A Case Study of

Teachers' Experiences with Power

A Thesis Completed in Partial Fulfillment

for the degree of Master of Education

by

Bonnie Watson

April 2004

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Abstract

The present study was designed to provide information concerning teachers' experiences with power. Data obtained through surveys, interviews and observations were used to determine the sources of power that teachers at an elementary school identified as being significant and to describe their experiences with power. Previous studies have focused on the experiences of school administrators and less is known about how teachers view the use of power. In Fennell's (2001) study, the aim of the principals to empower and energize their staffs was evident. It has not been determined, however, how teachers experience power emanating from various sources including the school administrator. The current study was designed to shed further light on these issues.

Three major themes emerged from the data of this study. These themes were types and sources of power, teachers' experiences with power and other powerful influences.

The findings reflected considerable unanimity concerning the identification of the types and sources of power that impact upon teachers' performance and activities. Some of the teachers' experiences produced feelings of power and autonomy; others resulted in feelings of powerlessness. The latter occurred when teachers felt coerced into complying with policies and procedures mandated by their superiors. Accountability and curriculum represented other powerful influences that have a significant effect on teachers' daily activities.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Problem

Introduction

Experiences with power are prevalent in all organizations and especially those with a hierarchical structure. A true understanding of the nature of organizations requires the study of power and how the members of the organization experience power. Many organizations function within a "top-down" model where power emanates from managers and supervisors. In a system such as this, members of the organization are likely to experience power differently depending on where they are situated in the hierarchy. Other organizations operate with a team-based or "bottom-up" structure where there is ostensibly more power-sharing. Different experiences with power will be reflected in this type of organizational structure.

Educational institutions are examples of hierarchical systems where power can be experienced as a significant factor in the day-to-day activities of the employees. The traditional organizational structure involving directors of education, superintendents, principals and teachers is deeply rooted in the education system and has been, virtually since the beginning of public education. It is probable that the members of school systems have differential experiences with power, based on their positions within the hierarchy. For example, power can be considered in a positive way when it empowers or enables people to carry out their roles more effectively. Conversely, there may be a negative impact

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when power is experienced as arbitrary, unfair or when it interferes with daily responsibilities.

The concept of power has typically been studied from the point of view of leaders and there is an extensive and growing literature on leadership, management and communication styles. Considerably less is known about how power is experienced by others in the hierarchy such as teachers. Power may be considered enabling by leaders and as a constructive way of getting things done but as disabling and inhibiting by subordinates. It appears timely, therefore, that further study be undertaken to identify some aspects of how power is experienced by teachers who are obviously key actors in the school system. Further understanding of how power is experienced will be useful not only for the theoretical implications in terms of models of power, but practical ones as well, such as improving shared school vision, school climate and job satisfaction.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' experience with power. The study was conducted using a qualitative and emergent design (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research designs "seek illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations" (Hoepfl, 1997); in this instance, to the issue of power sources and how they are experienced by teachers. The data collection instruments for the study consisted of open-ended surveys (Appendix D), interviews (Appendix E) and observations in the form of field notes. An entire teaching staff of an elementary school in Ontario's public education system was invited to take part in this study. All participants were asked to complete an open-

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ended survey. The participants were also requested to indicate whether they were interested in taking part in a detailed interview. The collection of the data took approximately three weeks to compile whereby the following research questions examined:

1. What sources and types of power do teachers identify as being significant to them?
2. How do teachers experience power?

Rationale

The study was a reflective response to a combination of factors that have impacted upon educational institutions in Ontario. These factors include "revamped curriculum, imposed strict funding formulas, reduced powers of school boards, standardized testing" (Schofield, 2001, p.24) and the establishment of the Ontario College of Teachers. The monumental changes that have transpired in Ontario's public schools have placed an increased emphasis on accountability, both of the school system as a whole and of teachers in particular (Leithwood *et. al.,* 2002). It could be argued that there is a strong relationship between accountability and power in that as the demands for accountability increase, forces both external and internal to the school environment potentially have greater power over the members of school organizations in general and teachers in particular.

Other possible sources of power over members of school systems include parent councils, individual parents and students. Since parent councils have

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been created and schools become more accountable to the parent council, it can be expected that these councils will also have greater power over the teachers' autonomy. Even though the councils are designed to act in an advisory capacity, the potential exists for them to be perceived as having additional power since the traditional autonomy of the school may be seen as being gradually eroded. Individual parents can also exert power over teachers by close monitoring of teachers' performance in the classroom, and by exhibiting ever-greater advocacy on behalf of their children. Increasing numbers of parents are insisting on having detailed information pertaining to curriculum expectations and are demonstrating a thorough understanding of rights and responsibilities of educators under the Education Act as well as of policies developed by school boards and the Ministry of Education (Leithwood *et. al.,* 2002). For instance, parents have been known to hire lawyers to press claims for greater resources for their children or to reverse decisions that are made by teachers and administrators with respect to disciplinary issues.

The Ministry of Education can be considered to hold power over teachers through the certification process (including proposals for mandatory continuing education and re-certification) and through requirements imposed by standardized curriculum and testing and these factors have a significant influence over how teachers present material in the classroom. Principals and senior administration have always had, and continue to have power, over teachers' behaviour and activities in terms of both legislative authority and also through monitoring, supervision, assignment of duties, assignment to in-school

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committees, extra-curricular activities, etc. Finally, students can be said to have power over teachers in the sense that teachers are accountable for students' learning and for prescribed outcomes as well as for students' behaviour and social/emotional development.

Problems within educational institutions have become increasingly complex. For example, in Ontario, the conservative government's mandate of "the common sense revolution" called for "restructuring, downloading, and downsizing of public services and a series of ambitious tax cuts" (Bedard & Lawton, 2000). This has created an array of pressures and stresses within the education system. School governance and administration were altered, as well as the education funding formula and it brought about changes with the provincial curriculum and pupil assessment policies. "These changes, and many others aimed at increasing the accountability of schools, were sweeping in scope, occurred at a very fast pace, and were carried out with very little attention to the advice or preferences of professional educators in the province" (Leithwood *et. al.,* 2002). Now there is an urgent need for alternative approaches to deal with these issues. Traditional, hierarchical uses of power do not appear to be addressing most of these issues very effectively or efficiently (Barnett *et. al.*, 1999). Greater understanding of power issues may contribute more useful strategies.

Methodology

The constructivist paradigm is based upon relativist ontology where there are multiple realities, a subjectivist epistemology whereby the knower and

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subjects create understandings, and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures. Therefore, in keeping with constructivist thinking "human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The study was qualitative in design whereby individuals' experiences with power were examined in a natural setting in an attempt to make sense of it, in terms of the meaning teachers construct for the concept of power.

Multiple sources of data were collected after the study passed the ethical requirements of Lakehead University and the participating school board. Information derived from open-ended surveys, interviews and observations was collected over a period of three weeks. Collecting multiple sources of data (e.g. surveys, interviews and observations) is "good research practice [that] obligates the researcher to triangulate...to enhance the validity of research findings" (Mathison, 1988, p.13). Reflective and ongoing data analysis was conducted throughout the entire study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the initial step of analysis was to identify codes, followed by patterns and finally themes will emerge.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used in the present study:

Power

"The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance" (Weber, 1947, p. 152).

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Power Relations

"Power within social systems can thus be treated as involving reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence in social interaction. Power relations therefore are always two-way, even if the power of one actor or party in a social relation is minimal compared to another. Power relations are relations of autonomy and dependence, but even the most autonomous agent is in some degree dependent, and the most dependent actor or party in a relationship retains some autonomy" (Giddens, 1979, p.93). This means that power relations, therefore, imply that one individual attempts to exert power, control or influence and the other person accepts that condition.

Experience

"an event regarded as affecting one" (Oxford Dictionary, 1996). An event may include the perceptions, beliefs and emotional impact felt by the individual.

Limitations

1. This case study is not an exhaustive one; therefore generalizations cannot be made.
2. The number of interviews and surveys completed was dependent on the staff population of the school as well as the staffs' participation and compliance with the study.
3. Some respondents might have been reluctant to acknowledge and discuss the fact that they were a part of a power relation and this might have affected their responses to the interviews and questionnaires.

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Delimitations

1. The participants were unknown to the researcher, therefore, it was crucial to build rapport through which trust and comfort could elicit truthful responses.
2. The study was limited to one school within a large, urban school board.
3. The researcher's observations were individual interpretations of activities which occurred in the school and therefore have the potential for researcher bias.

Assumptions

1. The interviews, open-ended surveys and critical, objective observations were the most effective means to elicit truthful and revealing experiences with power on the part of teachers.
2. All participants voluntarily gave honest, objective and detailed responses to questions that were posed.

Significance

"Most research in educational administration describes how leaders (usually principals and superintendents) exercise power from the top down" (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991). The use of power has been studied extensively in those who wield the power. For example, Blase and Blase (1999) and Bolger (2001) examined how leadership styles of administrators affect the school climate through what some might perceive as power tactics such as instructional leadership and shared governance. Discussion papers (Commons, 1983; Dunlap and Goldman, 1991) have also suggested that superiors must address the issue

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of power differently when dealing with subordinates. In fact there is a notable gap in the education literature and an under-representation of studies dealing with the recipients of that power (teachers) and the impact it has on them. Therefore, the goal of the study was to identify the various sources of power that teachers experienced and how those experiences affected their day-to-day activities which are carried out in the social structure of an educational institution. The findings of the study can be used to provide all the stakeholders of education with a frame of reference of where and how to alleviate power struggles or conflicts of interest. The data can contribute to the understanding of uses of power to increase the likelihood of power being facilitative and beneficial to all those involved in the education arena.

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CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Foucault (1997) declared that power is everywhere. It is at the heart of human relations and interaction and is the foundation of societal structures and organizations. The multifaceted and pervasive characteristics of power have seeped into every realm of human activity: military, government, business and education organizations. It is a concept that "seems so fundamental to understanding human interactions and institutions but remains puzzling, maddeningly elusive, theoretically complex and enigmatic" (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991, p. 7).

History of Power in Organizations

One of the earliest references to power is found in Machiavelli's The Prince (1532/1952). From a political and military point of view Machiavelli conceptualized the equation that power equals authority and that in order to achieve a desired outcome it is necessary to ensure that one has sufficient power to be able to exert one's will over another's. The understanding of power and how it can be employed was one of the central themes of Machiavelli's model of diplomacy and politics.

Following the Industrial Revolution and the gradual growth of the technological society, there has been a steady interest in the structure of organizations, productivity and how power and authority are employed and experienced in the workplace setting. Functional theorists such as

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Frederick Taylor and Max Weber identified and described some key factors that have an effect on organizations. These included "such organizational issues as division of labour, organizational hierarchy and *power* and defined lines of authority". While Taylor's (1911) Scientific Management focused on ways of making industrial organizations more efficient by lowering the cost of production, one of his principles – "clear division between management and workers, with management doing the goal-setting and planning and workers executing the required tasks (cited in Owens, 2001, p.36) became the norm for many organizations and may be especially reflective of how the traditional education system has operated.

Weber's (1947) theory of bureaucracy contended that within bureaucratic organizations those who hold a formal position in the hierarchy possess power. A formal position or vested authority entitles an individual to exercise power which Weber defined as the "probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance" (Weber, 1947, p.152).

After World War I, the human relations movement emerged. Mayo, who together with his associates, was responsible for the famed Hawthorne studies dealing with productivity within organizations, maintained that "human variability is an important determinant of productivity" (cited in Owens, 2001, p.46). Mayo was particularly struck by how interpersonal factors such as workplace morale, democratic decision-making and motivational strategies have a significant impact on the performance of the members of an organization.

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The functioning of educational organizations can perhaps best be described by means of a combination of classical organizational theory and human relations theory. The bureaucratic nature of educational organizations as outlined in classical models is clear: there is a top-down approach with authority clearly emanating from ministries of education flowing to directors, to superintendents, to principals and in turn to teachers. On the other hand, there is a growing realization of the importance of human-relations factors in implementing policies and procedures, for example, and in ensuring the smooth operation of schools. The use of power and authority has to be carried out judiciously. As Doyle and Hartle (1985) point out, in view of the fact that teachers are "foremost in creating instructional change ... it questions the wisdom of any change strategy that seeks to force change upon the teacher arbitrarily and without his or her participation" in the process.

One model that can be employed to examine the functioning of the education system is that of a modified general systems theory which was first cited by Von Bertalanffy (1950). In this model, "an organization is an integrated system of interdependent structures and functions...in which groups or a group consists of persons who must work in harmony" (Owens, 2001, p.74) the. In the case of educational institutions interaction between the school system and the wider community is emphasized and there is a focus on the "endless cyclical interaction between the school and its larger environment" (Owens, 2001, p.74). The community produces and encourages individuals to become life-long learners who will be participants in, and consumers of, the school system and eventually

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become productive members of the community who will foster more learning and so on. The organizational hierarchy is thus only one of the important aspects of the education system; the demands and expectations of the larger community also play a significant role in the goals and outcomes of the school system.

Typologies of Power

Max Weber (1947) proposed three pure types of legitimate authority that have the ability to exercise power or influence over individuals: traditional, charismatic and rational-legal. Traditional authority is based on the "belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them" (Weber, 1947), suggesting that commands are legitimized by traditions and an obligation of obedience is based on personal loyalty to the traditional leader. Charismatic authority lies in "devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person". This type of authority is often highly inspiring for its followers. Finally, rational-legal authority is the "belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands" (Weber, 1947).

More recently, other aspects and types of power have been identified as having influence over how the members of an organization perform on a day-to-day basis. For example, French and Raven (1968) presented a typology of five types of power: legitimate, coercive, reward, expert and referent. This typology extends Weber's model of legitimate authority to examine how power can be used and experienced differentially.

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Legitimate power corresponds most closely to the traditional, Weberian definition: power that is position-based where formal authority lies with the individual who holds a particular position within the organizational hierarchy. Generally, the members of the organization acknowledge the right of the person who wields power to do so.

Coercive power is used when a member of an organization performs in a certain way under threat of punishment. While coercive power typically suggests a superior-subordinate relationship, it may also occur among members who are equal in formal standing but where one member may conform or acquiesce to another (e.g. on a team) out of fear of criticism or ostracism.

Reward power, on the other hand, is achieved through the offering or promise of recognition or reinforcement of some type (in organizations, the promise or hope of promotion, for example, can be a powerful motivator and those in charge of such bounties can be perceived as being very powerful).

Expert power is achieved through acquiring or maintaining a knowledge base. Those who have access to vital information or who are experts in their field can control the actions of others who do not possess such knowledge. The example of technologists (particularly those in the information area) comes to mind. Finally, referent power is attributable to personal characteristics such as charisma, attractiveness, loyalty, wealth, etc.

By presenting these typologies French and Raven broaden the utility of the concept of power, especially in their emphasis on the reciprocal nature of power, i.e. the phenomenon from the perspective of both the wielders and the recipients

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of power. This model, which raises the possibility of a multivariate analysis of power, appears especially suitable when studying modern organizations including school systems. Traditional unitary concepts of power as reflecting only a line authority are limiting and probably not representative of the underlying realties of how individuals experience life in their workplace.

Notwithstanding French and Raven's multi-factor approach to describing power, definitions and analyses of power as a form of domination and control remain prominent in the theoretical literature. For example, Henry Mintzberg (1975) suggested that in all organizations there is an informal system of politics that may run counter to the legitimate power inherent in the hierarchical structure of the organization. Dunlap and Goldman (1991) point out that in traditional conceptualizations "power is fundamentally domination; it carries connotations of manipulation and prohibition at best, and oppression and negativity at worst" (p.9). Abbott and Caracheo (1988) postulated that power depends on either formal authority or prestige but in any event is demonstrated through dominance over others: power is the "most generic and most encompassing term in a conceptualization of domination in social interactions" (p. 241). Yulk (1989) proposed that there are three sources from which power can emanate: position, personal attributes and political influence. Individuals or groups may control one or more of the three power sources to impose their dominance over others.

Power and Leadership

Descriptions of power invariably lead to the study of leadership since it is typically leaders who are thought of as exercising the most power. Watkins

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(1989) noted that "leadership should be considered as a subset of power" (p. 20) and Fennell (1994), following Watkin, concluded that "[p]ower and leadership are [both] highly relational concepts" (p. 678). There has been a great deal of recent interest in leadership and leadership styles both in academic circles and the popular media as illustrated by the amount of research and the plethora of popular works on management skills. Leadership becomes of increasing importance when issues of policy implementation, accountability and productivity are being considered. In the educational sphere, research in which leaders are characterized as facilitative, instructional or transformational has been predominant (e.g. Harris and Willower, 1997; Barnett et al., 1999; Blase and Blase, 1999; Dimmock, 1999; and Bogler, 2001). Other concepts related to leadership such as shared governance (Blase and Blase, 2000) and collaboration and trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2000) are also being studied and identified as being important components of individuals' experiences within organizations.

Power and Education

There has been perhaps less focus on the concept of power in the education system than there has been in other organizations such as business and the military. However, there have been some important studies and extensive discussions that have examined the use of power and how it is experienced in schools (Commons, 1983; Dunlap and Goldman, 1991; Fennell, 1992; and Fennell, 2001). These studies have tended to focus on the use of power by school principals, especially in relation to the implementation of policy and the effective and efficient day-to-day operation of the school. By contrast, the

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use of power by teachers and the experiences of teachers with regard to power have not been studied extensively and have received little attention despite acknowledgement (e.g. Common, 1983) that teachers do have considerable power and autonomy over some decisions that affect their day-to-day activities.

Fennell (2001) studied the "lived experiences" of six female principals. The principals were interviewed to determine their experiences with power in terms of the influences it has on their work in their schools. Fennell used in-depth interviews, conducted at three-month intervals over the course of two years, with questions designed to elicit the principals' perceptions of their leadership role. Fennell found that in all six cases "principals viewed power as an enabling and a positive energy for change and growth in their schools" (Fennell, 2001, p.95). The need on the part of the principals to address issues of accountability was highlighted and each of the principals found her own way of balancing accountability with her day-to-day responsibilities of running a school. The limitations of legitimate power were also noted. It was seen as important to maintain a positive working environment through sharing power and helping teachers to understand more about the use of power in the classroom. Although significant information was obtained regarding leaders' views of power, Fennell (2001) did not attempt in this study to describe teachers' experiences with power. As indicated previously it would be of considerable interest to determine whether recipients of power share the same beliefs and perceptions as the wielders and in particular whether teachers also view power as enabling and a "positive energy for change and growth" (Fennell, 2001, p.95).

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Dunlap and Goldman (1991) stated that traditional "conceptualizations of power are limited by the central acceptance of power defined as acts of domination that come from the legitimated hierarchical structure" (p. 8). They proposed, instead, consideration of "facilitative power" (p.13). "If dominance is power over someone, facilitative power is power manifested through someone" (p. 13). Dunlap and Goldman's view of facilitative power is much like that of the principals in Fennell's (2001) study where power was seen as being empowering and energizing rather than merely reflecting domination. In this model there are presumably some common goals being pursued by both the wielders and recipients of power and facilitative power can be used to help the members of the organization achieve these aims on the basis of trust and reciprocity.

Common (1983) approached the concept of power from a somewhat different perspective: that of the assumptions that are made with respect to the power of teachers. Policy makers and those at the top of the school system's bureaucracy appear to view teachers as being powerless, passive, uniform and changeable. On the other hand, teachers see themselves as being powerful, active, autonomous and as a source of stability. The marked difference between these two sets of metaphors can lead to tension and conflict, especially insofar as the implementation of new policy and other changes to established procedures is concerned.

Muth (1984) reported on some earlier studies investigating the relationship between "power behaviours" (p.32) of high school principals to the "degree of conflict or consensus perceived by teachers" (p.32). The more coercive the

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principal tended to be the greater the conflict that teachers perceived between their views on policy matters and school routines. Conversely, the more influential principals tended to be the less conflict was perceived.

