that in my current place that I think that this principal really needs to have their finger on a lot of socio-economic particulars. They need to understand the community better than I think you would in a more affluent area. ...Where there’s a lot of money, you can kind of use assume that a lot of people are going to understand or you simply say "that’s how we do things” and they have to go with it.

Chrissie

With our demographic, I feel that there needs to be empathy balanced with firm consequences, and I don’t feel that we have the firm consequence side at all. ...That really puts a strain on the rest of the staff and—um, other staff feel like they need to pick up the slack but if admin isn’t leading the way they wonder if that’s really the tone that the admin wants to set and if they’re going to be, you know, striving to implement firm consequences then are they going to be at odds with the administration?

In addition to their implicit focus on intentionality as a key element of purposefulness, survey respondents also included the concept of integrity as critical. The descriptions of the survey respondents operated on the premise that intentionality and integrity are two sides of the same coin; integrity is intentionality lived out despite obstacles and possible opposition. An in-school administrator's sense of purposefulness is demonstrated by the administrator's ability to translate their intentional vision for the school into action. Respondents cited three main areas where this ability is needed. First, they often referred to the in-school administrator's role as an active lobbyist or advocate to the "higher-ups" (the school board and the Ministry of Education, in particular) on behalf of the teachers. Second, many respondents believed
the in-school administrator plays a major role in creating a purposeful environment for students. Third, respondents wanted the role of the in-school administrator to include helping teachers become more reflective, effective, and intentional in their practice, with the clear dual goals of professional growth and value added to the school. The data indicate that survey respondents preferred their in-school administrators to approach leadership with a determination to clear the way for school success. In short, survey respondents appreciated in-school administrators whose approach to leadership is purposeful: they should know why they are doing what they are doing, and keep that reason in mind as they keep doing it.

These administrators are driven by a well-defined personal understanding of their vision for the school community and, according to survey participants, this leads to 1) clear and consistent communication, 2) an intentional editing of the demands on teachers' time, and 3) a deliberate backing of agendas, initiatives, and events that practically support the vision of the school. Time and time again, the survey respondents linked the perceived purposefulness of an in-school administrator's leadership approach directly to their own perceptions of the administrator's support for them as teachers.

Chrissie

*They're at an unfair advantage because they're only there two years, maybe three if you're lucky. But because there's staff coming and going all of the time—all of the time—like, that should be the primary position of leadership in the building, and regardless of whether they're there two years of three or whatever. I mean, with, there's got to be a better model. (Laughs) No, I think that the administrator role is everything. It needs to be kind of the driving force behind that, as much as possible.*

Andrea
I was like, "Why am I [in this PD session]? Why am I wasting this time? I could be doing multitudes of things, but I'm just sitting here." It was ridiculous, and I think it was because he wanted to prove to higher-ups that he had control of the school. So he was micromanaging. And then another thing that makes me crazy with some administrators is—they want to climb the ladder, they want to get a promotion and so they come up with crazy ideas that are new and inventive.

Daphne
A lot of us wouldn't even send our kids to [the principal] with issues because, if they were sent up there, they were fooling around, they were allowed to use iPads, and it became a reward rather than a punishment. So we just started doing our own discipline stuff...[The principal] had to have known. But nothing happened and there were no repercussions. There were no reprimands as far as we were aware.

Billie
There was a parent who was difficult. ...For this entire meeting, the mom basically attacks me...I think the principal jumped in a few times but this went on for a good hour. The second the mother and daughter left, I burst into tears. It was awful. I've never been so personally and professionally attacked in all of my career. And I didn't think about it for months after but, looking back now, I get upset. At the mom, yes, but even more at the principal. The principal should have shut that meeting down two minutes after it started. ...She should have defended me, had my back, removed me from that awful situation. ...She should have taken control of that meeting and ended it if the mom was only interested in attacking me. Compare that to more recently when there was another difficult parent, and after one interaction with the parent, our principal said to the teacher, 'Don't respond to emails. Don't call. Don't talk on the phone. Everything goes to me.' That's how it's done.

Eric
If someone's just taking notes on all the things that I'm doing wrong, and I don't know why people have this idea but, for a lot of people our role is very much a report card. And how we follow through at school, people feel like they're constantly having a report card done about them, and I think that if you have an administrator that is [creating a report card on teachers], they have to be upfront about that. Because I have. I have and I didn't know, and I watched that destroy a segment of the staff who, all of a sudden, you think you're doing a good job, and then "these are all the things you're doing wrong." Okay. "So, can you show me the other pile of all the things I'm doing right? Because I know that I'm not only doing bad things."

Chrissie
I think he noticed that I liked to be collegial and friendly and get along with everybody and he just said that those were qualities of a leader and he said that he had that in mind for me down the road and that really called me to be like, "Okay, so, what does a leader look like? And how does that affect my day-to-day conduct?" ...As a professional, I want to know, like, okay, if I need to be involved in more extracurricular, if that's what you're seeing, then I need to be. And I just appreciate that honest feedback.

Andrea

And then she goes, "I'm not going to tell you [what to do] because it's your choice, but anytime you do something you open yourself up to criticism. So if you make the choice to [do this], then you are then opening yourself up to criticism and you have to be prepared to take whatever form that comes. There might be nothing. But there might be something." I just thought it was really cool. I felt like I could go in and talk to her about it because I knew she wouldn't judge me and I knew that she would give me her honest opinion. ... But it's also important that I can go into the office and say, "Hey, I made this bad decision. Just letting you know.... if you get a call— I did it. So, punish me. Do whatever you got to do."

Felix

The words that came from this person were very much like, "Listen, we've all done things. We all have a past and that's okay." Like, it just, it didn't validate the situation I had caused. It didn't validate what I had done, but it was like, "Listen, man, it's alright. Let's get through this. It's going to be totally okay, and—we've all been there. We've all said some things, we've all done some things, we've all seen some things. And it's okay."

Georgia

I’ve seen principals put supports in place where needed. “This teacher needs help with this. Let’s kind of band around them.” But[with] more personal stuff, I would hope that it’d be a private conversation, and kind of with the intent of “I want you to do well. This is what I’m seeing that you’re struggling with, so what can we do to help you?” ...Because if they didn’t care they wouldn’t talk to you. They would just let you flounder.

