ED 425 503   EA 029 287

AUTHOR   Michaelis, Randall B.
TITLE   Restructuring in Relation to the Informal Organization of an
                Elementary School.
PUB DATE   1998-04-00
NOTE   28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American
                Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April
                13-17, 1998).
PUB TYPE   Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Educational Administration; *Educational Environment;
                Elementary Education; Interprofessional Relationship;
                *Organizational Climate; Power Structure; *School
                Restructuring; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher
                Attitudes; Teacher Morale

ABSTRACT
                This paper describes a study of teachers in an elementary
school, how they constructed and viewed their understandings of social and
professional organization, how these understandings were modified as the
central values of the organization, and how its social and political context
underwent significant changes. The report focuses on the values held by the
teachers and how these values are not constant in people, time, and place.
The study was qualitative, using participant-observer techniques, and
approached the topic from a grounded-theory perspective. From the data, three
categories of teachers emerged: social groupings, ideological orientations,
and proximity to power. These three perspectives by which teachers viewed
each other and themselves were interrelated and significantly affected the
school's formal organization and the manner in which the participants
responded to conflict and change. Some of these informal groups were based
around a common teaching ideology, and some groups were primarily social in
their basis. Ideology led some teachers, who had taught in the school for
many years, to resist the school's change to site-based management, whereas
other teachers, who were ideologically grouped, embraced change. (Contains 17
references and 3 figures.)(RJM)

RESTRUCTURING IN RELATION TO THE INFORMAL ORGANIZATION OF AN

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Randall B. Michaelis

Whitworth College

Spokane, WA 99251-0701

Paper Presented to the American Education Research Association

San Diego, California

April, 1998

RESTRUCTURING IN RELATION TO THE INFORMAL ORGANIZATION OF AN

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

This is the report of a qualitative study based on larger research project (Michaelis, 1997) which examined how teachers in a single elementary school, Meeker Elementary, constructed and viewed their understandings of how they socially and professionally organized themselves, and how these understandings were modified as the central values of the organization and its social and political context underwent significant change. This study examined how teachers informally organized themselves, the relationship of this informal organization to conflict within the school brought about by the district's efforts to bring about restructuring.

Specifically this study addressed the following questions: 1. How do teachers view the various types of teaching orientations that exist within the building in which they teach? 2. How do teachers position themselves within these views of teaching orientations? 3. To what are these orientations related? While much of the literature suggests that teachers' orientations are often idiosyncratic in nature (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992), it is also well documented that the socialization process and the informal organization of a school are also powerful influences on the development of teachers' belief systems (Michaelis, 1989; Rossman, Corbett, & Firestone, 1988; Iannaccone, 1962; Cusick, 1981).

The study focused on the values held by the members of the organization and posited that values are not constant in people, time, and place (Hanson, 1985). As people change, as the "times" change, and as places change, the values of an organization change. What was once a dominant and acceptable value may become, over time, passé or even despised, ironically, within the same place and by the same people. The organization in this study went through such a time. The long-held values of the past were challenged by

people from other places with new values; values which were supported by the changing

elementary teaching culture and mandated by a district restructuring policy.

Methodology

The study was qualitative in nature and approached the topic from a "grounded

theory" perspective (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Strauss & Corbin,

1990). This approach to research aspires to the development of theory based on the data

collected from the social setting under study. The school was selected because it appeared

to be experiencing a high degree of internal conflict, an attribute which made it theoretically

interesting. Research was carried out using participant-observer techniques which included

interviews, attendance of meetings, collection of documents, and observation of teachers,

staff, and administration in informal settings. The data were collected over a year's time

spanning two different school years.

Informal Organization of Meeker Elementary

From the data collected, there emerged three categories by which the teachers of

Meeker Elementary informally organized themselves: 1. Social groupings, 2. Ideological

orientations, and 3. Proximity to power. These three perspectives by which teachers

viewed each other and themselves were inter-related and had a significant effect on the

formal organization and the manner in which the participants responded to conflict and

change. It was by these three perspectives that the members of the organization defined

themselves and their colleagues. These three lenses formed the internal organizers by

which the members of the organization were able to place themselves in an organizational

context, and provided the internal structure by which they made sense of the day-to-day life

of the organization. The teachers of Meeker understood a complex organization by defining

the members of the organization around these three perspectives. Members were able to

place each other with a fair amount of agreement along continuums of power, and

ideology, and to which social group or groups they belonged.