Additional studies of the use of power on the part of school principals have shed some light on important aspects of leadership. In one of a series of studies of women principals, leadership and power, Fennell (1994) found that the principals whom she interviewed considered themselves to be leaders who made use of facilitative power, going to great lengths to demonstrate support for, and assistance to, teachers on their staffs. The aim of the principals was to empower teachers rather than merely to have power over them. Of particular interest in this study was the comparison between the principals' self-perception of their leadership and communication styles and teachers' perceptions of the principals with whom they worked. This appears to be one of the first studies in which teachers' experiences were included. Fennell (1994) found that where principals made use of facilitative power, teachers tended to agree with the principals' self-perception with regard to communication styles, decision-making and problem-solving.

In a study of how new curriculum policy is implemented, Fennell (1992) found that the ability of (male) principals to engage in power-sharing with teachers and to create a school environment based on collaboration was a significant determinant of success in the implementation process. Again, the use of facilitative power was linked to effectiveness and to positive reactions to implementation on the part of the teachers who were participating.

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Bogler (2001) attempted to determine whether teachers' job satisfaction is related to principals' leadership style and decision-making strategy. Questionnaires were distributed to 745 teachers and were designed to provide the teachers' perception of the leadership style of the principals with whom the teachers worked (transformational versus transactional) and also of the decision-making strategy (autocratic versus participative). Teachers' perceptions of their own occupation and job satisfaction ratings were also obtained. The results showed that teachers prefer to work with principals who are seen as exhibiting a transformational leadership style and participative decision-making. In this type of leadership, teachers' autonomy is supported, positive feelings and attitudes are fostered and job satisfaction is higher than is the case when other leadership styles and decision-making strategies are in place.

There have been few studies where teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership were examined. Therefore, there remains little understanding of how teachers experience power in general and what sources of power are identified as being salient. It is also not known to what extent these impact upon the day-to-day activities of teachers and whether power is experienced as being positive (facilitative and empowering) or negative (coercive and inhibiting). The growing number of studies of leadership and use of power at the top of the educational hierarchy contrasts markedly with the dearth of research on those at the other end.

French and Raven's (1968) typology is one of the most of the comprehensive views of power in the literature and identifies and describes the

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different types of power present in organizations. Therefore, it was used as the conceptual framework for the present study because of its potential value in revealing the types and sources of power that the teachers experienced. In addition, French and Raven's (1968) model provided a clear way of conceptualizing and integrating the findings of this study. The current research employed survey and interview questions designed to determine teachers' experiences with different types of power.

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CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative and emergent (Patton, 1990) study was to explore teachers' experiences with power. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), a case study stimulates and provides an in-depth examination of an issue. In this case the issues were sources of power and experiences of power that impact upon teachers. Qualitative research is of value in suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability (Graue, 2001).

Research Process

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Each subject was made aware of the purpose of this study, their role in it, the voluntary nature of their participation and provisions for confidentiality. The names of individual participants will be kept confidential and therefore remain anonymous, unless requested otherwise by a participant. Signed, informed consent (Appendix C) was obtained from each teacher prior to the start of the study. The consent form outlined the purpose of the project, the voluntary nature of participation and the issue of confidentiality. All participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Storage of data. All of the data gathered during the project that was conducted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Education degree will remain the

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property of Lakehead University. All original data will be kept in a locked location at Lakehead University, will remain confidential and will be kept for seven years without destruction, in accordance with the Research Integrity Policy of Lakehead University.

Anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher has sole access to raw interview data. Subjects were given a pseudonym known only to the researcher. All information collected will remain confidential and any information that might result in a loss of anonymity without the consent of the participants was excluded. Any publications that result from this data will maintain the confidentiality of the subjects; pseudonyms will be used in any public documents.

Dissemination of results. Any participants in this study may request a summary of a final report. A bound copy of the thesis will be placed in the Faculty of Education library at Lakehead University.

Risks and benefits. There were no risks to the participants involved in this study. Personal benefits for participants included: opportunities to share and convey personal experience and wisdom in regards to power relations. Educational benefits included: a greater understanding of power relations in the school system and an addition to the limited research literature on teachers' experiences with power.

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Gaining Entry to Research Site

Once ethical approval for the study was given by the Research Ethics Board of Lakehead University, the researcher contacted the district school board in which the study was to be conducted, to gain permission and ethical approval. A information package was sent to the board which included the approval from the university, an introductory cover letter (Appendix A) introducing the researcher and the purpose of the study in order to gain ethical approval from the board. An elementary school principal was then approached to inquire about the potential interest that his staff might have in participating in the study. Again, a full explanation of the study was given to the principal so that all relevant information could be conveyed to the perspective teacher participants.

Selecting Participants

One elementary school in a large, urban school board in Ontario was selected for the study. All members of the teaching staff were invited to participate. Teachers were advised both verbally and in the form of a letter (Appendix B) about the nature of the study. They were assured that participation was strictly voluntary, that they were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Instrumentation

Open-ended survey. A brief introduction of the survey (Appendix D) notified the teachers that participation was voluntary, would remain confidential and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. The survey consisted of six open-ended questions designed to obtain information about teachers'

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experiences with power within an Ontario elementary school. This permitted the researcher to identify commonalities among the responses. The survey served a second purpose, as it assisted in determining which individuals were willing to participate in an in-depth interview. At the end of the survey, the teachers were asked to check whether they were interested in participating in an interview (Appendix D).

Interviews. Based on the literature review of power, the researcher constructed 23 interview questions (Appendix E). These questions served as a guide to elicit in-depth responses that would assist in answering the two primary research questions. Preceding the interview, participants were again made aware of their rights with respect to ethical issues. During the interviews the researcher was flexible in her line of questioning, following Patton's (1990) general interview guidelines where questions act as initiators and enable discussion to unfold from the participants' perspectives and not from the researcher's perspective. The face-to-face interviews took 60-90 minutes each to complete.

Data Collection

Teachers were initially invited to attend an information session about the study. At the meeting a verbal explanation of the study, along with a numbered envelope that contained an introductory letter, an open-ended survey and a consent for participation form were given to each teacher in the school. The researcher corresponded the numbered envelopes to a master list of the teaching staff for her own records. This coding system is accessible only to the researcher

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for reasons of confidentiality. The teachers were informed that participation is voluntary, confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Those teachers who were willing to participate further were then requested to sign the consent form, complete the open-ended survey and indicate their interest in being interviewed. The teachers then submitted their consent forms and survey responses in a sealed envelope. A secure location – a mailbox slot in the office - was available for the teachers to hand in their completed responses. This process took three days. The researcher then examined the surveys to identify which individuals were willing to be interviewed.

Using the master teacher list, which had corresponding envelope numbers, the researcher identified prospective interviewees and made personal contact with them to schedule individual interview times. Each interview lasted 60 to 90 minutes and was conducted on-site at the school. The interviews were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure that all information was compiled accurately. The audio tapes served to focus the researcher's attention to the individuals' experiences and to allow a natural flow of discourse to unfold during the discussion. The tapes allowed important data to be recorded so that it could be accessed at a later date for the verification of content.

In addition to the surveys and interviews, daily observations of the school activities and interpersonal interactions of the teachers were made over the course of three weeks. Notes were made in the following settings, in and around Meadow Lane Public School: the main office, staff lunchroom, playground, classrooms and hallways. Everyday routines, including how information is

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disseminated, transition times between classes, after school times when parents pick-up their children and scheduled breaks (e.g. recess and lunch). Interactions among staff members and between the staff and the administration were recorded for the duration of the study. Copies of memos and meeting agendas were shared with the researcher by some of the participants. Through a review of these documents and the communication binder located in the school office, it was possible to glean further information about issues relating to power such as how the principal ensures compliance from his staff and how the teachers feel about this strategy

At the time of the study, contract negotiations between the School Board and the teachers' Union were in progress and the teaching staff was operating under work-to-rule procedures. While it is not clear to what extent this may have affected the data collection, it is important to note that some teachers in the school declined to participate in the study.

These multiple data sources formed the basis for triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study the data consisted of surveys, in-depth interviews and non-participant observations recorded in the form of field notes.

Data Analysis

The researcher's entire data set consisted of nine completed surveys, 14 transcribed interviews and observations. The data set was analyzed on an ongoing basis throughout the study and was reviewed for recurring themes. Surveys and observations provided preliminary inferences regarding potential codes. The transcribed interviews were then compiled for a complete analysis of

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the data using the "constant comparative method" (Patton, 1990; Bogdan & Biklin, 1992). The ongoing process of re-reading data was employed as the researcher examined the entire interview transcript and noted key phrases and words that displayed patterns of regularities. These apparent patterns enabled the researcher to apply specific codes to the data document. Those codes were next applied to all data instruments and organized accordingly. The codes were assigned to specific categories according to the content of the initially coded data. Finally, after an extensive examination of the content of the categories, overall themes emerged. The inductive analysis of the data fostered the conceptualization of the overall themes that emerged from the study.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Presentation of Findings

Introduction

The data collected for this study, *Teachers' Experiences with Power* are presented in this chapter. A triangulated method of data collection was used to address the research questions:

1. How do teachers experience power?
2. What sources and types of power do teachers identify as being significant to them?

Observations in the form of field notes about the case school were gathered, along with surveys and interviews that were completed by participants who worked at the school. A description of the school and participants are given below, followed by the survey and the interview data. The survey findings are presented according to the items on the survey (Appendix D) and data from the interviews are presented according to themes that emerged.

School Observations

Location

To protect the anonymity of the school the pseudonym given to the case school was Meadow Lane Public School. Meadow Lane is one of 451 elementary schools in one of the largest school boards in Canada. It is situated in a diversified, multicultural suburban neighbourhood, north of the city centre. According to the teachers, the community consists primarily of recent immigrants and/or first-generation Canadians. Therefore, there is a high English-as-a-Second-Language population at this elementary school. The socioeconomic

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status of the community is reported by the school staff as being wide-ranging from those families living in subsidized housing to professional-income families.

Size

The school is a large two-story building surrounded by ample green space for the students to play during recess and the lunch hour. Meadow Lane has a student population of 430, ranging in grade levels from the Early Years to junior years (JK – Grade Six). There are two teachers per grade, as well as a technology teacher, a special education teacher, an ESL teacher and a French teacher for a total of twenty. The administration at Meadow Lane Public School is comprised of one principal, who has been there for four years and one vice-principal, who arrived at the school one year ago.

Surveys

A description of the study, along with surveys, was distributed to the entire teaching staff of Meadow Lane Public School. The purpose of the research and ethical considerations (Appendix C) including confidentiality and anonymity, were explained in detail to the teachers. The teachers were asked to complete the survey anonymously and then submit it to a central location that was provided for them by the researcher.

Fourteen teachers completed the open-ended survey (Appendix D), designed to collect information about how teachers identify sources of power that affect their daily performance and activities and the relative significance of each source of power. Data obtained from the surveys are summarized in Tables1 to 3.

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French and Raven's (1968) typology of power was included on the survey to provide the teachers with a means for describing the influences of the various power sources that they identified. The typology identified five types of power: legitimate, expert, referent, reward and coercive. These power types are characterized according to the interactions between power holders and power recipients. Questions dealing with situations that produce feelings of power and powerlessness in the participants were also included. An opportunity for the teachers to comment on additional influences that impact upon the performance of their duties was also provided. In total, there were eight questions to respond to on the survey.

Description of the Survey

An open-ended survey (Appendix D) was used to solicit the teachers' beliefs and feelings about issues of power at Meadow Lane Public School. The surveys were completed anonymously. Two teachers did approach the researcher privately and explained that they felt that their Union's current insistence on work-to-rule was in conflict with their ability to take part in the research. All of the findings reported below reflect those of the fourteen surveys that were received.

Eight items were created to obtain the overall general perception and feelings' toward issues of power as they relate to Meadow Lane Public School. The findings are presented below in terms of the number of teachers providing various responses to each item together with illustrative quotes from individual participants where appropriate.

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Sources of Power

Table 1 summarizes the data pertaining to power sources and lists all of the sources of power without specifying the order of importance or ranking.

Table 1
Summary of power sources

		Participant Number													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Source	Government/Ministry		X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
	School Board	X				X	X		X	X		X		X	
	Superintendents					X									
	Principal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Vice-principal	X				X		X		X			X	X	
	Union Steward	X	X	X		X		X	X						X
	Colleagues		X			X		X		X		X	X		X
	Parents	X			X	X			X	X			X	X	
	Students					X			X				X		
	Media				X	X									

Ten of the fourteen participants indicated that the government and Ministry of Education and Training were sources of power that impacted teachers' responsibilities. Seven of the teachers indicated the School Board had influence on their activities, whereas only one mentioned that superintendents were a source of power in the school. Each of the fourteen participants noted that the principal was a power source at their school. The vice-principal was viewed as having an impact on six of the fourteen teachers. Seven of the fourteen participants identified the Union Steward as having influence on them. Seven of the teachers mentioned their colleagues had an influence on their performance

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and seven of the fourteen participants indicated that parents had an impact on their responsibilities and duties as a teacher. Students as a source of power were only identified by three of the fourteen participants. Two participants mentioned that media impacted their job of being a teacher.

Types of Power

Table 2 summarizes the findings with regard to types of power.

Table 2
Summary of types of power

		Respondent Number													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Power Type	Legitimate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Coercive				X			X	X						
	Reward														
	Expert			X		X	X			X	X	X			X
	Referent							X			X				

The participants were requested to qualify the types of power according to French and Raven's (1968) typology (Appendix D). All fourteen of the participants identified legitimate power as a type of power that they have experienced. The fourteen participants specifically related the *legitimate* power to that which the principal holds with his vested position as head of the school. The teachers acknowledged the legitimacy of the power held by the principal and they were therefore obliged to carry out tasks and activities as instructed by him. One participant commented, "You are told to do yard duty by the principal and you respect his authority." A second participant commented, "I do what I am asked to do because I feel that they are reasonable requests and that they are [the requests] my responsibility".

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Seven of the fourteen participants indicated that they have experienced expert power, describing situations where their colleagues acted as sources of knowledge that they depended upon for assistance and clarification. One of the participants also added that the principal was not only a source of legitimate power but also held expert power in his perception because the principal is quite knowledgeable about education legislation. That participant wrote, "Principals nowadays have to be knowledgeable about the law because they potentially have legal issues surrounding either staff members or students to deal with and [principal's name] certainly knows his stuff".

Of the fourteen participants, only two commented on having experienced *coercive* power during their educational careers. Likewise, only two out of the fourteen mentioned that they had witnessed referent power. In one case the referent power was held by a past principal and in the other case reference was made to the Union Steward at Meadow Lane Public School. None of the fourteen participants identified reward power as having some influence on teacher's performance. Some reported receiving letters of thanks and recognition from parents or even the principal but these actions must be regarded as mainly positive feedback for a job well-done because teachers did not intentionally set-out to receive some form of reward.

Positive Experiences

Thirteen of the fourteen participants shared some of their positive experiences. One participant commented, "One principal I had really cared about me and my life outside of school. It made me feel close and connected, like a

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family". Another participant referred to positive points mentioned in his/her performance evaluation, "When I get positive feedback on my evaluation by the principal, it makes me feel good because then I know that I am doing a good job". Two participants talked about positive experiences while working with student teachers and colleagues. One of those teachers wrote, "working with teacher candidates and working with fellow teachers has been a great experience because I feel that we can learn new things from each other which makes everyone better teachers". There was one participant that did not relate any positive experiences wrote: "My experiences have been pretty flat, neither particularly positive nor negative – quite business like".

Negative Experiences

All but one of the participants conveyed some negative experiences with regard to the use of power. As mentioned above, one participant said that his/her experiences with power "have been pretty flat". However, the other thirteen participants included various situations or events that were interpreted as being negative by the participants. One participant commented, "It is the principal's decision to assign class/grade designation for the upcoming year. I was denied my request and the position was given to someone else with fewer qualifications". A similar response was obtained from another participant, "From an outsider's perspective, I have seen the use of power as being negative in that a particular person on our staff was denied a position of change even though she had all the credentials and seniority". Another participant commented about an incident of receiving an "undeserved low rating on teacher evaluation form by

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administration". Another individual commented on negative experiences he/she has experienced through the Federation. The participant said that, "You must follow all instructions from Federation or be blacklisted for further support".

Effects of Power Sources

This item represented an attempt to determine whether all the sources of power that teachers experience are considered of equal significance or whether some carry greater weight. Responses to this item varied and there was not a consensus whether particular sources of power have the same impact. The participants responded in terms of the sources of power that they had previously identified. One participant wrote, "On a day-to-day basis, I'd say that administration and parents influence me equally". Another participant commented, "Both the vice-principal and the principal have equal influence over me and the Board also has equal influence". Other participants commented in terms of power types. One of the fourteen teachers noted, "Expert and referent power affect me equally but they are secondary to legitimate and coercive power". Another participant said, "legitimate and coercive power affect me equally and the most".

Compliance with Power Sources

The issue of compliance was examined in this survey item. The participants were asked what power sources achieve greater compliance. There were a wide variety of answers for this item. For example, one teacher commented:

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> The ones that you have to deal with face-to-face like administration and parents because you have to deal with repercussions of your actions. Whereas, the more distant sources [government and Board] make you feel like a number and that no one knows who you are.

One of the fourteen participants wrote, "I respect someone for expertise and/or decency of behaviour. I will be emotionally more willing to follow-up on suggestions made to me". Another participant commented, "I give legitimate and coercive power more attention because I have to organize my actions in terms of amount of time and energy available to me". One participant stated:

> Power sources that don't come across as being a power source will likely achieve greater compliance. It's all in the attitude. You would rather do something for someone or an organization that is pleasant rather than nasty, rude or cocky.

Power-sharing in the School

Table 3 summarizes the results for the issue of power-sharing at Meadow Lane Public School.

Table 3
Summary of responses to the issue of power-sharing

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Minimal power-sharing	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X	X		X
No power-sharing				X				X		X			X	

The fourteen participants responded in either one of two ways to this question. Four participants were adamant that there was no power-sharing and ten participants commented that there was power-sharing but that sharing was "minimal" and only pertained to less important issues at the school. The teachers who commented on the limited power-sharing explained the committee process at

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Meadow Lane Public School whereby the entire staff debates issues such as preparation time and consensus is needed for agreement on committee issues. One teacher wrote, "A committee, once formed, will share power within that committee (e.g. staffing committees and prep time committee) usually by trying to reach consensus".

Another teacher commented, "Power-sharing is minimal. Issues are delegated by the principal, when they [the issues] are deemed not to be a priority". Another responded, "There is power-sharing to some degree but mostly for less important areas. For example, dividing of prep schedule - number of minutes pre-determined".

Four of the fourteen teachers felt that there was no power-sharing at their school. One individual strongly expressed his/her experience by commenting, "In our school there is no power-sharing. There is only one boss – head chief and he makes the rules".

Conforming to Goals

The fourteen participants had a variety of responses about their experiences of conforming to others' or school goals. One teacher wrote, "I haven't felt any undue pressures but I tend to be a conformist and want not to cause waves for anyone. So I often go out of my way to make things smooth". Another participant reported that he/she felt pressures from a number of groups and/or people, "[I feel pressure from] official teacher evaluations, parents' expectations, endless Ministry documents and expectations and [my colleagues] with comparison with other teachers of other classes". Echoing these comments

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another teacher expanded on the list of pressure sources and wrote, "College of Teachers and re-certification courses, colleagues who...gossip and terminally uncooperative students" bring undue pressure on oneself to conform.

The survey instrument provided the teachers of Meadow Lane Public School with an opportunity to express their feelings and experiences with issues of power within an anonymous forum. It is the assumption of the researcher that the anonymous and confidential climate established for the completion of the questionnaires solicited honest, truthful and sincere responses from the participants.

In addition to collecting teachers' experiences with power, the survey assisted in identifying those individuals who were interested in completing an interview. The researcher later contacted the participants who indicated that they would like to take part in an interview.

Interviews

Of the 14 teachers who completed the survey, nine agreed to participate in a lengthier, more detailed interview designed to gather further information about how these teachers experience power in the school setting. A variety of questions were posed using an open-ended interview procedure. Typically the interviewer followed-up on the teachers' responses by asking for additional information and elaboration, particularly with regard to the teachers' experiences with power in their current workplace setting. The interview findings are summarized in terms of themes that emerged from the responses. Actual quotes describing the experiences of each teacher with regard to issues surrounding

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power are included to provide further illumination of the main issues. The interviews contributed rich and in-depth data on the research topic.