Eric

If you think that this is about you then it becomes about you, but it's really not. If a person on your staff makes a mistake, they've made a mistake. That's okay. That's not you. So I think that's kind of that personality in itself, where it's like the school isn't about them; the school is about the kids and the total—not themselves.
A presence-based approach to leadership. The third and final theme, constructed first from an overwhelming number of survey responses, is that presence is a key factor in teachers' perceptions of and reflections on an in-school administrator's approach to leadership. Survey respondents demonstrated through their examples that they view this presence as a practical, physical presence. They listed a multitude of ways that an in-school administrator could (and, to their perception, should) be visible within the school. For example, many respondents made at least a few of these suggestions: that the in-school administrator walk in the hallways, greet students in the morning, linger in common use areas during class breaks, visit classrooms while classes are in session, and arrive at the school early enough that their schedule can facilitate this visibility. The presence of the in-school administrator, the survey respondents believe, benefits the teachers and the students equally.

However, the survey responses indicated that the concept of presence also extends beyond a merely practical, physical presence (though there is no escaping the perception that it starts there). Survey respondents regularly articulated a firmly held belief that, when in-school administrators are physically present and interactive in the places that students are, they make connections with students. These survey responses often included the idea that these connections "pay off" if the in-school administrator needs to address an issue with those students. A consistent presence during in-school activities also

"I most appreciate when administrators are involved in activities in a hands-on way. The best administrators I have worked with have made their presence felt in the school, not just told."

Survey Respondent #39

"Volunteering in classrooms to meet with students/teachers in good circumstances instead of just dealing with the negative would go a long way towards building a positive culture."

Survey Respondent #51
communicated to survey respondents that the in-school administrator was more likely to hold an accurate view of what the teachers face daily. When an in-school administrator was present, survey respondents held the perception that the administrator was working toward acknowledging and understanding the teachers' realities, and that this presence gives the in-school administrator the ability to empathize with teachers.

The survey data indicated that teachers view the physical presence of the in-school administrator as a very effective way for the administrator to build trust with teachers and students, listen to their concerns, and gain the ability to give specific feedback that carries weight for the listener. In short, survey respondents believed that for in-school administrators to accomplish effective work, they must see and be seen. Survey respondents regularly used language that demonstrated their belief that the level of visibility of in-school administrators is intrinsically connected to the established school culture; they frequently wrote that when an in-school administrator is consistently visible, the tone of the school is markedly more positive than if the in-school administrator is inconsistently visible or not frequently visible. The voices of the interview participants support this:

**Billie**

*You really need to have a strong leadership to get kids to be going to their classes and not fighting each other, and so, yeah, I think that our school demands a little more of a presence: principal and administration to be in the hallways and knowing who the kids are—especially knowing who are the troubled kids or the ones who will start things a lot and kind of moving them over to their side. Like, being an authoritative principal but not being seen of this wall of authoritarian... you know what I mean? To have kids know, well, "He's a good guy" or "She's a good person"—to have the kids feel like [the principal has] their back makes a big difference to them.*

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**Survey Respondent #17**

In-school administrators should "have a large presence in the hallways, meaning that s/he is building rapport with individual students so that when issues arise, there is a foundation of trust there already and consequence, if necessary, are more meaningful."
Andrea  
Availability. Like, being available, being at the school. Being there. They don’t have to be the first there and the last to leave. ...I mean, to me, it’s mostly important to staff. But I also think that students need to know that they can walk into the office and speak to the admin, right? ...I really like that [the principal] walks around the school and looks in classrooms and checks things out because I feel like, at that point, she’s then seeing what we’re doing. ...I feel like if [the principal] was to evaluate me, she would actually know what I’ve done.

Georgia  
She checks in with every single teacher every morning. "How are you?" “How was your weekend?” “How are your kids?” “What were you up to?” “I know your dad was sick. How is your dad?” Like, unbelievable. And the whole staff, every morning. And remembers and is super personal. ... I watch her make her rounds around the school—“How was your weekend? What did you do?” “I know you weren’t feeling well. How are you feeling?”—all through the school every single morning. So that, to me, demonstrates amazing leadership, because you feel that personal—like, somebody cares about what I was doing.

Eric  
I think it’s just the idea that they’re open. I’ve been on staffs where I feel like the principal doesn’t have open communication and you see the residual effects through the entire staff. People are afraid. People have no idea what’s going on and they just gossip and talk and everything else because it’s—if you don’t feel like you’re in the know, you want to know.

Georgia  
Yeah, not being accessible, right? Door closed, not approachable to ask for help or ask for, you know. Especially new teachers, just not supporting them. I feel like that’s kind of the process of how we lose those teachers, if they don’t feel that someone’s kind of invested in making sure they’re supported. ... I’ve seen with some of those principals that they’re just sort of in and out. Like they’re just putting in their time. ...Like, five minutes before the bell, five minutes after the bell—see you later. Leave on their lunch hours. So that’s what I’m talking about in terms of detachment, right. Just sort of, “...I’ll put my time in but I’m not”—Yeah, they just kind of leave it, kind of keep everything at an arm’s length.

Daphne  
Often [the principal] will be down at our end [and] come in to sing O Canada. [The principal] will come in to see, "Oh, that one’s been away for a few days, oh, they’re here now." [The principal] will do supervisions for people that are away. Lunchrooms. Um, you see [the principal] out on the
playground always visible. That's an excellent habit of [the principal's]: visibility, for everyone. ...[The principal] is everywhere. Oh, I can't talk enough about [the principal]! ...Being at the school, being present. If they're gone to meetings, that's fine, but let the staff know so we're not running around looking for them, you know, if we need something. ...Just communicating and being visible. Those are probably the two biggest ones that can be detrimental if they're not honoured.

Chrissie

[Administrators should not be] just sitting in their office chair. Punctuality, if not beating everyone there. But you set the tone. And to set the tone, you're in the hallways, you're talking to kids as they're getting their books out of their lockers, you're sitting in the front entrance engaging kids as they come in.... And often, the kids who hang out at the front entrance don't have any intention of getting to class on time so those are the ones you want to be making strong connections with, so that when it does come time to discipline—if those kids aren't going to class or if they're not pulling their weight in some way, you've already built that rapport. I don't know, even popping into classrooms. I had an administrator once who regularly popped into the classroom and—I mean, I'm not afraid of the accountability. I know some people didn't love that, but it was accountability, but it was also refreshing for me to know that an administrator wanted to keep his finger on the pulse of what actually does go on in the classroom. If they saw I was struggling getting to the 17 students who require differentiated instruction—like, I want them to know that! And that's not necessarily something that I'd make time during the day to go and talk to him about, lest I be a complainer. Or, you know, and, yeah, and then building rapport with staff. Like, attend the evening functions that the teacher has put her blood, sweat and tears into.

