How Does a Successful Secondary School Woman Principal in the Greater Montreal Area
Describe How She Carries out her Responsibilities as a Leader?

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McGill University, Montreal

2019

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree
of Master of Arts in Educational Leadership

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the leadership of a secondary English school woman principal in the greater Montreal area. The focus of the study was to learn how a secondary school woman principal carries out her responsibilities as a leader. More specifically the questions that led this study were: "What qualities does she attribute to leadership development?" "What are her approaches to leadership implementation?". The data sources included interviews with a woman school principal, four stakeholders, reflective memos, school artefacts and online information including the principal's twitter feed and school website.

A thematic analysis of the interviews with the principal resulted in emergence of two main themes and nine categories. The first theme was "Embracing Change" which included the categories of "Following the passion", "Adventuring", "Being a life-long learner", and "Getting the pieces together". This theme demonstrated the principal's openness to new ideas and circumstances and the substantial contribution this quality had in her personal and professional life. The second theme was "Communicating to Empower" which included the categories of "Bringing people in", "Serving others", "Caring for self", "Being compassionate", and "Standing firm". This theme indicted the way this principal interacted with those around her which was based on enabling the people in her community and herself. These themes reflected her beliefs about leadership and the way she approached her responsibilities as a leader.

The leadership of a secondary school, woman principal which was explored in interviews about her own lived experiences revealed that she has an approach to leadership that combines qualities which the literature suggests are typically attributed separately to male and female principals. She utilized these to practice leadership successfully. This study suggests that her leadership qualities can be helpful to those women who are new to school leadership or are contemplating the possibility of seeking a school leadership position.

Resumé

Cette étude qualitative examine le leadership d'une directrice d'une école secondaire anglaise dans la grande région de Montréal. L'étude avait pour objectif d'apprendre comment la directrice de l'école secondaire assume ses responsabilités en tant que dirigeante. Plus précisément, les questions qui ont conduit à cette étude étaient : " Quelles qualités attribue-t-elle au développement du leadership ? ", "Quelles sont ses approches pour la mise en œuvre du leadership ? ". Les sources de données comprenaient des entrevues avec une directrice, quatre parties prenantes, mémos de réflexions, artefacts scolaires, informations en ligne, y compris le fil Twitter de la directrice et le site internet de l'école.

L'analyse thématique des entrevues de la directrice relève deux thèmes principaux et neuf catégories. Le premier thème étant, "Adopter le Changement", qui comprenait les catégories de, " Suivre sa passion ", " S'aventurer", " Être un apprenant à vie", " Fragmenter les gros projets en petites taches". Ce thème a montré l'ouverture de la directrice à de nouvelles idées et à son désir d'innover ce qui lui permet d'atteindre ses objectifs tant au niveau professionnel que personnel. Le deuxième thème étant " Communiquer pour Responsabiliser" qui comprenaient les catégories de " L'intégration", " Se soutenir", " Prendre soin de soi", " Être compatissant", et " Être assertive". Ce thème décrivait la manière dont cette directrice interagissait avec ceux qui l'entouraient, afin de permettre aux membres de sa communauté et à elle-même de se prendre en charge. Ces thèmes reflétaient ses convictions du leadership et de la manière dont elle aborde ses responsabilités en tant que leader.

Le leadership d'une directrice d'une école secondaire, étudiée au cours d'entrevues sur ses propres expériences, a montré qu'elle a une approche du leadership typiquement de directeur et de directrice. Cette étude suggère que ses qualités de leadership peuvent être utiles aux femmes qui débutent leur carrière de directrice ou celles qui sont en recherche d'un poste de direction.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisor Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber for her time, care, dedication, and expertise, which she generously contributed to each stage of this thesis. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my participants who very warmly accepted to talk to me and shared their very valuable experiences with me.

Thanks also to each member of DISE department who generously contributed their expertise to help me and advance my learning. To my friends, thank you for walking this journey alongside me. Your presence made the experience joyful and meaningful.

Last, but not least, my deepest thanks to my treasured family. I do not have enough words to thank my parents, brothers, and sisters for all their support and encouragement, without which I could not have reached this level.

Dedication:

To my parents

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Chapter One: Introduction

In Chapter One I briefly describe the topic of this study, the purpose of the work and the research questions. Then I talk about my position as the researcher in relation to this topic.

School Leadership

As the key position for the success of any complex organization, leadership has been the focus of attention for a long time (Palestini, 2013). Successful leadership is an important element for a successful organization, which necessitates the search for the skills that leaders can use to improve their practice in order to facilitate development for the organizations. In the case of educational settings, leadership indirectly contributes to successful student outcomes (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004) through two main paths; "the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of effective organizational processes" (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 2). An educational leader needs to be cognizant of the context s/he is in and needs to set goals and foster visions which focus on organizational development.

On the other hand, for a long time, leadership positions were considered to belong to men. Metaphors for leadership such as "men on a white horse", "great men" are widely used throughout the history of leadership (Klenke, 2004). However, the situation has changed dramatically in comparison to what women have experienced in the past. It is now possible to find an extensive international literature on women's experiences entering leadership positions (Bagilhole, 2006; Ely & Rhode, 2010; Rhode, 2016). However, women are still seen as the minority when it comes to the leadership positions (Woodward, 2007). Margaret Atwood mentions that "we still think of a powerful man as a born leader and a powerful woman as an anomaly" (Hengen & Thomson, 2007, p. 336).

Historically, schools have been considered the appropriate domain for women in which to work as teachers, but not as principals, (Blount, 1998). Ella Flagg Young was the first school administrator in Chicago. She stated that education "is a woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership" (Blount, 1998, p.1). Blount's words were about the time when women were entering educational leadership. The importance lies in the fact that educational administration is where important educational

changes in society can be initiated (Blount, 1998). However, after about thirty years, statistics show that women still do not have equal representation in educational leadership positions (Blouin, 2005). The number of female elementary school principals has risen over the past ten years, while that rise is less in secondary schools (Blackman & Fenwick, 2000; Boris-Schacter & Lager, 2006). For instance, according to Statistics Canada, the percentage of women leaders in the secondary schools of Canada is less than their percentage in elementary schools (Blouin, 2005). In Canada the number of female elementary school principals is almost the same as men principals (53% female principals at the elementary level) however, at the secondary level, 68 % of the principals are men (Blouin, 2005). This is because women are still seen as responsible for family issues by societal norms (Hochschild, 1989) and they are expected to emulate the male leadership models (Loder, 2005) as well. Also, the literature shows that they need to go through a more difficult process to enter leadership positions (Hoff & Mitchell 2008). In addition, there are women who do not dare to enter the leadership, or decide to give up the leadership because of these hurdles. In summary, getting to know about how a successful woman principal fulfills her responsibilities can be helpful for other women principals and the women who are aspiring to become principals.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to see how a successful woman principal in the greater Montreal area describes how she carries out her responsibilities as an educational leader. In this thesis, the criteria for "success" are defined as having the recognition and reputation of being an efficient principal, having achieved positive results like student success, and having established a good rapport with students, parents and staff, while maintaining a balance between personal and professional aspects of one's life and, overall, being reputed to be successful in the job. I used these criteria to ask people in the field for endorsements of possible participants for the study. Another criterion that I was looking for was experience as a school leader. I wanted a participant that had been a leader for at least five years.

My overarching research question guiding this study was:

How does a successful secondary school woman principal in the greater Montreal area describe how she carries out her responsibilities as a leader?

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The sub-questions were:

1. What qualities does she attribute to leadership development?
2. What are her approaches to leadership implementation?

Positioning the Researcher in the Study

I started teaching English as a second language in 2009 when I was a student doing a B.A in English literature in Iran. I have been working both as a private tutor and as an instructor in various schools. My teaching in these schools has been very much affected by the way these schools were being run and the climate that was present in each. As a young and inexperienced teacher, I never thought about the impact the leadership in those institutions had on me. Any negative feelings I had, I thought were about me and that I needed to improve my knowledge as well as my pedagogy. Subsequently, however, I realized that the leaders of these schools were having an impact on me both as an individual, and as a professional, in the evaluation sessions and the feedback given to me which were not very empowering. More generally, I was obviously being impacted by the culture present there as well. This realization came when I started studying educational leadership at McGill University and got to know about the importance of leadership and how it has an impact on members in the school as well as the school community. I was able to see my own lived experiences as a teacher from a different perspective. I began wondering if the educational leaders were aware of the influence that they can have on the environment they are leading. It was then that I decided I wanted to investigate educational leadership from a leader's perspective.

As a woman, I am, and have always been, extremely aware about how women act and are reacted to in society. As a teacher and recently a researcher in educational leadership, I am curious to know how women in leadership achieve success. I have observed the various challenges that women educational leaders face, such as the higher workload for female educational leaders in comparison to men. Some of this workload is because of gendered views. Many women school leaders carry the burden of household responsibilities, as mothers and partners, as well as their leadership responsibilities (Kochan, Spencer, & Mathews, 2000). Societal norms make women leaders feel the need to take on all of these roles and that they are expected to excel in each. At the end of the day, after committing to all these responsibilities, it

appears that frequently, they are considered as less effective leaders only because they are women.

The combination of my interest in the way educational leaders lead in their institutions and my interest in the practice of women educational leaders, led me to the topic of this study and to explore school leadership from the perspective of a successful woman leader.

It is also important to mention that throughout this thesis I will be using the terms "educational leader" and "principal" interchangeably since I believe a principalship is not limited to managing the school affairs, but is more encompassing of what goes on in a school and includes more responsibilities. This will be explained in detail in Chapter Two.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to this study. I offered some preliminary information about the topic, explained the purpose of the study, included the research questions guiding the work and located myself as the researcher in this study. In next chapters, I will provide a review of the relevant literature, explain my methodology, present and discuss my findings, and finally, discuss the implications of the study.

Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter focuses on the current literature (within the last 10 years) that is related to my research topic. I begin by discussing the reasons why it is important to include a literature review in qualitative research. Then I explore the literature on the importance of the role of principals in school success and the overall the skills that principals need to lead a successful school. Next, I review issues and challenges women principals in particular face, and the skills that render their practice successful. I am incorporating these aspects to show that it is not only important for women to enter school leadership, but also to be aware of their own qualities, or learn new ones, to be successful in the field. I conclude by demonstrating a gap in the literature in this area and relate this to the work I have done in this study.

The Significance of Literature Review

This chapter is important for five reasons: a) it makes a case for the relevance of the proposed study; b) it articulates the gaps in the literature that currently exist on this topic; c) it provides a way of contrasting and comparing what exists in the literature with what emerged in my study without imposing on the work; d) it suggests the motive for my study; (Creswell, 2017), and finally e) it allows me to build a conceptual context for the study, that is, my "interpretation of what is in the literature" [rather than relying on] "an existing theory" (Butler-Kisber, 2018, p. 22). Furthermore, this literature review allows me to show my comprehensive knowledge of the field being studied and provides the readers with important background information (Galvin, 2009). Boote and Biele (2005) suggest that a thorough literature review contributes to a level of comprehensiveness and sophistication in the research conclusions, since it develops an overall understanding of topic being investigated by creating what he calls "good research." This objective is achieved only if the researcher has sound understanding about the existing knowledge on the topic before the study commences, as well as any strengths and weaknesses in the research. However, there is a delicate balance that needs to be maintained in order to be informed about, but not led by existing research. The latter would tend to narrow the focus and thereby limit potentially new understandings (Butler-Kisber, 2018).

Importance of School Leadership

It is an undeniable fact that leadership affects the functioning of an organization (Fullan, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010) just as it influences its culture (Schein, 2010), and the forms of organizational performance (Tierney, 1988). The differentiating feature of leaders from managers and administrators is their concern for culture (Schein, 2010).

Schools are educational organizations and school leaders can affect the success and culture of schools just like any other organization that is influenced by their leaders. A number of studies over the past three decades show the connection between high-quality leadership with positive school outcomes, including student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Studies focusing on the effectiveness of the schools demonstrate the important role of principal leadership in school success (Austin & Reynolds, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Lipham, 1981; Sergiovanni, 1991; Taylor & Valentine, 1985). Principals play key roles as instructional leaders, and forerunners of change (Fullan, 1991, as cited in Gerhard Huber, 2004), as school managers, staff administrators, problem-solvers, and boundary extenders in their schools (Goldring, 1990; Vandenberghe, 1995). School leadership is significant because of the role it has in managing school culture and in executing change initiatives (MacNeil et al., 2009). As Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1994) state:

> If education, in general, and schools, in particular, are seen as tools for social change, educational leaders are assumed to be among the most critical artisans. This assumption is widely held by the public-at-large, as well as by education professionals (e.g., Schlechty, 1990). It is also an assumption warranted by relevant evidence (e.g., lmmegart, 1988). Indeed, the leadership effect becomes increasingly prominent the more one focuses attention on schools as opposed to other types of organizations. (p. 5-6)

The culture of schools in educational organizations is very important because of the impact it can have on various areas such as student achievement, teacher performance, etcetera. That is why it can be argued that principals are educational leaders and not only administrators since they need to be highly aware of the culture they are creating. In brief, according to the literature, school principals have a major role in different aspects of the school, which makes it essential to understand the skills they need to exercise better leadership.

Skills of Effective Principals

The acknowledgment of the significant impact principals have on achieving success for schools has led to increased attention on attracting and preparing school leaders (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Hale & Moorman, 2003). Yet, the criteria needed for evaluating the performance of principals are not easy to define. This is because the job of school principals is highly complex, and their responsibilities encompass various tasks ranging from managing staff personnel, handling student behavior, coordinating professional development, connecting with the community and overseeing instruction (Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Moreover, contextual factors differ from school to school and influence the tasks of each principal (Clifford & Ross, 2012; Glasman & Martens, 1993). Given this complexity, there is not a global and common set of definitions of what school leadership is expected to encompass, or even whether the basic factors should be responsibilities, skills, processes, or outcomes (Goldring et al., 2009; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2006). Many attempts have been made to describe clear standards for principal performance. No one can deny that schools are sophisticated and dynamic organizations which produce countless factors that influence their success. However, it is helpful to see what areas research has shown to be directly influenced by principal effectiveness.

Hallinger's (2003) study demonstrated that effective principal leadership significantly contributed to successful change implementation and school improvement. Another study by Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2009) which was a review of the related literature in this area showed that some school outcomes, such as student learning, can be affected by a principal who hires and encourages quality teachers, chooses and elaborates a school vision and goals, assigns resources efficiently, and expands instructional support resources. It seems obvious that hiring, supporting and retaining good teachers can influence student learning positively. A year later, Rice (2010) concluded similarly that the behaviours of principals have an impact on teacher satisfaction and parents' impression about the school, and when combined, these behaviours influence the academic performance of students. Thus, it can be concluded that principals can influence teacher practice directly and student performance indirectly.

A program called the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (previously the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards) was designed and developed by the US National Policy Board for Educational Administration (October 2015). Their standards

describe the crucial qualities of school leadership among 10 broad dimensions, including "mission, vision, and core values; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and professional community for teachers and staff" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015 as cited in Grissom, Blissett, & Mitani, 2018, p. 448) which can influence teachers and students, as well as the school ambiance. Other studies focus on qualities of good leadership from other perspectives. For instance, Notman and Henry (2011) came up with four groups of essential factors in achieving success in educational leadership: 1) Personal characteristics which principals can utilize to represent their interpersonal skills and sense of personal identity, which I found to be a significant factor in my study as well; 2) Leadership skills through which the principals connect with their teachers on a professional and personal level. This factor was shown to be very important as well. 3) Leadership strategies which are highly connected to the student, teacher, and school community needs, such as instructional support, emotional support, etc.; and 4) Leadership sustainability that assists enhanced student achievement.

Some studies have investigated critical factors more specifically. One is the ability to identify the teachers as the key personnel, with opportunities of professional development. (Blase & Blase, 1999; Klar & Brewer, 2013). These principals can in fact distinguish the needs of their staff and faculty which helps them determine the organizational fit and develop professionalism in the school as well as to motivate and empower their staff (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Professionally empowered and personally motivated teachers provide the students with better instruction which, consequently, can improve the student outcomes. These scholars posit that professional development programs are a way to connect policy and practice (Razzaq & Forde, 2013) and can be facilitated by principals. Principals' knowledge about the personalities and specific skills of their staff and teachers are other features of effective instructional leaders (Grissom & Loeb, 2009; Grissom et al., 2013) that assist them in guiding the teachers and staff towards the programs that suit them as much as possible. Researchers found that principals who provide learning opportunities for their teachers are able to develop trust among staff and school ambiance as well. These principals model learning by participating in professional development and other kinds of learning themselves to show that learning is not only for students and teachers (Blase & Blase, 1999). This modeling is enabled because of the active and direct participation of the leaders in dealing with issues of curriculum and instruction (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager & Winn, 2018). The active participation on the part of the principals creates a mutual

learning environment in the school (Slater, 2008 as cited in Hollingworth, Olsen,Asikin-Garmager, & Winn,2018). The essential requirement for finding out about teachers' needs and providing them with necessary resources is developing communication skills. Price (2012) documented that having healthy interpersonal relationships with staff correlates with the commitment and morale of staff which I assume can be a positive outcome of the trust brought by those healthy relationships. Moreover, studies show that principals allocate 70-80 percent of their time in interpersonal communication with various groups of people (Tobin, 2014). This study is congruent with the ten traits that McEwan (2003) enumerates for highly effective principals. Her in-depth qualitative study on educational professionals highlighted the following important skills which include: communicator, educator, envisioner, facilitator, change master, culture builder, activator, producer, character builder, and contributor.