Setting and Participants

All of the interviews were conducted at the school during teachers' preparation time, before or after school or at the lunch hour. The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed to provide a permanent record. Five men and four women, with varying years of experience and teaching of different grade levels, participated in the interviews. For the sake of the participants' anonymity the teachers have been given pseudonyms.

Themes

The interview findings are reported below in terms of themes that emerged. Several reviews of the interview transcripts revealed the presence of four common themes with respect to issues of power. The individual narratives provided by the nine participants assisted in the emergence of the following themes: *sources and types of power*, *teachers' experiences with power and other powerful influences.* Appendix F contains the transcript of one of the participants responses to the interview questions.

Sources and Types of Power

In the hierarchy of the education system, as in other bureaucracies, there are multiple sources of power and influence. One of the themes that emerged from the interview data was the identification of the sources and types of power. Within this theme, participants identified two categories, sources of power and

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types of power. The first category, *sources of power*, refers to the classification of the different sources of power that have an impact on the activities and performance of the teachers in the study. *Types of power*, the second category, pertain to French and Raven's (1968) model of power, which deals with the interactions between the holders and the recipients of power.

Sources of power. All nine participants identified the sources of power within the education system that influence them in their job as a teacher. The teachers were consistent in listing the government, Ministry of Education and Training, the school Board (including the Director and senior administration), the principal, colleagues, parents and students as the sources of power which impact on their professional lives. Many of the teachers also viewed themselves as being in a power position by virtue of feelings of autonomy and empowerment.

When asked about who holds power over him, Andy commented, "Administration... parents...lead teachers...experienced teachers in general...and Union representative" (p. 15). Anna identified the following power sources by saying, "Definitely the principal, the vice-principal and sometimes certain teachers ...and the Federation" (p. 48) and "...definitely the government...[but] not on an every day basis" (p.53). Cliff noted, "The principal, the Board, the Union, parents, students, fellow teachers" (p. 62). William had a similar list and stated:

> Administration, principal, vice-principal, Board, parents (p. 98) ...and government, Board, senior administration, (so that means supervisory officers), principals, I'd say other teachers because teachers still have an influence on each other ...Federation, then School Council...then students probably (p. 110).

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Tony emphasized the power that teachers possess by commenting:

> The power that a teacher has is just incredible. What they can do with kids and how they can turn the kids on and how they can turn the kids off...Who's the most powerful person in the board? It's got to be the teacher (p.41).

Tony, William and Luella viewed the provincial government as holding power in education by virtue of enacting legislation reflecting society's insistence on accountability, common standards and reporting procedures. Tony commented, "the government [has power] because they set-up what I must teach and the expectation I must cover" (p. 38). William added, "...the Ontario government is probably one of the big ones [in terms of holding power] because they have a huge impact on what we do" (p. 98). "It [power] comes from the legislation being passed by successive governments" (p. 111). Luella commented that the "government...puts into being all the things that are necessary for teaching" (p. 151).

The impact of the Ministry of Education and Training is seen mainly in its role as providing curriculum guidelines, setting policy and maintaining standards. Todd noted, "They [the Ministry] impact us with all the curriculum they keep sending down. Methods of delivering it and things they want us to do..." (p. 120). Marie commented on the importance of the legislation that the Ministry passes down and said, "Ministry [is a source of power] because they dictate the legislation like the Education Act. And then we also have the curriculum that we have to follow and that's every day all day" (p. 105).

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The role of the Board is seen as one of implementation of Ministry policies and guidelines. Supervisory officers, including superintendents and the director are responsible for the allocation of resources that enable teachers at the school level to carry out the specified policies and procedures. Tony commented, "the Board basically tells us how to implement [curriculum documents] and gives us the resources to do it" (p. 39). Luella further elaborated by saying, "Downtown administration, they certainly have some power when they come in because they make overall decisions that influence everything from the type of textbooks that will be used...to your salary" (p. 151). Todd agreed that the Board administrators are a source of power and commented:

> They're [supervisory officers] the ones that are sending things down to the principal to do...but at the same time he feels their impact "less and less. It's much more indirect. ...With all the cutbacks, there's very few of them [Board administrators]. But, they are definitely there (p. 119).

All nine of the teachers spoke extensively about the role of the principal at Meadow Lane Public School and previous administrators for whom they had worked. Because of a great diversity in the roles that principals assume, it is clear that they exert a great deal of power and influence over virtually all aspects of teachers' performance and daily activities. Andy commented, "the principal influences the day-to-day operations of my classroom...dictating the grade...he has the power over what grade I teach, what classroom I will be teaching in and handing out of...extra assignments" (p. 21). Luella expressed a similar idea by noting:

> The largest power that you deal with in the school is your principal, who assigns you such things as your classes, decides on class size, usually

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> decides what children you are going to get to teach, decides even on such things as yard duty. Those are all power things. [The principal] decides what things will be implemented in the school and how they will be checked on...so I'd say admin. has quite a bit of power (p. 151).

Tony commented, "...he [the principal] is responsible for what happens in this school and what happens in my classroom. And ultimately, he [the principal] is responsible" (p. 38). For Anna, the power of the principal is derived from the fact that the school administrators have "the best interest of the kids" (p. 52) constantly in mind and Anna continued by saying, "They [administrators] do have power over [us], telling us what to do" (p. 52). Lisa acknowledged the principal's power and commented, "the most influential power person in this building...that would be the chief administrator" (p. 5). Cliff said simply, "Principals are very powerful" (p. 63), while William expanded that "...if the Board wants a certain directive, it's up to the principal to tell the teachers...and we're obliged to carry it out" (p. 98). Todd emphasized the point that the principal affects the general school climate and stated, "The principal sets the tone...if it's a nice friendly environment, you can tell that from what the principal wants to do" (p. 123). For Marie, her belief of the principal's power is directly related to her job performance and reported, "As a probationary teacher I know that I have to do what the principal requests. That's part of the expectation" (p. 148).

Another source of identified power was that of colleagues. The participants indicated that it is important to them that they are perceived as being team players and they reported going to some effort to obtain approval,

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particularly from colleagues within the same division as well as from older or more senior peers. Andy said that he feels some influence from:

> ...peers, in the sense that what I'm teaching and how I'm teaching it. Because, I want to feel that we're all on board and doing the same thing. I also want to feel that we have a healthy relationship as peers in order to work and get along with each other...so that's why I say peers. It's just something that I feel comfortable with. I want a good positive working relationship (p. 21-22).

William expanded on the influence that teachers have over one another and commented, "Colleagues influence each other. When you have a senior colleague who knows something and really think it's a good idea, they can sway a staff" (p. 110). Conversely, Marie highlighted some difficulties she has encountered as a junior teacher:

> As a new teacher, it's a difficult position to be in because sometimes a teacher who's been there for a long time does things a certain way and they don't want to be told by a younger teacher how to do their job (p.101).

Most of the teachers identified the Teachers' Union or Federation as a significant source of power and as an important counterbalance to the influence of the government and the Ministry of Education and Training. Considerable support for the Union's position during a recent work-to-rule campaign was highly visible. The teachers reported a unanimous turnout at a Union meeting where a strike vote was taken. Federation buttons worn by most of the teachers were also in evidence at the school throughout this period. Teacher support for the Union was also apparent in terms of the refusal by some of the staff to participate in the study because it was felt that taking part in the research would be incompatible with their work-to-rule mandate. Anna said, "...the Federation would impact me in

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that they pretty much know what's best for us. They inform us. So you're more likely to go along with them when they explain the reasons behind everything" (p 49). William also discussed Federation's perceived power and stated:

> Federation does [have power] to a certain extent because they are representatives of the teachers. And so, it's in their interest to have all the teachers on the same channel. So they're going to want teachers all to be on board and doing the things that the Federation feels is in their best interest. So they [the Federation] will try to get teachers to do what they suggest. So I guess they try to exercise power. And they do have a certain amount of power (105-106).

In response to a question about the Federation's power, William continued: "they have won us settlements in the past. They've stood up for teachers' rights in terms of making sure they [teachers] have a safe workplace, healthy workplace, respecting gender rights" (p. 110). For Todd, the Union is seen as a more immediate source of problem-solving and he commented:

> I know for a fact the Federation will be helpful. I know of a couple of people who went through Federation and solved problems. And Federation will do the best they can. And in one case I found to my utter amazement that they had solved the problem (p. 134).

Luella also commented on the importance of the Union's power, "...my main support is from my Union, because they will support me when there's any type of a negative or a positive activity that will concern my teaching career" (p. 153). Luella continued, "We also know that the Union has today tremendous powers. They can oppose the administration on anything, whether it's the implementation of a work to rule by the teachers or whether it's over such things as trivial as the yard duty schedule" (p. 157).

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One participant mentioned the media as a power source. Lisa identified the media as a source of influence on her, making her feel de-valued and giving the impression to the public that teachers are over paid and unreasonable in their demands. She commented, "It [the media] makes me aware of the public's perception of teaching...[it is] mixed...the media doesn't always report accurately"(p. 6).

Classroom observation indicated a traditional teacher-centred environment in which the authority and autonomy of the teachers was evident. This was consistent with the teachers' own statements in which they emphasized the teachers' influence in the classroom. For example, one participant (Luella) commented, "the only power you really have is when you go in your classroom, you close that door and you start doing your real job of teaching and relating to children" (p. 155).

One participant commented on his power and authority as a teacher. Tony recognized that the autonomy enjoyed by teachers is a source of power. He commented:

> The power that a teacher has is just incredible. What they can do with kids and how they can turn the kids on and how they can turn the kids off. Who's the most powerful person in the Board? It's got to be the teacher. (p. 41).

In discussing the various sources of power that influence them, all of the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School did include parents but their feelings about the extent of parental involvement at the school was mixed. Luella stated, "Parents have a great deal of power as well, but they would rank below the

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students because you deal with them usually not as regularly as the students" (p. 151). Cliff on the other hand noted:

> In this community I would say for the 15 years I've been here, I've maybe had one or two parents in...who have actually questioned the content [of the curriculum]...but in terms of them questioning what you are doing...I found them [parents] sort of out of it, more than anything (p. 65).

Anna, Marie and Todd also commented that at Meadow Lane Public School parents do not hold as much power as they might do elsewhere. Anna's response to the question 'Do you feel any power from parents?' was, "Not in our school...I think it depends on what school you are at" (p. 53). To the same question, Marie commented, "Sometimes but not that often; sometimes the parents influence what you do...but at my school, not very often" (p. 100). Todd's statement regarding parent involvement at the school was as follows:

> Parents, they don't [have power]...in this particular school. The parents aren't a problem...I've heard of other schools where there's problems. Where parents are more [involved], especially in more affluent communities. They're definitely very, very involved in the school and they want to know everything you're doing and they'll question you on all kinds of things (p. 120).

Cliff commented, "In terms of having a strong Parent Council, in terms of dictating where money goes and how things are done, it's not very powerful at all" (p. 97).

Four of the participants indicated that students are a source of power that impacts their daily performance. Luella commented, "Certainly the students have a great deal of power because they can make or break your day" (p. 151). Cliff voiced his opinion about changes he has noticed in students over the years:

> Students I found have become more powerful over you [teachers]. A lot of them seem to run their own show at home because many of the parents

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> are ESL (English-as-a-Second-Language) or ESD (English-as-a-Second-Dialect) or don't speak English period...Because of that power they [students] can then manipulate [their parents] (p. 65).

Andy focused on the influence students have over his instructional techniques and noted, "I have to adapt to their needs, either pick-up the pace or slow it down...they really dictate what learning is going to happen" (p. 22). Tony commented, "The kids are here for one reason, that's to learn and if we're not teaching them, then we are not doing our job" (p. 42) then students ultimately have power over a large part of what teachers do on a daily basis.

Types of power. French and Raven (1968) identified five types of power based on the relationship between the power holders and recipients; legitimate, coercive, expert, reward and referent.

Legitimate power entitles the power holder to have influence by virtue of his or her position in the hierarchy and was identified by the participants as one of the main types of power in this educational setting. The teachers attached legitimate power to the government and the Ministry of Education and Training by recognizing that these authorities have a legitimate right to set policy and curriculum, to which teachers must conform, regardless of the teachers' feelings toward these institutions. Marie commented, "The reason why I meet my expectations is because that's my job. Ministry expectations – I am legally obliged to do" (p. 147). Luella framed the government's legitimate power in terms of control:

> It's felt that only the Ontario Government and the Ministry of Education has control over education in Ontario. It's become very centralized" (p. 154). She continued: "Most of the things in the school come down from [the

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> Ministry]. They are the power source. They tell you how many days you will teach; they will tell you how many holidays that you will have, when you will have them. They decide on the curriculum. They decide on many things (p. 155).

Legitimate power was also granted to the School Board. Andy commented on the Board's authority by saying, "I'm meeting [expectations] because that's what we are expected to do" (p. 31). Cliff noted:

> The Board sets policy, resources and various other things that we utilize...and we are dictated by what the Board wants. The evaluation of students is Board mandated. There seems to be a lot more Board mandates over the last five years (p. 63).

Anna added to the idea of the Board possessing legitimate power by commenting, "...the people at the Board level you know, they have the ultimate authority" (p. 53). Luella too noted the Board's legitimate authority, "Downtown, they certainly have some power when they come in because they make overall decision that influence everything form the type of text books that will be used...to your salary" (p. 151).

All of the teachers recognized principals' legitimate power position as the authority figure within the school and teachers' compliance with the policies and procedures established by the principals are due in large measure to their acknowledgement of the administrators' role. Marie commented, "I know that I have to do what the principal requests. That's part of the expectations" (p. 148). Lisa supports Marie's acknowledgment of the principal's legitimate authority and stated, "He [the principal] makes it very clear what you can and can't do" (p. 6) and the teachers do not usurp the principal's position. Andy remarked about the legitimate power of the principal and commented that he complies with his

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superior's legitimate requests, "There are certain things I have to do no matter what... I'm told this is what you have to do, and it's laid down on me and I fulfill that task" (p. 23). He also mentioned the legitimate act of his performance being appraised on a regular basis:

> Every three years we're on the administrative track and the principal sits down with us and tells us what he would like to see...we're held accountable to the administration (p. 34).

Three of the interviewees identified their Union as possessing legitimate power, especially when they have needed legal advice or guidance. Lisa commented:

> "If a teacher files a grievance and it's found in the teacher's favour, then the administration has to make the adjustment that's found for" (p. 9)... and I think that's what unites the staff is because we know that there's a support [legal] network among us" (p. 10).

Tony also discussed the Union's use of legitimate power and commented, "We still have our Federation as protection" and "Federation uses a lot [of power] and that's for obvious reasons" (p. 41) [referring to contract negotiations]. Luella too acknowledged the Union's legitimate power and said, "The Union today has tremendous powers. And they can oppose the administration on anything. Whether it's the implementation of a work to rule by the teachers or whether it's over such things as trivial as the yard duty schedule" (p. 157).

Andy and Luella both felt that having completed their teacher training afforded them legitimate power in the classroom. Andy stated, "I've been given power through the educational system...by going to Teacher's College, by getting my teacher's certificate" (p. 23). Due to her teacher education and additional

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qualifications, Luella commented, "You have the control in your room. And that you are able to put forth your program and your method of teaching to help all the children to try to succeed" (p. 155). Luella then completed her previous comment by saying, "... but you're doing it under the authorization of the Ontario Government" (p. 155) thus acknowledging the fact that the government is perceived as being at the top of the educational hierarchy.

In the case of Meadow Lane Public School, individuals who were granted expert power possess a knowledge base, which recipients wish to access. The principal is seen as having expert power by virtue of his thorough knowledge of the Education Act, Ministry guidelines and Board policies. Todd noted, "He [the principal] knows what he wants. He [the principal] can quote you chapter and verse [regarding Board policies and the Education Act] and frequently does" (p. 122) to reinforce his position. Todd continued to talk of the principal's expertise:

> He's [the principal] informed and he's knowledgeable of what his position is, so no one can really question it.... He documents everything, everything. So if you ever go in there and say, you said something...He'll pull out the piece of paper and prove you either right or wrong (p. 125).

Two of the teachers regarded their colleagues as possessing expert power due to their knowledge in a particular field. Anna talked about a fellow teacher, who is the Union Steward and commented:

> He's informed and he explains it all to us...he's so good that he informs us, we don't have to go search for the information. I know in other schools they [the teachers] have no idea what's going on...so I feel very informed" (p. 51).

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Cliff's experience with expert power emanates from senior teachers and the loss to retirement of these teachers upon whom more junior staff could rely for advice is seen by him as highly regrettable. Cliff stated:

> ...when I initially started, you had people that had been in the teaching profession with 25 to 30 years...So that gave a lot of strength to a staff, because of these older [teachers]. When I came to the school, I could walk up to someone who'd been teaching for 30 years and ask, 'How would you deal with that?' You don't have that knowledge to tap into and I really do feel that the teachers that are just coming into the profession over the last four years suffer as a result of not having the wealth of basic experience (p. 76).

The knowledge base that more senior staff has is valuable and junior teachers do depend on it. Marie commented that being a second year teacher she often seeks the assistance of more experienced colleagues and commented, "There's a couple of staff members that I go to for clarification and I feel that they give me good advice as to what I should do" (p. 147).

Some team-teaching situations were observed. Discussions about the need for shared resources and knowledge took place during preparation times and after school. In one instance in particular a senior teacher was advising a junior teacher about instructional strategies on unit relating to fairy tales. Junior deferred to their senior colleagues in discussions dealing with teaching methodologies. In situations where colleagues with equal experience were conferring, power-sharing and equitable decision-making were observed.

Observation of the staff lunchroom activities indicated frequent conversations, requests for assistance, advice giving with regard to instructional material, behaviour management techniques and an on-going small gift-giving

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program (known as "secret buddy"). These activities gave the observer a sense of collegiality amongst the staff at Meadow Lane Public School.

Reward power for personal gain has been observed by two of the interview participants. Both Anna and Cliff made reference to colleagues who position themselves to receive either promotional reward or recognition. Cliff commented:

> Someone who follows...whatever the Principal wants, then you may be viewed differently for someone who's a bit more...oriented towards the Union...and people perceive you as someone who is doing it because they're looking for brownie points. Taking on pilot projects or roles usually ensures that some reward can be reaped at a later date because it puts you in favour with the principal (p. 66).

Anna also discussed reward power by stating:

> I guess there's a few people ...they definitely want to be recognized by [the principal] as a good person or teacher. They kind of want to be credited with all that they do.... There's one teacher in particular...who wants to climb the [administrative] ladder that's doing it" (p. 58).

Threatening punishment is one way in which a wielder of power coerces individuals; however, coercion can occur in more subtle ways. Lisa commented that the principal practices restrained, coercive power when she referred to the responsibility attached to keeping a binder of policies and procedures. She stated, "We have frequent, frequent, hard copy correspondence as such that tells us under no uncertain terms what the expectations are...we are told to keep all agenda items and newsletters" (p. 13). For Lisa, keeping and referring to the memo binder are done out of a feeling of being coerced. Andy also noted he was coerced by a previous principal and said, "In a nutshell I just didn't feel comfortable at all. But, sometimes we have to do that whether you like it or not"

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(p. 26). Todd felt coerced to complete the task of recognizing the student of the month:

> They [principals] have little add on things they like to do. The principal has the student of the month thing that he wants us to do.... Well, I'm not sure what would happen if you didn't do the student of the month. I think he [the principal] would just hound you until you did (p. 118).

Marie talked about the coercive nature of being required to check the communication binder on a daily basis. She commented:

> There is a binder in the main office and the principal writes what is going on at the school for the day, like assemblies or if there's visitors coming to the school. Anyway, each morning, we [the teachers] have to read and initial that we have read it. The principal checks to see who has done it...I always read it so I don't know what happens if you don't (p. 148).

For Marie the signing of the binder is something she feels coerced to do daily so as to escape possible reprimands from the principal.