4

The first of these informal organizational categories referred to the social groups to which teachers were viewed as belonging. Teachers were aware of who was close to whom, who was socially isolated and why, and were even able to predict how certain social groups might respond to organizational changes. The social group to which a teacher belonged had meaning in the minds of the members, in that social group membership was seen as related to where one stood ideologically and politically within the organization.

The second category used by teachers for informally organizing themselves was the idea of ideological orientation. The term "ideology" is used to describe the system of beliefs and values by which the teachers interpreted themselves and others as teachers and which shaped their actions toward others (Bennet & LeCompte, 1990). The Meeker teachers seemed to have a sense of a continuum which ran from "traditional" or "structured" on one side, to "progressive" or "developmentally appropriate" on the other. Teachers were able to place themselves along this continuum and generally had a sense of where they thought others should be placed as well.

Teachers also organized themselves around the idea of who was politically powerful within the organization and who was not. The descriptors used in this category depended on the teacher's placement on this power continuum. Those who were considered as powerful by others described a continuum running from such labels as "team player" to "not a team player." Those who were considered not near the center of power might refer to others along this continuum with labels such as "the principal's pets" and "second-class citizens." The term "power" was used in this study as the capacity to control or influence others (Hanson, 1985). Therefore, those close to the center of power were teachers viewed as having more control and influence over the organization. Those viewed as not powerful were seen as having little control or influence over the organization and the people in it. Because elementary schools are relatively flat organizations, there are few formal positions of power outside of the principal. Therefore, those teachers who

5

were viewed as powerful by others were those who had access to the principal and who had the principal's support for their programs.

The teachers of Meeker also viewed each other through the formal organizational perspective. They knew who were the teachers and who were the non-certified staff members. However, this perspective seemed to have little to do with how the members interacted with each other and did not seem to be significant in understanding the nature of the organizational conflict at Meeker.

An organization constructs itself around a common set of values, and generally, the values of the dominant members are the values around which the organization constructs itself. This dominant set of values, or ideology, and the dominant participants to which they belong are the dynamic center of the organization (Wilson, 1963). As the teachers described themselves in various ways they had a sense of who occupied the organizational space closest to the dynamic center of Meeker, why those members were there, and why other members were not.

The Informal Groups of Meeker Elementary

The organization in this study was comprised of a number of informal groups, some of which were based around a common teaching ideology and some of which were primarily social in their basis. One group of teachers, named the Guardians in the study, held to an ideology which had dominated the school for a number of years. The traditional ideology to which they held, however, was regarded as out-dated by the teachers who were transferring to Meeker from other schools within the district. The social context of Meeker was also changing, in that the traditional views to which these Meeker teachers held were at odds with the constructivist teaching philosophy which was emerging as the dominant teaching philosophy within the district and was subscribed to by the newcomers to Meeker (Brooks & Brooks). The dominant group was referred to as the "Guardians" and the newcomers as the "Reformers." At the time of the study, the district had mandated that schools undergo restructuring through the adoption of a site-based form of management.

6

Meeker Elementary was comprised of five basic groupings. Two of these groups were dominant within the organization. These were the Guardians, the long-time teachers of Meeker who represented "traditional" teaching orientations, and the Specialists, who respected the Guardians, but who were aligned with the principal's efforts to bring about school-wide restructuring. The newcomers to Meeker were referred to as the Reformers. The fourth group of teachers was referred to as the Friends. The Friends consisted of a group of teachers who had felt rejected by the dominant group of the past, the Guardians, and consequently harbored a strong sense of animosity toward the dominant members of the organization. The fifth group was not really a group at all, but a category of teachers who remained relatively non-aligned with any one group during the time of study; these teachers are the Free Agents. The following section will characterize each of the groups . with respect to the organizing perspectives of power, ideology, and social affiliation.