The range of skills and knowledge principals need to develop in order to deal with the complex challenges of school leadership have been studied extensively (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Portin & Shen, 1999). For instance, Grissom and Loeb (2011) integrated survey responses from principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parents with rich administrative data to distinguish the main skills that correlate most highly with school outcomes. They came up with five skill categories such as organizational and management skills, internal relations, instruction management, administration and external relations. Out of these categories, only the principals' organizational and management skills, continually predicted student achievement growth.

Other scholars have identified behaviours that make a principal effective. These include building a vision, maintaining integrity, knowing about self, sharing the accomplishments, encouraging leadership in others, applying efficient problem-solving skills, and having a comprehensive knowledge about the school they are leading and forces that form it (Collins, 2001; Covey, 2004; Maxwell, 1998). Some additional behaviours that emerge as important when investigating this literature are the skills needed for building an atmosphere where learning, improving, monitoring, appraising instruction, manifesting competence in curriculum and evaluation and fostering community relationships is promoted (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2013; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

In another study, Portin and Jianping Shen, (1999) studied the various skills needed for the success of principals. They identified the variety of the responsibilities that principals have and concluded that there is a layered structure where different responsibilities come on top of the other. First, they believe allocating enough time for each layer is a challenge for principals. Second, they recommend that principals need to create a balance between leadership and management. Managerial responsibilities such as preparing reports, managing the budget, and complying with legislative mandates, to name a few, may erode the time that principals are able to spend on leadership roles like creating relationships with staff, faculty, parents and students, supervising, mentoring, etcetera. Third, principals need to be capable of dealing with the ambiguity and complexity underlying the various roles they have. Fourth, they need to keep up their morale and enthusiasm in facing difficulties and change.

Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) observed the work of 100 principals for three years. Their research investigated the association between leadership behaviours and student achievement. They demonstrated that the amount of time principals spent on instructional functions has no role in predicting student achievement and growth. This may seem obvious considering that instruction is the first role of teachers and not the principals. However, the time principals spent on teacher coaching, evaluation, and improving their school's educational program predicted positive achievement gains. This is actually the indirect influence that principals can have on the instructional aspect of the school besides hiring suitable and professional staff and faculty as mentioned earlier. Contrarily, "time spent on informal classroom walkthroughs negatively predicts student growth, particularly in high schools" (p. 433), because they do not use these informal classroom walkthroughs as a part of broader school improvement strategy, like professional development. This study shows that principals need to reexamine the classroom walkthroughs more profoundly and use it as an opportunity to help teachers improve their practice. Also, I would suggest that these researchers need to consider the changing attitudes about school among secondary students. These changing attitudes may have an effect on the result that principals are expecting the walkthroughs to have on their classrooms.

One of the most recent studies in effectiveness of school principals, conducted by Hollingworth, et al. (2018) found that managing the implementation of multiple initiatives, knowing the staff well and engaging in explicit and purposeful communication are the three most important practices of a successful principal. These new findings are congruent with what

Grissom et al. (2013) found and demonstrate that the time principals allocate to managing and developing leadership roles among teachers are more important than attending to the instructional roles.

All the roles and skills discussed in this section, have an impact on the culture of a school. Thus, highly effective principals are aware of the key functions necessary for creating a good culture in the school and that they can have a strong influence on it (Louis, 2007).

Women in School Leadership

Given the importance of principals' roles in achieving success in schools, this section turns to the literature on women as school leaders and what their success factors are. In the last four decades there has been an increasing interest in studying women in school leadership (Schmuck,1980, Shakeshaft,1989; Hall, 1996; Blackmore,1999; Coleman, 2003, Davis & Johansson, 2005; Franze´n, 2005; Blackmore, 1989, 2002; Reynolds, 2002; Møller, 2003; Coleman, 2000, 2003, 2007; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Smith, 2011; Bruner, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

The report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), shows that while women make up the majority of teachers, they do not represent a majority in school leadership, especially in secondary schools (Blackmore, 2002; Coleman, 2000; Lee et al., 1993; Moorosi, 2010, Pont et al., 2008). Although some research attributes this to a shortage of women principal candidates (Gajda & Militello, 2008; Gronn & Rawling-Sanaei, 2003; Pounder Crow, 2005), due to the demands and complexity of the role, the scholarship on women and educational leadership shows that impediments occur in various areas including recruitment and the stability of a position and these are causing this shortage (Murakami & Törnsen, 2017). These impediments are often about gender issues, although they are not completely acknowledged when the career barriers stopping women from entering leadership in secondary schools are being discussed (Murakami & Törnsen, 2017).

In spite of the explicit and often implicit barriers, women continue to take on leadership positions, which suggests the need for more research on their approaches to school leadership and the effect it has on organizations (Trinidad & Normore, 2005). The results of such studies would be very useful for increasing equity in choosing the most appropriate candidates for leadership positions, those with the most pertinent and fitting skills and qualities for the job of school leadership (Barker, 2000; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Hoff and Mitchell (2008) in their study of male and female administrators found two main categories of factors affecting their job; those affecting their entry into school leadership and those affecting their progression in the principalship domain. The first group of factors included; timing, preparation, career planning and career paths that influence people's entry into a principalship. For instance, in case of timing, the average numbers of years it takes for women to enter principalship is 13 years, while it is eight years for men. Accordingly, this late entry has had a negative impact on the advancement of women in the job as well, because late entry causes the women to lose the opportunity to gain leadership experience in comparison to men. This study also mentions the conflict that exists between the time demands of this job for women and their family responsibilities. This conflict is not very significant in the case of men. This study showed that men tend to enter school leadership positions before meeting the academic requirements, while women wait for their leadership preparation to be completed and for their children to grow up until they accept a school leadership role. In terms of mobility men tend to be willing to change districts to get a position, while women are not as inclined to do this. The other important factor mentioned in this study is that men are more likely to take initiative to enter into leadership, while women wait for the invitation to enter the job (Hoff & Mitchell 2008). The findings of this study indicate that women have a harder time entering and progressing in leadership positions, given the factors mentioned above, and highlight that many of the gendered roles associated with women in leadership are still intact despite the cultural changes in the society.

Other factors which have an impact on career advancement in school leadership show that women have harder time becoming insiders in the realm of administration, because they have fewer support structures, and do not fit the "image' of leadership. For instance, in terms of becoming insiders, women were shown to be slower in accessing the cultural, insider information compared to men. This has a significant and negative impact on the first impressions the principals make. This study also mentions that being an insider may be translated differently for men and women. Since having insider information is equivalent to being politically intelligent, the experience of working closely with others and in the cases of men, networking, means longevity and experience in workplace and staying in the same district for a long time. For men, extensive experience in one context is a positive dimension of a career, but for women this can be translated as not being willing to get out of the comfort zone. Therefore, apparently

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women have understood that being an insider is to be competent and experienced, while men have understood it as being politically current and intelligent, or being valued, heard and in the communication loop. The lack of support for women was another factor mentioned that has worked against women. Women, either do not support each other, or are not supported by men. Men create a masculine network among themselves, which results in the isolation of women in the field and lack of access to insider information. This study also showed that the dominant portrait of a leader is one that features qualities traditionally associated with men like toughness and decisiveness. This study concludes that gender-related issues have a significant impact on women's entry into and advancement in educational leadership (Hoff & Mitchell 2008). Furthermore, it suggests that all women need to build more confidence, have faith in their capabilities, plan for apply for leadership positions early in their career, initiate strategies for accessing the leadership realm and strive to be more flexible. They need to fight for what they want, instead of waiting to be invited and accepted into the male circle of leadership. I would argue that on the personal level, they need to take more practical actions to balance their load of responsibilities at home and with their family.

The importance of distinguishing between the male and female leadership styles lies in the current trends of creating flatter organizations and more team-base management, as well as globalization (Evans, 2001). These trends necessitate a change in leadership style to create harmony between the new organizations and new kinds of demands within them (Trinidad, & Normore, 2005). For instance, scholars believe that feminine leadership styles are more suitable for flatter organizations where authority is distributed through the organizational levels (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Van der Boon, 2003). It is here where women can come into play and claim their right to leadership positions and help to integrate these newer leadership qualities and models into their leadership contexts. It is an opportunity for women to take a special role in leading the transformational change that organizations need (Trinidad, & Normore, 2005). The increase of women leaders in the workplace could have a revolutionary effect since it would make their different leadership styles more common and push back against the male models of leadership which have dominated leadership in schools and other contexts.

The differences that male and female school principals manifest in their practice have also been investigated not to determine that there is a right and wrong way, but rather to

understand the varieties of educational leadership and how to work more efficiently and collaboratively (Shakeshaft, 1993).

The work of Pavan and Reid (1994) indicate that female principals show higher tendencies related to success in comparison to their male counterparts— specifically when it comes to implementing instructional leadership and building a supportive climate in school. Ortiz and Marshall (1988) investigated the gender differences in leadership and they report higher teacher performance and student task achievement when schools are led by female principals. These researchers believe the reason for this is because women principals are more actively involved than men in instructional leadership activities and allocate more of their time to supervision and other instructional roles, which is in contrast to the findings of Grissom, et al. (2013) mentioned earlier.

Bulach, Boothe, and Michael (1999), found that female principals performed better when it comes to trust/decision making, control, instructional leadership, human relations, and managing conflict. Also, it has been shown that women principals are more democratic and use participatory practices more than male principals (Eagly, Karau, & Johnson, 1992). They explain that women principals are more likely to consider teachers and other subordinates as coworkers and peers, and to involve them in the process of decision making, while men, on the other hand, act more directly and less collaboratively (Eagly, Karau & Johnson, 1992). Similar results were found by Shakeshaft (1989) in an earlier study where she indicated that female principals are: 1) more person oriented, possess better interpersonal skills, and build a more community-oriented environment in their schools; 2) have more knowledge about pedagogy, tend to be more direct when it comes to instructional issues and establish an environment where learning is enhanced; 3) lead more democratically, have participatory leadership styles, and create a higher sense of school community where accomplishment is underscored. As will be discussed later, a number of these qualities emerged in the analysis of this study. Moreover, Shakeshaft (1989) explains that these differences were attributed to the different capabilities of female and male individuals who wished to enter teaching, since they had different kinds of choices when entering the job market and differences in incentives. Women aspired to become teachers more often than men and therefore, had difference kinds of experiences. Women waited longer before deciding to become principals, and both the men and women had different interpersonal communication

styles in supervisory conferences, in giving critical feedback and in interpreting leadership and collaboration.

Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) demonstrated that "female principals exercised more active leadership in the areas of curriculum and instruction than males" (p. 543). This could be because they stayed longer in teaching roles as mentioned earlier. Bista and Glasman's study (1997) concluded that principals who have had more teaching experience tend to be more flexible in their leadership. It can be assumed that longer teaching experience helps them to better understand the teachers' experiences and consequently to be more flexible, which is a positive feature of school leadership. This gives women an advantage given their tendency to remain in a teaching role longer than men principals (as cited in Cotton, 2003). In an earlier study Gurr (1997) indicated that, "school leadership required for schools now and in the future seems more attuned to the type of leadership that has been found to be more typical of females than males. Gurr notes that "this may result in the marginalization of male principals, but more likely will enrich schools through the liberation of leadership roles from a more constrained, non-inclusive perspective" (p. 14).

Trinidad and Normore (2005) conducted a thematic analysis of related literature on women in education and business leadership and concluded that the women's preferred leadership style in education is transformational leadership, while in the corporate world, it is democratic and participative leadership. Transformational leadership is closely connected to the values that are traditionally associated with women such as the importance of relationship building, communication, consensus building, power as influence, and of working together for a common purpose, all of which are developed through socialization processes. They believe that their work, "provides a theoretical perspective on women's leadership behaviors as an approach to equity in organizations by capitalizing on female contributions to organizations and the importance of those contributions in an increasingly diverse workforce world-wide. Women leadership styles are presented as alternatives to traditional leadership models" (p. 574).

As will be shown in subsequent chapters, my study was an attempt to add to the understanding of the complexities of educational leadership and the specific qualities and approaches that a woman principal uses to succeed in school leadership.

Summary

In this chapter, I tried to give a brief summary of the relevant literature on leadership generally, and on school leadership more specifically, the success factors for effective principals and the issue of women in educational leadership. The literature revealed that a key role in educational institutions is that of educational leadership and that school leadership has its own complexities given the broad range of the roles and responsibilities that it entails. This suggests that uncovering the skills and requirements necessary for being a successful principal is no easy task. Furthermore, each school is different, and this necessitates a different approach to leadership to successfully run it. Therefore, there is a need to study school leadership in context. Finally, the literature on women school leaders and their specific approaches to leadership underscored the need for further study of women school leaders. Their natural tendencies to flatten leadership hierarchies and work collaboratively are congruent with the leadership qualities that reflect the current thinking about what constitutes good leadership. Chapter Three describes in detail the methodology for my study of the leadership of a secondary, woman principal in order to understand more fully her approaches to leadership in a specific context.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of Chapter Three is to describe the methods and procedures used to collect, manage, analyze, and interpret the data I gathered in interviews with a female participant in a secondary school leadership position in the greater Montreal area, as well as data collected from other stakeholders who had the experience of collaborating with her in the past. Also, I provide a detailed account of the ethical considerations to which I attended and how I tried to add trustworthiness to my study, and In summary, this chapter will include sections on the research questions, research design, participant selection/ access, processes of data collection, data management, data analysis, ethical considerations and rigor in the work.

Research Questions

In this qualitative study, I explored the lived experiences of a woman principal and tried to explore the qualities and approaches that enable her to navigate and manage the everyday tasks and challenges she faces in her school. My overarching research question guiding this study was:

How does a successful secondary school woman principal in the greater Montreal area describe how she carries out her responsibilities as a leader?

The sub-questions were:

1. What qualities does she attribute to leadership development?
2. What are her approaches to leadership implementation?

Research Design

The methodology I employed in this study was qualitative where I studied in depth and over time, one carefully chosen individual. Every qualitative study is unique, but there are some characteristics that are common in most qualitative studies. The ones I used in this research are as follows.

Qualitative research:

1. Explores intentionally chosen cases in depth (Lundsteen,1986).
2. Happens in natural settings: the purpose of qualitative research is to study the human behaviors in the natural settings they take place (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Erickson,

1986), which renders the lived experiences happening in their authentic contexts significantly important.

3. Uses participant perspectives and concentrates on participants' meaning. Qualitative research is "about understanding the meanings individuals construct in order to participate in their social lives" (Hatch, 2002, p. 9). In fact, it aims to give voice to the participants (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992).

4. Focuses on the wholeness and complexity of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative research presumes uniqueness, continuous change and complexity about the social settings, thus examines them systematically and avoids breaking them down into pieces. Narratives are very important in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Erickson, 1986).

5. Is subjective. Since it aims to study the inner states of participants, as well as their observable behaviors, qualitative researchers need to rely on subjective judgments. Subjectivity is particularly important when advancing from describing the phenomenon to interpreting it. Qualitative researchers don't claim objectivity. Instead they focus on reflexivity, using reflective approaches which allow them to distinguish between their own subjectivity and their participants' subjectivities. This enables them to comprehend the implicit incentives and assumptions of their participants (Hamilton, 1994; Jacob, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; as cited in Hatch 2002). Therefore, qualitative research is "a process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal deep connections between the writer and his or her subject" (Goodall, 2000, p. 137). This will be explained in detail later when I discuss my reflective memoing procedures and how I aimed to establish trustworthiness.

6. Is emergent in nature. Since a qualitative study aims to discover and interpret social phenomena, it is difficult to predetermine research strategies (Patton, 1990) or hypothesize about the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) before data collection has begun.

7. Uses inductive data analysis. Qualitative researchers document as many details from a context as they can and focus on finding the patterns of connection among those details. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state, "you are not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (p. 29). Thus, the findings are grounded in the data generated from

bottom up. That is, in qualitative research the direction of analysis is "from specifics to analytic generalizations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Hatch, 2002, p.10).

Overall, qualitative research provides the researcher with opportunities to immerse herself in the context of participants and to illicit their perspectives on their lived experiences. Lunsteen and Wilcox (1982) caution that the researcher cannot concentrate on everything when studying a phenomenon. Therefore, in my research my focus was on the qualities and approaches that my participant indicated she was using to accomplish her role as a school leader/principal.

Participant Selection

I used Patton's purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to access my main participant, who has been a secondary school principal for the last 20 years. To reiterate, I used the following criteria to identify a willing and appropriate participant. These were:

1. The woman leader had to be a secondary principal in an English language school in the greater Montreal area.
2. She had to have at least five years of leadership experience, as well as prior teaching experience and family responsibilities.

In summary, as mentioned in earlier, I wanted to explore the experiences of a successful woman principal carrying out her daily responsibilities in greater Montreal area, someone who has a busy personal life with responsibilities for people outside of school and who had a reputation of being a successful school leader. I considered success as having a reputation of being effective and efficient, having achieved positive results, and having established a good rapport with students, parents and staff, while maintaining balance between personal and professional aspects of her life. Last, but not least, I needed a principal who was willing to participate and was available for interviews with me.