Andy discussed coercive power sometimes used by other teachers. He commented, "There's some teachers who would try to coerce you...into a different way of thinking or maybe they want...to get something...and they try to just sway you into their way of thinking" (p. 15). Andy continued to explain, "I want to feel that we're all on board and doing the same thing...and get along with each other" (p. 21). Ultimately, Andy wanted to avoid disapproval from other staff members, people conform because no one wants to be perceived as the "weak link" (p. 16).

Referent power is attributable to factors such as friendship, loyalty or charisma. This type of power was referred to on two occasions. Todd made the following comments about a previous principal:

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> The school I used to be in, there was a principal there that staff really liked. He was there for five years. He was very much a principal who would let people do some of their own things and he didn't have central control of the power...he'd let you run with things and do what you're strong at or wanted to do. ...The staff got along really well with that principal and was willing to do whatever he asked us to do (p. 123-124).

Anna stated her opinion about the Union Steward:

> You follow him and he, he knows what's best for us. And he's so informed and he wouldn't lead us the wrong way. So I feel very comfortable that way because I would do whatever he would say...I would go with him because...he's a good guy" (p. 50). "I call him like the god...'you're the godfather of our school and whatever you do, we just kind of...aimlessly follow you'. It's because he knows what's best for us (p. 60).

For Anna, the Union Steward is a revered, powerful figure that represents her best interests to the point where she is willing to do whatever he instructs her to do.

Teachers' Experiences with Power

The teachers' narratives about their different experiences with power constructed the second theme: Teachers' Experiences with Power. The nine participants had mixed power experiences. Some commented on feelings of power and others mentioned feelings of powerless. In the interview situations the teachers were requested to identify and describe their experiences with power. They were specifically asked about both positive and negative feelings associated with these experiences.

The interview data reported that teachers' feelings of power or empowerment emanate more from intrinsic factors such as professional self-esteem and feelings of personal satisfaction in working with children than from

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external rewards in the form of monetary remuneration and/or social rewards from parents and administrators. Conversely, feelings of powerlessness were experienced when the teachers felt that they had to comply with decisions over which they had no control and also from the pressure of trying to meet all the expectations placed on them within the existing time constraints.

The teachers also reported their experiences of power in terms of sharing in the decision-making about educational issues. Power-sharing and traditional "top-down" approaches to decision-making were identified. The "top-down" refers to the traditional organizational structure where authority resides with those in the highest position and power-sharing, which is a more contemporary concept in line with modern management practices, refers to team-based decision-making and a "bottom-up" rather than a "top-down" paradigm.

Four categories are included the second theme: feelings of power, feelings of powerlessness, traditional decision-making and power-sharing.

Feelings of power. The teachers at Meadow Lane School reported feeling empowered by a sense of self-worth associated with their professional role. Andy stated, "I feel empowered with the fact that who I am from teacher's college, given the paper that I've been given to teach... I've been given power though the education system ... by going to teacher's college, by getting my teacher's certificate" (p.23). Andy also recognized the importance of power:

> ...used to uplift, to share, to talk about things during staff meetings, congratulating people. Power in a sense of getting work done or completing a task (p.17).

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William emphasized the power derived from the fact that and commented, "They [teachers] are highly qualified, highly trained professionals" (p.106). The autonomy associated with teachers' professional role provides teachers with a sense of empowerment. Luella stated, "I do feel quite empowered [as a teacher] (p. 151). She continued to say:

> You have control in that [class] room. The only power you really have is when you go in your classroom, you close that door and you start doing your real job of teaching and relating to children" (p. 155). I think the greatest power is the power that you have within yourself to do a good job with all elements that are involved in the school system...hard work, building consensus, being a team player, doing what you think is right (p. 156).

While the teachers reported feelings of empowerment associated with their professional qualifications and their role in the education system and in the school, they also identified feelings of power resulting directly from working with their students. Tony said that the feeling of empowerment "has to be personal and you get it from the satisfaction from seeing kids improve" (p. 42). Anna commented:

> The excitement that they [students] get out of the things that you do... I have a lot of power. You don't think you have power... but when you encourage them a certain way or you see them do something right when they've been on the wrong track for a while, you get this power sense that you really do influence them (p. 55-56).

Anna continued, "It gives me a good feeling that you're influencing them in a good way...And it's not really a power thing [over the students] but more just an influence that you really had...and that gives me...a power feeling" (p.56). Cliff also identified the:

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> power of positive energy...that I get out of working with the kids in this grade... just sitting in the room with expressions of some really powerful stuff that has gone on ... I think more or less that's the big positive for me" (p. 71).

Feelings of powerlessness. In contrast to the empowerment that teachers experienced in the course of some of their professional activities, feelings of powerlessness were also reported in the interviews. These feelings were often associated with frustration resulting from having to carry out activities that interfered with teaching and which were seen as taking time away from the students. Although the need for completing administrative tasks was seen as being necessary, teachers expressed concerns that they do not have an adequate amount of time to do so and also to cover the required instructional curriculum material. Andy stated:

> I feel powerless at times when there is so much work and you can't do it. I think about it and just feel really overwhelmed and sometimes you just feel like crawling in a hole (p. 16).

Evaluation periods are stressful for Andy as he reported, "I feel powerless at report card time. It's overwhelming because of the amount of work you have to take home and you're just struggling, just sweating to stay afloat" (p.16). Tony also commented on feelings of powerlessness:

> [I feel] powerless in a sense that we're subjected to so much paperwork and so much literature ... and the people that are suffering are the kids because they're taking a lot of out time away from the kids and that's where our bread and butter is ... making sure that the kids are learning (p.40).

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Three of the teachers commented on the lack of input that they have at the school or local level. Luella noted, "Very few decisions are really left at the local level anymore. So in a way we are powerless" (p. 155).

Lisa commented that her opinions carry little weight:

> I know that personally it makes me feel horrible. And it makes me feel powerless, less than whole because...no matter how good my ideas or no matter what my suggestions are I'm being road blocked and told, 'As administrator I make the decisions' (p. 4).

Anna said that she does not have much control over significant educational issues, "That's where I feel powerless, in the fact that changes occur and we have no say in it" (p.50). Anna also noted that in an organization where "there's so many teachers and the Board's so large" (p.50) that "sometimes you feel powerless like you can't be the person who makes the difference" (p.51).

The sense of powerlessness even extends sometimes to Union issues despite the fact that the teachers tended to view the Federation as being of critical importance in defending their interests. Andy noted:

> I feel like I'm stuck in the middle [between the School Board and the Union]" (p.27). He continued, "I think that it's [the Union] very powerful in the sense of persuading us because we have to follow through in what is expected of us. I feel powerless in that sense. We just have to do what we're told" (p.16).

Anna also stated, "You kind of have to go along with what the Federation guy thinks is the best even if you don't agree with everything just because you're not

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going to make a difference as one person" (p.50). Cliff reported: "I feel disjointed [from the Union]. I don't feel that I'm very much in contact with the Union" (p.66).

Traditional decision-making. In the interview situation, the participants discussed their experiences not only with the current principal of the school but also administrators with whom they had worked in the past. The participants indicated that they have had the most experience with traditional decision-making where power is vested in the principal who makes all the major decisions regarding implementing Board polices and initiating school-level procedures, both of which facilitate the daily activities within the school. The teachers identified this as a "top down" approach, consistent with the hierarchical structure of the education organization. Lisa commented, "There are those to whom I refer power because of their position and because I respect them" (p.5). Anna stated, "They [the administration] do have power over [teachers] telling us what to do. Well, it's in the best interest of the kids anyway...there's not usually unreasonable power ... in this school" (p.52). Andy described the administrative role of the school principal and vice-principal as follows:

> I see them more as a managerial role as opposed to being educators first... a power role. It's becoming management – management first and I don't even know if they're going to be educators (p.37).

Todd related a past experience where teachers in another school felt that they had little input into decision-making. This created a hostile working environment and the principal was perceived as playing teachers off against each other. As a result, half of the staff requested transfers to leave the school and it was evident,

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as Todd put it, that "the principal sets the tone [for the school]" (p. 123). Todd further described the top-down approach:

> At our school usually, non-essential issues are power-shared ...I mean of the current way things operate here in this school. It is very bureaucratic. Little goes up, much comes down" (p.115).

When asked how he felt about this he replied "Not good" and "very disgruntled" (p. 138).

Lisa also commented about the issue of shared decision-making at Meadow Lane School:

> No, I don't think there is power-sharing. There isn't even responsibility-sharing because the most power[ful] person has trouble delegating and leaving it because there is always the fear that the person that it's delegated to won't do it properly. So basically, there is always the hovering, even if you are delegated some responsibility. So I really don't think there's sharing (p. 11).

William remarked on the "autocratic nature of the power structure [in the school system] "(p. 111) and Cliff commented:

> I get the idea that things that are there will be or the expectations that are there are going to happen regardless of what you feel. So basically, whatever is going to happen is going to happen regardless of how you feel about it (p.89).

Andy, on the other hand, saw the merits of a traditional, top-down model and does not see the value of the alternate, power-sharing approach:

> I'm also glad [there is not power sharing at the school]. I don't have the time or energy. And I don't want to deal with that [decision-making]. The past administrator involved us in a number of ways...I really didn't want to be a part of that. I don't mind sometimes when administration take on that role. The word 'consensus' doesn't always work... to get consensus, that's a bunch of crap. In a sense we're just holding out for what he or she [the principal] wanted to begin with. Why not just say 'this is the way we're going to do it' (p.32).

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The traditional approach to decision-making pertains not only to the authority of principals in the school system but also to the way in which the government exercises control. As William stated, "The collegial environment [that] is essential to a quality education system" [is in] "decline" (p. 111). He attributed this to the "top-down [approach which] comes from the legislation being passed by successive governments" (p. 111).

Power-sharing. While the teachers in the study appeared to have greater experience with the traditional style of decision-making, they also made mention of alternative strategies such as power-sharing, consensus building and empowerment. These strategies produced more satisfaction according to the teachers than the traditional top-down approach, as teachers felt they had some input into the decision-making process. Todd stated, "I preferred the times when we've had more of a dialogue with administration and we worked together. I don't think the decisions are shared as much as they used to be" (p.116). Luella commented about her experiences with past administrators and agreed about the benefits of a power-sharing model adopted by some administrators:

> We had one principal and she was very top-down with her demands. We [then] had a new principal come in and she was a consensus person and she was not threatening. And the tone of the school was far lighter and far happier that it had been in a long time (p.155).

Although previously indicating that he was cynical about power-sharing adopted by some administrators, Andy did acknowledge that he would be in favour of power-sharing for the "day to day things that affect me. My working environment

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... anything that really involves me on a daily basis that affects me. I think I need to know what's going on" (p.33).

Some principals gave teachers the opportunity of working on committees, which were designed to address specific issues within the school (e.g. staffing and supervision). Cliff reported, "We do this thing called committee as a whole. So as a whole staff we sit down, we don't vote, we get consensus from that" (p.85). The ability to have input of this type was characterized as resulting in a more positive school environment and a happier staff as a whole. Marie commented, "We do our own staffing so I guess we do share [power]. We do share [power] with administration because in other schools the principal doesn't do that" (p.148). Todd described the situation with a former principal who engaged in power-sharing. He said:

> The staff loved him, absolutely loved him. The staff worked for him, hard for him, because they respected him. They felt like he empowered them to do things. They were allowed to run with what they wanted to do, and he would back them" (p. 137-138).

Luella discussed that fact that the willingness on the part of administrators to share power was seen dependent on the individual. She reported:

> If you have younger more confident leaders in your school they are willing to share the power. A lot depends upon the competency of your administration – if they feel comfortable sharing the power and allotting that power to others. And it takes a dynamite person to allot that power to others and to try and gain consensus without being heavy-handed about their demands (p. 154).

As indicated above, not all teachers were equally positive about power-sharing. Andy found the experience "frustrating" (p. 32) and a "joke" (p. 32) because he felt that the important decisions regarding school and Board policies

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are already made by the person in authority and that requests for input are not genuine. Andy believed that the hidden message behind the ostensible requests for staff input is, "'This is the way you're going to do it, because this is the way I want it done'" (p. 32). Todd maintained that the "principal holds power and doesn't let it go" (p.120) even when working with the Parent Council which was designed to provide advice to and share decision-making with the school principal. For Todd, "They [principals] do set the tone, absolutely" (p.124). The extent of power-sharing or decision-making taken on by the staff "depends on how united the staff is" (p.124). Todd felt that only a strong, united staff can ensure that decision-making is shared between the administration and school staff.

Other Powerful Influences

While the teachers were responding to questions about sources and types of power and their experiences with power, it was observed that they often returned to issues, which appear particularly salient to them. These issues were the basis for the third theme, Other Powerful Influences. These were issues pertaining to accountability and the delivery of the curriculum in the classroom, both of which have been priorities established by recent governments in the province of Ontario and have direct influence over the teachers' daily activities and responsibilities. While the teachers were readily able to identify and describe how power sources impacted them, many of them appeared especially concerned with feelings engendered by having to deal with everyday, practical and concrete issues.

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Curriculum. All nine participants commented on trying to deliver the curriculum that has been developed and mandated for each grade. Andy expressed his frustration:

> I feel powerless in the quantity and quality of the curriculum coming down. I feel powerless at times when there's so much work and you can't do it. I think about it and just feel really overwhelmed and sometimes you just feel like crawling in a hole (p.16).

Todd's comments about the curriculum were as follows:

> I don't think there's a teacher in the province that can deliver the program effectively or completely" (p.121)... There are a million little things and they want you to do all these million little things. And sometimes you remember them and sometimes you forget. And hopefully, you forget the least important ones (p.129).

Luella noted, "I have very little control over the curriculum. That's decided [by the Ministry]... they are the power source" (p.155).

The teachers questioned the appropriateness of the new curriculum that they are obliged to cover within the school year. There was seen as being too much material at too high a level of difficulty for students to master and too little time to cover the information. William noted:

> The volume of things they expect to just plop into students' heads is completely irrational. And to expect students to get it on a time schedule this year, that's just nonsense. The human body doesn't work that way (p. 112).

Lisa expressed her concerns in this way, "Curriculum is way out of line for the amount of time [available for teaching] and the age level" (p. 7-8). Marie stated:

> It [the curriculum] is limiting in some ways because you don't have as much variety in what you are going to teach. Because there is so much

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> curriculum to cover...which doesn't leave any time left over to do extra projects and activities (p.102).

Tony felt that the task of presenting the curriculum is poorly understood and commented, "To these people [who make the decisions] you'd say, "Perhaps you should spend a few days in a classroom and see what it's really like and the time constraints that are on us to get these things covered'". (p.44). Andy felt uncertain as to how best to proceed in terms of delivering curriculum to his students and stated his dilemma:

> The curriculum guidelines or expectations...you try to address them all but it's not clear as to how to address them. It's not very clear on when to address them...I think we're all struggling with that and every teacher deals with it in their own way (p.24).

In the past, teachers have depended mainly on opportunities for professional development in order to obtain the appropriate teaching strategies. More recently, these opportunities have become more limited and teachers have to be more self-reliant in gaining insight into implementation of the curriculum. Cliff put it this way:

> We used to have consultants, or people that would...put on workshops for the P.D.[professional development]. So you would then have an expert that you could tap into and give you ideas...and I don't think we have enough of that any more...and there is also a lack of senior colleagues who were once available to act as consultants and mentors...You don't have that [knowledge base] to tap into (p. 76).

Andy noted, "Curriculum leaders, they're slowly being faded out...being able to find the time and the effort to spend with this limited resource is difficult on top of your regular duties that your doing every day (p. 33).

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Despite the pressures to deliver the mandated curriculum, there was also the understanding of the need to keep the curriculum current and relevant. As Luella stated:

> It's a new and different generation that we are teaching and we needed to certainly beef-up our curriculum to be more responsive to the demands of educated people in our society (p.150).

As an experienced teacher Luella continued to comment:

> Our main job is to support the students and the new curriculum, any new guidelines. I find the new things that come around are something that have already been there and you're just going over something that happened 25 years ago. Nothing's new; it just keeps going in a circle (p.150).

Accountability. Accountability and the need to meet expectations were issues that generated considerable discussion during the interviews. There were frequent references to the importance of trying to fulfill expectations articulated by the government, administration, parents, colleagues and the Union. With respect to accountability, Lisa said:

> I feel like I'm the infantry as opposed to the cavalry...I still have, no matter what, a curriculum to get through. I have kids to please, parents to please, have my bosses to please and I have my own self and standards to please (p. 2).

Andy also described his feelings about meeting expectations:

> So I think for the most part as a teacher I want to please parents because we are in that business... Expectations – they govern me day in and day out and what I teach, how I teach... It's driven me because I have these report cards that I need to account for the expectations. The expectations are tiresome. There's so many of them. But I still have to follow them, no matter what, because it's laid down. It's provincial (p.24).

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Todd relayed his beliefs about accountability issues. He stated, "In terms of the way we pursue accountability, it's very top-down. And that isn't always the best way to create a dialogue to improve on successes" (p.115). Todd continued: "...a lot of that accountability is either not monitored or impossible to monitor" (p.121).

Meeting expectations was a matter of considering the consequences of doing or failing to do so. As Lisa stated:

> Personally, feeling that it's a job well done and publicly it's a job well done because it's measurable to the public, to the principal, to the parents, to the [School] Board. And so it's again, I guess, the private kudos [for meeting expectations](p.10).

On the other hand, for Cliff there are concerns about not meeting expectations. He said, " ...it's [complying with expectations] too much aggravation not to" (p.78) but also acknowledged that he had professional responsibility and commented, "I'm doing what's professionally, it's a professional ethic. You are supposed to do what you are asked to do" (p.112). Marie spoke of meeting expectations as an obligation and said, "The reason why I meet my expectations is because that's my job. Ministry expectations – I am legally obliged to do it" (p.146).

Two of the nine teachers commented the usefulness of issue of accountability. Andy stated:

> They [parents] are holding me accountable which is good in a sense. It keeps me on my toes. And I need to answer to them. It's their school ... and I don't blame them" (p.22).

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Tony also commented on positive aspects of working with parents to meet expectations by saying:

> They [parents] just want honesty from us ... and [they want to know] how we're helping and how they can help (p.40)...Parents, if you do your job and the kids are learning, don't bother you and they're really supportive and they try to help. The thing here is the communication. If you're open with them [parents]...and you communicate with them...they're really supportive (p.42).

Province-wide testing mandated by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was referred to as another source of accountability. Considerable pressure surrounds the EQAO testing, particularly with regard to getting all the instructional material covered in time and teachers reported that it is necessary to "end up teaching to the test somewhat which I don't agree with but you feel [is necessary] in order to give the kids the best" as Anna put it (p. 54). The teachers feel the pressure to such an extent that they avoid teaching the grades which are involved in EQAO testing. Anna stated:

> ...some [teachers] would like to teach grade three because of the age [of the children] but they avoid it because of the extra pressure...and just trying to finish the whole curriculum before the beginning of May (p. 55).

Three of the teachers commented that the requirements for assessing and reporting student progress are complex and extremely time consuming. Cliff commented, "The way assessment is set-up, I feel that it becomes an onerous task" (p. 67). While assessment packages have been developed by the School Board and are used at Meadow Lane Public School, there are so many aspects of students' performance that need to be evaluated that some of the teachers feel

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overwhelmed and that there is not sufficient time to do an adequate job. Cliff continued:

> I think the assessment packages that are given...you would have to have years of experience in order to co-ordinate that assessment with your general running of your classroom...[and] the time frame to do that, I don't think is feasible (p. 67-68).

Andy expressed frustration with the standardized reporting process. He stated, "I feel powerless at report card time. It's overwhelming because of the amount of work you have to take home and you are just struggling to stay afloat". (p. 16). While many of the expectations perceived by the teachers are associated with student assessment and reporting of student progress, there are also many other tasks for which teachers are accountable (e.g. monitoring of attendance, parent/teacher conferences, attending staff meeting, etc.). The number of tasks required and the limited time available in a school day to complete them can be overwhelming. William quoted:

> 'Constant dripping weareth away a stone'...now with this [expectation] - 'you shall, you shall, you shall', you don't have the ability to think (p. 107).