Eric

And honestly, I think that the staff see a person that truly cares, wants to be there, is happy to be there, gets to know, is all social with the kids and—the staff is the staff but in the end, I still think the majority of people want to see how their administrator interacts with the student body. And that's a huge thing. I don't think we think about that a lot when we're in Education. It's just like, how do they interact with their staff? More, you hear of they interact with the rest of the school and the community and the families and—if they're afraid to talk to the parents, that's a huge thing. Or if the parents don't know who the principal is in the school, it can be a huge thing. And it can be a personality type but at the same time, part of it is that you're representing the community group, and if you're not physical[ly present] and they don't see you as that person.
Daphne
It was a community that was affected by [the principal], not just the staff but the students and the parents.... I expect administration to show up at, you know, a band concert or, you know, a basketball tournament, a senior tournament or something like that. Be visible in the school but sometimes in the community as well. ...It was like [the principal] wasn't part of us... either felt better or didn't feel included. So it just seemed to send one more message.

Eric
So I think that consistency that comes from within the community comes from also being in the community. So when they have spent a significant amount of time and they're involved, they earn some trust. And if that trust is there, [parents] will find someone within the school to talk to or [they will] not talk at all. ...As the school system starts to change, that person gets moved out, you lose some of that consistency that can go along with a long-term goal. And you don't see a long-term goal. ...So I think that affects the kids.

Billie
Being in the hallways, out of their office when they're in the school. When they're out of the school, like, I know you're probably at some really great training but it doesn't help us if you're not here. Being there early—before most of the people get there—and then staying later, not being the first one gone. ...Somebody who just breezes in ...breezes out, in their office a lot or out of the building a lot, just generally seems like they don't know what's going on or don't care or are not invested in it. It comes off as, "I'm just here, but I'm not invested."

Felix
Being present at events that you are a part of, I think, is [a key habit]. But it can't—Body language and tone of voice say a lot. And if it's, "Okay, I'm here because this is what I need to do," it almost sometimes feels worse than if you're not there at all. Know what I mean? It's like, "Oh, okay. Understood. You do this out of duty and only duty as opposed to being genuinely interested or as ingeniously interested."

Chrissie
Our current administrator eats lunch every day in the staff room which is great, and has the potential to be very good as long as that administrator is positive and not a nay-sayer. Yeah, and I think that when a principal can relate on a personal level to his staff or her staff, and—obviously, when it comes time to do the real work, if that relationship's there. And it seems obvious but often more difficult in execution than philosophy.
Felix

Yeah, I mean, being intent. Being there for the school community, not just being there. There is a difference. ...It's not just due diligence. It's actually being vested. Like, having a vested interest. And taking some ownership in it. Because that's the thing. I mean, as good management, you want to inspire your employees who will now somehow, we as employees will somehow inspire our clients to do better things. You want the same thing.

Georgia

I rely way too much on recognition. I should be able to just go and do my thing. But for me it's really important for them to see that I did that, or at least mention it. I think that goes a long way with people—just a really quick, "Good job on that. That was a ton of work." So I try to do that for our kids' teachers. Like, "Thanks for planning that. I know that was a ton of work" or "Thanks for coaching that. I know it was a ton of time." It's just such a thankless job that you can toss out a few thank-yous and it goes a long way. It's just an easy word but it's a word that teachers just don't hear very often.

In the course of this research study, participants shared their personal narratives and perspectives with me. I analyzed their voiced perceptions of varied approaches of in-school administrators through three lenses. Through the first lens, *What We Construct*, I learned that teachers collaboratively build understandings and perspectives. Though the second lens, *How They Describe*, I found that teachers use vivid and focused language patterns to emphasize key personal values. Through the third lens, *What They Describe*, I found that teachers value approaches to in-school leadership that are professional, purposeful, and presence-based. These three terms describing approaches to leadership (professional, purposeful, and presence-based) encompass the themes expressed by teachers through survey responses and individual interviews, and serve to extend the current research on educational leadership reviewed in Chapter 2.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Reflections

To situate myself and the reader for my research conclusions, I note that this chapter provides reflections in two distinct categories. First, I consider the implications of my approach to analysis: the lens-based methodological analysis tool which I designed for and applied in this study. Secondly, I reflect on the voices of the teachers as expressed in the research process and represented in this study.

Reflections on the approach to analysis. In an effort to identify an analysis approach that accepted complex, fluid experiences and perceptions as vivid and valued, I referred to McCormack's (2004) lenses of context, moments, language, and narrative processes, along with her understanding of personal experience narratives. My design of this lens-based approach to analysis was, admittedly, more limited than McCormack's own research due to the scope of my study being a Master’s thesis rather than a PhD dissertation. As I adjusted the boundaries of this lens-based analysis to fit the scope of my study, I was guided by McEntyre's (2009) perspective on conversation as a potentially formative—and transformative—method of communication. The result was an analysis process wherein I viewed the survey and interview data through three lenses: What We Construct (the co-construction of understanding and meaning between researcher and participant), How They Describe (participants' language processes, particularly their use of figures of speech and repetition), and What They Describe (the experiences, reflections on experiences, and perspectives shared by participants during their interviews). In my
assessment, my research process benefited from the use of this three-lens methodological analysis approach in three key areas: responsiveness to participants as individuals, responsiveness to participants as a group, and co-construction of new contexts.

First, the use of the three-lens analysis method meant that, in my role as researcher, I was able to be responsive to individual participants. As each participant told stories, I could see their facial expressions and body language and I was sensitive to their tones. Likewise, participants could observe my facial expressions, body language, and tone. There was no need for me to remain aloof or impassive during the interviews; in fact, I believe that if I had approached the interviews with a cold or sterile manner, I would have actively limited the participants' willingness to share their experiences and perceptions. As it was, all participants were aware that I was, like each of them, a full-time practicing teacher with similar experiences. From the beginning of each interview, we (researcher and participant) were positioned as peers and we were able to respond to each other as peers: authentically and without pretense.