I searched for my participant by using endorsements from educators who had insider information because they had experience in working in the English language schools in Montreal, or who in the past, had professionally close relationships with those working in these settings. I was able to find a woman school principal who met all the necessary criteria as outlined above. As a graduate student in Educational Leadership, I had access to insider information among my classmates and my professors. I created a list of potential participants and

was fortunate that the first person I contacted accepted to do the study with me. I will call her Mrs. Summers from here on. I will explain later how and why this pseudonym was chosen. I give a brief introduction to her in the following paragraph. This information comes from our first interview when she shared some of her background with me.

Mrs. Summers is a married woman and the principal of a secondary English language school in the greater Montreal area. She was a teacher for approximately 22 years before becoming a school leader and has been in this role for approximately 20 years. She has a reputation of being a very successful teacher and school leader in her current position and in her previous roles as an educator in other schools. She has had the experience of leading in the independent school system (which charge fees like private schools, but also are partially funded by the government because they adhere to the public school curriculum titled the Quebec Education Program and use the same pay schedule for teachers as public schools) and in the public school systems in the greater Montreal area. Also, she has mentored a number of other professionals entering school leadership positions. All of these experiences have helped her to understand the nuances of school leadership, more specifically those facing women leaders.

After Mrs. Summers agreed to be part of the study, I approached four other educational stakeholders which included a teacher, a previous school director, a previous vice-principal, and a principal who had knowledge about her leadership approaches. I used these interview data to confirm or disconfirm what was emerging in my interviews with Mrs. Summers. It should be noted that at the time of my interviews with these participants, they no longer had any direct connection to Mrs. Summers, or her school. This served to eliminate possible conflicts of interest. Also, in my interviews with these other stakeholders, I didn't ask them directly about Mrs. Summers, but rather I interviewed them about their professional lives and allowed them to bring up Mrs. Summers as part of these experiences and their work with her.

Data Collection

I had three different sources of data for this study. They consisted of transcribed audio recordings of my interviews with Mrs. Summers and the other stakeholders, ongoing reflective memos and publicly available information about the school and about Mrs. Summers taken from the school website, as well as other online information and tweets created by her. Below I describe in more detail these sources of the data and the methods I utilized to collect them.

Interview Data

The interview data for this study were in the form of voice recordings which included two sets of interviews; the first set consisted of three interviews with my main participant, Mrs. Summers. The second set included a single interview with each of the four other stakeholders, which as mentioned above, helped confirm and/or disconfirm what was emerging from the interviews with Mrs. Summers, and I would argue helped to make my research more trustworthy (see section on trustworthiness below). As mentioned earlier, these four stakeholders were a former teacher, a vice-principal in the public school system, and a school director in the independent school system, all of whom had worked in various school contexts with Mrs. Summers and a school principal who had the experience of working directly with her.

To conduct the first set of interviews with Mrs. Summers, I used Seidman's (2013) three-part, open-ended interview protocol approach. Using step-by step individual interviews with Mrs. Summers enabled me to coordinate with my participant, gradually build trust (Seidman, 2013), to discover her perspectives on the research topic and to understand her lived experiences in her particular context (Geertz, 1973).

Before the interviews, I contacted Mrs. Summers by email to see if she was interested in my research and in participating. Then I contacted her personal assistant by phone to coordinate an introductory meeting with Mrs. Summers and to explain the purpose of my study. A date and time were arranged for me to visit her at the school to describe the nature of my study and see if she would be willing to participate. She chose to meet in her school as it was more comfortable for her (Seidman, 2013). From the outset she was very welcoming, and she willingly accepted to participate in the study. I delivered the consent form (appendix B) to her before the first interview, gave her time to read it and answered her questions about the research. For instance, she had some questions about the type of the information I needed to know about her, the timing of the interviews and some other questions concerning the publication of the study such as where and when it would be published. I explained that I wouldn't take much of her time, I would try to limit the interview sessions to only an hour and her identity would not be revealed at any time, either during, or after the study. I also explained that, the study would be submitted as my thesis in partial fulfillment of my MA in leadership. She was not concerned about revealing her identity (for ethical reasons I indicated that I would have to keep her identity confidential), but she did

want to make sure that the interviews and the process of the study would not take too much of her time. This was very understandable considering the tight schedule she had. She signed the consent form and returned it to me. Later, by email I arranged for July 3, 2018 to be the date of the first interview.

The purpose of the first interview was to "allow the participant to reconstruct experience within context," and to begin to create a rapport between us (Seidman, 2013, p.10). I prepared an interview protocol (Appendix C) in advance. The questions were open-ended and created to avoid leading questions (Seidman, 2013). Open-ended questions help a participant to know generally what kinds of information the researcher is seeking, and at the same time gives the space and freedom to take the discussion in directions that best describe personal experiences. Leading questions, on the other hand, can stifle the voice of the participant and impose expectations of the interviewer (Seidman, 2013). Having the protocol of questions also helped me to be more attentive during the interview and to focus intently on the responses I was receiving.

The first interview lasted approximately 25 minutes. It focused on her personal and professional background and how and why she became a principal. I asked her to recount her story as a journey for me. I thought that way I would be able to see her life from her perspective and listen attentively to the metaphors she used throughout this interview. This information proved to be very valuable in the data analysis phase of my work. I asked her about how she defines leadership and how she would describe her experiences of teaching. Again, these questions and her responses provided a good understanding of her leadership practices and experiences from her point of view. Her responses also helped me to prepare questions for the second interview. At the end of this interview, we arranged the time for the second interview for August 8, 2018.

The second interview lasted approximately 65 minutes and was conducted at the school in her office. Again, I prepared an open-ended interview protocol (Appendix C) beforehand. As mentioned, I designed these questions based on the responses she gave me during the first interview to probe more deeply, to clarify and explore further. At this point, we were very comfortable with each other. I attempted to get responses from her about the qualities that she attributed to her leadership, and the approaches that she implemented in her leadership to assist

her in her leadership role, any challenges she encountered and how any contextual factors might have influenced her leadership practice. I asked her to give me specific examples of the kinds of situations with which she deals, such as her daily responsibilities and plans, both personal and professional, the people she interacts with and how she communicates with them. We arranged our third interview for August 21, 2018.

Before the third interview she had to cancel at the last minute due to an urgent personal matter. Later, we rearranged the third interview for September 18, 2018. In retrospect, this additional time may have been a bonus since it provided each of us with more time to think about and reflect on our previous discussions.

The third interview also lasted for 65 minutes. The purpose of this interview was to "encourage the participant to reflect on the meaning of (her) experience" (Seidman, 2013, p.11). My prepared interview protocol (Appendix C), included the questions I had omitted asking during the first two interviews and any clarifications and/or elaboration that I needed about some of her previous responses. Also, I asked her to add any other information that she thought would be helpful in my research, and any questions that she had.

In each of these interviews I used the voice recorder app on my phone to preserve the interviews for later transcription. As mentioned above, I knew that to achieve my goals in the interviews, it was essential to develop a positive relationship between us. Part of this was to be as attentive and engaging as possible throughout the interview. As Creswell (2007) explains it is crucial to achieve two goals; to show gratitude in the trust and respect that participants are providing by sharing their insights, and to minimize the distance between the researcher and the researched (Creswell, 2007). Thus, by recording the interviews I was able to concentrate on our discussion, maintain eye contact with her and avoid any distractions that notetaking would have had. As a result, I was able to be vigilant, to respect her spoken words and to observe any paralinguistic features, or aspects of the environment that gave meaning to our discussion (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The second set of interview data were gathered from the four stakeholders (one former teacher, one previous vice-principal, one previous school director and one principal who had previously worked in one of Mrs. Summers' schools, and, in one instance, directly with her in

school leadership). I conducted these interviews between the second and third interview with Mrs. Summers. This helped me in my reflections and preparation for the last interview with her.

I conducted open-ended, 20-30-minute phone interviews with three of them and a face-to-face, one-hour interview with the fourth. Initially, I aimed to do each interview in person, but considering that they were all very busy, or not available to be interviewed in person, I decided to conduct the interviews by phone. There are various advantages and disadvantages about phone interviews. The most important advantage is the easy access the phone provides for the researcher to contact the participants (Opdenakker, 2006). However, a disadvantage is that social cues like body language are lost. Yet, it is important to remember that other social cues like voice and intonation are still present and they can contribute a lot to the researcher (Opdenakker, 2006). Further, since the interview and the interviewee do not share the same space, it is very difficult for the interviewer to create the same kind of ambiance that can be created in face-to-face discussions (Opdenakker, 2006). However, I decided that the advantages of accessing and scheduling phone interviews with these participants outweighed the disadvantages because of the added information and additional perspectives on school leadership that I would acquire, and more particularly, the insights they would provide about Mrs. Summers' leadership. This information proved to be very valuable and contributed to the data that I had compiled from Mrs. Summers and complemented some aspects which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

To conduct the phone interviews and the one in-person interview, I called these participant stakeholders first and talked to them about my research and asked if they were willing to do the interviews. When they accepted, and we decided about the time and date of the interviews, I sent them the informed consent form to their personal emails and asked them to return the signed copy as a pdf file to my personal email before the interview. The interviews were recorded by the voice recorder application installed on my phone. It is called Cube ACR and permits the user to record the phone calls. I informed the interviewees that I would be recording the phone calls the first time I called them, and it was also highlighted in the informed consent form (Appendix C).

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Reflective Memos

The second source of data used in this research were reflective memos. Throughout the research process, from the beginning to its completion, I constantly contemplated various aspects of my study and how it was unfolding. At the same time, I continually questioned my assumptions. Reflective memos were the documentation of the reflective stance I assumed. It helped me keep track of how I located myself as the researcher in connection to my data, of my assumptions and biases and any other contextual or social aspects that were influencing the way I was interpreting the data as well as the questions, insights and the concerns I had as the work proceeded. (Butler-Kisber 2018,). I constantly reviewed these memos and incorporated them into the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). They helped me to make connections between the data and the ideas that arose in the process of the research, and to preserve these ideas which otherwise might have been forgotten, and later would prove to be significant (Glaser, 1978). I used these memos as a tool to achieve confirmability, or disconfirmability (Charmaz, 1995) and hopefully to add trustworthiness to the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which is discussed in a section below. One of the first memos that I wrote was a description of a successful woman principal according to my personal experience as a student and as a teacher. The reason for writing this memo was that it helped me monitor my presuppositions and expectations about a successful woman principal. Later, when I was analyzing the data, checking this memo enabled me to put aside my presuppositions and rely only on what the data was showing instead of imposing those presuppositions on the analytic process. Another reflective memo was what I wrote about my very first impression of Mrs. Summers. It was after I received her response to my first email, which turned out to be very significant later. Please note that I referenced each memo by indicating in parentheses that it is a memo, the order in which was written and the day and date on which it took place. As well, I referenced excerpts from transcripts by indicating in parentheses that the excerpt is from an interview, the initials of the participant pseudonym, the day and date of the interview (see below).

Today, I sent Mrs. Summers my first email inviting her to participate in my study. She was so fast in responding to me and the tone of her response was so friendly and welcoming. Was this a coincidence or does this happen regularly? I was not expecting

such a quick reply, maybe because of my own experience as a teacher before and my relationship with the principals I had. I wonder how this assumption can impact building a relationship with her, or my interpretation of the data. (Ref. memo # 9/ Thu, 21/06/2018)

Later, during the interviews, twice Mrs. Summers mentioned that: "I return parents calls really quickly, I return parent emails really quickly" (Int with M. S/ Tu, 03/07/2018). She emphasized how this is a very important aspect of communication because it helps her connect to the people more effectively, especially those in challenging situations. This answered, at least in part, the questions I was ruminating about her as a leader that I posed in the memo above.

Artefacts/Online Data

My third source of data included the information I could get from the publicly available sources like the artefacts in school, school website and Mrs. Summers' twitter account. This information was important for two reasons. First, by collecting these artefacts, I got information about the activities and events going on in the school. Second, these materials were reflective of the culture present in the school and her perspectives (Lessard, 1999). For instance, I took some pictures of the school bulletin boards and the announcements that were posted around the school. These helped me after I left the site to remember the school ambiance and triggered details that I might otherwise have forgotten. I was not able, for reasons of confidentiality, to use these pictures as part of this study even though all were taken of inanimate objects and none included people. Third, I collected the free booklets and documents which were available for the parents and visitors who came to the school. I visited the school website and checked out the contents, specifically the ones that included Mrs. Summers' messages, and represented her perspectives and her direction in leading the school. Her twitter posts were very helpful as well, since they very concisely demonstrated her opinions. These added yet another perspective to what I had collected from other sources.

Data Management

The data I collected was divided according to type, namely, the audio-recorded interviews, the memos, the artefacts, and online information. Most of the data were collected between August 2018 and October 2018. However, the online sources were collected on an on-

going basis from August 2018 until I started writing my methodology chapter in March 2019. Memoing started from the time I finished my proposal until the last moments of analyzing the data.

All data files were named using standardized and uniform file names for each set of them. For example, the interviews and transcripts were named by pseudonyms for the participants. This helped me with maintaining confidentiality, easy storage, organization and retrieval of the data. Further, to ensure the confidentiality, all files containing the participants' information and the recordings were kept in password-protected files. The changes made to the data to eliminate the identifying features were saved in a separate file. All data was kept in a locked cabinet in a secure place in my home. Password protection on my personal computer was another security check that was put into place. I also made a copy of all the files on my password-protected, hard-drive to make sure that I had each file in two places in case one got lost/eliminated accidentally.

Eventually, to avoid any additional risks to confidentiality and privacy, all data will be destroyed immediately following formal acceptance of the study by McGill University.

The interviews with Mrs. Summers were transcribed on an ongoing basis. I started the transcription process right after the first interview when it was fresh in my mind. I transcribed each interview in as much verbatim text as possible and then listened to it several more times to make sure that I had not missed any information. The transcriptions were dated, labelled and the lines were numbered. Seidman (2013) indicates that when transcribing, it is essential that the researcher pays attention to "all the nonverbal signals, such as coughs, laughs, sighs, pauses, outside noises, telephone rings, and interruptions, that are recorded" (p. 116). I developed a notational system to indicate paralinguistic and nonverbal features in transcriptions. For instance, I underlined the words that were emphasized, and bolded parts of sentences which had a different intonation. To make sure that I had included all of these features, I listened to the interviews several times after transcribing them as mentioned earlier. This process also helped me punctuate the transcriptions without losing or distorting the meaning. It is important to know where to punctuate the transcriptions since when talking, people don't speak in paragraphs, nor do they clearly indicate where their sentences end (Seidman, 2013). Below is an excerpt of a transcribed passage from one of my interviews with Mrs. Summers showing how I represented the nonverbal aspects of the interview.

Uhm with free will, because we, you know, we visit <u>when, you know</u> we have the time to go in. Sometimes I'll go into a class and say: "**hi** (with a lot of enthusiasm in her voice), what are you **<u>doing</u>**?", and so they are… say "oh **<u>miss</u>**, this is what we are doing, we are doing math but we **have** to do this" (imitating the sound of a young student) or I'll go into another class. You know I don't like to push myself in, I just go and sit and listen to what they're doing, <u>and</u> sometimes I **go** in with the **purpose** <u>of</u> observing a teachers' <u>practices</u>, … I have evaluations, I have to do evaluations of teachers every year and <u>staff</u> members, and so I'll go in and I'll <u>observe</u> the teacher teaching and I'll observe the practices and I'll write about, write about that. (Int. with M. S./Wed, 08/08/2018)

In this excerpt for instance, the words which are bolded were said with more emphasis, the words in italics were said with a lower pitch than usual, the underlined words were said with higher pitch, the pauses are shown with ellipsis (…) and where there was an noticeable nonverbal aspect, this was added in parentheses. This detailed approach to creating the transcriptions was very helpful because it reduced time in my analyses by helping me to avoid returning multiple times to the audio recordings (Seidman, 2013).

I did not transcribe verbatim the interviews with the four stakeholders. Instead, instead, I listened closely to them several times and took notes about the points that were related to the leadership of Mrs. Summers. Also, there were times when I referred back to those recordings to make sure that my notes were not missing anything of importance, or to add information that would be helpful in analyzing the data.

As mentioned earlier, I started writing memos from the very beginning of this study, right after my proposal was accepted and continued until the very last stages of analyzing the data and began the writing of my thesis. I typed the reflective memos and kept them in a password-protected folder named reflective memos in my password-protected personal computer as discussed earlier in this chapter. I dated and labeled them according to the time and situation in which they were written. These memos really helped me to distinguish my own perspectives from those of the participants.

As mentioned, the artefacts were various forms of public information available around the school. These were organized according to type and stored in a binder. The other artefacts collected from the school website and Mrs. Summers' twitter account were copied to a word file and saved in a protected folder called "online artefacts" in my personal computer. Each of them was labeled, dated and had a link to the website, or online source from where they were retrieved.

Data Analysis

This study is both descriptive and interpretive in nature and I used a qualitative methodology to answer my research questions. I adopted a thematic approach for my analysis. Butler-Kisber (2018) proposes that thematic inquiry is a type of qualitative research where the researcher uses a categorization process to interpret the data (Maxwell Miller 2008, as cited in Butler-Kisber, 2018). The categorization process I used is called the Constant Comparison Approach (CCA) (Butler- Kisber, 2018) which emanates from Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1978) and critical grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005). I used CCA to gain an overall understanding of the way Mrs. Summers, described the manner of accomplishing her responsibilities, the qualities that she attributed to her leadership and the approaches that she implemented in her leadership to facilitate her practice (Reissman, 1993).