The teachers at Meadow Lane Public School were also accountable for meeting the principal's expectations. The principal has established various methods of ensuring that teachers are aware of policies and procedures. It is expected that all staff will adhere to these practices and the principal closely monitors this. For example, the staff is required to sign a daily communications binder. There are also expectations that teachers will attend regular staff meeting

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and retain individual binders, which contain meeting agendas and Board communications. Lisa noted:

> We have frequent hard copy correspondence that tells us in no uncertain terms what the expectations are...they're reminders from up high...[this is] constantly, constantly, condescending" (p. 13-14).

Performance evaluation carried out by the principal represents another source of pressure for some of the teachers. William pointed out: "...anyone saying 'This is your accountability phase', they [teachers] sit up and take notice" (p.108). For Cliff, however, the evaluation process is seen as more stressful - creating "anxiety" and "trauma" (p. 91).

According to Cliff:

> You are being evaluated upon this new set of competencies [mandated by the School Board] and you don't really have a firm grasp of how or why or what are these things coming from (p.91).

He stated, "Do I feel empowered by being evaluated? No, I feel the exact opposite. I feel powerless again" (p. 91)...I really don't have any idea what it is going to do for me as a teacher" (p. 92).

Teachers were required to keep up-to-date regarding Board and school policies and procedures by reading the Communications Binder located in the central office and by acknowledging with their signature that they had done so. Observations each morning confirmed that the teachers did comply with this requirement made by the principal. The principal also expected the teachers to keep copies of memos and documents in a personal binder. Informal discussions with some of the teachers indicated that retaining all memos served as an accountability function, enabling the

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administrator to direct the teachers to their binders whenever they were seeking clarification about school policies.

Summary

The teachers at Meadow Lane Public School were able to identify sources and types of power that impact on their daily performance and to describe feelings and experiences that they have with regard to issues of power. Additional factors having direct influence on them also emerged from the data. How power is exercised in the school was also brought out in the findings. These data derived from surveys and interviews along with the field note observations made it possible to identify three themes: Sources and Types of Power, Teachers' Experiences with Power and Other Powerful Influences. Table 4 illustrates the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. The findings will be analyzed and discussed in Chapter Four.

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Table 4

Summary of Survey and Interview Themes and Sub-Themes Representing Teachers' Experiences with Power

Surveys Themes	**Interview Themes**	**Interview Sub-Themes**
Sources of Power Types of Power	Sources and Types of Power	Sources of Power Types of Power
Positive Experiences Negative Experiences Effects of Power Sources Compliance with Power Sources	Teachers' Experiences with Power	Feelings of Power Feelings of Powerlessness Traditional Decision-making Power-sharing
Power-sharing in the School Conforming to Goals	Other Powerful Influences	Accountability Curriculum

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Table 5

Relationship between Research Findings and French and Raven's Typology of Power

Sub-Themes Relating to Sources and Types of Power	French and Raven's Typology of Power
Sources of Power	Legitimate Coercive Expert Reward Referent
Types of Power	
Feelings of Power	Legitimate, Expert, Reward, Referent
Feelings of Powerlessness	Coercive
Traditional Decision-making	Legitimate
Power-sharing	Legitimate
Accountability	Legitimate, Coercive
Curriculum	Legitimate, Expert

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CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Introduction

The findings of the present study show that the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School were able to describe clearly how power was used to get them to comply with school, Board and Ministry of Education policies and procedures. The teachers' experiences reflected a wide range of situations where power was routinely employed. The teachers also identified sources of power that had some influence on their professional activities on a daily basis. These sources included the school principal, school board administrators, Ministry of Education and the provincial government. The model outlined by French and Raven (1968) was used to categorize types of power. Teachers' experiences depended on the type of power being exercised.

Sources and Types of Power

Sources of Power

Power of the principal. The initial research question pertained to identifying sources and types of power that the teachers experienced. In the current study the school principal was the most frequently cited source of power by the teachers. The principal was seen as being responsible for the implementation of School Board and Ministry of Education policies and procedures. The principal was also empowered to develop and implement initiatives specific to the school to which the teachers were obliged to adhere. The findings with respect to sources of power were consistent with traditional

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perspectives of power relations (Weber, 1947). It can be expected in a hierarchically structured organization that one's immediate supervisor is seen as being the most significant source of power and this was confirmed in the present case. One of the teachers in the study put it this way "The most obvious [person who exercises power] is obviously the principal. But he is responsible for what happens in this school and what happens in my classroom. And ultimately, he is the one that is responsible" (Tony, p. 38). These findings support the conclusions of Court (1990) who highlighted the importance of the principal's role in the daily management of a school and as a curriculum leader. Court carried out a participant observation case study using a School Board in Ontario. He described the roles and activities of members of the educational hierarchy in that Board. In discussing the role of the principal, Court (1990) stated, "the principalship is a powerful position. It offers its holder a great measure of discretion and scope" (p. 23). On the other hand, Court (1990) outlined the limitations of the principal's power in terms of the authority of superintendents and administrators higher up in the hierarchy, constraints imposed by the collective agreement with teachers and legal boundaries relating to the discipline of students. The teachers in the present study placed a greater emphasis on the principal's power than the limitations. Lisa commented, " the most influential power person in this building...well that would be the chief administrator [principal] " (p.5). By taking the perspective of an entire school board, Court (1990) was able to describe how the power of the principal was limited by the authority of positions higher up in the hierarchy. From the perspectives of the teachers in the current study, there was little mention of

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limitations on the principal's power. Only in the case of the Union did any of the teachers note that there might be limitations on the principal's power. Todd, for example, pointed out that the Union places restrictions on the principal's power: "Now he's on the outside of it [Federation] and this whole work-to-rule thing is impinging on him and causing him [the principal] to have his agenda changed" (p.133).

Power of the Ministry and government. As expected, in view of the hierarchical structure of the education system, power holders at higher levels of the organization were also identified. These included the Board of Education administration, Ministry of Education officials and the provincial government. However, the high frequency of contact with the principal made him a more significant figure to the teachers in terms of power relations than other power holders who were seen as more remote. The teachers had little contact with Board, Ministry or other government representatives and as a result, the salience of these officials as holders of power may have been attenuated. Previous research has not specifically addressed the significance of proximity and frequency of contact between the holders and recipients of power in the education system. The physical separation between the teachers and Board and Ministry officials and the fact that the teachers do not routinely relate to specific individuals at the higher levels of the education hierarchy may account for the finding that they were less frequently mentioned as being significant sources of power. The proximity of the principal and the immediacy of daily contact made him a more salient source of power than the Board and Ministry.

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Issues such as standardized curriculum, assessment and reporting policies had a significant impact on the teachers even though the originators of those policies were not in close proximity to the teachers at the school. Here the Ministry of Education and the provincial government were seen as being highly significant sources of power in spite of the absence of physical proximity. Province-wide standards have been mandated by the Ministry of Education responding to calls from the provincial government for increased accountability in the education system. Whenever the teachers identified the Ministry and the government as having power, it was always in relation to issues of accountability or curriculum development. Increased expectations for teachers have raised the significance of the power held by the Ministry and provincial government. Luella commented "I have very little control over the curriculum. That is decided in Toronto [Ministry of Education]...they are the power source" (p. 155). Todd added "In terms of the way we pursue accountability, it's very top-down...you have less latitude than you used to...the Ministry impacts us with all the curriculum they keep sending down" (p. 120). Previously the Ministry and provincial government as a whole were considered distant and anonymous sources of influence; currently, the standardization of curriculum and evaluation across the province of Ontario accentuates the importance of power-holders at the upper levels of the bureaucracy and the way in which teachers carry out their daily instructional activities.

Power of the teacher. Another source of power that the teachers identified through the surveys and interviews was that of the teaching role itself or as

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Leithwood, *et.al.* (2002) termed it, "professional teaching efficacy" (p. 100). The teachers demonstrated a strong sense of professional self-worth and power that they derived from their training and certification process. Feelings of autonomy acted as a buffer against the power exercised by those higher on the education hierarchy. Tony pointedly stated, "Nobody really has power over me. I'm accountable to some people. I'm accountable to the kids in the classroom and the parents but no one has power over me" (p.39). The teachers frequently cited the importance of their own autonomy, which allows them considerable latitude in delivering instructional activities even within the mandated curriculum.

The finding that teachers' sense of professional identity is an important source of power compliments the results of Bogler's (2001) research into job satisfaction of teachers. In that study, teachers' sense of professionalism was found to be a highly significant variable associated with job satisfaction. Bogler (2001) noted that teachers "perceptions of occupational prestige, self-esteem, autonomy at work and professional self-development contribute the most to job satisfaction" (p.676). Common's (1983) discussion of the way in which teachers view themselves highlighted "qualities or characteristics of power, action autonomy, and stability" (p. 205). Even though the teachers in the present study did not specifically address issues relating to their job satisfaction, directly evaluate teachers' job satisfaction, it was clear that professional autonomy gave the teachers a sense of empowerment. This was illustrated in a comment of Andy's "I feel empowered with the fact that who I am from teachers' college, given the paper that I've been given to teach" (p.23). Luella also stressed the

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importance of teacher autonomy: *Question*: "Do you feel autonomous in the classroom with the door closed?" *Answer:* Yes, you have the control in that room. And you are able to put forth your program and your method of teaching to help all the children to try to succeed" (p.155). From her research findings Bogler (2001) concluded

The more the teachers perceive their teaching job as a profession and central to their lives, the more they will be satisfied with it... Viewing teaching as an occupation that confers a sense of self-esteem and professional prestige will lead the teachers to consider it as central to their lives and will thus increase their satisfaction from their work. (p. 679)

The teachers' sense of their own professionalism was especially important to them in view of their awareness of the increasingly negative opinions of teachers and the education system being held by the public and government. emphasizing their autonomy was a way for the teachers to buffer feelings of powerlessness arising from decisions regarding policies and procedures into which the participants had little of no input. This was expressed by William "I feel a devaluing of the teacher's role. A de-professionalization ...I think there has been a concerted move to vilify the teacher's role and what the teachers do when in fact they are highly qualified, highly trained professionals. And I don't think that's recognized" (p. 106).

The present findings also the support the conclusions of Court (1990) who described a wide range of powers that teachers possess. These include the possession of knowledge, power over school administrators, the way in which

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they implement curriculum, power over students and power obtained through their participation in the Union.

Power of the Union. An additional source of power often mentioned by the teachers was that of the Union, as embodied in the school by the Union steward who monitored working conditions to ensure that there was adherence to all aspects of the collective agreement. The power of the Union was exemplified in two distinct ways. First, the Union was seen as protecting teachers' rights and preventing perceived abuses in the workplace. By virtue of the collective agreement the Union had legal leverage to negotiate working conditions and to ensure that they were honoured. As Marie stated "We were told that if the principal said 'You still have to do it' we would say 'No, I refuse based on section whatever of our collective agreement'" (p.104). Court (1990) argued that "the role of the collective agreement is to limit the discretion, or liberty of action, of all the players in the organization. By restricting the liberty of action, it is constraining the power of players in the organization. This is the nature of its power" (p. 40). The teachers in the study recognized how the union was able to constrain the power of other players in the organization. Luella's comment "We also know that the Union has today tremendous powers. And they can oppose the administration on anything. Whether it's the implementation of a work to rule by the teachers or whether its over such things as trivial as the yard duty schedule" (p.157). At the time this study was conducted the teachers were in negotiations with the school board and were participating in a work-to-rule campaign. Through the field observations it was apparent that the campaign was having an effect in

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limiting the power of the principal. For example, no staff meetings were scheduled during this time and discretionary tasks such as writing report card comments were not carried out. Second, the power of the Union was demonstrated through the compliance of the teachers in participating in Union activities and demonstrating support and affiliation. The teachers felt obliged, for example, to wear union buttons, to take part in union planning meetings and to prepare for the possibility of strike action. This is highlighted by Anna's comments about the Union Steward "I kind of feel like you just don't get to have your say...you all follow him [Steward] and he knows what's best for us" (p. 50). Anna continued by describing the reasons why she attends Union meetings "He's [Steward] is somewhat pushy...if there was a meeting downtown, he wanted us all there...if I didn't [attend] he would come hunt me down 'Where were you?'. I'm going to go just to show up for him"(p. 60).

Parents and students. The teachers seldom mentioned students and parents as sources of power. This finding was somewhat surprising in view of the increased accountability in education currently being promoted by the provincial government. It might have been predicted that as teachers are required to become more accountable for the learning outcomes of their students, teachers would view both parents and students as being significant sources of power. This did not appear to be the case, however, as the survey and interview data contained few references to this issue. This finding is somewhat contrary to the argument postulated by Court (1990): "through deviance students do have a significant role in the web of power relations"

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(p. 12). According to Court (1990) deviance can take the form of passive non-co-operation, active opposition to authority as well as failure to demonstrate desired outcomes (i.e. learning). In the current study the teachers did not focus on student deviance. Perhaps in the Meadow Lane school community student deviance is not a major issue and thus students were not seen as having power. Court (1990) described several situations involving teachers (including administrators) and students where the power of students to affect teacher behaviours was evident. Court did not indicate, however, whether the teachers he observed were aware of the power of the students or could have identified student power had they been asked. Of the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School, few of the teachers made mention of student power. It is possible, therefore, that students at the study school did exercise power but the teachers were insufficiently aware to make specific comments in this regard. It may be helpful to make a distinction between *power* and *influence*. The survey and interview data suggest that it is more appropriate to consider the students and parents at meadow lane school as possessing influence rather than power.

The teachers viewed the need for accountability as being reflected in additional tasks related to assessment and reporting that they were obliged to perform but this did not confer any power on the consumers – the students and parents. This finding is consistent with a traditional perspective of power inasmuch as consumers of a product or service are not generally considered to hold a position in the organizational hierarchy and instead lie outside the bureaucratic structure. Students and parents are perhaps best considered as

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consumers of the educational product rather than as holding a legitimate position within the organization. Court (1990) argued, "although not included in the official organization, they [parents] affect activity within it" (p. 42). The influence on teachers was one of pressure (and then only occasionally and specific to particular situations) rather than one of power. In the Meadow Lane School community, parents have only infrequent contact with their children's teachers and rarely attempt to exert power. The influence of parents was reflected in the teachers' obligation to keep parents informed of the progress of their children but there was no sense on the part of the teachers that the parents had significant power over them. Court (1990) concluded that "parents can apply pressure and exercise some influence in the system. That is the extent of their power. They represent a significant interest group that modestly affects the operation of the organization" (p. 43). The current data supports Court's position that parents have some influence at the school level as far as the teachers were concerned but have little direct power over either policies and procedures that were developed or the teachers' day-to-day professional activities.

Types of Power

The second part of the initial research question addressed the types of power that the teachers identified as being significant. Power within organizations has often been seen as being based purely on control and dominance. As Dunlap and Goldman (1991) suggested, "power is fundamentally domination; it carries connotations of manipulation and prohibition at best, and oppression and negativity at worse" (p.9). In the framework outlined by French and Raven

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(1968), the traditional view of power was broadened to include some forms of power that are not associated with dominance such as reward power, expert power and referent power.

The typology developed by French and Raven (1968) was a descriptive one and did not ascribe greater weighting to any one form of power. The data revealed that the five types of power identified by French and Raven (1968) were not mentioned with equal frequency by the teachers. Some types of power appeared to be more salient than others. In fact the types of power most closely associated with traditional organizational models (i.e. legitimate and coercive power) were the most frequently cited by the teachers as being significant to them. Other types of power mentioned by French and Raven (1968) such as reward and referent power appeared to have less impact on the teachers since they were infrequently cited as playing a role in their daily activities.

Another model of power was proposed by Muth (1984) to broaden the view of power beyond Weber's in which power relies on the use of force or coercion. Muth (1984) identifies three types of power that are present in the interactions that occur between people: coercion, authority and influence. Coercive power exists within an asymmetrical relationship where an individual uses force on another to gain control. Authoritative power refers to the legitimation that an individual possess and another willingly follows. Within an organization those persons lower in the hierarchy grant legitimacy to those above them. Finally, Muth (1984) labels the last subtype of power as influence. The power of influence can

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be described as "the ability of an actor, without recourse to force or legitimation, to affect another's behaviour" (Muth, 1984, p. 31).

Legitimate power. The present findings confirmed the overarching importance of legitimate power in influencing the actions of the teachers. This was especially evident in the recognition by the teachers of the legitimate right of the school principal and Ministry of Education to establish policies and procedures governing their day-to-day performance. All of the teachers acknowledged the presence of legitimate power in their school and in the education system as a whole. Although the teachers were not always content with having to comply with demands placed on them, none of them questioned the legitimacy of the sources of the demands. This finding is consistent with models of power which discuss the existence of legitimate power within organizations. The presence of what Weber referred to as *rational-legal authority* (Scott, 1998, p. 43) reflected the experiences of the teachers at Meadow Lane School. The teachers at Meadow Lane did follow the commands and directives of their supervisors without question. The teachers' compliance highlights the significance of legitimate power at the school.

Coercive power. This type of power clearly had an impact on the teachers of Meadow Lane. Their compliance with policies and procedures – even those perceived to be a waste of time or not in the best interests of students – was frequently based on the need to avoid negative consequences. Examples of the use of coercive power at the school occurred when the principal insisted that all teachers sign the communication book on a daily basis, teachers were to submit

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monthly activities for the morning announcements and completing a personal goal plan. It was understood by the teachers that failure to comply would lead to repercussions. On the basis of several studies that he conducted, Muth (1984) concluded that *coercive* power is inversely related to *influential* power. The present data confirmed that little experience with influential power at the school and the use of coercive power was discussed more often than the principal's use of persuasive techniques.

In addition, Muth (1984) indicated that the more coercive principals tended to be, the greater the conflict or lack of consensus within the school environment. In the present study, teachers reflected negative feelings about the use of coercive power but did not specifically identify the principal as being a coercive individual. Muth did not distinguish between coercive power and coercive power-holders. The current findings suggest that the use of power may be the critical variable rather than the characteristics of the individual who has the power.

The influence of coercive power may have been underestimated in recent discussions of shifts in leadership and management styles (Burns, 1978; Dunlap and Goldman, 1991; Blase and Blase, 1999;). According to Dunlap and Goldman (1991) "the extraordinary capacity to lead others to desired consequences or remarkable efforts, is not explainable by hierarchical domination no matter how participative or critical that domination is in scope" (p. 8). Dunlap and Goldman focused on leadership characteristics to account for much of the compliance exhibited by followers. In particular, they described facilitative leadership in which decision-making is shared and the co-operation of colleagues is enlisted.

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However, there were many indications in the current data that control, domination and coercion continue to be present at Meadow Lane School as far as the teachers were concerned. Coercive power not only impacted most of the teachers' daily activities but was a driving force behind their compliance with school and Board policies.

For the most part coercive power was exercised by those situated above the teachers in the education hierarchy. At times, however, coercive power was experienced as emanating from peers. For example, junior teachers sometimes anticipated disapproval from senior teachers in a team-teaching situation. The novice teachers tended to comply with requests from their colleagues in order to be perceived as team players. Avoiding aversive consequences from their peers was often a motivating force behind much of what the teachers did during the school day. Although increased focus has recently been placed on benign forms of power implicit in models of shared governance and facilitative leadership (Dunlap and Goldman, 1991; Blase and Blase, 1999; Barnett, *et.al*, 2001), coercive power remains an integral part of lives of many of teachers at Meadow Lane Public School. Since coercive power continues to be prevalent in the school system, it may warrant further discussion and investigation.

Reward power. Reward power was shown to have minimal influence on the daily activities of the teachers. In the typology proposed by French and Raven (1968), compliance with organizational policies can be obtained when power-holders offer or promise some advantage or reward. In Muth's (1984) conception of influential power, the power-holder takes into account the wishes of

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the follower and uses persuasion to obtain compliance. According to the survey and interview data, the teachers in the study were motivated neither by the anticipation of external rewards or persuasive techniques employed by the administrators. The arguments of Dunlap and Goldman (1991) and Muth (1984) do not apply to the existing power relations at the school.