The Guardians

The group with the longest history at Meeker was the Guardians. This group was historically considered closest to the center of organizational power and would be placed ideologically toward the traditional end. This is a group of teachers who were ideologically similar. Within this ideological groups were social sub-groupings. One social sub-group, the Guardian Core, provided the ideological and political leadership for the Guardians. Below is listed the set of values which comprised their traditional ideology and its related tacit professional code:

1. Quality in schools is defined by the establishment, maintenance, and public display of high academic and moral standards.

   a. Teachers are role models of virtue and decorum (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). They are to be "professional" in their interaction with each other, thus avoiding behavior which might tarnish the image of the school and its teachers.

7

b. School is for teaching "academics." Consequently, there are set standards of what children ought to be taught and know at each grade level. Good teachers adequately prepare their students for the next grade level.

c. It is the role of the school and its teachers to display to itself and to the community the best of academic achievement and of morality and virtue. Competition is an integral part of determining and maintaining the nature of "best" and in keeping the standards high.

d. The past also informs about the best, so the notion of tradition is important; especially "traditions" which can be observed each year as a celebration of the best of academics and the best of morality and virtue.

2. Quality teaching is carried out by "professionals" who are dedicated and committed to the school and community.

a. Commitment and dedication is shown by being involved in activities outside of the classroom and in supporting other teachers in carrying out their displays of commitment and dedication.

b. Going beyond the expectations of teaching in the classroom is part of being dedicated, and one should not expect compensation for this outside involvement.

3. Teaching is an individually-learned craft and teachers should, therefore, have autonomy regarding their teaching practices.

a. Only the individual teacher can determine what is his or her best teaching practice. Teachers should be autonomous about decisions regarding their style of teaching.

b. The effectiveness of teaching practices is determined through "what works for me;" a notion referred to by Smith and Geoffery (1968) as the "provisional try."

c. A teacher should not criticize another's style of teaching. To do so would be to violate the autonomy of the other teacher. Who is to say what works best for any one teacher? Each teacher is to respect the other's individually constructed style of teaching.

d. Good teachers do not allow their students to violate the autonomy of other teachers. Good teachers control their students so their behavior or noise does not infringe upon the autonomous spaces of other teachers.

The Guardians held to traditional teaching perspectives which had long dominated the organization. They had developed their way of handling political change and conflict in accordance with this ideology. As noted above, this ideology held that teaching was largely idiosyncratic in nature. They had less of a sense of a codified knowledge base with respect to effective teaching than the Reformers and instead built their own sense of effective teaching from practice and personal histories. They had long been the major group at Meeker and controlled a number of key committees, and they were in charge of several high profile school-wide events. As a result of their willingness to perform at such high profile level, the principal protected their positions of power within the school; especially in supporting adequate budgetary resources for these programs. Their basic ideology, however, was not in keeping with the changing context in which they taught. Elementary school teaching culture and the district were promoting the use of cooperative learning, constructivist teaching methods, collaborative-teaching, extended placement, and multi-age classrooms--ideas which were supported by the incoming teachers to Meeker.

The Specialists

The Specialists worked with all the teachers and their classes, and they organized events for the whole school. Their perspective, was therefore, one which viewed the · organization as a whole. Consequently, they were most interested in bringing solutions to what they saw as "building level problems." This whole-school perspective put them in good stead with the principal whose role called for a similar perspective. Together, they

implemented school-wide programs which addressed building level problems and which increased the overall efficiency of the school. The Specialists were, in many ways, similar to the Reformers in ideology; however, there were some important differences. They too, wanted reform in the classrooms and the school, but their sense of reform did not extend as far as the Reformers. They viewed schools as organizations which were in need of reform, but not as fundamentally flawed and in need of total restructuring. The Specialists also respected the efforts of the Guardians. The teaching cultures of music, athletics, and physical education included the notion of displaying quality through performance, competition, and individual efforts in cooperation with others. The Specialists also understood the public relations value of the kinds of events that the Guardians supported. The Specialists were considered by the principal as strong dependable teachers and were included in his group to whom responsibility was given.

The Reformers

The group known as the Reformers were teachers who had transferred from Chapter One schools within the district and brought with them a set of beliefs which challenged the traditionally held teaching methods of the Guardians. The Reformers subscribed to a constructivist teaching ideology which held to the values listed below. For these values to be implemented in schools, this group of teachers believed that schools must fundamentally change. Being part of the change process, in other words, reforming schools, was central to this group's view of teaching.