The data analysis process was a challenging, but at the same time an exciting step of this study. I employed CCA manually because the overall amount of data was not so large that I needed to use a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis System (CAQDAS) to handle the analysis and I felt it would be inefficient, given my time constraints, to learn a software program.

CCA is a process that compares and contrasts units that the researcher demarcates in the transcripts and then places into named, descriptive categories. This process continues until all the data is accounted for and the categories become "saturated." As much as possible, the researcher tries to use "emic" or insider terms/phrases when naming the categories. Through an iterative process of expanding and collapsing these categories, eventually they are reduced and clustered into larger, conceptual themes. These themes then provide an explanation for what is emerging in the analysis. Because this process keeps the researcher grounded in the data, it adds to the trustworthiness of the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Rennie, 2000). The process helps to bring up questions and to explore various features and dimensions in the data. CCA allows the

researcher to distinguish various patterns in the data and facilitates the categorization of different sets of concepts emerging from the data. This is possible because CCA develops researcher's awareness of the data and their meaning in context. Concept descriptors are saturated by conducting several stages of constant comparison (O'Connor, Netting, Thomas, 2008).

To implement the CCA process in my study I used two phases of data analysis—course-grained and fine-grained (Butler-Kisber, 2018) which is an artificial separation of what is a non-linear process, but makes it easier to explain the analysis to the reader. In course-grained analysis the researcher closely examines the data by listening to the recordings, reading the filed texts, referring to the participants or the contexts where the field text has been collected in order to comprehend them (Butler-Kisber, 2018). In this step, by reading the transcripts over and over I looked for consistent and regularly happening patterns and topics that surfaced throughout the data. First, I copied the transcriptions for the three interviews in one Word document. Then I eliminated the interview question. The following step was to break down the data and divide them into units of text that made sense by "taking apart a sentence, a paragraph and giving each discrete incident, idea, or event, a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 63). To store the units and their corresponding names/codes, I used Microsoft Excel Software. Table 1 shows a sample of the primary recording of data units and their code names.

Table 1. Sample of Data Units & Codes Names

Data unit	Code name
and maybe...I tend to really give people the benefit of the doubt. I really...I tend to trust that they're making a decision or they're saying something that, … that is the truth. You know I tend to really trust a lot. Does that impede me? no, not impede but, if there is someone who is trying to manipulate or get something from you and your character is trusting, you could have an epic fail there, but then you learn and you say "ok, that person, I really have to do this. So, it's like you know, part of the character always works for you and there is always part of your character that... that you could,... could be a little bit of a... a negative, I tend to think it's mostly positive	Negative aspect of the communication skill
(laughs)….eh.. what do I do in pressure situations? I try to... settle myself so that I don't react emotionally, I try to...ah decompress quickly because the pressure isn't healthy,…	Reaction in challenging situations
So, communication, the ability to communicate is when you think about how your words will impact another, right?	Definition of communication

Accordingly, I had a list of all data units, and their code names in an Excel workbook. It helped me keep the data units in an organized manner and to access and move them easily. Then I compared and contrasted the patterns in each of these units and placed them into categories, and in so doing, came up with an initial set of descriptive categories. Table 2 shows a sample of the initial descriptive categories that emerged in the analysis and a number of excerpts from the data.

Table 2. Example of Descriptive Categories

Category	Example of Data Excerpt
Professional background	"Ah...by the time, I went into administration, I would say, I probably had **really** 20 to 22 years of teaching experience" (Int. with M. S./ Tu, 03/06/2018).
Education	"I went further to get a professional diploma in administration, but…" (Int with M. S./ Tu, 03/06/2018).
Adventuring	"…and I always <u>loved</u> thinking about the world as a place of adventure and learning" (Int. with M. S./ Tu, 03/06/2018).
Passions	So, I loved <u>teaching</u> and, and I <u>really</u> enjoyed <u>being</u> a teacher (Int with M. S./ Tu, 03/06/2018).
Daily interactions	So, I interact with my <u>directors</u>, my <u>students</u>, <u>parents</u>, <u>board members</u>, **outside** people who want to come into the <u>school</u>, just speakers, people who want to present something, people who want to sell you something, people who want to <u>teach</u> you something, ahh..., I also have to interact with... companies, I interact with... organizations that I want to and have relevance to the school like the Quebec association of Independent schools and <u>other</u> heads of school and.... and yeah trying and living with all my assistants and the <u>cleaners</u> and the people who do the maintenance, *that*.
Relationship with a mentor	**"Yes**, uhm, so when there is a <u>mentor</u> and a <u>mentee</u>, it's a very **<u>fluid</u>** type of relationship because often times when you are the mentor and when you have a mentee, it changes and the mentee becomes the mentor and the mentee in a certain <u>experience</u> or in a certain discussion. Uh, because the learner can shift, "oh I learned something from what you said." right?" (Int with M. S. / Tu, 18/09/2018).
Integrating new teachers	"we're preparing <u>for</u> new hired staff and <u>faculty</u>, they have a two-day orientation eh and … ah they learn about the school" (Int with M. S./ Wed, 08/08/2018).

The second, fine-grained analysis phase was a more precise analysis of the data. It included a lot of expanding and contracting of the categories which helped me to see any connections among them (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Richards & Morse, 2007) in order to understand the data conceptually and at a deeper level. At this step of analysis, I started to break down the categories even further: I broke the data into smaller units or subcategories and then expanded and contracted until the categories were saturated (Boeije, 2002). First, I came up with four themes; "connecting", "supporting", "getting things done", and "learning". Then, I realized that there was a lot of overlapping between the two themes of connecting and supporting. Since the supporting role of the principal was carried out in a large way in her communication with others , and the purpose of her support was to give others power and capability to become leaders themselves, I concluded that they need to merge, and I came up with the theme which I called "communicating to empower." For each category, I generated rules of inclusion which serve to define the essential features of each unit of data and determine where each should be place. These are presented in detail in Chapter Four. Finally, I was able to collapse the initial categories (and their sub-categories) into nine categories within two larger and conceptual themes that I called: "Communicating to Empower", "Embracing Change". Figure 1 below represents the categories and larger themes.
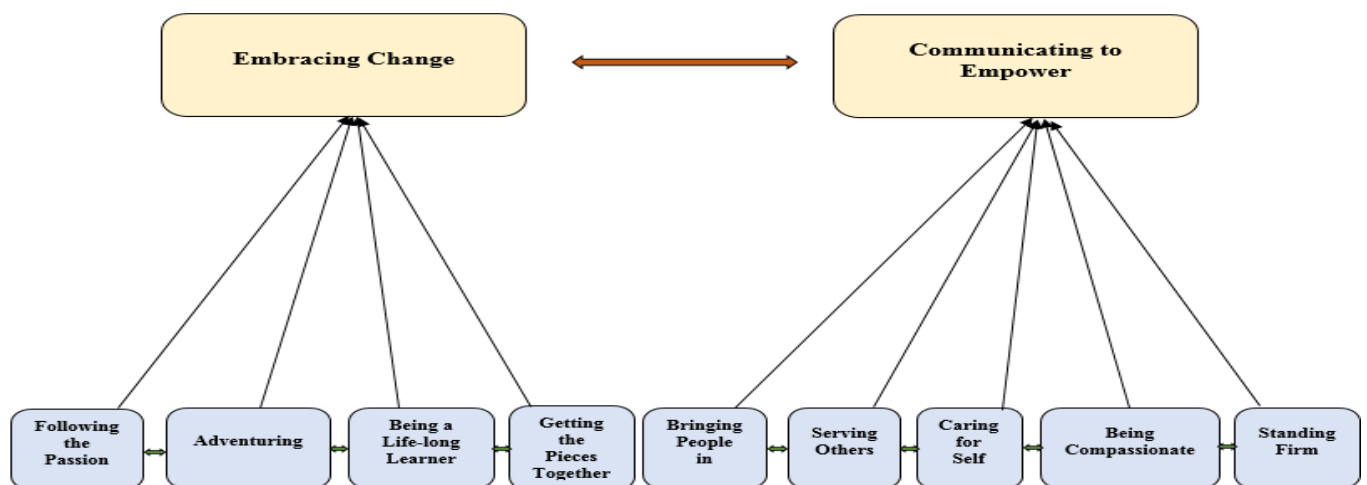

Figure 1. Emerged Themes and Categories

I also had two groups of data that didn't belong in any of these two themes. They provided very useful information about Mrs. Summers' personal and professional background and helped me in understanding the context of her lived experiences. They were extracted from the data I will explain more about them in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were an integral part of this study from its inception to its culmination. As required, I submitted an application to the Research Ethics Board of McGill University. The permission to conduct the study was granted. This represented my first step for conducting an ethical study. Similarly, as mentioned previously, informed consent (see Appendix B & C) was obtained from all of the participants to ensure they fully understood the nature of the research, as well as their role in the study. As suggested earlier, to ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms from the outset to protect their identities. For my main participant, I asked her if she had a preference for the use of a pseudonym. She suggested I use "Mrs. Summers". I immediately began inserting this pseudonym as I did the transcription and as I proceeded, I made sure to remove any other identifying features. Throughout the interview process I reminded the participants that they had the right to refrain from answering questions and to leave the study at any time. Fortunately, none of the participants chose to do either. I encouraged the participants to explain and to elaborate on their experiences, but didn't show any signs of approval, disapproval, judgement or bias (Mack, et al., 2005). I wanted to make sure that I obtained their perspectives and gave them voice and that my reactions were not guiding them in any way. Thus, I adhered to the notion that an ethical stance requires an ongoing negotiation with participants throughout a study (Butler-Kisber, 2018) and not just the process of obtaining written consent.

Rigor in Qualitative Research

There are multiple perspectives and approaches in the literature addressing validity in qualitative research. Various terms such as authenticity, transparency, trustworthiness, and credibility are used to address rigor in the work (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Authenticity refers to the "truth" of the qualitative research (Scott, 2007), transparency to the clarity of research process (Butler-Kisber, 2018). Nevertheless, there is an agreement among qualitative researchers that they need to demonstrate credibility in their studies.

In qualitative research, credibility and/or trustworthiness is the criterion for judging the quality, which is defined as how precisely "the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.125). To establish credibility, researchers generally adopt strategies such as member checking, triangulation, and thick description of participants and themes (Shenton, 2004). Thick description refers to the detailed description of phenomenon or the data (Shenton 2004). Below I address each of these as they relate to my research. I would argue that the credibility of my study is linked to how I maintained the authenticity of what emerged from the interview data. I used the participants' perceptions, impressions, and reflections of their experiences to ground my interpretations in the data. In addition, to enhance the transparency of the study, the clarity of the research process, I attempted to write rich descriptions of the themes from participants' accounts.

Member checking is a process of consulting with the participants to determine that the interpretations and conclusions of the researcher accurately represent the perceptions, impressions, and reflections of the participants (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). To make sure that Mrs. Summers felt comfortable and that the work represented and reflected her perspectives, I used member checking to confirm that her experiences as a school leader and the interpretations and findings of my research which I shared with her were accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Leininger, 1985). I sent Mrs. Summers parts of the analysis that included the excerpt from the interviews and the detailed explanation of emerged themes. I asked her to read and verify if they represented what we had discussed in interviews with her. She responded that she was happy with how her experience and perceptions were reflected in the research.

I believe that using a three-part interview design and conducting the interviews over time, helped me enhance the trustworthiness of my study, because both my participant and I had time to reflect on what was said, and to check the accuracy of both transcriptions and interpretations (Butler-Kisber, 2010). In addition, this process helped me engage with Mrs. Summers for a length of time which allowed me to build trust with her (Shenton, 2004).

Morrow (2005) suggests that the use of multiple data sources allows the researcher "to achieve the goal of adequate variety" (p. 255) by using triangulation. Triangulation is the process whereby the researcher uses multiple data sources and data gathering methods to validate the research (Denzin, 1978). It involves a "search for disconfirmation and helps to combat the investigator's natural tendency to seek confirmation of her or his preliminary or emerging

findings" (p. 256). I did this by including interviews with other stakeholders and used these interviews to corroborate or disconfirm what emerged from the interviews with Mrs. Summers. Also, as mentioned earlier, I engaged in writing reflective memos which helped me to consider my biases and to question any impression that could have resulted from my background and and/or my experiences with other school leaders in the past and might influence what I saw in the data. Also, I used artifacts and online sources like the comments Mrs. Summers documented in her Twitter account, mentioned earlier, to confirm or disconfirm what was emerging from the interviews with her. Together, the three sources of data (interviews, reflective memos and artifacts/online sources) provided different vantage points and a more holistic understanding of Mrs. Summers' lived experiences. Similarly, throughout the analytic process, I shared and discussed my emerging work with my supervisor. Therefore, I feel convinced that my interpretations were plausible and grounded in the data and that my preconceptions did not unjustifiably influence the outcome of the study (Eisner, 1991; Charmaz, 2006). I was able to triangulate my findings using multiple sources of data, and I believe this will enable others to judge positively the believability and trustworthiness of this study (Charmaz, 2006). Bringing the participants' voices into the qualitative research makes it more authentic and more ethical, which I achieved by using the emic words to name the categories and themes, by grounding the discussion of findings in transcripts and the other sources of data to explain the themes in Chapter Four. Lastly, in order to address credibility, I prepared a detailed documentation of this research process which started before formally reaching out to my participant (Butler-Kisber, 2010). By constantly tracking my interpretations through these multiple avenues, I feel that I have enhanced the transparency, and thus, the credibility of my study.

Summary

In this chapter, I described in detail the process I followed to do this research. I started the chapter by a brief introduction, restated my research questions, explained the research design in detail in including; participant selection, data sources and data collection procedures, data management and data analysis. I discussed my approaches to the ethical aspects of the study and addressed the rigor of my work by describing the approaches I used to ensure my research would be credible and persuasive. In next chapter I will focus on the findings of the study and I will respond in more detail to the research questions.

Chapter Four: Discussion of Findings

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the categories and the corresponding themes that emerged from the analysis of the participant interview data and was introduced in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings, which are framed by the overarching research question and sub-questions that I posed at the beginning of my study.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Mrs. Summers is the principal of a secondary, English language school in Montreal area and is reputed to be a successful principal. After rigorous analysis of the data gathered from her, using a constant comparison approach (Chapter Three), two conceptual themes emerged which provide insights into the way Mrs. Summers carried out her responsibilities and how it helped her become a successful secondary school woman principal. These themes were: 1) Embracing Change; and 2) Communicating to empower. According to Creswell (2009) the final step in data analysis is to reach an interpretation or to generate meaning from the collected data. In other words, an interpretation is the explanation that a researcher derives from the data (Lincoln & Guba ,1985). I intend to provide what I interpreted from my data in this chapter.

In the following sections, I explain each theme in detail and in so doing, I respond to my research questions at the end of the section on each theme. Ultimately, through selected excerpts from Mrs. Summers' interview transcriptions, stakeholders' interviews, reflective memos, school artefacts, online information around the school, and Mrs. Summers' tweets as explained in Chapter Three, I will demonstrate how Mrs. Summers carries out her responsibilities as a leader.

The Process of Arriving at the Themes

As discussed in Chapter Three, the themes emerged from three face-to-face interviews conducted with Mrs. Summers, one face-to-face interview, three phone interviews with other involved stakeholders, and from my own reflective memos written throughout the study. After close reading, categorizing, coding, collapsing, and expanding of categories, I was able to separate all of the data into nine specific categories, and ultimately collapsed these into two conceptual themes. It is important to mention that I arrived at these themes by playing an active role as a researcher in my use of constant comparison inquiry, as described in Chapter Three. Ultimately, by reflecting on how Mrs. Summers fulfilled her responsibilities as a leader, her perceptions of leadership and her interactions, and how they related to one another, I was able to examine the data conceptually and arrive at a deeper understanding of how Mrs. Summers

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carried out her responsibilities and what was her perception of leadership and in what interactions she was involved. Table 3 presents an overview of the themes, the categories that support the themes, and the rules of inclusion which articulate the criteria used to specify which data excerpts belong in each category.

Table 3. Themes, Categories and Rules of Inclusion

Categories	Rules of Inclusion	Themes
Following the passion	Refers to how Mrs. Summers sees passion as a basis for helpful tools such as service for others and how passion can determine one's path and keep them focused on their job as a teacher or leader. keeping focused happens by remembering motives in contrast to being distracted from the path.	Embracing Change
Adventuring	Refers to "transitions and shifts" such as job changes, immigration, etc. that Mrs. Summers has experienced in her life and her willingness to have them in her life and how she reacted to them.	
Being a life-long learner	Refers to willingness to being humble and learn from others regardless of one's positions as well as one's own positive or negative experiences.	
Getting the pieces together	Refers to the process of fulfilling leaders' responsibilities such as daily meetings, dealing with difficult situations, disregarding if they are a normal situation or a challenging one, making decisions, and attending to their consequences	
Bringing people in	Refers to how Mrs. Summers integrated faculty, staff, students and parents in school affairs by engaging them in school activities such as team building activities and social activities in a meaningful way to help them grow so that they could work independently and manage the school without her if needed.	Communicating to Empower
Serving others	Refers to support, material (professional development, funding, etc.) or emotional (mentoring, creating a culture of trust in school, etc.), that Mrs. Summers provides for her faculty and staff, students and parents to help them achieve their best performance in their position as a teacher, staff, student or parent.	
Caring for self	Refers to the ability of Mrs. Summers to communicate her needs to people around her and ask for appropriate support in her personal life as well as her professional position.	
Being compassionate	Refers to the ways Mrs. Summers connects to people on a daily basis (through walk-throughs, meetings, morning chats, face to face meetings, emails, etc.) and in routine and difficult conversations, while being careful about their emotions, looking beyond their words, connecting to those emotions and taking action to help people deal with those emotions.	
Standing firm	Refers to the need to be assertive by negotiating, being firm, keeping calm, avoiding temper and emotional responses.	