While the teachers enjoyed receiving positive comments and tokens of appreciation from the principal, the intrinsic satisfaction of seeing growth in their students was much more powerful than actual or anticipated external rewards in motivating the teachers. As one of the participants in the study, Luella put it, "what motivates me is to see that they [students] are successful". Somewhat similar was the emotional reward Lisa received from her students – "I love the group that I teach...seeing them learn makes it all worth it". These findings agree with the conclusions of Leithwood, Steinbach and Jantzi (2002) who noted that "bonuses were appreciated by teachers as a form of recognition and a source of pride but had little, if any, 'before-the-fact' motivational value" (p.99-100). None of the teachers in the study expressed any association between expectations of gaining promotion or other perquisites, on the one hand, and compliance with school or Board policies on the other. There was no indication that the principal of the school attempted to use reward power to obtain his goals. He relied mainly on the exercise of legitimate and coercive power.

Expert power. This type of power was seldom mentioned by the teachers. Some of the teachers noted that senior colleagues who have expertise in their chosen subject areas were consulted to give advice regarding curriculum delivery.

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The increasing loss of experts due to retirement and promotion was regretted. Nevertheless, there were no indications that the teachers *depended* on these experts, such as curriculum consultants or administrators, for professional development or assistance with their instructional techniques. Experts were respected and admired but there was no evidence that they held any true power. Instead, the teachers continued to rely on their own knowledge and skills.

The teachers in this study appreciated the contributions of experts but did not depend on them nor vest any power in them. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) stated that "to influence the practices of their colleagues... school leaders often will have to influence the system of shared norms, values, and beliefs that ... shape their colleagues' interpretations of events" (p. 683). There was no evidence that the teachers in the current study perceived experts to influence any of the norms, values and beliefs at the school. In that sense, therefore, experts cannot be considered as school leaders who hold any significant power. In his discussion of influential power, Muth (1984) included expert knowledge as being an important factor that contributes to compliance. The present findings support the conclusion that expert knowledge may be of some use to teachers in enhancing their instructional practices but cannot be considered a significant motivator for following policies.

The principals in Fennell's (2002) study highlighted the importance of their own knowledge and expertise of curriculum and school governance in terms of meeting their career and personal goals. In the present study, on the other hand, the teachers did not emphasize either their own, colleagues' or administrators'

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expertise as being of significance. Although the teachers of Meadow Lane acknowledged the expertise of their principal, they neither relied on it nor were influenced by it.

Referent power. Of the types of power outlined by French and Raven (1968), mention of referent power was largely absent from the data. Referent power relates to situations "when a power-holder has personal charisma or ideas and beliefs so admired by others that they are induced by the opportunity to be not only associated with the power-holder but insofar as possible to become more like him or her" (Owens, 2001, p. 236). Muth (1984) also mentioned "referent modeling" (p. 31) as one of the components of influential power.

In a hierarchical organization such as the education system, one might expect referent power to be significant, especially as the role of leadership is increasingly emphasized. Theorists such as Dunlap and Goldman (1991) and Blase and Blase (1999) attribute the compliance and co-operation of followers to factors relating to leadership styles. Two types of leadership that have attracted attention are transformational and facilitative, both of which incorporate shared goals, joint decision-making and consensus-building. The surveys and interviews generated little discussion of referent power. The "personal charisma", if indeed it existed, of the school administrators discussed by the study participants was not sufficient to serve as a potent source of motivation or reason for compliance. Although Eden (1997) asserted that school principals "are required to exert transformational leadership, which derives its power from charismatic personality" (p. 249), the present findings yielded no evidence that charisma of the school

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leader was relevant to teachers' compliance with policies and procedures. It is not clear whether the virtual absence of this type of power was a reflection of the specific environment at Meadow Lane School or whether, in general, leaders in the education system are not perceived as possessing referent power.

Power and Leadership

Other types of power that can be exercised in bureaucratic organizations have been described in a growing literature on leadership styles (Dunlap and Goldman, 1991; Eden, 1997; Blase and Blase, 1999; Bogler, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Dunlap and Goldman (1991) argued for a new conceptualization of power that is not based solely on domination and control.

Facilitative power. Dunlap and Goldman (1991) postulated the concept of facilitative power in which administrators "work *through* others rather than ... exercise power *over* them" (p.14). Facilitative power in the school setting is exercised when administrators assist in making material resources available, provide professional development, foster a collaborative working environment and provide feedback and reinforcement to teachers.

There were few indications in the present findings that the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School had many experiences that could be attributed to the use of facilitative power as described by Dunlap and Goldman (1991). As a rule, the teachers considered themselves to be responsible for obtaining their own materials, resources and professional development. Few explicit efforts were perceived as being made by the administrator to enhance team-building and a collaborative school atmosphere. Only infrequently did teachers receive positive

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feedback and reinforcement. Monitoring and supervision of many of the teachers' daily activities did occur but this was mainly seen in a negative light (i.e. as an instance of coercive power) rather than being facilitative. The teachers also noted that there was very little power-sharing or joint decision-making except in situations perceived as being of minor importance.

Despite the fact that the teachers did not explicitly identify the existence of facilitative leadership, it could be argued that this type of power was still present but in such a subtle form as to be unnoticed and not attributable to the school administrator. It could be claimed that the principal was working "behind the scenes" using facilitative power to ensure that a positive, collaborative environment existed at the school. Facilitative power might be present but not obvious or overt. The problem with such an argument is that if facilitative power can be exercised so subtly as to be virtually invisible and unrecognized then its presence or absence cannot be verified empirically - only inferred.

The present data did not confirm the overt presence of facilitative power at Meadow Lane Public School. There was thus no support for the arguments of Dunlap and Goldman (1991) that it is necessary to postulate types of power other than traditional ones based on dominance and control.

Transformational leadership. Other researchers (Blase and Blase, 1999; Bogler, 2001) have examined the effects of alternate leadership styles where administrators share power without relying exclusively on control. Owens (2002) described how in transformational leadership practices "transforming leaders engage the aspirations of followers, tap their inner motivations, energize their

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mental and emotional resources, and involve them enthusiastically in the work to be done" (p. 245). Transformational leaders, like facilitative leaders, exercise power through promoting collaboration and inspiring their followers.

The survey and interview data provided no indication that the teachers felt that the administrator engaged their aspirations, tapped their inner motivations or energized their mental and emotional resources. The teachers were motivated to comply with policies and procedures by the need to avoid negative consequences and by the legitimate authority vested in their superiors. The data yielded no descriptions of engagement or inspiration emanating from leaders. It was the teachers' own sense of professionalism and responsibility toward their students that guided their activities and provided the main source of motivation. Teachers viewed themselves and their colleagues as energized and inspired by the prospect of growth in their students rather than their leaders' objectives.

Shared-governance. Considering recent emphasis on developing effective styles of management, one might assume that school leaders would be encouraged to foster the principles of shared governance and collaboration. Broadly speaking, shared governance refers to the establishment of "representative, democratic decision-making structures to promote teacher, parent, and student involvement in school-wide instructional and curricular decisions" (Blase and Blase, 1999, p.478). A key element in shared governance is "substantial teacher involvement in school-wide decision making" (p.481). For shared governance to be successful, it is critical that administrators be willing to let go of some of their power as it is traditionally conceptualized.

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At Meadow Lane Public School there was no evidence for the existence of shared-governance and collaboration. According to the teachers, the major decisions involving policies and procedures were made unilaterally by the principal, School Board and Ministry officials. Whether or not it was the intention of the administrators to let go of some of their power in order to engage in more collaborative decision-making, this was not actually experienced by the teachers. Even on purely school-based issues, the principal made decisions with minimal input from the teaching staff. The teachers indicated that there were no instances of power-sharing except for issues that they regarded as unimportant. Even then, the teachers did not report feeling that these attempts at joint decision-making were sincere. Rather, they felt manipulated. Two of the participants who did have previous experiences more closely resembling shared-governance indicated that they would rather work in an environment where collaborative decision-making was practiced. It was clear, however, that educational leaders' use of power as perceived by the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School was traditional, transactional and hierarchical in nature as described in Dunlap and Goldman (1991) and Blase and Blase (1999).

Teachers' Experiences with Power

The second research question related to teachers' experiences with power. The findings indicated that for the most part power was not a salient issue for the teachers. Although all of the teachers identified situations where power was used to get them to comply with policies and procedures developed by others, the tacit acceptance of the legitimate right of power-holders to do so resulted mainly in

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feelings of indifference. The manner in which the teachers described most of their experiences with power was neutral in tone. The teachers did experience feelings of powerlessness when they felt coerced into conforming to school and Board policies. Only rarely were distinctly positive feelings associated with power expressed by the teachers.

Feelings of power. It was clear that most of the teachers believed that the power they had in their classroom and over their students was formidable, even considering the limitations imposed by other powerful influences such as standardized curriculum delivery and accountability that affected their daily routines. As Tony, one of the most experienced of the teachers put it: "The power that a teacher has is just incredible. What they can do with kids and how they can turn the kids on and how they can turn the kids off...Who's the most powerful person in the board? It's got to be the teacher" (p.41).

Common (1983) described the view of teachers that is often held by educational reformers and policy-makers responsible for initiating change in the school system (e.g. Ministry and School Board officials). According to this perspective, teachers are generally seen as "powerless, passive, uniform and changeable" (p. 205, adapted from Figure 1). Common argued that this view is not consistent with how teachers perceive themselves. The current findings support Common's (1983) conclusion that teachers see themselves as being "powerful, active, autonomous and stable" (p. 205, adapted from Figure 1). The teachers at Meadow Lane School clearly recognized their own power and autonomy in the classroom and demonstrated a good deal of flexibility and the

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ability to effect change with respect to the implementation of new policies and procedures.

Positive experiences with power were also associated with the teachers' Union. The teachers in the study described the power held by the Union in a positive light, in spite of the fact that sometimes coercion was used by the Steward to ensure participation in Union activities. The primary role of the Union was seen as safeguarding the interests of teachers and ensuring fair and equitable working conditions. The teachers in this study expressed pride and confidence in their Union. The power of the Union acted as a buffer against the effects of the power exerted by school and Ministry administrators in the current political and social climate that led to the teachers feeling embattled. The findings are consistent with the teachers' reports in Court's (1990) study in which several anecdotes were given relating to how the Union's power can be successfully pitted against that of the school administration.

Feelings of powerlessness. Scott (1998) pointed out that in a hierarchically-structured organization, subordinates may experience feelings of powerlessness and alienation when they have to engage in activities that are not intrinsically rewarding and when they have little control over events. Discontent may arise when individuals feel excluded from the decision-making process (Leithwood, Steinbach and Jantzi, 2002). In a traditional, top-down bureaucratic organization there may be compliance with policies but those at the lower levels of the hierarchy may seldom feel empowered and may perceive themselves to be de-valued. Common (1983) pointed out how some policy-makers view teachers

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"as powerless functionaries...within the legitimate chain of authority, teachers are [seen as being] at the bottom of the pyramid and dependent upon the organization" (p.205), to earn rewards and avoid sanctions. In this view teachers are considered passive and under control with security needs being of paramount importance.

In discussing issues related to increasing demands for accountability, Leithwood *et. al.* (2002) noted "one's perceived sense of control (ability to make sense of a policy) influences one's emotional states positively or negatively" (p. 98). Perceived lack of control leads to "an increased desire to regain understand or potential control and an increase desire to avoid the negative implications of any further loss of control" (p. 98). The present data suggests that the contention proposed by Leithwood *et. al.* with respect to accountably has wider generalizability. The teachers at Meadow Lane described a lack of control when left out of the decision-making process at the school and when they felt coerced into complying with school policies. The teachers responded to the perceived lack of control by emphasizing their own autonomy which exists behind the closed classroom door.

Blase (1984) found that teachers reported elevated levels of stress when administrators were perceived as conducting themselves in a transactional manner, as opposed to the more collaborative, transformational approach that encourages input from all the members of the school team. Blase (1984) noted that teachers developed a number of coping strategies to deal with demands for compliance.

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Strategies identified as *proactive positive* were considered to be most effective and *acquiescent strategies* least effective in coping with stress related to principal's demands. Proactive strategies as described by Blase (1984) are designed to reduce or eliminate the effects of external stressors. Acquiescent strategies are those that involve passive acceptance, resignation and compliance to a given stressor.

When faced with demands made by the school principal, the teachers at meadow lane tended to use coping strategies that could be considered as acquiescent and there were few indications that they used proactive strategies. As indicated above, however, the teachers were generally acquiescent because they believed that the principal had a legitimate right to create policy at the school. There was no indication that the teachers' acquiescence was a response to stress; rather the teachers viewed their compliance as expected given the context in which the principal's demands were made. In the current study the teachers were not asked to identify stressors or the intensity of the stress that they experienced and none spontaneously mentioned stress emanating from the demands made by the principal as being of major significance.

Having to comply with policies and procedures relating to issues of curriculum and accountability also fostered feelings of powerlessness. The teachers felt that they had no input into provincially-mandated standards and had to implement them without sufficient resources or professional development. This finding is remarkably similar to that of Leithwood, *et. al.* (2002) who reported that teachers viewed issues of accountability in a negative light and were concerned

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about inadequate resources, insufficient information and unrealistic timelines for implementing change. Leithwood, *et. al.* (2002) also noted, "the government's action surrounding their accountability initiatives conspire to erode teachers' sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their work generally, as well as, in their ability to respond productively to the specific accountability initiatives of the government" (p. 106). The teachers in the current study expressed doubts about their ability to implement all the curriculum innovations and policy initiatives that were expected.

Another aspect of accountability that related to evaluation, self-assessment and the need to develop personal goal plans also troubled the teachers in the study because these were additional tasks that needed to be carried out at the likely expense of instructional time with students. The narrative of Cliff, one of the teachers in the study, highlighted this experience: "Do I feel empowered by being evaluated? No, I feel the exact opposite...I feel powerless " (p. 91)...I really don't have any idea what it is going to do for me as a teacher" (p. 92).

Contrasting Experiences of Teachers and Principals

Fennell's (2002) research on principals' experiences with power is perhaps the study that is most closely related, conceptually, to the current one since it focused specifically on personal interpretations of the use of power. Fennell (2002) reported that the principals in her study described their power as an "enabling and positive energy for change and growth in schools rather than a source of "top-down domination" " (p. 95). The principals also identified the "power of knowledge, the power of trust, the power associated with being a

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positive role model, the power of responsibility and the power of respect as being the faces of power that were prevalent in their experiences" (Fennell, 2002, p.111).

The experiences of the principals in Fennell's (2002) study were not similar to those of the teachers in the present one. None of the teachers at Meadow Lane identified the principals with whom they had worked as "empowering" nor did they indicate having experienced "enabling and positive energy" emanating from their administrators. The traditional, "top-down domination" (Fennell, 2002, p.95) model of power was present at the school and reflected the experiences of all the teachers. In fact, the concept of empowerment was so remote for the teachers that interview questions referring to this term appeared to produce some confusion and requests for clarification. When the teachers did comment on empowerment, they did so in a way that suggested that they experienced empowerment by virtue of their own position, professional qualifications and perceived autonomy rather than from an outside source such as the principal.

The present findings as reflected in teachers' comments were consistent with those of Fennell (2002) in acknowledging the importance of knowledge and responsibility on the part of their administrator. The teachers did identify the principal as having a strong knowledge base, with regard to both curriculum issues and School Board and Ministry policies and procedures. On the other hand, although the teachers recognized the principal's knowledge base, there were no indications that this was seen as a strong source of *power* in terms of impacting their daily activities. The teachers relied on their own expertise and

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that of their colleagues and Union representative. They expected the principal to share information that was necessary in order to comply with policies and procedures but did not attribute power to the principal as a result of his having this knowledge. It was also apparent that the teachers recognized that the principal was required to assume the responsibility for the operation of the school and the activities of the staff and it was this power, elsewhere referred to as legitimate power that was most salient to the teachers.

Although the teachers in the current study frequently emphasized their own power and autonomy in terms of their professional role, they seldom mentioned the effects of these factors on their students. The teachers appeared less cognizant of their own "power of knowledge, the power of trust, the power associated with being a positive role model, the power of responsibility and the power of respect" *vis- à -vis* their students than were the principals in Fennell's (2002) study in relation to their teaching staffs.

The principals participating in Fennell's (2002) research were particularly conscious of their role as educational leaders. They were especially interested in employing their power to improve the school climate and the professional growth of both students and teachers. As a result, it was important to those principals that they provided a sense of empowerment to their teaching staff.

There were no indications in the present study that the principals who were discussed by the teachers had similar concerns. If indeed it was the *aim* of those principals to promote empowerment and a sense of "enabling and positive energy", these feelings were not actually *experienced* by the teachers. There

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may be an inconsistency between the intentions of some principals and the felt experiences of teachers. A key variable may be the *behaviour* rather than the *intentions* of the principal: leadership behaviour designed to promote empowerment may be required for the teachers to experience "enabling energy". Intentions may be necessary but not sufficient.

Appelbaum, *et. al. al. al.* (1999) reported on different interpretations of the concept of empowerment held by management and worker. Managers tend to perceive themselves as empowering their subordinates; the reality as perceived by workers is contrary to their superiors' assumptions. Additional research may be necessary to determine the relationship between principals' intentions and teachers' perceptions of how power is used and experienced and to identify critical leadership behaviours that lead to feelings of empowerment in teachers.

On the other hand, it might have been the case that the principals discussed by the teachers in the present study did not, in fact, have strong intentions of promoting empowerment. These principals might have seen their role as school leaders in traditional terms and continued to rely on *power-over* strategies rather than adopting a *power-with* approach. For these principals, "holding on" to power may be more important than "letting go" (Fennell, 2002).

Summary

The findings of the present study were discussed in terms of existing conceptual frameworks, research and theoretical arguments relating to power and its uses in the school system. The data indicated that power was regularly

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experienced by the teachers of Meadow Lane Public School throughout the course of their daily activities. This confirms the view of power as being inherent in organizational structures as proposed by theorists such as Foucault and Weber.

Aspects of the framework outlined by French and Raven (1968) were also validated, particularly with regard to the presence of legitimate and coercive power. These types of power were both prevalent and of major significance to the teachers in this study. Other types of power such as reward, expert and referent were not considered of paramount importance.

There is an absence of studies dealing directly with teachers' experiences with power. Most of the recent research associated with power has dealt with leadership styles. Relatively new and progressive leadership styles (e.g. transformational and facilitative) have emerged in some school systems in an effort to enhance cohesive, team-centred school environments. The teachers in the current study had little or no experience with these forms of governance. The teachers did not participate in power-sharing except in what were perceived as relatively unimportant matters at the school. The studies of Fennell (1992; 2002) showed that when principals are able to "let go" of some of their power, teachers can become empowered to effect change in the school. In the present study the administrative structure remained a traditional, top-down one and there were no indications that teachers felt empowered or energized. It was argued that it is important for administrators not only to have the intention of adopting changes in

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leadership but also to ensure that teachers actually experience the positive effects of these changes.

Despite the fact that the teachers were able to identify sources and types of power that have an impact on them on a regular basis, other issues such as accountability and curriculum appear to be more salient because they have a direct impact on teacher activities. The teachers accepted the legitimacy of power that comes with being part of a hierarchical organization. Recognition of their own autonomy and professionalism buffers, to some extent, against negative effects of experiencing power. However, expectations associated with delivering curriculum and reporting procedures caused considerable concern and preoccupation. Issues relating to power itself appear to be of lesser importance to the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School.

Chapter Six includes a discussion of the implications of the present findings for practice and future research. To conclude, some personal reflections on the process of conducting this study will be presented.

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CHAPTER SIX

Implications and Reflections

Introduction

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to address the following research questions:

1. What sources and types of power do teachers identify as being significant to them?

2. How do teachers experience power?

Data were collected at an elementary school in the form of surveys, interviews and field note observations. Previous studies and discussions pertaining to power have not examined in detail teachers' experiences. Most of the existing literature is based on leaders' use of power and on leadership styles. The present study was designed to examine the impact that power has on teachers' daily activities and feelings.