Unlike research methodologies which rely on quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, my use of narrative methodology did not require that participants' responses be limited to a number line or short-answer text box. As noted in the Literature Review of this study, quantitative methodologies are broadly represented in this area of research on teacher's perceptions of leadership styles and serve important purposes, but a need existed for a study which allowed a certain level of story-telling responsiveness. Due to the fluidity afforded by the three-lens approach to analysis designed for this study, I found that participants could respond to my questions in a unique and personal manner, rather than limit their responses to a short answer text box.
or a rigid line of inquiry. I could follow participants down narrative paths which they deemed important and which they connected to my initial interview questions.

Second, throughout the research process, I was also able to remain responsive to the participants as a group. Their collective voice determined the scope, direction, content and depth of my analysis and representation. As mentioned previously (see p. 37), I was drawn to a lens-based approach to analysis after engaging in data collection for a period of time. I had even left one lens undefined until all data was collected and the analysis was underway, in order that teachers' voices could determine key facets of the analysis and representation in this text. Because I used this three-lens approach to analysis, my own personal presuppositions were tempered by the influence of the participants' narratives.

With built-in cues directing me toward responsiveness, both to the individual and the collective group, I could hold the data with an open hand as I collected it, studied it, and worked toward a representation of it. In a sense, I was also holding the participants with an open hand: my methodology accepted them as complex, storied people whose experiences and perceptions did not need to be fitted into charts and numbers in order to achieve 'validity'. The three-lens analysis method allowed for a transparency that embraced the messy, fluid complexity of lives being lived. Thus, I believe that this form of analysis will be a highly relevant and compelling tool for research studies which draw on complex, peopled stories. The use of the three-lens approach to analysis meant that, as researcher, I could be responsive to these individual stories as well as the collective narrative being co-constructed.
Third, the use of the three-lens analysis method that I used in this study meant that I could acknowledge and respond to the co-constructions of new contexts. Each participant (or, story-teller) came to the study with a unique context formed by their present and past experiences with the varied leadership approaches of in-school administrators, along with their perceptions of these experiences. As the researcher (and listener), I also came to the study with a particular context; my context was likewise formed by my experiences and perceptions of my experiences. When each participant and I met, together we formed a new and unique context together: the context that story-teller and listener created together as we told and listened to each others' stories. Just as none of participants' experiences were had in isolation, none of their stories were told in isolation either. The three-lens approach to analysis recognized, even embraced, the value of this co-construction, most particularly through the lens *What We Construct*. With this in mind, I suggest that the three-lens methodological analysis which I designed and drew on for my study is a viable tool for narrative researchers who desire to approach their study with an open hand toward collecting, analyzing, and representing their participants' voices, to keep the voices of the participants as central and vivid throughout the research process, and to acknowledge the effect of their own presence on the stories told by participants.

**Reflections on interpretations drawn from the analysis.** I planted a rose bush right around the time I began to analyse the stories of interview participants. Rose gardens are a bit of a tradition on my mother's side of the family, and I finally had one. It was only a single bush, yes, and it was small, but it was mine to tend. I sought advice from relatives, gardeners, and the internet regarding the choice of rose bush, the transfer
and installation of it, and its care. I was invested in this rosebush. I could see my rosebush from where I often sat in my house to re-read transcripts, analyse the survey and interview data, and wrestle with ideas of representation and co-construction. I began to notice that my approach to the care of this rosebush over the summer often ran parallel with themes that I heard in the stories of teacher-participants in this study.

This personal investment in my rosebush caused me to become something I have never been before: a dedicated gardener. I was relentless in my nurturing of this rosebush. One blight-spotted leaf? It and its neighbours were removed and discarded. An annual that grew threateningly close to my rosebush? Dug up and replanted elsewhere. I carefully dug a shallow bowl around the bush and bought a watering can so I could gently and precisely water its base. I watched that rosebush so vigilantly that I knew every branch. I could spot a yellowing leaf from my moving car as I turned onto the street. I even pruned my neighbour's hedge one day when I discovered that its unkempt branches would hit my rosebush given a brisk breeze. My internal reaction on the day that I discovered evidence of an errant dog was—well, it does not translate well to the written word.

Though I refrained from using the words “positive” and “negative” in my questions, teachers who responded to the surveys and participated in the interviews did not shy away from these concepts. Their experiences, they told me, often did feel positive or negative, and they could connect these feelings to their perception of the in-school administrator’s leadership approaches and their expectations of that role. Teachers spoke about their expectations and hopes for their in-school administrators while they described their perceptions of them.
Teachers described—in glowing terms—the positive perception they had toward in-school administrators who demonstrated a relentless nurturing in their leadership approaches. They told how these in-school administrators set a high bar, enforced consistent standards for staff and students, provided clear and straightforward direction, and were quick and resolute in their dealings with whatever “blight” they saw. They described how these principals set clear priorities and were watchful in them. This relentlessness neared a sort of ruthlessness when these in-school administrators felt the health of the school was threatened. Teachers told of how these administrators worked for the good of the school, even if it came at a personal expense for them. The first time that I discovered blight on my rose bush, it hurt me to prune it so ruthlessly. I had just started to see new growth, and I thought, “There’s only a little bit of blight. Surely it won’t harm the rest of the bush.” But, for the health of the plant, I pruned it back. The rose bush grew back stronger, but I had to prune it for that to happen.

Likewise, teachers always linked this relentless vigilance with the necessary motive of nurturing. In fact, they told stories of relentless vigilance without the motive of nurturing, and these stories were framed, uniformly, in a negative light. If they did not recognize an in-school administrator’s desire to nurture through his or her role, teachers perceived high standards and resolute directions as authoritarian and inauthentic. Yet teachers told positively-framed stories about leadership approaches that demonstrated to them that the in-school administrator’s goal was to relentlessly nurture the school and the staff into better health. They cited communication, authenticity, responsiveness, organization, visibility, and hard work as elements of leadership approaches that built their trust in the in-school administrator.
So consistent, specific, and passionate were teachers’ perceptions on this matter that, though the intent of this study was to present the narratives of teachers, I venture here to make concrete recommendations for current and aspiring in-school administrators based on my analysis of the participants’ voices.