Background Information

I also had units of data that didn't fit into either of the two broad themes and their subcategories. They provided important information about Mrs. Summers personal and professional background as mentioned in Chapter Three, which I called background information. These pieces of data were not analyzed since they were descriptions of her personal and professional status (her marital status, children, her education, years of experience, etc.). These two types of data (personal and professional background information) helped me have a better understanding of Mrs. Summers personality and her context. Some excerpts from these data are used to further support the two main themes that emerged from this study which are discussed in the sections below. However, I had to be cautious to avoid incorporating material that might give away Mrs. Summer's identity.

Theme One: Embracing Change

The first theme to emerge from the data was "Embracing Change". It relates to very specific beliefs Mrs. Summers has about leadership. It includes four categories that demonstrate her openness to new ideas and circumstances and the substantial contribution this quality makes in her personal and professional life. These categories include: "Following your passion", "Adventuring", "Being a life-long learner", and "Getting the pieces together". In the fine-gained analysis of data, when trying to find a name for this theme, I was not sure if I should use the word "change" or "challenge". The reason I decided to use the word "change" was that it covered both positive and negative shifts in her life. I believed if I used the term "challenge" it connotate only the difficult and probably negative transitions in her personal and professional life. The data units containing information about these four categories illustrated her openness towards both negative and positive changes, that is, she tries to learn from both circumstances.

Following the passion

This category refers to how Mrs. Summers believes passion is the basis for using approaches in leadership such as service to others, defines one's career path and helps retain the focus necessary in a job as a teacher or leader. she believes focus is supported by remembering motives in contrast to being distracted from one's path. Portin and Jianping Shen, (1999) recommend that principals need to maintain their enthusiasm to counter difficulties and change. Throughout the interviews with Mrs. Summers, she constantly mentioned the importance of following a passion in order to fulfill responsibilities. This passion and enthusiasm were obvious

not only in her words, but also in her tone of voice and the way she talked about various aspects of her life, personal or professional. She argued that regular recalling of the motives that once inspired her to apply for a leadership position has helped her to keep up her eagerness for the work in spite of any difficulties she has faced. In the excerpt provided below, she describes her incentive for applying for a leadership position.

> When you are administrator, you are working with a bunch of students, but students and their parents, students and their greater community, students, parents, the greater community, your staff and the faculty. And I loved having that much of a reach where I could help everybody reach for their highest potential. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 03/07/2018, 38-44)

As a successful leader, she reminded new or unexperienced leaders to maintain their passion for their job by constantly remembering their reasons for entering each position. She believes that it is important to keep up the passion given the complexities of school leadership and various kinds of tasks (ranging from managing staff personnel, handling student behavior, coordinating professional development, connecting with the community and overseeing instruction) and accordingly the challenges that a school leader may encounter on a daily basis (Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). She stated that keeping up the passion and remembering the incentives are approaches that help her to confront the challenging situations and enables her to be resilient when encountering difficult moments.

> You have to be willing to, I hope that people who want to be leaders are passionate about it. You have to remember your why, why do you want to do this, it's really an important question to ask about anything you want to do, what your why and stick with your why, remember your why, remind yourself of your why, why do I want to be here, on the days that I don't want to be here and it's really tough and I want to just crawl under the bed , it's just like "Ok , why did I do this? Why am I doing this, why, it's that. (Int. with M. S/ Tue, 18/09/2018, 906-911)

Furthermore, Mrs. Summers considers that passion is a criterion for hiring her teachers and staff, since she believes that passion is the force that keeps the faculty and staff willingly inside the circle of school activities without putting pressure on them. It is with passion that faculty and staff go beyond their normal responsibilities and contribute more to the school.

> I would say… character. I hire for character. I mean, we have to know, I'm not going to hire you if you can't teach math, to be a math teacher, but I hire for character, I hire for someone who is enthusiastic about learning, I hire somebody who likes, you know working with the students, the … children, I hire somebody who is willing to give? back to the school and does not just do their teaching job and run home. (Int. with MS/Wed, 08/08/2018, 518-521)

The category of "following the passion" was representative of one of the qualities that Mrs. Summers uses to keep motivated and to confront difficult situations. She also looks for passion in her staff and faculty to make sure they contribute to the school.

Adventuring

This category refers to "transitions and shifts" such as job changes, immigration, etcetera that Mrs. Summers has experienced in her life and her willingness to have them in her life and how she reacted to them. I used the emic term adventure to name this category because when talking about the turning points in her life, she used this word and emphasized that life was "a place of adventure and learning" for her. She later emphasized that it is her motto about the life "… and I always loved thinking about the world as a place of adventure and learning" (Int. with MS/ Tu, 03007/2018, 2).

Mrs. Summers' perspective is representative of her enthusiasm and willingness to confront new situations and situations which involve ambiguity and more specifically provide her with opportunities for learning. The excitement that was present in her voice when she was talking about these transition points in her life added another layer of importance to her statements. The use of her vocabulary was manifested in her attitude towards these changes. For instance, when she was talking about some professional shifts she has had, she used the word "jump", which I assumed as a sign of zeal for those changes:

… and then making the jump from, ah, from a teacher to … an administrator, principal or vice principal, that is a significant jump. That's really adventure, you really have to ask yourself, why you want to do that. Because it is different, you are a different kind of teacher, when you are an administrator, well definitely it is not the same. (Int. with M.S /Tue, 18/09/2018, 556-559)

Mrs. Summers also added that she volunteered for some of these changes and as mentioned earlier reminded me that her motto about life is that she believes life to be an adventure:

I had an opportunity to come to Montreal when I married a Montrealer and it was a decision, does he come to (my country) or do I go to Montreal and I volunteered to come to Montreal because of my "life is an adventure" motto. (Int. with M.S./ Tu, 03/07/2018, 4-5)

She recounted her transition points proudly which indicated that she considered them as achievements in her life. She mentioned that in those moments, she has collected knowledge and experience that are helping her grow and, finally, when she mentioned thinking about her retirement, it was clear that she was ready to embrace one more change as it approaches her. In talking about these specific moments in life, she stated that one requirement is the need to adapt to the new situations:

... ahm, … then taking all of my education and expertise and trying to put it together to use in this other country, that's an adventure, because, everybody has different … ah rules and constraints and criteria for educational leadership or teaching and you have to comply with that, right? (Int. with MS/ Tue, 18/09/2018, 552-555)

I believe that the attitude that Mrs. Summers has towards life is a big asset in managing her responsibilities as a leader. It makes it possible for her to save energy by finding the best in what is coming to her instead of worrying about the future or being concerned over what has not happened yet. In fact, she can "handle uncertainty and ambiguity" (McEwan, 2003, p. 86) which

is a quality of being "Change Master" principal. However, her background information shows that her entrance into leadership was after approximately twenty-two years of teaching. This aligns with the literature presented in Chapter Two where I mentioned that according to the research, women principals apply for the leadership positions later in their career and after they get leadership certificates, or attain university degrees (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). It can be argued that Mrs. Summers has developed this openness to learning and doing new activities through years of experience.

Being a life-long learner

This category refers to the willingness to being humble and learn from others regardless of one's positions, as well as from one's own positive or negative experiences. During the interviews, Mrs. Summers introduced herself as a life-long learner, mentioning that she is always willing to get out of her comfort zone and learn from what comes to her. When she was explaining the process of being hired for her current position and why she accepted that role, she stated:

And one of the reasons why I said sure, was because I had been at this high school for six years, things were going very well and I'm a learner. I'm a life-long learner so I said Ok, if I really want to learn, the best way is to take myself and put myself in the zone where I am not as comfortable, right? You put yourself in a kind of not as comfortable zone, right? So, that's what I did. I took a flying leap into a zone that isn't natural and comfortable and did a lot of learning. That's what we do. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 157-160)

For Mrs. Summers, learning is equal to taking flying leaps into the zone of discomfort and that's how she acquires new experiences and, as a result, new skills like dealing with various situations and different types of people:

And then everything I learn seeks to help that character grow. And you learn sometimes from a lot experience and by making quite a few errors, "oh, next time I'm not doing that" or "oh, you know what next time I probably would not say that quiet that way", "oh,

uhm, with this parent ... I'm trying to calm them down first" "oh, this teacher really needs to feel as though they have a lot of value so that next time" you learn you make a lot of errors. But really … making mistakes here, like mistakes are good, mistakes really help you, errors really help you move forward, failure helps you move forward, if you don't fail you don't learn. So, I … made a lot of mistakes, I had a couple of really epic failures and ... they moved me on, they moved me to be really better at what I do. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 373-376)

Thus, it is in the realm of inexperience that one is given the opportunity to learn, to observe herself and her practice. Errors and mistakes are unavoidable and sometimes have big consequences, at the same time they are precious for teaching one lessons, lessons that wouldn't be learned unless one is in the context. So, Mrs. Summers sees failures as an opportunity to grow herself as a person and as a principal. Karen, one of the stakeholders emphasized this point as well stating that, "You learn over time, you learn over time what to do, what not to do, … experience is very, very important … (Int. with Karen/ Th, 16/08/2018).

The reason for learning in these situations according to Mrs. Summers is that the attention span is wider which renders the person more open to learning new things. She explained:

When you're in the zone of discomfort, you're always paying attention, nothing is ever like you put your feet up on the table, you relax, you say I know what I'm doing. When you're in the zone of discomfort, that's where you are learning, you are paying attention at all moments, Ok , yep, I'm going to pay attention there and that's when the learning comes because you are open, everything is open to learning, it's like a library is open, so that's what I would say. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 588-590)

As the excerpt above shows, she believes individuals learn and grow by getting out of their comfort zone. In contrast, when certain leaders achieve expertise in a specific job, they become unwilling to relinquish this comfort to take on a new position. The willingness to accept a new position for which one needs to learn new skills, or acquire more knowledge, indeed

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creates the opportunity to develop personal and professional skills. When someone accepts the challenge to start a new job, change a position, etcetera it provides the opportunity to develop. The literature suggests that new and inexperienced women educational leaders or teachers, who aspire to enter the leadership positions wait to gain the expertise they perceive is necessary to apply for these positions (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Mrs. Summers believes the opposite. She encourages anyone who is looking for growth and more specifically, new and inexperienced principals, or those aspiring to enter educational leadership, especially women to take that flying leap and start learning. As mentioned earlier, the tendency to delay applying for leadership positions, comes from the need that women feel to perfect their skills. However, as Mrs. Summers explains, one can gain experience while doing a job.

Notman & Henry (2011) report that the success of a principal is impacted by her critical reflection about her own practice and her understanding of the personal value system to which she has a commitment. Such principals are brave about accepting their mistakes and show their human fallibility (Notman & Henry, 2011) as Mrs. Summers articulated.

So, when you have these huge adventures, most often they put you in a zone of discomfort, because I believe that most really good learning comes from the zone or being in an area of discomfort. When you are not as much at ease, when it's not routine and regular for you, when it's not something that you just know. Suddenly you're, … you know, you have certain expertise but you are thrown into "oh, but I don't know much about this, I'm going to have to do a lot of learning too," so, you're thrown into this area of discomfort where you have to be very humble … like imagine I came to a school where (…) and suddenly with all the expertise that I have, I didn't know enough. And so, you have to, you have to get very humble, you have to be willing to say, "Ok, I'm the leader but I am not the one who knows everything right? Everybody around me who has been there before, knows more about this school than I do … and that goes for any switch that you make, like it may be a switch you make from one school to another school when you first get there, it's a zone of discomfort because you're the leader, but everybody knows more than you do, so, what do you do with that? You have to step aside from your ego … and you can't pretend that you know, and in fact the best thing is to really admit that you don't know. I'm the leader here, but I don't really know how to do that, or I

don't know what the policy is on that, or eh, ... I don't know what the procedure is there so … can somebody instruct me, so I'll know how to do that. As a leader that's tough, because you've going to say to yourself how does the leader admit to a whole bunch of people that they don't know. Well, you just do, you have to. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 568-580)

Mrs. Summers mentioned that an essential requirement of being a life-long learner is being humble. It is common knowledge that nobody is perfect. Also, there are always times when one doesn't have sufficient information about the needs of that situation. That is when one needs to remain humble regardless of being in a leadership position. Indeed, it is the time to reach out and ask for help.

It is essential for a leader to be open to learning, meaning that leaders do not start their work after acquiring all the expertise that they need. Professional education is needed, but what adds to the learning is actually being in the field and practicing, making errors and learning from all. Just as noted in the literature as well, each school has its own specific context and accordingly its own special tasks (Clifford & Ross, 2012; Glasman & Martens, 1993) and every specific situation teaches the leader a new lesson. In these situations what helps the leader is being open-minded towards what people share with them at that moment just as Mrs. Summers stated: "I'm open, I'm open to suggestions I'm open to creativity. I'm open to people's ideas and I share mine" (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 362-363).

This shows that avoiding resistance to new ideas and new initiatives helps to expand one's knowledge and expertise. It was immediately noticeable from the first impression that Mrs. Summers gave me that she was really keen to know about others and what they propose. After I contacted her about my research by email and she showed interest in it, she invited me to go to her school and visit her. It was interesting for me since, knowing that she should be a very occupied person, she wanted to meet me first. The attention to and enthusiasm about my research and her eagerness to know about me were notable for me. My memo after this visit reflects this openness in her:

This meeting was very different from what I was expecting. I was expecting a very formal meeting where I would talk about my topic and explain the procedure and leave the school until she responds and lets me know if she is willing to participate. However, she was very warm. She welcomed me at the door herself and was very friendly. I think she is a people person. She obviously was interested to know about the topic of my study as well as myself. (Ref. memo #11, Th, 28/ 06/2018)

Later when talking about the category of "Serving Others", I will show that according to the data, this was not only as a gesture of respect and friendliness. Mrs. Summers is also willing to help people to operationalize their new ideas.

This quality of being open to new ideas and actions goes beyond only welcoming and listening to people. Mrs. Summers also encourages her staff and faculty to try new projects or even initiates them. So, she advises others to try new things:

Challenges! Ooh (sigh) sometimes ... when ... a staff member is ...eh reluctant to ... ah make changes in their practices that would really help them and help the school move forward, that's a challenge because you have to try to get people to do different things as they move on and not everybody is brave enough as they can, they're afraid sometimes, so it's getting teachers to really be on board, sometimes with new projects, new ideas and sometimes new things "oh, why can't we do this the way we used to always do it", "well because we need to move ahead to keep up with the way the world is moving", right, so sometimes you have teachers that are less willing, a little more afraid, so that's a challenge to try to get them, well, just try it and see how it goes. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018,407-414)

In general, the category of "Being a Life-long Learner" suggested that a powerful quality of a successful principal is that she dares to change, make mistakes and learn from her experiences and encourages others to do the same. It is particularly important for women principals since they are shown to be more conservative about accepting leadership roles and on the other hand, under more pressure to lead perfectly because of gendered stereotypes that consider men to be more effective leaders (Northouse, 2015).

Getting the pieces together

This category refers to the process of fulfilling leaders' responsibilities such as daily meetings, dealing with difficult situations, disregarding if they are a normal situation or a challenging one, making decisions, and attending to their consequences. The reason for choosing this code name for this category was because Mrs. Summers used the metaphor of a puzzle for fulfilling responsibilities and doing whatever needs to be done:

> As a puzzle, all of them. It's always a puzzle. Anything that comes to you that is, that is difficult and challenging you could lean on your hands, hang your head, you could do all that, you could get upset and your heart can beat fast, or you just say Ok. This is what it is. No matter, what I do. This is what it is so now, let's look at what could be done. What are the options here? What do I have in front of me? I have these many people here. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 445-448)

As it will be shown in the excerpts from the transcriptions which follow, Mrs. Summers believes, all situations, easy or challenging, need to be handled by breaking them down into smaller pieces and dealing with each part separately. She mentions that calming down and looking at the situation as consisting of various parts helps to balance the burden of the situation and fulfill the responsibility in the best possible way.

> I think challenging situations are not like here (motioning to her head) in my head, just comes out and I just say Ok were going to … so things happen every day, they could be really big, but I'm just going to deal with them all the same way. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 438-440)

In this excerpt Mrs. Summers pointed out that situations happen, and she feels the need to deal with them immediately. Karen, one of the stakeholders I interviewed also mentioned the leader needs to be a quick problem solver:

In these situations, the leader … ah, needs to act … right away. She needs to be quick on her feet, … like what you're going to do, ah you don't have lots of time to think about it. (Int. with Karen/ Th, 16/08/2018)

Mrs. Summers also expressed that a leader needs to make decisions on a daily basis no matter if it is about a normal routine activity, or a challenging situation.