Sources and Types of Power

Sources of Power

With regard to the first research question, the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School identified the government, Ministry of Education, School Board, principal and their own profession as the main sources of power. The principal was identified most frequently by the teachers as a significant source of power; it is speculated due to his direct presence and influence in the school. These findings are consistent with the hierarchical nature of the education system. Power relations insofar as the participants in this study were concerned followed

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traditional lines and there were strong indications in the data that the teachers viewed their educational leaders as exercising power over them in conventional, well-established ways.

Other sources of power were viewed as having less impact on the teachers' daily activities. Somewhat surprisingly, considering that students and parents are the consumers of public education, the teachers did not perceive them as being significant sources of power. This may be because students have been seen traditionally as occupying the lowest level in the education hierarchy and children are not typically viewed as having power over adults, especially in the classroom setting. Only a few of the teachers identified students as having power. However, some of the teachers noted that students do exert power through their performance and behaviour in the classroom. Since these teachers identified their own job evaluations as being partially dependent on students' achievement, they realized that their students held some power. Although all the teachers clearly recognized the importance of accountability for student outcomes, the majority of the teachers in the study did not equate accountability with students having power.

The teachers reported infrequent contact with parents at Meadow Lane Public School and therefore parents were not regarded as having much impact on day-to-day classroom activities. Parents were described as exerting some power only when they attempted to influence teachers' decisions regarding the delivery of instruction, class placement, seating arrangements, assignment of tasks, evaluation procedures and reporting.

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One conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that power sources that were more direct, immediate and frequent had a greater impact on the teachers than sources that were more distant and less visible on a daily basis. Thus, the principal and the Union steward, who were highly visible and always present at the school, were considered more significant sources of power compared to the officials of the School Board and the Ministry of Education.

The teachers identified their sense of professional identity and self-efficacy as a source of power that provided strong support to them in dealing with other sources of power. Their own autonomy helped buffer them against requirements relating to accountability and curriculum that were imposed unilaterally on them. The teachers often pointed out that the Ministry and Board could mandate *what* they would teach and that students would be evaluated but not *how* they would teach or *how* they would evaluate. Another conclusion from the data is that the teachers viewed their own power as being of great personal significance to them. This was the only issue that produced complete unanimity among the participants.

Types of Power

Legitimate power. Types of power that teachers experience were also addressed in the first research question. Here the framework of French and Raven (1968) was used. The type of power most often identified by the teachers in the study was that of legitimate power. The teachers recognized the legitimate power of the Ministry of Education to determine curriculum and standards province-wide. Legitimacy was also accorded to the School Board as the

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employer who has the power to set policies and procedures as well as working conditions and expectations negotiated through the collective bargaining process. The principal was recognized as having the legitimate right to establish school-based policies and procedures with which the teachers were obliged to comply. Teachers also identified themselves as having legitimate power. This derived from the training and certification process, from formal recognition of the profession by the Ministry of Education, and from the recently-created Ontario College of Teachers.

Expert power. Another type of power described by French and Raven (1968) was that of expert power. Expert power was attributed by the teachers in the study to the principal by virtue of his knowledge of the Education Act and his role as curriculum leader. Colleagues who were expert in their subject areas were also considered to have power as did the Union steward due to his extensive knowledge of the collective agreement and the Union's position on working conditions.

Coercive power. This type of power seemed to have major significance for the teachers who participated in the study. Every teacher mentioned some experiences with coercive power. The use of coercive power was identified whenever others attempted to exert control over their actions and there were negative consequences for failure to comply. Experiencing coercive power often produced feelings of frustration and powerlessness. Compliance on the part of the teachers was mostly due to fear of the consequences for failing to do so even

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though they viewed many of the required tasks as taking valuable time away from their teaching and not always being in the best interest of their students.

Reward power. Although the present data revealed that teachers appreciated rewards in the form of positive feedback from principals, colleagues and parents, there were very few indications that reward power was significant or that teachers were motivated to comply with the wishes of others by the anticipation of rewards. According to the survey and interview data, teachers were motivated primarily by the prospect of seeing growth and accomplishment in their students.

Referent power. Of the types of power outlined by French and Raven (1968), mention of referent power was absent from the data. One might have expected this type of power to be significant, especially since leadership in education is being increasingly emphasized. It is not clear whether the absence of this type of power was a reflection of the specific environment at Meadow Lane School or whether, in general, leaders in the education system are not perceived as possessing referent power. It may also be the case that while some leaders are admired and respected, their "personal charisma" is not a potent source of motivation.

French and Raven (1968) extended the concept of power in organizations to include types of power other than dominance and control. In the traditional education setting, as exemplified by Meadow Lane Public School, the additional types of power described by French and Raven were largely absent. It appears

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as if the concepts of legitimate and coercive power are sufficient to describe the experiences of the teachers who participated in the study.

Teachers' Experiences With Power

The second research question related to how the teachers experienced power. Common elements in terms of how the teachers conceptualized and experienced power were revealed in the survey and interview data. The teachers described a variety of situations that were associated with the use of power. The teachers reported feelings of power and powerlessness in response to the different types of power that were wielded.

It was apparent from the findings that the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School did not experience power as an abstract or theoretical concept. Thus, in discussing their experiences with power, the teachers typically responded with specific examples rather than generalizations. The teachers identified and described powerful influences that they encountered on a regular basis. There were direct or immediate influences, such as the need to follow policies devised by the principal. On the other hand, there were indirect and more distant influences such as those emanating from the Ministry or School Board.

Experiences with legitimate power were mainly neutral in tone. This finding is somewhat surprising since it might have been predicted that strong negative feelings would result from having to comply with directions and carry out tasks which the teachers often viewed as unnecessary or inappropriate. Infrequent and insufficient opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making about these types of activities could be expected to heighten negative

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feelings. This did not seem to be the case, however. The teachers acknowledged that certain sources of power are legitimized by virtue of legal mandate or position of power-holders in the organizational hierarchy. Compliance with the expectations required by legitimate power sources was considered an integral part of the teachers' professional and legal responsibility.

Acceptance of the legitimacy of the power source seemed to attenuate any negative feelings that might occur. In addition, the teachers felt that they still enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in the classroom despite having to comply with the various demands placed on them. By focusing on their autonomy, teachers were able to interpret the legitimate use of power in neutral rather than negative terms.

Although it was not identified frequently as a strong source of power, positive feelings were expressed toward holders of expert power. The teachers valued the expertise of colleagues, administrators and Union representatives and were able to obtain information that would assist them in performance of their daily duties. Positive feelings directed towards peers who possessed expert power appeared to promote a sense of collegiality. In turn this contributed to heightened perceptions of both "personal teaching efficacy" (Leithwood et al., 2002, p.100) and "collective efficacy" (p.101).

There were no indications that the teachers were motivated to carry out various tasks or to comply with directions by the prospect of receiving rewards from a power source. Since reward power in general did not seem to be particularly important for the teachers, there was no data to suggest that rewards

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resulted in increased feelings of power on the part of the teachers. To the extent that the teachers discussed issues relating to rewards and reward power, the sentiments expressed appeared to be neutral even though the teachers enjoyed receiving rewards of various types. For example, verbal and written praise given by the principal and parents was appreciated. In some cases, however, the teachers were skeptical about the motivation behind the reward (e.g. whether they were being manipulated) even though they enjoyed receiving the reward itself. Seeing students progress in terms of their learning and social behaviour was also a form of reward for the teachers. The teachers were likely to attribute growth in their students primarily to their own efforts and were motivated to improve their instructional activities by the prospect of realizing further improvement. It could be said, therefore, that in effect the teachers became their own holders of reward power. Feelings of power resulted from the knowledge that students were progressing.

It was evident that the teachers derived considerable power and positive feelings from their sense of autonomy in the classroom. In spite of the considerable limitations and pressures imposed by mandated expectations (e.g. especially with regard to curriculum and accountability), the teachers perceived power and autonomy remained largely intact. Focusing on their own autonomy appeared to help the teachers counterbalance feelings of powerlessness that resulted from their perception that the teaching role has been increasingly devalued by the public and the government.

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Strong feelings of powerlessness also occurred when the teachers were confronted with situations where coercive power was employed. This was especially evident when the teachers believed that they were being excluded from the decision-making process and when there was considerable pressure in the form of negative consequences to comply with policies and directives. The sense of powerlessness was heightened by having to carry out mandated activities that were viewed as not being in the best interest of students. Similar feelings were generated by having to complete tasks that resulted in less time available for teaching. Even seemingly minor issues where compliance was required, such as having to sign a communication binder on a daily basis, were seen not only as irritants but also as examples of coercion.

For the teachers in the present study, the traditional top-down method of decision-making was experienced more frequently than a power-sharing approach. The fact that the teachers were not allowed to participate in decision-making produced strong negative feelings of powerlessness. Only in minor instances did the teachers feel that power was being shared (e.g. scheduling of "prep" time). Even this type of power-sharing resulted in negative feelings because it made the teachers more aware of the fact that their input was not sought for important school-wide issues.

Other Powerful Influences

All the teachers in the study identified the issues of curriculum and accountability as having a major impact on their professional activities. These factors can be considered to be powerful influences since they were the driving

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force behind much of what the teachers did on a daily basis in the classroom and within the school. In many ways, having to deal with issues of curriculum and accountability presented more of a challenge to the teachers than did coping with the other sources of power that were identified above.

Having to follow policies pertaining to the province-wide curriculum and accompanying standardized assessment and reporting procedures resulted in feelings of powerlessness among all the teachers participating in the study. This was only the second issue of all the factors discussed by the participants where unanimity was obtained. Implementing all the policies surrounding curriculum, assessment and evaluation was perceived by the teachers as being based on coercion. Most of them felt that there was too much material to be covered in the curriculum and not enough time to ensure student mastery. Negative feelings with regard to the process by which the recent changes were undertaken (e.g. lack of teacher input, reduced opportunities for professional development, etc.) were frequently expressed. The teachers had significant concerns about their ability to deliver the curriculum as mandated and to carry out the required assessment and evaluation procedures in the time allotted.

The need to meet the perceived expectations of the government, Ministry of Education, school administration, parents and colleagues was an ongoing concern of the teachers. Accountability represented a powerful influence in the professional lives of the teachers at Meadow Lane Public School. In almost all cases the teachers viewed accountability as a negative force creating additional pressures in addition to their instructional duties. The fact that expectations

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emanated from a multitude of sources and involved so many of the teachers' daily activities may have contributed to negative feelings. Accountability also places limits on the teachers' autonomy and they resented having to organize their time around the testing process.

The need to meet the expectations of the school administrator was seen as onerous. The policies and procedures adopted by the principal were often viewed as being time-consuming and without clear purpose but the teachers identified the need to follow these in order to avoid conflicts. The performance evaluations carried out by the principal in which teachers were held accountable for their teaching practices and performance of their other duties made some of the teachers feel powerless.

Two teachers identified some positive aspects of accountability. For both teachers, accountability was a way in which they could establish contact with and obtain support from the parents of their students. It was felt that most parents would be supportive of teachers provided that the assessment and reporting processes were seen as being open and fair. Keeping parents informed and involved was identified as a key aspect of accountability. One of the participants noted that being held accountable helped ensure that teachers remain current in terms of their instructional strategies and the delivery of curriculum.

Based on the findings of the present study it is possible to draw some implications both for professional practice and future research. In addition, some personal reflections on the process of conducting this research are included in this chapter.

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Implications for Practice

Given the politicized view of educational issues, together with the powerful influences of changes in policies and procedures, it is more important than ever that teachers recognize and foster their own sense of autonomy and empowerment. The findings suggest that teachers' sense of autonomy may reduce feelings of powerlessness and negative effects of coercive strategies. Through strong affiliation with the Union, ongoing professional development and maintaining a sense of collegiality, teachers can enhance their sense of professionalism. Further discussion of concrete methods that teachers can employ to improve their sense of empowerment will need to take place. Since the Union is seen as such a powerful body, it may be the role of the Union to explore ways in which teacher empowerment can be fostered and encouraged.

Due to the complexity of all the issues relating to education, traditional ways of managing a school environment may no longer be effective and can be argued to be increasingly obsolete. The discussions with the teachers in this study implied that top-down approaches do not motivate or engage subordinates to perform at their optimal level. Greater encouragement may need to be given to educational leaders to become risk-takers and practice facilitative forms of management.

The teachers in this study did not experience substantial feelings of empowerment from educational leaders. The principals, as described in Fennell's (2001) research, made a deliberate effort to promote empowerment and a sense of positive energy among their staffs. To ensure that this happens, principals

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interested in power-sharing and developing enhanced feelings of empowerment will need to make conscious attempts to achieve this goal. Administrators who are responsible for implementing change will also need to take into account the power that classroom teachers possess and deliberately involve them in decision-making that will have a direct impact on their day-to-day routines. To reduce feelings of powerlessness, teachers will need to be involved in power-sharing and joint decision-making with issues that are seen as being important rather than trivial. For their part, teachers will need to advocate vigorously for power-sharing in the event that not all administrators adopt a facilitative or transformational leadership style.

With the large proportion of senior teachers having already retired or expected to do so in the next few years, it may be difficult for teachers to identify colleagues who possess expert power. The present findings indicate that expert power is important in maintaining positive feelings and autonomy. As a result, teachers may need to seek out colleagues and mentors who hold expert power. The availability of experts in curriculum delivery may eventually increase over the next few years as currently-inexperienced teachers gain greater knowledge and skills in their respective subject areas. However, experts who are of the same age and experience level as their colleagues may not hold the same expert power than senior teachers did with their more junior colleagues.

According to the findings from the teachers in this study, there is a void in referent power at all levels of the education system. Teachers do not feel inspired to follow their leaders and carry out all the tasks that are required of them. At

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present, coercive power is the main way in which policies are implemented. The absence of referent leadership means that teachers comply reluctantly and are motivated primarily by the avoidance of negative consequences. There is a strong need to attract individuals who are capable of being charismatic and influential leaders and who can inspire teachers to work to the highest standards.

Implications for Future Research

The present study provided an initial investigation into teachers' experiences with power in an elementary school setting. Because of the qualitative nature of the research it is not possible to generalize the findings to the population of elementary teachers as a whole. It would be interesting, however, to attempt to replicate the study in another elementary setting to determine whether the present teachers' experiences with power are shared by other teachers in a school with a different administrator, Union steward and organizational structure (e.g. a larger school with both less experienced and more experienced teachers at the primary, junior and senior levels). It would also be of interest to conduct a similar study at the secondary school level to determine whether experiences with power are different in this type of setting.

No attempt was made in the present study to determine how the principal perceived himself in terms of his leadership style. The principals in Fennell's (2001) study appeared to identify themselves as using power to facilitate improvements in their schools and as empowering teachers. Further research may be conducted to investigate whether there is a difference in teachers' experiences with power between settings where the principal identifies

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himself/herself as adopting a power-sharing approach compared to settings where the principal favours traditional, top-down strategies.

It would also be interesting to determine the experiences with power of novice teachers compared to more experienced ones. It may be that novice teachers experience power in different ways and/or with different degrees of intensity than veteran teachers who have 'seen it all'. In addition, teachers may have different experiences with power in schools where there is an inexperienced administrator compared to schools where the principal has had several years of experience. Future research could be carried out to investigate the effects of the variable of teacher and principal years of experience.

Fennell's (2002) study focused on the experiences with power of female principals. The principal at Meadow Lane Public School was a male. According to the teachers' responses, the principal at Meadow Lane used power differently from the way that the principals in Fennell's (2002) study did. Further research is needed to determine whether there is a gender difference in the willingness and ability of male versus female administrators to use power-sharing approaches to leadership. It may also be useful to further study the expectations of male and principals to determine whether there are differences in their use of power.

Based on the differential responses of the male and female teachers in this study to interview questions, there may be gender differences in teachers' experiences with power. Female teachers may be more susceptible to coercive power than male teachers, for example. Coercion may engender more resentment in males, especially if it is used by female principals, and may result in

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less compliance. Determining whether there are interactions between the gender of teachers and that of administrators in terms of the use of and experiences with power would be of value.

Further investigation of the way in which the use of power impacts upon the school climate in general would be of interest and would be expected to provide useful information for administrators who are concerned about improving the environment. The relationship between experiences of power and job satisfaction of both teachers and administrators may also need to be explored and may have definite implications for the workplace.

In the setting of the current study, observations indicated that the staff could be considered to be fairly cohesive and collegial. Teachers' experience with power might be different in school settings where there is less perceived cohesion. It would be of interest to determine under what conditions the use of coercive power becomes more prevalent and to what extent a collegial school atmosphere attenuates the effects of coercive power. Observing and conducting interviews in settings where different types of power predominate might produce a varied set of experiences.

Since the present study did not indicate that students and parents are viewed by teachers as being a strong source of power, further research is needed to determine how these "consumers" are perceived. Teachers may view students and parents as being important in terms of influencing their daily activities but not necessarily as being powerful. It may be useful to identify specific issues where the power of students and parents is more apparent. For example, lesson

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planning, yard supervision and the scheduling of extra-curricular activities may be situations where the power of students and parents is directly experienced.

Finally, further study is required to determine how some teachers become more effective than others in dealing with challenging problems such as accountability and delivery of curriculum. Future studies can examine teachers' coping mechanisms as they relate to different sources and types of power. The findings of such studies would have implications for enhanced performance and job satisfaction. They could also provide useful information to assist in goal-setting, personal improvement plans, professional development and teacher training programs.

Personal Reflections

Initially, I was skeptical about conducting qualitative research. The traditional and long-accepted practice of scientific method is what I was more familiar with as the typical way of conducting research. However, during my two years of graduate work I discovered that qualitative research plays an important role in the social sciences and more specifically in the area of study of Educational Administration. In the course of reading numerous journal articles and now actually carrying out a qualitative study, I have been enlightened on the effective and valuable contribution this type of research has made to academic literature. In addition to my readings, a graduate course designed specifically to investigate qualitative research was also helpful in furthering my understanding of the process. Qualitative research is reliable and trustworthy and has achieved

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recognition for its focus on rich, thick, and in-depth narratives that promote progressive and liberal thinking. Using qualitative research methodology has expanded my knowledge of the phenomenon of power and power relations in an educational setting such as Meadow Lane Public School and has helped me to understand the experiences of teachers from a phenomenological perspective.

The process of conducting the research was extremely challenging. On a continual basis there were many variables to take into consideration to ensure that the present study remained credible. Ethical considerations, gaining access to the research site and obtaining sincerely interested and willing participants were some of the challenges. These were factors which I, as a novice researcher, did not take into account initially but quickly realized that without these basic fundamentals, sound empirical research cannot take place.

As an educator, I believe in the philosophy of life-long learning and one of the most significant learning experiences I gained from the present study was the ability to conduct effective interviews – a process in which I had not previously engaged. Collecting valuable data by means of interviews is more than a simple conversation; crucial factors must be carefully considered before, during and after the procedure. Initially, thoughtful, probing questions must be designed. Then, active listening skills must be honed to ensure that participants and the researcher are communicating and understanding each other fully with regards to the purpose of the questions. Finally, continual reflection of the data that is collected and the process by which it was obtained is imperative to guarantee the integrity and understanding of the research. Collecting and relaying the

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experiences of others must be handled in a professional and delicate manner because the participants of the study are entrusting the researcher to convey their beliefs and feelings in a public forum.

The process of conducting research, in particular the present study of teachers' experiences with power, has been gratifying. It has enabled me to pose questions, find answers to those questions and interpret them to conclude with some illumination on the topic. It may be that the most valuable aspect of carrying out this project has been that it has led me to raise additional questions and has aroused my curiosity concerning teachers' experiences in general and the use of power, in particular. Perhaps an endeavour such as this is most useful when it raises more questions than it answers.

Summary

Survey, interview and observational data were used to investigate teachers' experiences with power at a single elementary school in a suburban neighborhood of a large urban centre. Fourteen teachers completed a survey in which teachers had the opportunity of identifying sources and types of power that impacted their daily activities. Nine teachers participated in extensive interviews where their experiences with power were described in greater detail. Field notes made through observations allowed the process of triangulation to take place to add validity to this study.