**Recommendations**

These are the seven recommendations that I feel confident to make, based on the frequency and passion with which the topics were discussed by interview and survey participants:

1. Teachers want in-school administrators to be in control. They want to run into a hard wall when they run out-of-bounds, and they want to know that that wall is there for their colleagues as well. They want to know what is expected of them, where the ship is headed, and to know that (and see how) the administrator is fulfilling his or her role.

Recall, for instance, how Georgia expressed this desire:

I like having someone to report to. I like having a boss. (Laughs) I like having someone after me. Like, “I don’t know, go ask So-and-so.” I don’t like to be where the line ends. …I think that the leadership makes a huge difference, because it's a hard job. It's a hard job right now and it's messy and if you don't have someone strong leading you, you're going down the tubes. There's no hope, right? (p. 78)

2. Teachers want in-school administrators to communicate. Frequently, in both the survey and the interviews, teachers listed examples of ways their principals communicated with them, and the examples usually consisted of consistent but small actions from the in-school administrator. Teachers remembered and cited these actions, though it was often years after they experienced them. Common themes were present in these examples: the communication was regular, all teachers received the same information, the communication pointed teachers to the “big picture” while giving
specific and precise short-term details, and the communication regularly featured the
administrator’s positive observations or gratitude toward specific teachers. The majority
of participants said that at some point in their career, they had a principal who sent out a
weekly memo by email. All spoke highly of it. Recall Eric’s reflections on the opposite
practice:

I've been on staffs where I feel like the principal doesn't have open
communication and you see the residual effects through the entire staff.
People are afraid. People have no idea what's going on and they just
gossip and talk and everything else because it's—if you don't feel like
you're in the know, you want to know. (p. 86)

3. Teachers believe that leadership and communication are harmfully limited if
the in-school administrator is (or seems) disconnected from the school. Most teachers
wanted the principal to walk through hallways and visit classrooms (when students were
present and when teachers were alone). One participant added a caveat to this: that it can't
feel like a military-like inspection. Other teachers suggested that consistency of visits and
personal chats would be the antidote for the perception of a judgmental inspection.
Remember Chrissie’s view on this:

I had an administrator once who regularly popped into the classroom
and…it was accountability, but it was also refreshing for me to know that
an administrator wanted to keep his finger on the pulse of what actually
does go on in the classroom. If they saw I was struggling getting to the 17
students who require differentiated instruction—like, I want them to know
that! And that's not necessarily something that I'd make time during the
day to go and talk to him about, lest I be a complainer. (p. 87)

4. Teachers want in-school administrators to be aware that they have a uniquely
significant role in the school building, for better or for worse. Their actions, responses,
body language, tone, level of presence, organizational skills, response times, and attitudes
toward professional development are seen, and they are seen as important and influential.

Recall Felix’s comments on the subject of in-school administrators’ visible influence:

Body language and tone of voice say a lot. And if it's, "Okay, I'm here because this is what I need to do," it almost sometimes feels worse than if you're not there at all. ...I mean, being intent. Being there for the school community, not just being there. There is a difference. ...It's not just due diligence. It's actually being vested. Like, having a vested interest. And taking some ownership in it. Because that's the thing. I mean, as good management, you want to inspire your employees who will now somehow, we as employees will somehow inspire our clients to do better things. (pp. 88-89)

5. Teachers want in-school administrators to be aware that their leadership approaches can affect teachers’ job satisfaction, sense of purpose, levels of initiative, and enjoyment of their work. Remember when Daphne reflected on an experience that:

We were a cohesive group but we were so upset with the principal—and the lack of direction, lack of consistency, lack of communication, lack of standing up for us—that we had become very, very toxic. ...But the principal wasn't going anywhere. So it affected the whole climate of the school. And it was such a negative, toxic place to be that, I think, health-wise it was affecting a lot of us physically as well as emotionally. When your leader is not leading and it's up to you pull everything together and so many of us were feeling, like, “We can only do so much.” (p. 79)

6. Teachers want their voices, experiences, and perceptions to be important to the in-school administrator. They view themselves as competent professionals who deserve, at the least, a basic level of professional respect and support. Teachers want the in-school administrator to know that they care about the quality of their own professional work.

Recall Andrea, who expressed her perception of the effect of this professional trust:

I think that really makes you feel better equipped as a teacher—knowing that the choices you make are supported. That gives me a really big confidence boost and I think it also makes me take ownership because they trust me to do this. (p. 74)
7. Teachers want their in-school administrators to be at work early. No teacher stated that the administrator should "be the first to arrive and the last to leave"; on the contrary, some stated clearly that they did not believe this was needed and, in fact, believed it to be an unnecessary, even unsustainable practice. However, nearly every interview participant, and several survey respondents, discussed this seemingly small detail—that the administrator should arrive at work early—with strong feelings and at significant length. On reflection, I believe that there are two reasons for this. The first is practical: that arriving early means the principal can be available to staff before the school day begins, and can also accomplish work that will allow him or her to be in the hallways later, as students come in. The second reason is symbolic: teachers see the presence of the principal as an indication of his or her vested interest in the school. If the principal regularly arrives early, teachers perceive the principal as invested in the well-being of the school and this, they believe, will challenge teachers to be likewise invested.

Consider Billie’s perspective for a second time:

   Being in the hallways, out of their office when they're in the school. When they're out of the school, like, I know you're probably at some really great training but it doesn't help us if you're not here. Being there early—before most of the people get there—and then staying later, not being the first one gone. ...Somebody who just breezes in ...breezes out, in their office a lot or out of the building a lot, just generally seems like they don't know what's going on or don't care or are not invested in it. It comes off as, "I'm just here, but I'm not invested." (p. 88)

**Limitations**

The word *perception* was used deliberately throughout this study, from its stated purpose and title to these final words. I acknowledge that while perceptions are powerful—and the experiences that accompany them feel real—they remain perceptions.
The stories told in this study came, largely, from seven teachers. Their voices are valuable in themselves—the idea that they do not have to be representational of a larger group is supported by the disposition of narrative inquiry; this study was not meant to be comprehensive. I acknowledge, however, that in this study there are fewer than seventy voices out of thousands of possible teacher voices. Further, at the time of their participation, these seven interview participants and the 63 survey respondents were situated in particular political, economic, and pedagogical climates in southern Saskatchewan. At another time and in another context, different experiences and perceptions may have taken precedence in the participants’ stories.