Sometimes, I have a lot of things that I need to get done, very very quickly, and you know it's one thing after another, so I need this and I need this and I need this, I'll just sit myself down and ... I do what I have to do and just ... do one thing at a time and get it done and it all gets done eventually. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 403-406)

Aside from calming herself down in the situations in which she is in a rush to get several things done, she needs to do them separately and one by one.

So, sometimes you have to make a really tough decision and the impact of this decision will be, it will be very impactful … in a way that … it could impact what you are doing, the job, the school, but you are up against what you really think is. (Int. with MS/Wed, 08/08/2018, 635-637)

According to this excerpt, another important factor that helps her make decisions and get things done is to consider their consequences and how they impact other people. In the following excerpt, she explains how she deals with a challenging situation.

Well ... (sigh) yeah, you look at whatever it is, you say "Ok, so what could be done here? let's take an example like ... uhm, a child did not get off at the bus stop, a child sleeping in a bus (whisper), (...), very tired got sleep, never got off the bus, the mom is frantic, the bus driver doesn't know, because the kid is sleeping in the back of the bus. Parent is in the school. "Where is my child? Never got off the bus …". I'll say, Ok, we need to start looking at it as a puzzle, everything is a puzzle. we need a puzzle, Ok. So, let's call the bus driver, we call the company, the company calls the bus driver, the bus driver says

there is no one in the bus, "wait a minute, the bus, in the back row there is a little girl sleeping in the back." So then, Ok, so "what are we going to do now?" I'm going to stay, or someone else is going to stay because, the bus driver is going to come back with the child, the parents going to come and pick up the child. It's just like you, ... you break down the puzzle. You're always, you know it's a huge puzzle. You just break down every step one at a time. Actually, there is an answer in there, lots of people to help." (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018422-432)

This category is representative of Mrs. Summers belief about handling various situations including her daily responsibilities and those that are challenging.

The scholarship is replete with various roles and responsibilities that educational leaders need to play in schools. However, theme one shows that in order for Mrs. Summers to carry out her leadership responsibilities, she had to have a belief system on which she based her actions, which was that of embracing change and the various ways she embraced change described in the categories above. I would argue that she was able change responsibilities and situations into chances of learning and developing knowledge and expertise, because she has an acute awareness about her beliefs about leadership. This awareness drives the educational leaders to seek professional development as well. As the excerpts mentioned in theme one show, Mrs. Summers demonstrating how attentive she has been towards the personal and professional aspects of her life and how each of them was impacting her. Self-awareness is the first component of emotional intelligences (Goleman, 2006) which is proven to be a helpful skill for educational leaders (Gary, 2009). That is why I named this theme "Embracing change". The rich content of theme one shows that a successful woman leader doesn't see leadership as the position of know-all, but rather as a place of learning and being humble. She is constantly conscious about her thinking and beliefs, aspires to learn, takes risks and is willing to experience new or challenging situations knowing that they all help her to gain more experience.

Theme Two: Communicating to Empower

The second theme emerging from my data illustrated the ways in which Mrs. Summers indicated that she implemented her leadership as a school principal. The reason I called this theme communicating to empower was that there was a common goal in all the categories that emerged under this theme and that was an attempt to empower others. This will be explained in

detail in the discussion of the categories that made up this theme. They include: "Serving others", "Integrating others", "Being compassionate", "Standing firm", and "Caring for self".

Serving others

This category refers to support, material (professional development, funding, etcetera) or emotional (mentoring, and creating a culture of trust in school), that Mrs. Summers provides for her faculty and staff, students and parents to help them achieve their best performance in their position as a teacher, staff, student or parent. The support for faculty and staff included professional development, emotional support and even modeling to teach them leadership skills. The support for students encompassed providing them with the facilities and the opportunities that they needed to help them develop their academic and personal skills, such as leadership skills and the support for parents included providing them with enough information about the school and their students and being quick in responding to them. Overall, the data demonstrated that Mrs. Summers tried to create a culture of enabling and empowerment for the people working with her and with the students, their parents and the greater community. One way she did this was by serving others as evident in the excerpt below.

> There are lots of different kinds of leaders, so for me, I believe in service leadership, as a service leader, my... my mission is to provide the resources, the ... whatever somebody needs to achieve their goals. And so, if it's providing a student, I'm providing the student population with the best practices in teaching that I can find. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 03/07/2018, 45-48)
>
> Or we can provide something to the world and help the world be better. So, I am a service leader ... and I really love that. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 03/07/2018, 51-52)

Mrs. Summers mentioned that she provides professional development and some activities that teachers need before the start of the academic year to prepare them for the new year. They included speakers, time to prepare their classrooms, and getting their classrooms.

> I have a whole pedagogical week for my staff and faculty before the students come, a whole week. So, my staff and faculty will come back on 29th … and that whole week

will be speakers, professional development, readings, getting a class ready, getting your class set, all that. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 498-500)

So it really depends on what it really is that you are asking me support for, support for learning, professional development, mentoring by other people in the school, here, everybody has a mentor, we assign them a mentor, new staff gets new orientation for two days before they come in , you know that's support too. (Int. with MS/Tu, 18/09/2018, 793-795).

The provision of professional development happens from requests from the teachers themselves and the knowledge that Mrs. Summers has about each of her faculty and staff and their needs. As mentioned in the review of the related literature, one of the features of successful educational leaders is that they can develop professionalism in the school and motivate and empower their staff by distinguishing their specific needs and taking action to help them accordingly (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

So, so in the past, teachers didn't know what their goals are, and we have goals for the year and we have departmental goals for the year and they will say what they're trying to or aspire to and then they will ask for you know what kind of professional development they might need and also when I when certain things come to my attention, I'll be like "oh, that would be great for Joan, because she needs that type of professional development so we're always looking for, they're always looking for improving and I'm always looking and and I'm always looking for improving and for someone whose goals are to become an administrator, well they might want to go to a leadership conference, or be supported for that. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018,797-803)

There is a very powerful reason for providing professional development for teachers. It is the approach principals can use to empower their staff and faculty. Researchers found that principals who provide learning opportunities for their teachers, are able to develop trust among staff at the school and improve the ambiance as well (Notman & Henry, 2011). The manifestation of this aspect of leadership in Mrs. Summers practice was highlighted in the

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interview I had with Sue, a teacher who had the experience of working with Mrs. Summers. She stated: "feeling supported is really important" (Int. with Sue/ Mon, 27/08/2018). When mentioning a challenging situation, Sue had encountered with a parent, she explained:

> One strength that woman leaders have, is that … they do kind of have good really good social skills and really … understanding perspective ... in my last school I felt completely supported and the principal was like I completely understand what you mean, and she was very decisive, and she was an excellent leader. It really effects your experience as teacher that you feel supported by and understood by her, and the space felt so empowering, …
>
> Last year I had a difficult situation with a parent and right away I went to the principal and the principal was like so let me get all the information and so I gave her all the information, and then she was like ok, you've done nothing wrong and just being very objective about it, ah, this is the situation, I think there needs to be an objectivity as well you know, like a keeping a cool head, and my principal, definitely did that, she was like, ok, this is the situation, you have done nothing wrong, I support you, she was like if you want to press charges against this parent, she was just truly supportive and I felt very supported because like because often times when there is a difficult situation where you feel like afraid for your career, you know what I mean, so that was really nice and assuring. (Int. with Sue/ Mon, 27/08/2018)

The culture of trust in a school, empowers the teachers and the principal. When there is trust between the teachers and the principal, the principal becomes the resource that teachers reach out for. This enables them and gives them the opportunity to be informed about the school setting, what is going on and what can help them manage the difficult situations more efficiently. This corroborates with the scholarship stating that mutual approachability is an important factor in creating higher organizational commitment in teachers (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). An approachable principal motivates teachers to dedicate all their energy to their instructional role. This is because they know that the principal will support them in challenging situations, such as dealing with difficult parents.

For the teachers, the mutual approachability provides a sense of job security that Sue, the teacher I interviewed, mentioned. In my experience I have observed a situation where one of my colleagues had to resign since her principal preferred to support a difficult parent although the teacher had not done anything wrong. When Sue recounted her story, I was reminded of that incident and recorded it in the following memo:

It's very valuable that there is this much of trust between a teacher and her principal. I think it can give a teacher a kind of confidence and strength in confronting difficult situations knowing that somebody is out there who will be besides them rather than in front of them. Since when people get defensive, they may try to hide a situation or worse confront the leader in contrast. (Ref. memo #17, Mon, 27/08/2018)

Another empowering aspect of the 'Serving others" approach, is Mrs. Summers' ability to build a network of people who look after each other, and help each other as she points out in the following excerpt:

… and when somebody has something terrible going on in family for them, we try to give them support as well, help them with anything they need, sometimes other staff and faculties would help. (Int. with MS/Tu, 18/09/2018, 795-796)

Modeling is another way of "serving others" that Mrs. Summers provides for her staff and faculty. Successful principals also model learning by participating in professional development and other kinds of learning themselves to show that learning is not only for students and teachers (Blase & Blase, 1999). Mrs. Summers used modeling and mentioned that she helps her staff and faculty learn about leadership skills, communication skills, maintaining balance in their life and adding humor to their practice by modeling. Modeling is the she provides them with approaches they can use to react in various situations:

Well modeling would be, I, I do what I want you to do so if I, if I am speaking to a group of people and I am ... I am wanting them to, to do something on behalf of the school, people would be watching the manner in which I model communication, or people would

be, there are some people some of my assistants would watch the way in which I speak to difficult parents, I am modeling how I behave in front of this parent who is enraged because somebody said a bad thing to her daughter and I'm speaking to her. Two of us are here, I'm here and the vice principal or the director is there of that program and I'm modeling how I want her to speak when that happens or him to speak when that happens, so that you get a sense of I'm modeling this for you, I'm showing you I'm demonstrating, modeling is another way of demonstrating. So, the whole tone of the school happens because of the way I demonstrate what I want. (Int. with MS/Tu, 18/09/208, 711-717)

As the excerpt shows, Mrs. Summers believes that her manner of behaving in the school can set the tone of the whole school. As the main role model in the school, her awareness of the behaviours she has and how they influence the overall climate of the school is so valuable:

Uhm little, little changes come in the tone, I set an example for tone, you know we don't yell at children, yeah, you know, we simply, I spent three months here just setting the tone. It's all about tone setting. "Nope, we don't treat (students) like that. We don't yell at them, we don't tell them to get in line. We don't discipline them that way. We have a different manner. So, they are little changes that I think developed the tone of the school. (Int. with MS, 18/09/2018, 706-710)

Rebecca was a vice principal in Mrs. Summers's school previously. She is now a principal herself. Rebecca corroborated this in my interview with her.

The way a leader carries herself in the school, sets the tone, …you know, she commands the respect by giving the respect, I think it's critical in establishing solid and trusting relationships. (Int. with Rebecca/ Mon, 17/09/2018)

Emotional support is another kind of the service Mrs. Summers provides for her faculty, staff, students and parents in order to help them accomplish their tasks efficiently:

Ah, other changes had to do with. I really listen well when people tell me about ideas they have, so, certain innovations that teachers wanted to do, they wanted to change the way their classroom looks, instead of having rows of desks and chairs , some of them wanted to go to a more, er, ... eh relaxed way like you would find at Starbucks, they have little tables, little bean bags, and little, for learning. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 701-706)

As this excerpt shows, she is open to listening to the new ideas and looking further into them. Emotional support can also be provided by the mentors assigned for the staff and faculty:

… there is that feeling from a good mentor that says, 'you're in this job for a reason and you definitely know what you're doing, and you can make decisions knowing that there isn't really a bad one to make'. It's that confidence that they give you. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 626-629)

Mrs. Summers is also willing to help them put their ideas in to practice by providing them with the funding if it is available and supporting them emotionally. "Sometimes, when I have enough funds, I'll say yes please, yes, I'll support that yes" (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 783-784).

For the students, she offers emotional support as well as academic support. "And so, I support, I support a lot of the ideas that some of the students have (Int with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018,705-707).

More importantly by providing support for the staff and the faculty Mrs. Summers is providing academic support for the students in an indirect way:

Well, well, the school's mission is to, is to afford (students) with the opportunities to fulfill their passions, and to become great (people) and great leaders so that when they go out into the world, they can find themselves in, in leadership positions and positions that make great strides and make great strides for humanity and it's our job to create a school in which they can learn the things they need to learn ,to assume those world roles. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 03/07/ 2018,172-176)

The mission of the school mentioned in the excerpt above as well as Mrs. Summers'
emotional support is reflected in her tweets as well as school publications. For instance, she
shared an article on her tweeter feed entitled; "What straight A students get wrong". The article
discusses the prevalent obsession of students about getting straight As. What the article points
out is that nobody needs to perform perfectly all the time. I believe sharing this article and
inviting the students, as well as their parents to read, it is a form of emotional support that she is
providing for their community (students and their parents). It signifies that as the leader of the
school, she is expecting the students to perform well, but not perfectly. She is conveying that she
is supporting them in their learning but does not expect them to be perfect. This is also
reminiscent of her view about making mistakes which was mentioned in explaining the category
of "Being a life-long learner", where she stated that making mistakes and learning from the
experiences can help anybody to grow. The school mission and Mrs. Summers' attempts to
support students are to prepare them as citizens. Mrs. Summers and her faculty and staff not
only focus only on the academic aspects of students' needs, but also, they are aim to develop
future change agents and actively engaged citizens who care about their society and what is
going on around them.

Last, but not least, Mrs. Summers provides the parents with support as well:

… and I'm providing parents with the best speakers that I can find and help them educate
them on the best ways to raise their children or to understand what their children are
going through or I can provide something to the community that will help the community
be better. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 03/07/2018, 49-51)

A tweet she shared states:

Over-evaluation and test scores will never portray the true ability of our students. We
need to go beyond test scores if we really wish to laud the students that each child brings
to their learning. (MS tweets, 15/09/2018)

This is an influential message for parents who may need to stop obsessing over their children's scores and worrying too much about the academic preparation of them. In sum, the data showed that Mrs. Summers is providing different kinds of support for the school community to help them grow and accomplish their goals, which would empower them in their own roles.

Bringing people in

This category refers to how Mrs. Summers integrated faculty, staff, students and parents in school affairs by engaging them in school activities, such as team building and social activities in a meaningful way to help them grow so that they could work independently and manage the school without her if needed. So, team building is an important dimension in this category. Karen, one of the stakeholders, corroborated this in her interview with me:

> I think a good leader is the one who helps people to move forward, not individually move forward, but move forward as a team, towards some shared goals of the organization. (Int. with Karen/ Th, 16/08/2018)

> I believe my principal was really good in encouraging teaches and help them move forward in dealing with specific initiatives as a team … everybody working together and, ah everybody on the same page … ah the teachers understand the strategic direction of the school (leader) … needs to make sure that everybody understands the plan. All of the parties need to be in the sync, and the parents too. Parents need to understand what is the plan, and they… ah, they need to be with the (leader) too. (Int. with Karen/ Th, 16/08/2018)

Mrs. Summers believes that a good leader enables her staff and faculty to work independently so that they can manage the school without her if needed. They are prepared for independent practice by being integrated in the school activities and being mentored for their roles. She had a recent example to illustrate this. In fall 2018, she needed to leave the city of Montreal during the school opening days because of a personal requirement. She was pleased to see that the occasion has been led very successfully by her personnel:

To involve in school, they do it well, but You cannot be there, I think that's being a good leader, that I can walk away… school ran really well, you know it went beautifully. Ok all good super, and I was able to take care of my dad so that was Ok. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 535-537)

Rebecca another stakeholder mentioned that:

(leadership is about) trying to find leaders in others so … being a leader to bringing the best in people and …support them so that they could carry on without (the leader). (Int. with Rebecca/Mon, 17/09/2018)

To achieve this goal, she utilizes various means to integrate people into the school community. One of the important aspects is to help new personnel to blend in the school culture. She explained this process as:

So I start my new year as soon as the old year ends so that's why I'm here into July, so we're preparing for new hired staff and faculty, they have a two-day orientation and ….ah they learn about the school, and they learn how to do many things at the school, they meet with HR, yeah two day experience for them.(Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 495-498)

The other approach she discussed is collaborating with her faculty and staff. She invites everybody in the school to participate in various activities, attend the meetings and express their opinions and more importantly to take on a critical perspective and give feedback about what is going on the school and the decisions that need to be made.