According to the data, three themes emerged: Sources and Types of Power, Experiences with Power and Other Powerful Influences. The sources of power identified by the teachers reflected the positions that constitute the

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educational hierarchy (e.g. Ministry of Education, School Board, Principal, Union and teachers). Types of power corresponded to French and Raven's (1968) framework of power describing legitimate, expert, coercive, reward and referent power.

Teachers conceptualized their experiences with power in specific, concrete terms and their reactions to power issues varied according to the situation. Legitimate power tended to result in neutral feelings on the part of the teachers. Teachers in this study obtained a sense of power from their own autonomy and professional role. Coercive power on the other hand, produced negative feelings associated with powerlessness.

In addition to the power attributed to individuals and groups within the education system, the teachers identified other powerful influences that affected their performance on a daily basis. These included issues related to curriculum and accountability.

The findings of the study were discussed in relation to previous educational research. The implications for professional practice and further research were outlined. Personal reflections on the process of carrying out the research were also included.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter to School Board

April, 2003

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Bonnie Watson and I am a graduate student in the Master of Education program at the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. As part of the requirements of the program, I am planning to conduct a study investigating teachers' experiences and beliefs about the use of power and I would like to ask your Board's permission to allow me to collect my data at one of your elementary schools within your large urban school board.

As part of my study I will be inviting teachers to complete open-ended surveys and will be making observations in the form of field notes about the school environment. In addition to the surveys and observations I will be inviting interested individuals to participate in an in-depth interview. Each interview will be approximately one hour in duration and will be recorded and transcribed. In total the data collection should take approximately two weeks to collect.

To ensure confidentiality, the school board, school and participants' names will not be identified and pseudonyms will be assigned. There are no physical, psychological or social risks involved with the study and participants may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their daily power relations within the school environment. Participation is strictly voluntary and participants reserve the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

All of the data will remain confidential. The findings from this study shall be summarized and submitted to Dr. Hope Fennell at the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University as my completed thesis. The data will be stored in a secure location at the university for seven years; after such time the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or need clarification regarding this research project, please contact me at (807) 683-6914. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Watson

Bonnie Watson

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APPENDIX B

Cover Letter to Teachers

April, 2003

Dear Teachers,

My name is Bonnie Watson and I am a graduate student in the Master of Education program at the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. As part of the requirements of the program, I will be conducting a study investigating teachers' experiences and beliefs about the use of power.

As part of my study I would to invite you to complete one open-ended survey. I also will be inviting interested individuals to participate in an in-depth interview. Each interview will be approximately one hour in duration, will take place at the school and will be recorded and later transcribed verbatim. In addition to the surveys and interviews I will be making anecdotal observations about the school environment.

To ensure confidentiality, all participants' names will not be identified and pseudonyms will be assigned. There are no physical, psychological or social risks involved with the study and participants may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their daily power relations within the school environment. Participation is strictly voluntary and participants reserve the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

All of the data will remain confidential. The findings from this study shall be summarized and submitted to Dr. Hope Fennell at the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University as my completed thesis. The data will be stored in a secure location at the university for seven years; after such time the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or need clarification regarding this research project, please contact me at (807) 683-691. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Watson

Bonnie Watson

955 Oliver Road Thunder Bay Ontario Canada P7B 5E1 www.lakeheadu.ca

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APPENDIX C

Consent for Participation

Research Topic: Teachers' experiences with power.

The researcher, Bonnie Watson, is a graduate student at Lakehead University and is conducting the following study as a requirement for the completion of her Master thesis. She will be conducting her investigation under the supervision of Dr. Hope Fennell and will be adhering to Lakehead University's *Ethics Procedures and Guidelines for Research Involving Humans.* The researcher will be collecting open-ended surveys and conducting in-depth interviews with consenting participants. The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. All data that is collected will be analyzed and summarized in a final report that will be submitted to Dr. Fennell as partial requirement for the Educational Administration graduate program. The data collected is confidential and participants will not be identified at any time during the study. The data will be stored in a secure location at the university for seven years, after which it will be destroyed.

1. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from this project at any time, even after signing this form. I also understand that there are no risks associated with this study.

2. I, _____ consent to take part in this study which will explore the experiences and beliefs of teachers in regards to the use of power.

_____

Signature Date

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APPENDIX D

Open-ended Questionnaire – Teachers' Experience with Power

The following survey is confidential and your anonymity will be maintained. If should choose to withdraw your responses at any time during the study you may do so.

The data collected from this survey will be used in the study, investigating teachers' experience with power in their professional life. Below are some examples of different types of power, feel free to use those examples in your explanation; however if you feel that other types of power have impacted you the sharing of that information would be extremely useful to the present study.

French and Raven's (1968) typology of power.

Type of Power	*Description*	*Example*
Legitimate	Position-based power	A teacher agrees to supervise the lunchroom because he respects a principal's authority to make such assignments.
Coercive	Power based on threatening punishment	A teacher agrees to supervise the lunchroom because the principal said that refusal to do so would result in a negative statement in his performance evaluation.
Reward	Power based on offering or promising rewards	A teacher agrees to supervise the lunchroom because the principal promises to assign him to a better classroom next year.
Expert	Knowledge-based power	A teacher agrees to supervise the lunchroom because he believes that the principal knows what is best for the school and for him.
Referent	Power attributable to factors such as friendship, loyalty, and charisma	A teacher agrees to supervise the lunchroom because he views the principal as a loyal friend and an ideal principal.

1. Please list all the sources of power that affect you as a teacher?

2. Please describe what types of power you have come in contact with during your professional career and explain how it impacted upon the performance of your duties and responsibilities as a teacher?

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3. Please describe any positive experiences you have had with power? How did it make you feel?

4. Please describe any negative experiences you have had with power? How did it make you feel?

5. Please explain if the sources of power that you affect you have equal influence over you?

6.In your opinion, which power sources achieve greater compliance and why?

7. Do you believe there is power-sharing in your school? If so what issues are most likely to be shared?

If you are interested in participating in an interview please check the box. ☐

You will be contacted within a week of completing this survey. At that time an individual and confidential interview will be scheduled.

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Appendix E

General Interview Guideline for Teachers' Experience with Power

1. Please identify groups or individuals who you believe exercise power over what you do on a day-to-day basis.

2. Describe how these groups or individuals impact you.

3. Please identify groups or individuals who try to exercise power over what you do on a day to day basis and describe how they affect you.

4. With increased demands of accountability in the education system, do you feel powerless in your role as teacher? If so why?

5. Please describe some positive experiences with power you have witnessed or have been a part of.

6. Describe some negative experiences you have had with power.

7. Please rank order all the sources of power in terms of the most influential to least influential.

8. Briefly describe in what way these power sources have influence over you?

9. Please describe how you feel when these individual or groups make demands on you?

10. How do you feel empowered to carry out all your duties and responsibilities of a teacher?

11. Do you feel that expectations are clearly articulated and realistic?

12. What motivates you to comply with the expectations that the individuals or groups make?

13. What instils resistance to compliance of others expectations

14. How do demands coming from different power sources conflict and how do you resolve those conflicts?

15. Do you feel there is a support network to discuss issues of power and potential conflicts?

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16. Have you ever felt coerced to meet expectations? If so, can you describe the situation and how you felt?

17. What are the benefits of meeting expectations?

18. During your teaching career, what have you witnessed/ perceived as shifts in the power source in the education environment?

19. Do you believe that there is power sharing in your school? If so what issues are most likely to be shared?

20. How is your autonomy affected by the different power sources that you identified earlier? How do you feel about this?

21. Do you receive any feedback from the various power sources that you identified above, regarding your performance?

22. What pressures are brought to bear on you to conform to the school's or others' goals?

23. Are there any other issues of power which you would like to add to the discussion?

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APPENDIX F

Transcript of a Sample Interview

Interview with Luella

Interviewer: Please identify and group or individuals who you believe exercise power over what you do on a day to day basis?

Interviewee: The administration, your peers and students.

Interviewer: Describe how those groups impact you?

Interviewee: Well administration can change your timetable at any time and you have to do coverage when you're a learning support teacher like I am. Often teachers come to me when they need to leave early or they need special favours and I, and they've okayed it with the Principal so I'll help them out if they leave early, say 15 minutes and cover classes. Students because, of the type of students I have, sometimes they need remediation on something that's unplanned for. So that certainly changes what I do on a daily basis.

Interviewer: Now identify groups or individuals who try to exercise power over you? Describe how they affect you?

Interviewee: Administration might try to consecutively to have you cover their classes if they have to leave all the time. But, I think that something you have to bring up to them and tell them how you feel. And tell them that you feel your you know, that they have an important function in the school but you have an equally an important function with the students. So to give that some consideration.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you often tell your administration how you feel?

Interviewee: I haven't normally told them but as I have got older and, I have decided that it's more appropriate instead of keeping these things inside that I certainly tell them because it's for the benefit of the students, not myself.

Interviewer: With increased demands of accountability in the education system, do you feel powerless in your role as a teacher. And if so, why?

Interviewee: No I don't feel at all powerless. Our main job is to support the students and the new curriculum, any new guidelines. Something that comes around so often that I find the new things that comes around are something that you've already been there and your just going over something that happened 25 years ago. Nothings new, it just keeps going in a circle.

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Interviewer: Please describe some positive experiences with power you have witnessed or you've been a part of.

Interviewee: We've had a new Principal come to our school and she rules by trying to run a good show by reaching some consensus with the staff. She doesn't try like the former Principal to override everyone's decision or everything that goes on thinking that she's the total person who knows everything and she's dealing with quite an experienced staff.

Interviewer: Now describe some negative experiences you've had with power.

Interviewee: My former Principal who just left, I always have done the five, grade five's, all the children with the learning problems and one of the new five teachers who happen to be assigned to the job this year, and was, did not want me for her L.S.T. And the Principal who was a good friend of the five teacher, instead of saying, "Yes she's always done it and she'll be a major help to you," asked me if I would mind changing and giving that assignment to my co-worker who's another LST. I find it's very detrimental to the children because they needed a very experienced teacher to help these children certainly with reading and many other things. And the other LST simply isn't experienced. It was a very poor decision and the Principal realized she made it, but she's left now and nothing can be done.

Interviewer: Rank order all the sources of power in terms of most influential to least.

Interviewee: The largest power that you deal with is in the school is your Principal who assigns you such things as your classes, decides on class size, usually decides what children your going to get teach, decides even on such things as yard duty. Those are all power things. Decides what things will be implemented in the school and how they will be checked on. And also, they have the power to call you at any time you know, in the office and to talk to you about things that your doing and teaching or maybe problems that there's been with parents. So I'd say admin. has quite a bit of power. The other power is the power of your peers. They have a great deal of power too. And it's in an indirect way that they can have it because among peers, everyone knows how you rank in teaching, the workers, the non-workers, people who are very supportive of the children and otherwise. Certainly the students have a great deal of power because they can make or break your day. Parents have a great deal of power as well, but they would rank below the students because you deal with them usually not a regularly as the students. Downtown administration they certainly has some power when they come in because they make overall decisions that influence everything from the type of text books that will be used in order up to your salary. Government, the final level, we don't deal with them a lot. They put

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it into being all the things that are necessary for teaching, we just have to follow through.

Interviewer: Do you feel empowered to carry out all your duties and responsibilities as a teacher?

Interviewee: Yes I do feel quite empowered. I think that comes with experience and I think you have a duty of first and foremost to your students, to your fellow staff members, and to the community, to do a good job.

Interviewer: Who or what empowers you?

Interviewee: Your empowered by yourself. And

Interviewer: So you don't feel that you get empowerment from any external sources?

Interviewee: The law says that the teachers will have certainly some power in the school but I think power, and there are different forms of it, it comes also when a form of respect you get from your students and respect from your peers. That is certainly the largest concern of power and it's the power that you have to educate good students. It's the most important thing.

Interviewer: So students success is what empowers you to be a good teacher?

Interviewee: That's your job, to see that they are successful and to help them when then fail. Because so much determines upon their schooling and our Canadian society.

Interviewer: Do you feel that expectations or demands are clearly articulated and realistic coming from the power sources?

Interviewee: Most of the time they are realistic and it's done for the betterment of students. And that's something that often the teachers forget that it's a new and a different generation that we are teaching and we needed to certainly to beef up our curriculum to be more responsive to the demands of educated people in our society.

Interviewer: What motivates you to comply with expectations or demands that are made upon you by these different power groups?

Interviewee: I think that if you feel that there justified, that will motivate you to put them in force. And nothing is to say that change isn't good.

Interviewer: What instils resistance to compliance of some of these expatiations?

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Interviewee: A lot of teachers are very reluctant to change. The one's that I've worked with and sometimes the older they are, they don't want to change. We want children to learn. We're moving in some different directions in English and the only way that you could get that to come across is, it had to come from on high. It had to come from an authority type figure. It wasn't going to be a grass roots movement the other way, like spec. ed. or not the spec.

Interviewer: Why don't you think that a grass roots movement would work in the education system? Why can't the front line workers, the teachers motivate one another to make positive changes for the students?

Interviewee: They did and they went to something called whole language. And it was something we needed a change at that time. And the authority figures weren't moving in that direction and the teachers of course where exposed to this from other countries and they went in that direction for a few years. Education like everything else is changing. And it doesn't matter if it comes from on high or it comes from a grass roots movement. We do need change and the biggest change for us in education has come from the government.

Interviewer: How do demands coming from different power sources conflict and how do you resolve those conflicts?

Interviewee: Conflict can and exists between and among people. If it's among staff members and administration, there is usually six of one and half a dozen of another. It's usually not all one sided. Usually the administration has a vision of a whole, where the teacher just has a rather limited and narrow vision which just pertains to them, not to the entire school. And I don't think you can feed into their disagreements. You can maybe understand it, but we want to work for the well meaning and good of the school community. Something in conflict between parents and teachers, that usually a big one, I think you have to learn to resolve those methods, not any one is 100 percent right or wrong. You work for resolution. The best situation to cure the ills and the best that suits that particular child that's involved and particular teacher and parents. Everyone needs a different source of help. Coming from the Government, there's always been a lot of problems with older teachers and great resistance to the new curriculum. A lot of it's because they don't want change and they don't want the work and they say, "Well if it's not broke, don't fix it." But, sometimes it may not be broke but it's old and antique and you need change.

Interviewer: Do you feel there's a support network to discuss issues of power and potential conflicts?

Interviewee: No, there's really not a support work at all. The only support you get is from your peers because usually the peers go together and they are on the

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same level where your administration is on a higher level. And since it's even taken out of our Union, the administration works on a totally different plane than we do. We have different and needs and results.

Interviewer: Do you feel support from the Ontario College of Teachers or from your Federation? And have you ever had to access support from either of those two institutions?

Interviewee: At the present time I'm never had to access support form either one. My main support is for my Union because they will support me when there's any type of a negative or a positive activity that will concern my teaching career. The Ontario College of Teachers only appears as a money grab. It's been put in there in place to give some academic meaning but at the present time all I see them doing is charging us money and going after teachers who are have a negative impact on students. I don't see much positive coming out of it.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt coerced to meet expectations or demands. And if so, can you please describe the situation and how it made you feel.

Interviewee: No, I've never felt coerced to meet new demands. I've always tried to be ahead of ever meeting new demands and always struggling in meeting new things on my own before anything has ever come out.

Interviewer: What are the benefits of meeting expectations or demands?

Interviewee: Your striving for a higher level. Everyone has to strive to do the best that they can do. So it's, you try to meet those demands as best you can both for yourself and for the students.

Interviewer: During your teaching career, what have you witnesses as shifts in power source in the education environment?

Interviewee: There is less power at the local level over school Boards. Less we have School Councils in schools but they lack a great deal of power. When I began teaching, we had local school Boards which would be made up of school Boards that were dually elected and they were the trustees that operated your local school. They ran everything and they hired the teachers and you had a great deal of control then. And you could make and decide at the individual schools what you liked. Then we moved to the township system, and then we moved to the county system and eventually with, and then we moved to the huge amalgamated school Boards taking in several counties. Local communities and teachers do not react, and parents do not react well to the huge system that we have today because they feel powerless and so do actually the trustees that sit on the Board. Because it's felt that only now the Ontario Government and the

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Ministry of Education has control over education Ontario. It's become very centralized and yes we do have powerless over that.

Interviewer: Do you believe that there is power sharing in your school. If so, what issues are most likely to be shared?

Interviewee: There's only power shared in the school depending on the type of administration you have. If you have a younger, more confident, leaders in your school, they are willing to share the power. A lot depends upon the competency of your administration. If they feel comfortable sharing the power and allotting that power to others. And it takes a dynamite person to lot out that power to others, and to try to gain consensus without being heavy handed about their demands.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the administration sets the tone for the environment of a school?

Interviewee: Yes I do. The administration has a great deal to do with it. And I can tell you an example, prior to Christmas time we had one Principal and she was very top down with her demands. We've had a new Principal come in and she is a consensus person and she's not threatening. And the tone of the school is far lighter and far happier then it's been in a long time.

Interviewer: Is your autonomy affected by the different power sources that you identified earlier? And how do you feel about this?

Interviewee: Well, my job is to come to school to teach the children. I have very little control over the curriculum. That's decided in Toronto. Most of the things in the school come down from Toronto. They are the power source. They tell you how many days you will teach, they will tell you how many holidays that you will have, when you will have them. They decide on the curriculum. They decide on many things. So very few decisions are really left at the local level any more. So in a way we are powerless. The only power you really have is when you go in your classroom, you close that door, and you start doing your real job of teaching and relating to children.

Interviewer: Do you feel that autonomous in the classroom with the door closed?

Interviewee: Yes, you have the control in that room. And that you are able to put forth your program and your method of teaching to help all the children to try to succeed. But, your doing it under the authorization of the Ontario Government.

Interviewer: Do you receive any feedback from the various power sources regarding your performance?

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Interviewee: You have your annual reviews from your administration. You also, if you have a positive administration, all the time they're thanking you. And I can think of our new administration, both the V.P. and the Principal, there's either very thoughtful notes or else every day they say, 'Thank you teachers for doing a good job and being considerate." And that really wears in after time, it makes people in two months time, you can see quite a change in people's attitude. You get notes from parents or having parents just seeing you in a store and saying, yes, you know, "Thank you for helping so and so or doing what you can for them."

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: I think it makes you feel very rewarded to know that you've done a good job.

Interviewer: What pressures are brought to bear on you to conform to the schools or other's goals? For example, a colleague pressures you to have a new idea implemented?

Interviewee: There's always lots of pressure to do things because every school now has to have the education planned or improvement plan and, but the reason that you have those plans is because you find a weakness in the school and your trying to improve on it. And there's nothing wrong with having new ideas in doing new ways. And I think you have to be open minded and try it. If it works fine, if it doesn't work, try something else.

Interviewer: Are there any other issues of power which you'd like to add to this discussion?

Interviewee: I think the greatest power is the power that you have within yourself to do a good job at, with all elements that are involved in the school system.

Interviewer: How do you get that power within yourself?

Interviewee: Hard work, building consensus, being a team player, doing what you think is right.

Interviewer: Do most school environments in your opinion foster that type of empowerment?

Interviewee: They don't foster the collegiality that they should. But a good administration can try to develop a collegiality. And perhaps the type of staff that they hire depending on their personalities, they can get people to work together better. The staff should be hired so that they jell and work together well.

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Interviewer: So for clarification, is it the Principal that empowers or is it the power, the internal power within each individual that sets the tone for the school climate?

Interviewee: I think it's the person first who that can empower themselves and through empowering yourselves, your going to empower others. And it's not so much empowerment as it is the ability to do what is best for everyone. And to build collegiality among all by being a positive person and not looking at the negative.

Interviewer: Do you think that the concept of power is at play in the school system?

Interviewee: It's definitely at play because we know that the supreme power is the Government. We also know that the Union has today tremendous powers. And they can oppose the administration on anything. Whether it's the implementation of a work to rule by the teachers or whether it's over such things as trivial as the yard duty schedule. We now have various elements of power. You also have clicks within the school system too. You might have a click among your primary teachers, your junior teachers, your intermediate teachers. You could have a click among your special ed. teachers. There are certainly power click within the school and that can define things. You can have clicks among old versus young.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you.

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