A further limitation can be seen in the issue of access. Though the survey respondents and interview participants were self-nominated, my access to the pool of potential participants was limited due to my approach. If a school division gave me permission to contact their school principals in order to solicit their teachers’ participation, each principal had the option to not forward the survey link and interview information to their teachers. This was a deliberate decision on my part, made in deference to the principals in light of the topic of the survey and the interviews, but one that likely limited the number of potential teachers who were informed about—and thus who had opportunity to participate in—this study.

**Future Research**

A parallel study that researches principals' perceptions of the impact of their leadership approaches on teachers, and how that shapes their approaches to their role, could be informative and transformative. Shore and Walshaw (2016) have already

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4 It should be noted that, in a way, this narrative study considered a sampling of stories, not a sampling of people; while there were approximately seventy participants, the stories they told represented their many interactions with many different in-school administrators, both past and present.
completed a study on assistant principals’ perceptions of their roles, and they found that assistant principals’ perceptions toward their own roles was influential on their experience of and satisfaction within their roles; perhaps a study on principals’ perceptions of their leadership approaches within their role would be a useful supplement to their study and to mine. The concept of in-school administrators’ authenticity was alluded to, but not examined fully, by some teachers in this study; its reoccurrence suggests there may be room and need for a study that focuses on what it means for a school-based leader to be authentic. Finally, I suggest that there could be value in a study of how certain administrative leadership styles shape students’ perceptions of their engagement, along with how these perceptions might influence graduation progress.

**Final Remarks**

"Leaders, lead!" In the first interview I conducted, I was over-thinking, over-talking, and overplaying my role as interviewer. The teacher-participant had more years of teaching experience than I had in age, but she was kindly tolerant of my stilted demeanour as I sought (often awkwardly) to navigate the role of researcher, co-constructor, and peer-teacher. In the corner of the coffee shop, she told me story after story about how her experiences with in-school administrators shaped her teaching experiences for better or for worse. She often paused to reflect and to question. Her words were usually imbued with emotion, but they were soft and steady. However, after the formal end of our interview, we sat talking, and she spoke a two-word sentence that replayed in my mind as I drove home that night.
"Leaders, lead!" The sentence rang out like a clarion call, sudden and sharp, an abrupt change from her usual, soft-spoken cadence. It was like this exhortation had been building up inside her as she recalled and told stories, and I got the sense that this conviction was a sum of all those experiences that had shaped her career and her perspectives. She knew what it meant to live under leadership done well and leadership done poorly; she had told stories of both, and though some of the stories were twenty or thirty years old, the emotions she expressed while recalling them were vivid and deep. Her perceptions of her in-school administrators' leadership approaches had shaped her as a teacher. "Leaders, lead!" This was her synopsis, her take-away, her conclusion: a call to leaders to take up their role—their important, complicated, heavy, valuable role—and do it well.

The teachers who participated in this study had strong, resolute opinions. That did not surprise me—I have yet to meet a teacher who does not. They were passionate, and I had anticipated that too. They were reflective, largely clear-sighted, personable, and self-evaluative. This, too, was expected. However, while conducting the survey and interviews and while reflecting on the data from both, I was taken aback by how often teachers deliberately paused—both in stories of praise and in stories of criticism—to express a sympathetic camaraderie for their in-school administrators.

Principals and vice-principals: your teachers want you to do well. They want you to do well because they believe that if you do your job well, they will have a clearer path in their work. They understand that your role is difficult and increasingly complex, and they want you to have conviction anyway. They believe you have the ability to powerfully influence your school’s climate and direction. They want to see you in their
classrooms and in the hallways. They want you to respect good work and challenge carelessness. Your teachers want you to be a professional, purposeful presence in your school. They want you to lead.

Leaders, lead.
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doi: 10.1177/1321103X060270010301


doi: 10.1177/1468794111433090


Appendix A: Letter to School Boards

[Date]

[Name]
Director, [School Division]

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Dear [Name]

I am writing to you to request your school division's participation in a student research project (Masters' thesis) entitled, *What are teachers' experiences of in-school administrators and how do these experiences shape the teachers' own professional practice?* I am conducting this study in order to help in-school administrators understand how teachers perceive the role of the principal, including what teachers value and what they view as counter-productive.

This is a narrative study which will attempt to understand teachers' perceptions and experiences. The purpose and objectives of this research study, which has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board (REB), are to inform the practice of in-school administrators (principals and vice-principals) by studying: (1) what are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with in-school administrators, (2) what are teachers' views on the role of the in-school administrators, and (3) what are the teachers' experiences of in-school administrators, and the impact of these experiences on their interactions and relationship with the in-school administrators, their own work, and their professional contentment.

Participation in this study will involve approximately 15-20 minutes of teachers' time while they complete an anonymous, online survey. Principals and division staff are welcome to view the survey at the link provided, but will not be privy to 1) the number or names of teachers at your school, if any, who participate in the survey; or 2) the raw results of the survey. Further, the anonymous, generalized survey data will then be discussed further in individual interviews with teachers who nominate themselves, during the survey stage, for further participation. Both the generalized, anonymous survey data and the data obtained through individual interviews with teachers will be present in the final research report. However, any reference in the gathered survey and interview data to individual people, schools, and school divisions will be removed before the research report is made completed and public.
Participation by teachers in the survey is voluntary, anonymous and will not require teachers to reveal their identity within the surveys; participation by teachers in the individual interviews is voluntary and confidential, and their identities and the identities of their in-school administrators, school(s) and school division will not be made public. This information will be reviewed only by the researcher. Responses from all surveys and interviews will be compiled and will not be attributed to any particular person, school or school division within the research report.

If you agree to allow your division to participate in this study, I will also send letters to principals outlining the purpose of this study, as well as the extent of their and their teaching staff’s participation. With your permission, I plan to contact your school principals in May 2016, at which time I would ask their consent to contact their teaching staff.

Your division’s participation in this study would be greatly appreciated and would provide valuable input into an important topic that affects the daily professional work of teachers and administrators. I will follow up this letter by contacting you personally, but I also encourage you to contact me by telephone (306-580-1585) or e-mail (danyluca@uregina.ca) for me to address any questions or concerns you might have.