I am a very collaborative ... I don't run a bureaucratic institution. It's not "I'm the boss and everyone has to listen to me." It looks like that, but it isn't. I have ... ten directors and we all meet, and feedback is very important to me. I will be responsible for making the final decision I think, but not without feedback from all the intelligent people that work for me. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 358-360)

Mrs. Summers believes that feedback is an integral part of her leadership, which helps her make decisions. She adds that giving and receiving feedback is a part of the school culture and the school is run based on this perspective:

And the philosophy is you give feedback. We have an openness of philosophy towards saying how you feel about this, feedback, very important, we, … when I want them to be involved ah and actively involved and I have a meeting, I… it's just very clear … that they're there to participate together, it's just, it's just part of the way the philosophy of the school works. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 481-485)

In conclusion she claims that people working with her, all care about the school and are on her side, because they have been integrated well into the school environment:

Oh, well I have, I mean I have an outstanding staff, I have excellent teachers, I have... people who really care about the school, they're with me (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 394-395)

Well, most of the assistants are always part of major events of the school, the closing, the bazar, the annual service, open house eh, different kinds of advanced you know we don't exclude anybody, anybody is excluded. When people have to be working and working week and week and I mean then they are excluded but we always find a way to get them involved (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 814-817)

Mrs. Summers is pointing out that it is important that students are integrated as much as possible as well and that they have various activities to ensure that they are involved. For instance, there is a house system in her school where students are divided into four groups and work as teams. This is how they are integrated in the beginning of the academic year:

So, we have four houses and then everybody goes to their houses and they cheer and whatever so, there is a lot of team building, that's how we open. Uhm, we open the school that way. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018,503-505)

… and when the students come in, on the day that they come in, they have nice meetings with their teachers, they have an assembly, they meet the student council, they meet (principal) they, we talk about things they do. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 501-503)

There are also other kinds of activities such as fundraising activities, bazars, leadership conferences, and etcetera. that help integrate students, staff, faculty and parents as much as possible at the school which were reflected in the school publications and the pictures that I took when I visited there to interview Mrs. Summers. As mentioned earlier, I cannot add them here to confirm my arguments since they contain information that can reveal the identity of my participant.

Parents are integrated into the school system in various activities like social gatherings and as volunteers to help with daily activities of the school. However, she mentioned that there are some disadvantages to integrating parents into daily activities of the school:

They (parents) help, whenever we need help, they're here, they're great, but they see things sometimes that they don't understand "why do you have that?" " let me tell you why", "oh, yeah, ok I now get it" and so and they're also have a very tight group of parents in the area , they talk to each other, they skype with each other(low and scratchy voice) they send each other messages(low scratchy voice) "I was in the school (high voice) today and this is what I saw your daughter doing," "please don't ever do that!" , ah yeah so there is a lot of talk with parents. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 839-845)

Nevertheless, engagement and willingness to engage are so important for her that she uses them as criteria to hire her staff and faculty:

… my staff members, I hire people who are actively involved who want to be actively involved (Int. with MS/Wed, 08/08/2018, 479)

The category of "Bringing people in" as shown with the excerpts above is an essential part of Mrs. Summers leadership as it causes a sense of community and teamwork in the school. I believe teamwork and community is very important to any social organization specifically a school where the students are being raised to lead the world.

Being compassionate

This category refers to the ways Mrs. Summers connects to people on a daily basis (through walk-throughs, meetings, morning chats, face to face meetings, emails, etc.) and in routine and difficult conversations, while being careful about their emotions, looking beyond their words, connecting to those emotions and taking action to help people deal with those emotions. To name this category I needed to understand the difference between compassion and empathy, since I was considering the word "Empathizing" as a possible name for this category. Singer and Klimecki (2014) suggest that empathy is a gateway to compassion. They define empathy to be a method of relating to people where one can understand how the other person is feeling and they attempt to imagine how it would feel for themselves. While compassion is when one goes a step further by not only feeling what the other is feeling, but also accepting it and finally taking action to help the other person. Considering that Mrs. Summers' activities were attempts to take action and help people as well as understanding their feelings, I decided to name this category "Being compassionate" goes beyond empathy which was what Mrs. Summers did and compassion was an emic term that Mrs. Summers used frequently in our interviews.

The way Mrs. Summers shows her compassion is through communicating effectively with people around her.

> So, communication, the ability to communicate is when you think about how your words will impact another, right? So, when you're communicating, you're being almost more than one person at once, the person who's communicating and you're the person who is hearing the communication. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 661-663)

In the excerpt above, Mrs. Summers highlights that communication is more than merely transferring a message. She believes that it is more about how the message is going to impact the

other person. It is more about creating relationships. To corroborate this one of the other stakeholders, Mary, expressed that, "relationship building is the key to this job (educational leadership)" (Int. with Mary/ Fri, 14/09/2018). Therefore, Mrs. Summer's compassion plays a major role in effective communication, since it helps her to be attentive to emotions that a message may trigger in a person and to build relationships with people rather than just talking to them. For instance, she stated that:

> I think I'm an excellent communicator. I think that I have incredible compassion, I listen … I try to … understand that not everybody's words indicate what they're really feeling, like sometimes people are harsh and I try to jump over the words and look in their hearts. Uh … I really, I really try to, to give to ... to help people to, ... to understand to know that we're on the same page so it's in the communications envelope that I am. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/08/2018, 354-358)

This is consistent with the first of ten traits of highly effective principals suggested by McEwan (2003). She mentions that the first trait of highly effective principals is that they are communicators. Being a communicator is of high importance given that a principal is in contact with various groups people on a daily basis, from students, staff and teachers to parents, schoolboard, people from outside of the school. This high level of interaction makes it necessary for her to be highly aware of her communication style and how it can be helpful, or impeding, in advancing her responsibilities in the best way possible. As mentioned, she assumes that compassion is the main component of her communication skills and stated that it is compassion that enables her to lead difficult conversations successfully.

> So, what is it like if I have to tell you something that you don't want to hear, if I have to tell a teacher that her teaching practices are not effective in the classroom, if I have to tell a student that they, you know they haven't made it into this program because their skills are not in a high enough level, so when I say the communication, it's, it's being able to say "Ok, how can I best say what I need to say so that this person will come away with, you've given me something that has really helped me rather than ouch, it hurts me to hear this, it hurts me to listen, and this really, my feelings are hurt so it's really kind of

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thinking about at the same time who you are talking to (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 664-670)

Mrs. Summers discussed how it is important to consider several aspects for showing compassion—who she is talking to, what she wants to tell them, how to tell them in a way that they can understand and that works for them and finally, how to tell them in a way that doesn't hurt their feelings. This approach to leadership naturally takes time and thought. She believes being compassionate requires more than just a quick response. It means choosing the best manner and channel that suits the message and the person being addressed. She also indicated that it is essential for a principal to consider very carefully and completely the issue being addressed before taking any action.

I will tell upset parents that they need to give me time to investigate. "Could you give me this amount of time. I'll get back to you and keep you informed but I need a little bit of time". "Yes, miss …. we really appreciate that". Or if I get an email like Friday afternoon, I'm going to answer it before the weekend. I don't want parents to wait on the weekend so or I'll get an email that I know I cannot answer right away because I need to be away for two days in Calgary at a conference, I'm going to call or email that parent saying "I have your email I see, I sense your frustration. I've got it I'm away for two days, can it wait until I get back, if it can't, can you speak to so and so? (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 855-859)

Addressing the emotions in people is a component of emotional intelligence. This is an indicator that Mrs. Summers possess high level of emotional intelligence. Gary (2009) argues that emotional intelligence is the foundation for any decision a principal makes in school, also mentioning that emotional intelligence skills play a significant role in attempts to foster student achievement, as well as ensuring a healthy learning community (Gary, 2009). However, it is necessary for educational leaders to be aware of their practices. This is especially important when confronting challenging issues and the emotions triggered by those situations. Being able to discern the emotions people are feeling in an encounter is equivalent to seeing the needs behind those emotions and enhances the flow of communication as Mrs. Summers stated:

You don't leave upset parents for any length of time, they just, one thing gets them more upset. So, in fact if you look at the world you don't leave anybody upset, you know it's hard, you know power is confrontive, people don't like to be in front of somebody who is feeling, yelling, upset but if you don't do that it just goes to a different level and a lot of other emotions come into play. You just address it right there and then they get back to you and say "I really appreciate that. I don't like your answer, I really don't I'm not happy with it but, I really appreciate that you spoke to me. (Int. with Mrs. Summers/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 859-865)

In response to the question about dealing with difficult parents, she expressed that:

I'll give you the humor, Ok I run and hide, no, I don't. Eh usually I will, I will ask the parent to come and talk to me and sometimes that's a good conversation and sometimes it's not but it has to come out and I'd rather it be in my office because sometimes people use email to try to make that happen, no good, because email doesn't really say what you mean to say all the time and you can interpret anything , you read differently, come on in let's have a chat let's talk about it, "thank you miss ….., I'm really glad that you did that I'm really upset. I say I heard that from your email, from the message you send me, so tell me about that. (Int. with Mrs. Summers/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 850-851)

A very important message from Mrs. Summers was the necessity of addressing the problematic issues right away, even when they are very difficult to solve. As mentioned earlier, she investigates the issues thoroughly and deals with them accordingly and breaks her process into steps. For her, this is part of being compassionate as well, since she is aware that challenging situations may trigger negative feelings.

The excerpts from this category show that there are three essential components that help Mrs. Summers to practice compassion effectively. The first one is the awareness about the significant impact of everyday chances of communication with people like routine walk throughs and the opportunities that come up spontaneously when moving around or seeing people. The second important point is the significance of connecting on a human level and addressing the

feelings and unmet needs of people beyond their words by utilizing active listening. The third one is the kind of interactions used in challenging situations, where it is necessary to address negative feelings right away and avoid emotional reactions.

There is another point that facilitates her ability to show compassion. She is very expressive and sensitive when communicating orally or in written form as indicated in her choice of words, the tone of her voice, the way she enunciates the words very clearly, the vocal variety she uses in trying to connect with different people's way of talking, etcetera. These approaches to communication were present in the way she wrote emails as well. For instance, she used bigger font size to add expressiveness and created sentences that were very concise and to the point. In fact, I could see this communicative aspect from the very first day when I sent her an email to see if she was willing to participate in this study. She was very quick to respond. The message was also very clear and concise addressing exactly what was asked. Being a quick responder, responding sensitively and respecting the time of others all contributed to the compassionate way that she implemented her leadership approaches.

Standing firm

This category refers to the need to be assertive by negotiating, being firm, keeping calm, avoiding temper and emotional responses. Women leaders are shown to have better communication and interpersonal skills (Shakeshaft, 1989), and assertiveness is an essential aspect of communication specifically in difficult situations. It helps the leaders to transfer the difficult messages in an agreeable way. To achieve that assertiveness, Mrs. Summers pointed out that:

Uhm, I'm careful. I try to be cautious with … the emotional level because as soon as your emotions leave your head, as soon as that happens and they go all over the place, the person doesn't hear you the same way and you are not delivering your message in the same way. "Does it happen that I have an emotional response that I haven't thought of first? Yes, and it never goes well". I always end up having to have to say so, I'm not happy with the way that I delivered my message, I need to deliver the message so, I'm going to start all over, first I'm going to apologize for raising my, my temper, for losing my temper which I have done. I don't do it often but sometimes when it happens and I'm

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"Oh, I did that again, I got that person back," and then I say, "I didn't do that well. I'm going to do it again. I apologize for how that sounded but let me try it again." (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/ 2018, 684-688)

It was clear that Mrs. Summers is aware that there are different levels of assertiveness and assertiveness may not be achieved all the time. However, one way to attain it, is to avoid emotional responses when dealing with difficult people and situations. This was corroborated in an interview with Mary, one of the stakeholders. She indicated that:

Over time I have developed a thick skin … not everybody is going to like you, not everybody is going to like your decisions. Somebody is always going to be disappointed. Because what is not my most urgent is somebody else's urgent … One of the best things that I have learned was not to take things personally and really being able to shelve the emotions and to put myself in the shoes of other people. (Int. with Mary/ Fri, 14/09/2018)

Similarly, Mrs. Summers said:

So, I have, I try not to use emotional response as a way to communicate, I really try but sometimes it happens and then you just double back, you have levels of firmness. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/ 2018, 693-695)

When dealing with difficult situations and when Mrs. Summers needs to address situations or activities that should not be repeated in the school, she needs to be assertive. However, she mentioned that this assertiveness is naturally different from one person to the other and from context to context.

Sometimes, people will be fine with just a natural reminder and then sometimes people are not because nobody is the same (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/ 2018, 694-696).

However, there are various ways to manifest this assertiveness and depending on the situation, one can choose how to communicate a message to show the level of firmness as shown in the excerpt below.

Well, just it could be the communication, just like I mentioned in the last piece, sometimes I will write it, you have to determine sometimes whether a person can hear you when you talk, or do you want to write it to them you have to read it to them and at time when it's not so overpowering in their system, "I think I can read it now, you know, you have to make a decision, sometimes you will write it, rarely if I have to have this kind of conversation, I'll summarize it, but I'll speak to you face to face. I would write it, ah, … there were some situations in which the head of school getting involved right away is really going like a bomb exploding because I'm the (principal) of the school so I like to go to my director and say "look , this is what I'm hearing about that teacher. Can I talk to you about how to talk to that teacher or, that employee about what they do, can it come from you first?" Because sometimes coming from me for the (person is) like boom from my directors first that's fine. Right? Sometimes if it's something that I heard, communicating, I might just do a passing if I just wanted to kind of put a little reminder "how are you, everything good today did you have a good day in class, is everything ok at home? Because I have a little bit of feedback that you know there was a lot of yelling in the class today and just want to know if you are ok, are you ok?" And sometimes if it not usually like the person they'll say "ah, I know, it's been terrible today, I really apologize, I'll speak to my class don't worry I'll fix it" it kind of depends on what it is but there are lots of ways to communicate. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/ 2018, 766-781)

In the above excerpt, Mrs. Summers is pointing to the situations where she lets others lead the difficult situations. I believe this is a manifestation of the assertiveness a successful principal can show as well. Creating balance between recognizing when to lead and when to give others the opportunity to lead is a skill (Notman & Henry, 2011) that helps a principal to see how much she has been able to empower people around her. Davies (2006) calls it the ability of a principal to lead from behind, from the middle and, in times of crisis management, of leading from the front.

Ultimately, Mrs. Summers believes that any message can be transferred, but that is important to find the best way to deliver it using the points mentioned above:

I really think you can tell anybody anything, but it's always in the delivery. How are you delivering this message, it's basically that. (Int. with MS/ Wed, 08/ 08/ 2018, 676-677)

The category of "Standing firm" as illustrated in the discussion above indicates that Mrs. Summers shows assertiveness when needed and practices it by negotiating, being firm, keeping calm, and avoiding emotional responses.

Caring for self

This category refers to the ability of Mrs. Summers to communicate her needs to people around her and ask for appropriate support in her personal life as well as her professional position. Considering the load of the responsibilities a principal has, as mentioned in Chapter Two, it is highly important for principals to take care of themselves and ask for support, emotional or physical, for themselves. Since, this need is to be communicated to the principal's family members and colleagues, and since it has an empowering role for the principals, I decided that it should be a part of this theme. The empowering effect that it has, enables the principal to function more efficiently. On personal level, a woman principal with family and partner has her mothering and partnering role, needs to ask family members, especially a partner, to collaborate and share some of the personal responsibilities in order to offset her leadership responsibilities. For instance, Mrs. Summers stated that:

I could never have gone into this, not this school, but the administration without the support of my husband. Because what he basically said was that he would take on some of the responsibilities that I have always done at home so that I could spend more time in the job that I was passionate about. Everyone should have a mate like that. Right? So, … and we had a young child, right? We have four between us but they were older, it didn't matter really for them, but for the little one who was nine, or eight, you know somebody had to be there and I couldn't always so he said, you know what I will shift in I will rearrange my life so that I can do that and he did that. And so that was extremely supportive. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018, 592-598)

Mrs. Summers described the emotional support her husband provides for her as:

> He's (her husband) always been a support for me because he's … he thinks differently so if I had a dilemma, or a challenging situation and I went home and I would say, well here is the challenge that I am faced with right now. Here is what I … the conclusion that I came to, what do you think? Because he is so different in character, he was able to say, have you thought about this? Uh, no, so, his help been really kind of just given me another perspective. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/2018,599-603)

Mrs. Summers mentioned that maintaining balance is an important self-care requirement for the woman principals, which she sometimes lacks. However, it is an essential requirement for women principals since they have more responsibilities on a personal and professional level.

> Well, sometimes we don't (balance personal and professional life). Sometimes eh, the balance is really hard to achieve, and we just keep trying to find creative solutions to make it work. And there are times that the balance is like this (showing a balance with her hands and moving her hands up and down to visualize a balance) and like this and in the end it's just that you do it even when it's not balanced and you look for balance and then you can find some time for balance and sometimes it's just not there but you know that you'll get there, you'll get there. It is, it is a difficult sort of juggling act. But that's what it is because sometimes this ball's in the air and sometimes this ball's in the air (showing balls with her hands). (Int. with MS/ Tu, 03/07/2018, 87-92)

Mrs. Summers recommended that young principals be made aware of this aspect and take care of themselves by maintaining the balance between their personal and professional life:

> Ah, it's really important if you're very young to remember that you have a family sometimes and or other obligations, some people have parents that they take care of, families that they take care of, relationships that they take care of, oh my gosh, never forget about taking care of yourself, if you cannot take care of yourself, you can't take care of anyone else and if I, if I have a weakness it's sometimes to forget about me. Don't

forget about you, you have to do the things that give you passion that are not here, you have to feel healthy, you have to be healthy you have to eat healthy, you have to take time to communicate with the people you love around you, who love you, never forget to take care of you. (Int. with MS/ Tu, 18/09/ 2018, 913-920)

Asking for help can be in the form of looking for the information in various situations or asking others to share their expertise which can enhance leadership practice. The category of "Caring for self" shows that as an acknowledged, successful principal, Mrs. Summers is conscious of her needs and how to communicate them so that she can take care of herself. This permits her, in turn, to empower others so that she can practice leadership to the best of her ability.