Sincerely,

Carmen Danyluk
Graduate Student, Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK
Appendix B: Letter To Principals

[Date]

[Name]
Principal, [School]

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Dear [Name]

With the approval of your school board, I am writing to you to request your school's participation in a research project entitled, *What are teachers' experiences of in-school administrators and how do these experiences shape the teachers' own professional practice?* I would like to invite your teaching staff to participate in a short online survey that will help in-school administrators understand how teachers perceive the role of principals and vice-principals, including what teachers value and what they view as counter-productive. Teachers will also have the opportunity to nominate themselves for further participation in this study as an interview participant.

If you agree to invite your teaching staff to participate in this study, and if they choose to do so, minimal participation will involve approximately 15-20 minutes of teachers' time while they complete an anonymous, online survey. You are welcome to view the survey at the link provided (click [here](#) to view), but you will not be privy to 1) the number or names of teachers at your school, if any, who participate in the survey; or 2) the raw results of the survey. Further, the anonymous, generalized survey data will then be interpreted, discussed, and expanded upon in individual interviews with teachers who nominate themselves for further participation in the study.

Responses to the survey and narrative data gathered in the individual interviews may appear in the final research report. Participation in the survey stage of research is voluntary, anonymous and will not require teachers to reveal their identity. Responses from all surveys will be compiled and will not be attributed to any particular person, school or school division within the completed research report. Participation by teachers in the individual interviews is voluntary and confidential, and their identities and the identities of their in-school administrators, school(s) and school division will not be made public. This identifying information will be kept strictly confidential and reviewed only by the researcher.

If you agree to your school's participation in this study, please forward this survey link to your teaching staff: [Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership](#); alternately, you may
forward them this e-mail or contact me to request that I contact your teachers directly. The survey link includes information for teachers that outlines the purpose of this study, as well as the extent of their requested participation.

This is a narrative study which will attempt to understand teachers' perceptions and experiences. The purpose and objectives of this research study, which has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board (REB), are to inform the practice of in-school administrators (principals and vice-principals) by studying: (1) what are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with in-school administrators, (2) what are teachers' views on the role of the in-school administrators, and (3) what are the teachers' experiences of in-school administrators, and the impact of these experiences on their interactions and relationship with the in-school administrators, their own work, and their professional contentment.

Your school's participation in this study would be greatly appreciated and would provide valuable input into an important topic that affects the daily professional work of teachers and administrators. I will follow up this letter by contacting you personally, but I also encourage you to contact me by telephone (306-580-1585) or e-mail (danyluca@uregina.ca) for me to address any questions or concerns you might have.

Sincerely,

Carmen Danyluk
Graduate Student, Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK
Appendix C : Online Survey Questions

Thank you for being willing to participate in this survey. If you choose to continue, this survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete. Here's some essential information about the study:

- This survey is the first stage of research for my master's thesis. I'm conducting a study to understand what are teachers' experiences with their in-school administrators (principals and vice-principals) and how these experiences shape the teachers' own professional practice. I'm interested in hearing from teachers from varied teaching backgrounds; all experience levels and areas of expertise are welcome to participate!
  - I want to let you know about the second stage of research, as well: once I gather the survey data, I will generalize it and remove all references to specific people or places. This anonymous, generalized data will be presented to 8-12 self-nominated teachers who will discuss and interpret the survey results, and who will have opportunity to share their stories of experience regarding the same topic.
  - If this second stage of research interests you, and you would like to nominate yourself for an individual and confidential interview, please contact me by e-mail here to express your interest: danyluca@uregina.ca. I will also include this information at the end of the survey in case you're not quite ready to decide right now. To maintain complete confidentiality, I recommend that you e-mail me from your personal e-mail address rather than from your work e-mail address.
- Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you can choose to answer only those questions with which you are comfortable.
- If you choose to complete some or all of this survey, your identity will not be known to anyone, including me. If you choose to nominate yourself by e-mail for the interview portion of the research, I will contact you to get some basic information about you (name, basic contact information, years teaching, school division, grade level/subject area expertise); however, even then, I will not be able to connect your survey responses to you.
- This survey will ask you to reflect on the role of your current and past in-school administrators. Your principal is likely the one who forwarded to you the link for this survey; however, your principal and/or school board will not be made aware of whether or not any teachers at your school have completed it, whether any teachers have nominated themselves for the interviews, and they will not have access to the raw survey/interview data.

By clicking the "Proceed with Survey" button below, your free and informed consent is implied and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study.

Thank you for your time!
-Carmen Dany luk
Survey Questions:

Regarding the role of the principal:
1. Based just on his/her day-to-day schedule, interactions, and tasks, what seems to be the actual primary role of your principal?
2. What do you wish were the primary role of your principal?
3. What do you think your principal sees as her/his primary role?

Regarding your in-school administrators' leadership approaches:
4. Which of your principal/vice-principal's leadership approaches do you most appreciate?
5. What leadership approaches of a current/past in-school administrator most surprised you?
6. With which of your in-school administrators' leadership approaches do you least identify?

7. How does your in-school administrators, though their day-to-day role in your school, either support or impede your personal area of passion within your teaching career?

8. Any final comments? (optional)

Thank you for your participation!

I recommend that you take a moment to delete cookies and your browser history to help protect your anonymity.

If you would like to nominate yourself for the second stage of this research project (the individual interviews to discuss, interpret, and expand on the ideas raised by the data from this survey, and to share stories of how your experiences with in-school administrators have shaped your own professional practice), please e-mail me at danyluca@uregina.ca. Again, you may want to do so from your personal e-mail address in order to maintain complete confidentiality.

If you are interested in finding out the results of this research, contact me after April 2017 at danyluca@uregina.ca.
Appendix D: Individual Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Teachers’ Perceptions of Leadership

Researcher: Carmen Danyluk  
Faculty of Education, Graduate Student  
University of Regina  
306-580-1585  
danyluc@uregina.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Kathleen T. Nolan  
Faculty of Education  
306-585-4516  
Kathy.Nolan@uregina.ca

Purpose and Objective of the Research:
- The purpose of the research is to collect teachers’ stories of experience with their in-school administrators and to understand how these experiences shape the teachers’ own professional practice.

Procedures:
- The researcher will interview 8-12 teachers individually. The researcher and each teacher will meet once. During the individual interviews (hereafter referred to as "interviews"), the teacher will view coded, generalized data gleaned from a recent teacher survey regarding perceptions of the role and leadership approaches of in-school administrators. The teacher will be asked to discuss the data with the researcher and to form interpretations of the data. The teacher will also be asked to share their own stories of experience with in-school administrators and to reflect on how these experiences have shaped the teacher’s own profession practice.
- Interviews will be audio- and video-recorded.
- Interviews will take place in a private room at a coffee-shop or restaurant.
- Estimated time commitment for interview participants is one hour each.
- Additionally, the researcher will contact you after your interview to provide you with the transcript of your interview and invite additions, modifications, or revisions. At this time, the researcher may also ask for clarification or more detail on certain statements.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the research or your role.

Potential Risks:
- There are no known or anticipated emotional, psychological, physical, or economic risks to you by participating in this research.

Potential Benefits:
- The benefit of this research to participants is the opportunity to contribute their personal narratives to a body of research that may have the potential to inform school administrators of the comprehensive impact of their actions within their roles.
The benefit of this research to the state of knowledge is to add the voices of teachers in Regina, Saskatchewan to a qualitative, narrative-driven academic text. These benefits are not guaranteed.

**Compensation:**
- Refreshments will be provided.
- No compensation is provided.

**Confidentiality:**
- Direct and paraphrased quotations from interview participants will be included in the thesis. Non-verbal interactions of interview participants may also be noted in the thesis.
- Although the data from this research project will be published, the final representation of the data will be reported in aggregate form, so that it will not be possible to identify individuals.
- Moreover, the completed individual Consent forms will be stored separately from the audio and video recordings and transcripts, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses.
- Precautions will be taken to protect the confidentiality of each participant, including the storage of digital audio recordings, video recordings, and transcripts on password-protected, personal (not affiliated with any School Board) computer/tablet devices.
- The researcher will ensure that she does not disclose identifiable information about the participant in the reporting or dissemination of the research findings.
- Because the participants for this research project have been selected from schools in Regina, it is possible that, in the text of the thesis, you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what stories you have shared with the researcher. The researcher is committed to protecting your confidentiality and will take out all identifying information. You will also have the option to review your statements (see next point).
- After your interview and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. If you choose to edit your transcript, the researcher will use the edited transcript rather than the original transcript. Your right to edit your transcript will apply until results have been disseminated (estimated to be Winter 2017).

**Storage of Data:**
- The data will be stored on the researcher’s computer tablet (primary) and an external USB drive (secondary) during the course of research. Post-publication, the data will be stored for five years on the researcher’s personal, password-protected computer.
- After five years, the data will be destroyed.

**Right to Withdraw:**
- Your participation is voluntary and you may answer only those questions with which you are comfortable. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Your right to withdraw data from the research will apply until results have been disseminated (estimated to be Winter 2017).
- After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, the researcher may contact you to request clarification or more detail on statements you made in the interview. You are under no obligation to do provide this additional data. You may also contact the researcher with the information provided at the top of page 1, if you should like to provide verbal clarification or more detail on your interview statements.
After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. You are under no obligation to do so.

Should you wish to withdraw completely from the research, your individual interview transcript will be deleted at your request, along with the audio/video recordings of the interview.

Follow up:
- To obtain results from the research, please contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1, after April 2017.

Questions or Concerns:
- Contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1.
- This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the UofR Research Ethics Board on April, 2016. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at (585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca). Out of town participants may call collect.

Consent
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

☐ I agree to participate (to discuss survey data and to be interviewed) in the context of this research study.
☐ I agree that the researcher may contact me after the interview to provide me with the transcript of my interview and to request clarification, if necessary.
☐ I agree to be audio-recorded and video-recorded during my interview.

Name of Participant                                      Signature                                      Date

Researcher’s Signature                                      Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Appendix E: Individual Interview Questions

- What, in your view, is the ideal skill set for a principal in general? For a principal in your school?
- What, in your view, is the ideal communication style for a principal in general? For a principal in your school?
- What are the habits of an in-school administrator (principal or vice-principal) that support their ability to lead?
- What are the habits of an in-school administrator (principal or vice-principal) that detract from their ability to lead?
- What hinders the role of the principal?
- How is a principal’s role affected by the vice-principal’s role?
- How do you see the direction and/or climate of your school influenced by the principal?
- How do you see the direction and/or climate of your staff influenced by the principal?
- What do your in-school administrators do for you that makes you feel supported or better equipped for your job?
- What do your in-school administrators do for you that makes you feel unsupported or poorly equipped for your job?
- Tell about a time when your principal acted or spoke in a way that influenced how you approached her/him after that.
- Tell about a time when your principal acted or spoke in a way that affected the way you dealt with him/her after that.
- Has your opinion of your principal changed at all over time, even briefly? What happened to create that change?
Appendix F: Research Ethics Board Approval

University of Regina

Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Approval

REB # 2015-059

Investigator(s) Carmen Danylik
Department Faculty of Education
Supervisor: Dr. Kathleen T. Nolan

Title: Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership

APPROVED ON: April 28, 2016
RENEWAL DATE: April 28, 2017

APPROVAL OF:
Behavioural REB Application Form
Letter of Initial Contact - School, Letter of Initial Contact - Division
Participant Consent Form
Group Confidentiality Agreement

FULL BOARD MEETING X DELEGATED REVIEW

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the RED Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html.

Dr. Larena Hoeber, Chair
Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to: Research Office
University of Regina
Research and Innovation Centre 109
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone (306) 585-7775
research.ethics@uregina.ca
Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Renewal Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Carmen Danyluk

DEPARTMENT
Education

REB# 2015-059

TITLE
Teachers’ Perceptions of school Leadership

ORIGINAL DATE OF APPROVAL
April 28, 2016

NEW EXPIRY DATE WITH THIS RENEWAL
April 28, 2018

TODAY’S DATE
April 23, 2017

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Full Board Meeting □ Delegated Review □

RENEWAL CERTIFICATION
The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has renewed the above-named research project for an additional 12 months beginning April 28, 2017.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board for consideration in advance of implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions:
http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms/ethics-forms.html

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Ara Steininger
Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:
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Research and Innovation Centre 109
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