In general, the discussion of the categories in theme two showed that Mrs. Summers is involved in extensive and varied communication during a normal day, with students, parents, staff, teachers, and people from outside the school. However, the important part of this communicator role is her willingness and ability to serve and empower others in compassionate ways in order to bring in and integrate all members of the school community while standing firm in her practice when necessary while acknowledging the important of looking after herself. Fast replies to questions, issues and requests asking for support for self are important components of her the communication practices and how she approaches the implementation of her leadership in this school context.

Summary

By using the constant comparison approach for the analysis of my data (Chapter Three), two themes emerged illustrating how Mrs. Summers accomplished her responsibilities as a leader. These included: "Embracing change," and "Communicating to Empower." I used verbatim quotes from the semi-structured interviews with Mrs. Summers and stakeholders, my reflective memos, Mrs. Summers tweets, artefacts and online sources to illustrate the themes. They showed that Mrs. Summers is highly aware of the positive and negative aspects of her personal and professional background and her leadership practice and how they have an impact on her leadership as well as on all other members of the school community. The findings suggested that openness to change and taking risks and having strong communication skills that aims to enable other members had important roles to play in her capability to manage her daily

responsibilities. This was demonstrated in her ability to deal with various kinds of situations and to create an excellent relationship with her community.

In Chapter Five, I will provide a short summary of all the chapters presented in this thesis, will discuss the conclusions and implications of drawn from this study and outline the limitations. Finally, I will address recommendations for future directions for this work.

Chapter Five: Review of Chapters, Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

In this chapter, I explain the conclusions that I have drawn from this study. It includes the review of chapters, the significant findings, the implications of the study, the limitations as well as recommendations for future directions.

Review of the Chapters

In Chapter One, I introduced my research topic, I provided a background to the study and I described how it was related to my background and present status. I reflected on the implications for conducting this study as well. In Chapter Two, I explored the scholarship on importance of leadership position, the skills of effective school principals, and roles and issues of women in educational leadership and suggested how these literatures suggested a need for my study. In addition to providing a rationale for this study, I hoped that this conceptual context which came out of these literatures, would help my readers better understand the findings of this study. In Chapter Three, I focused on describing the methodological approaches I used to conduct my study. Constant comparison analysis (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) was applied as a means to analyze the data from my interviews with the school principal, Mrs. Summers, and to use stakeholder interviews, the reflective memos I generated, and artefacts that I collected to corroborate my analysis. Also, I explained how I addressed the ethical considerations in my study. Chapter Four was a detailed description and discussion of the categories and themes that emerged from the constant comparison analysis of my interviews with Mrs. Summers. The two major themes that emerged were: 1) Embracing Change; and 2) Communicating to Empower. The "Embracing Change" theme highlighted the openness that Mrs. Summers demonstrated to new ideas, situations and the substantial contribution this quality has in her personal and professional life. The second theme was "Communicating to Empower. The data constituting this theme showed the sophisticated communication skills Mrs. Summers has, and how these helped her to integrate and empower those around her in her school community. At the same time, she made sure to look after herself in order to help all to function at their best. This study demonstrated that Mrs. Summers' passion and openness to change as well as her excellent communication skills that aimed to empower people helped her in achieving success in her role as an educational leader. Findings suggest qualities such as approachability, active listening, compassion, emotional intelligence, modeling, self-care, being assertive, and willingness to risk

are powerful tools that women principals can use to effectively practice leadership. Lastly, Chapter Five is used to conclude the findings of this qualitative study.

Significant Findings

The results from this study indicated that Mrs. Summers carries out her responsibilities as a leader through two main themes; "Embracing Change" and 'Communicating to Empower'. The data also contained descriptive information about her personal and professional background which was not analyzed but provided a contextual lens through which I could better understand the activities that Mrs. Summers performed and the way she practiced leadership. Thus, it can be argued that her leadership is an outcome of the context in which she has grown and developed her personality and her experiences which manifest as the themes of "Embracing Change" and "Communicating to Empower". There is no doubt that her personal and professional background has had an impact on her leadership today.

On the other hand, looking at these two themes reveals that they can be attributed to the typical portraits of leadership historically associated with male and female leaders. "Embracing Change" can be associated with male approaches to leadership and "Communicating to Empower" can be associated to female approaches. Male leadership styles are related to agency (Heilman, 2001) which corresponds to the theme of "Embracing Change" and its categories. "Communicating to Empower" resonates with the literature about female leadership which is called "interactive leadership" (Rosener, 1990, as cited in Trinidad, & Normore, 2005). This theme included categories of serving others, bringing people into the inner circle, being compassionate, standing firm when needed and caring for self. Importantly, Mrs. Summers emphasized the need for the well-being in order to implement successful leadership practices. Increasingly, attention has been given to the need for wellbeing to achieve leadership success (Trinidad & Normore, 2005). In sum, I believe Mrs. Summers' leadership is a combination of both leadership portraits. They serve to complement each other and round out the understanding of what is needed for successful school leadership. Mrs. Summers was not consciously aware of having integrated these two leadership approaches. She built her approaches to leadership based on the qualities and practices she developed through years of experience in schools and her acute awareness of the uniqueness of each individual and context in which she worked. This finding

suggests the limitation in ascribing particular leadership approaches to either male or female leaders and of thereby propagating unhelpful stereotypes.

A further point about Mrs. Summer's self-awareness that I believe can be helpful for other educational leaders is that her awareness makes her very conscious about the inner and outer consequences of what she does and how they have an impact her and her community. This awareness not only paves the ground for fulfilling her responsibilities and dealing with easy or difficult situations, but also helps her gain from precious experiences and avoid future mistakes. Self-awareness is the first component of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) as discussed in Chapter Four. Thus, it can be argued that emotional intelligence is an important part of the skills that are essential for effective educational leadership. She is also constantly highlighting the importance of self-control, keeping composure and avoiding emotional reactions which is the second component of emotional intelligence. On a higher level, being conscious of how others are feeling, and acknowledging these and taking action with them in mind is the third component of the emotional intelligence. These are all skills that Mrs. Summers mentioned in our interviews. I would argue that they create an ability to manage the social relationships which culminates in being assertive, but in caring and sensitive ways. I believe, therefore, that this study emphasizes the need for a closer look at the role of emotional intelligence and how it can contribute to successful school leadership.

Implications of the Study

The potential contributions of this study are theoretical, methodological and practical. At the theoretical level, its potential feeds on the fact that it is adding to our understanding of how women perform in educational leadership by providing in-depth analysis of one, woman principal's lived experiences. Methodologically, each qualitative study is unique and contexualized, thus, it can be argued that each study adds a new perspective of the phenomenon being studied. From a practical standpoint, this study provides useful information that can contribute to the curriculum for educational leadership courses, and/or professional development experiences for principals and other educational leaders. Also, it can be useful in developing mentoring practices for new, or novice educational leaders, more specifically, women principals, to help them lead their schools more effectively because it provides a detailed account of a role model and very concrete examples of qualities, approaches and practices that are achievable.

Limitations of the Study

Like any other research, this study is not without limitations. In this section I discuss the limitations. The first limitation has to do with the fact that I personally do not have the experience of being a principal. Therefore, I may not have been able to adequately understand leadership from the perspective of a leader, although I hope the depth of my work mitigated this at least partially. The second limitation was that I was not able to observe the actual implementation of Mrs. Summer's leadership during my data collection. To counteract this, I did collect multiple forms of data to get varied perspectives to confirm or disconfirm what was emerging in my analysis. Further, although, I wrote reflective memos throughout the research process to avoid imposing my biases, I know one can never have a perfectly objective view and some of my assumptions may not have been addressed while writing memos. However, I believe that the emergent and reflective nature of my work was helpful in keeping me grounded in the data and to avoid drawing conclusions too quickly.

Another limitation could be attributed to the fact that the study focused on a single participant, which no doubt had an impact on what I found. I counteracted this, at least in part, by getting other stakeholder perspectives and gathering artefacts and online information. However, it can be argued that it is the nature of qualitative work to study fewer and discover deeper. According to Krefting (1991) having a specific researcher, a specific interaction and a specific participant makes each qualitative study unique from the others. I believe I achieved this by offering plausible and grounded interpretations of the phenomenon of this principalship. I aimed to study to "particularize" the understanding of what is already known (Donmoyer, 1990).

Finally, I was not able to access a parent and a student. Adding more perspectives to the lenses of the data could have given me a more comprehensive view of women in secondary school leadership.

Future Directions

In light of the findings of this research, and the aforementioned limitations, future research could consider the following points to provide a more accurate understanding of women in secondary educational leadership. The first aspect worth considering is to focus on the background of the principals and study the effect it can have on their leadership. In future work, it would be very helpful to add student and parent perspectives as well. The addition of observational data to interviews would help to round out the understanding of what goes on

every day in a school to complement interview data provided by the principal and other stakeholders.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the thesis. I highlighted and reflected upon the key findings from each chapter as well as the implications of the study and the limitations and suggested some directions for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix A, Consent form for the principal:

How does a successful secondary English school woman principal in the greater Montreal area

carry out her responsibilities as a leader?

Consent Form for the Principal

Dear ,

My name is Farzaneh Babazadeh Bedoustani. I am a Master's student in Educational Leadership in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University, located in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. I am conducting a study to fulfill the requirements of my degree, the purpose of which is to look at the leadership experience of an espoused secondary school woman principal in the greater Montreal area. As a teacher, a woman, and a researcher in educational leadership, I aim to investigate how an English secondary school woman principal carries out her responsibilities. The importance of the topic lies in the fact that the number of women principals in secondary schools is less than that of men principals. Women are still facing gendered views when entering leadership positions, and they face an overload of responsibilities in their personal and professional lives.

You are being contacted because you are a female secondary school principal. This letter is to invite you to take part in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in three 45-60 minute audio-taped interviews.

You are free to choose the date, time, and location for the interview to avoid the possible conflict it may cause with your other commitments. The interviews will be recorded only if you give the permission in order to capture the verbatim version of your responses. You are free to not answer any question you feel uncomfortable with during the interview. The interviews will be transcribed and your name will be replaced by a pseudonym. In the final version of my thesis and in any presentation of the study, and in any sharing of the results, the pseudonym will be used. The data gathered during this research, the recordings of your interview as well as the transcriptions will be stored in my password protected computer and in a locked cabinet in my residence. The data will not be accessible to anybody except for me. My supervisor will have peripheral access in discussions that take place with her about the study.

Also, I need to emphasize that all the information gathered in this study is confidential and any findings attained from your participation will only be shared with your permission. You will be free to withdraw from the study at anytime you wish.

Your contribution will be very helpful as it will improve our understanding of women leadership in educational setting. No predictable risk or discomfort is seen for you as a participant in this study.

Please note that this study has been reviewed for compliance with ethical standards. Should you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me (farzaneh.babazadehbedoustani@mail.mcgill.ca 514-9226702) or my supervisor, Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber (lynn.butlerkisber@mcgill.ca 514-398-2252).

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Thank you again for your time, I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Farzaneh Babazadeh Bedoustani,

Master's student, McGill University

Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)

<u>Please complete and sign the form below</u>

I have read the description of the research project and hereby agree to participate. I am aware that the results will be used for research purposes only, that my identity will remain confidential, and that I can withdraw at any time, if I so wish.

Name (Please print) _____ Email _____

Phone (work) _____ (home) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

I agree that the interviews would be audio recorded:

○Yes

○No

 NB: A copy of this letter of consent will be provided to you for your records.

Appendix B, Consent Form for the Stakeholders:

How does a successful secondary English school woman principal in the greater Montreal area

carry out her responsibilities as a leader?

Consent Form for the Stakeholders

Dear ….,

My name is Farzaneh Babazadeh Bedoustani. I am a Master's student in Educational Leadership in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University, located in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. I am conducting a study to fulfill the requirements of my degree, the purpose of which is to look at the leadership experience of an espoused secondary school woman principal in the greater Montreal area. As a teacher, a woman, and a researcher in educational leadership, I aim to investigate how an English secondary school woman principal carries out her responsibilities. The importance of the topic lies in the fact that the number of women principals in secondary schools is less than that of men principals. Women are still facing gendered views when entering leadership positions, and they face an overload of responsibilities in their personal and professional lives.

You are being contacted to because you were a stakeholder in a secondary school led by a specific principal. This letter is to invite you to take part in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute audio-taped interview.

You are free to choose the date, time, and location for the interview to avoid the possible conflict it may cause with your other commitments. I will keep the information gathered from the interview completely confidential. Your name will be replaced by pseudonyms in this study. In the final version of my thesis and in any presentation of the study, and in any sharing of the results, the pseudonym will be used. The data gathered during this research, and the recordings of your interview will be stored in a password protected file in my password protected computer and in a locked cabinet in my residence. The data will not be accessible to anybody except for me. My supervisor will have peripheral access in discussions that take place with her about the study.

Also, I need to emphasize that all the information gathered in this study is confidential. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. However, once the focus group is done, it will not be possible for you to withdraw from this study.

Your contribution will be very helpful as it will improve our understanding of women leadership in educational setting. No predictable risk or discomfort is seen for you as a participant in this study.

Please note that this study has been reviewed for compliance with ethical standards. Should you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me (farzaneh.babazadehbedoustani@mail.mcgill.ca 514-9226702) or my supervisor, Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber (lynn.butlerkisber@mcgill.ca 514-398-2252).

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Thank you again for your time, I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Farzaneh Babazadeh Bedoustani,

Master's student, McGill University

Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)

<u>Please complete and sign the form below</u>

I have read the description of the research project and hereby agree to participate. I am aware that the results will be used for research purposes only, that my identity will remain confidential, and that I can withdraw at any time before the focus group is done, if I so wish.

Name (Please print) _____Email _____

Phone (work) _____(home) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

I agree that the interview and the focus group would be audio recorded:

○Yes

○No

NB: A copy of this letter of consent will be provided to you for your records.

Appendix C, Interview Protocol:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research questions:

How does a successful secondary school woman principal in the greater Montreal area describe how she carries out her responsibilities as a leader?

The sub-questions were:

1. What qualities does she attribute to leadership development?
2. What are her approaches to leadership implementation?

Opening remarks for the principal:

Good morning (afternoon). My name is Farzaneh. First of all, I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate in this research interview. Prior to starting the interview, I would like to discuss the consent form to make sure that the main purpose and process of this study is clear. I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences as a woman principal. The purpose is to get your perceptions of the leadership as a woman. There are no right or wrong or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

I would also like to emphasize that your participation is fully voluntary. You are free to answer, refuse, skip, and stop the questions if you found the questions are inappropriate to you during the interview process. I will record this interview if that is ok with you. I would like to record it for two main reasons; first, so that I would be able to have access to the details of what we talked about after the interview and in conducting the study. Second, so that I can be focused and listen attentively as we conduct the interview instead trying to write down what you are saying. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential.

Sample interview questions for the principal:

- If you want to talk about your life as a journey, how would you describe it?
- What was your education?

- Do you have teaching experience and How many years was it?

- How did you find teaching?

- When you went into administration, how was it different from teaching, what are the differences between teaching and administration for you and what are the connecting points?

- How would you define leadership?

- How did you become principal of this school?

- What is your vision for this school and why?

- Can you explain about the school curriculum and the philosophy that drives the curriculum?

- Can you describe a typical day of yours?

- Who are the people that you interact daily?

- What qualities do you have that you believe helps you in doing your job and dealing with your daily responsibilities?

- How did you develop these qualities?

- Are there any qualities that you think they impede you in your leadership?

- What are the contextual factors that influence you in doing your job?

- What do you do in situations of pressure?

- What are the challenges that you encounter daily and how do you deal with them?

- What was the most recent challenging situation you had?

- What was the most successful experience you have had so far?

- What was your most recent success and what did you do?

- How do you start a new year and why do you do that?

- How do you hire your staff and faculty?

- Are there people who would support you and how?

- How do you make decisions?

Concluding remarks for the interview with the principal:

Thank you very much for participating in this interview. I really appreciate the time and energy that you put for this. Please let me know if you have any question about the study or if you have anything that you would like to add to what you already said.

Opening remarks for the stakeholders:

Good morning (afternoon). My name is Farzaneh. First of all, I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate in this research interview. Prior to starting the interview, I would like to discuss the consent form to make sure that the main purpose and process of this study is clear. I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences in educational system. There are no right or wrong or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

I would also like to emphasize that your participation is fully voluntary. You are free to answer, refuse, skip, and stop the questions if you found the questions are inappropriate to you during the interview process. I will record this interview if that is ok with you. I would like to record it for two main reasons; first of all, so that I would be able to have access to the details of what we talked about after the interview and in conducting the study. Second, so that I can be focused and listen attentively as we conduct the interview instead of trying to write down what you are saying. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential.

Sample interview questions for the stakeholders:

- Please explain about your role in education.
- What were your experiences with school principals?
- How were those experiences?
- How did you find the leadership of those principals that you have been working with?
- What did they do in challenging situations?
- How did they make decisions?
- What kinds of qualities and approaches did they have as a leader?
- What qualities did they have?

- What were the daily responsibilities that they had?

Concluding remarks for the interview with the stakeholders:

Thank you very much for participating in this interview. I really appreciate the time and energy that you put for this. Please let me know if you have any question about the study or if you have anything that you would like to add to what you already said.