1. The effectiveness of teaching practices are determined by the "research literature" and by what is "best for kids," not simply by the provisional try of "what works for me." In short, not all teaching practices are equal, in fact, some teaching practices are better than others.

   a. The best teaching practices are those that are "developmentally appropriate." One should adjust instruction and the curriculum to the

developmental stage of the child. Set academic standards for each grade

level are arbitrary and potentially damaging to children.

   b. Teaching methods must change to emphasize the integration of subject

matter, which should be organized around developmentally appropriate

themes relevant to the children.

   c. Children are to be nurtured. They can be easily damaged and should be

treated with kindness and given choices regarding their behavior and

consequences. Good teachers do not yell at or "put down" their students.

2. Children, families, and society in general, are fundamentally different than in the

past, and, therefore, schools and teachers must fundamentally change to meet

the challenge of teaching today's children.

   a. Schools must teach basic social skills that emphasize cooperation not

competition. An emphasis on competition is seen as damaging to the child.

   b. Schools must change classrooms and instruction to remedy the inequities

of society regarding gender, class, ability, and race.

3. Teachers are to be part of reforming schools.

   a. Teachers are expected to participate in the governance of schools

   b. Teachers are to collaborate with each other and should no longer teach in

isolation.

The Reformers were strongly committed to their ideology, and they were committed

to bringing it to pass within the schools. Their intention was to be part of an ideological

revolution which would fundamentally change the ways schools work.

The Friends –

The Friends were primarily organized around a social basis rather than a ideological

one. They believed that they had not been treated fairly by those in power at Meeker. They

felt disenfranchised from the dominant group of the school. Several members of the

Friends were long-time teachers at Meeker, who felt that they were considered as "less

than" by their Guardian peers. They believed that their input was neither solicited nor respected and that reward and recognition had been withheld from them by those in power. This group sought to bring about changes to promote equity in the workplace. Equitable treatment meant that they would be recognized as contributing members of the organization and that they would have an equal voice with those they regarded as the "principal's pets." Also, that they should be given positive regard for their teaching and be elevated beyond "second-class citizens."

The Free Agents

This category of teachers was mixed ideologically. Some of these teachers held strong ideological views and some were more neutral in this regard. They were viewed as not belonging to any one group of teachers and were less defined with respect to power and social groupings, which in most cases allowed them to have access to most of the groups of the school. Several of these teachers were male friends of the principal who spent time outside of school with the principal and were known as his personal friends.

One might summarize the above with the following statements. The Friends wanted to bring about changes in the workplace that were "good for teachers." The Reformers wanted to bring about major changes in the school that were "good for kids." The Specialists wanted to bring about changes that were "good for the whole school." And the Guardians were willing to join with these "good for the whole school" changes as long their autonomy in the classroom was respected and the changes "worked for them."

Competing Values

The major conflicts which occurred at Meeker were between the Reformers and the Guardians. The conflicts which occurred between the Reformers and Guardians were ideological in nature. These two groups held to sets of values which conflicted with each other in a number of areas. Some of the types of conflicts that occurred include the following:

Curriculum Driven vs. Developmentally Appropriate

The Guardians believed that each grade level had a basic curriculum which should be mastered, whereas the Reformers approached curriculum from a view of the child progressing at his or her own pace and level of difficulty.

Competition vs. Cooperation and Equity

The Guardians viewed competition as a means to improve achievement, whereas the Reformers viewed an emphasis on competition as potentially damaging to students, inequitable to certain populations, and antithetical to their belief in the teaching of cooperative social skills.

Tradition vs. Reform

The Guardians viewed the keeping of traditions as important to the maintenance of standards and a sense of quality, whereas the Reformers believed that the solutions of the past were not adequate to the challenges of the present, and that most of the traditions were elitist in nature.

"What works for me" vs. "What is best for kids"

The Guardians individually constructed their teaching orientations through their personal experience with various methods and materials through a "provisional try." Whereas, the Reformers endorsed strategies supported by "the research" and values embedded in the constructivist teaching ideology, and they believed that collaboration among teachers was a necessary part of reform.

School Improvement vs. Major Reforms

The Guardians supported the notion of change and improvement of schools, whereas the Reformers viewed schools, as they existed, as inadequate to meet the needs of the future and in need of radical reform.

Classroom Teaching vs. Participatory Management

The Guardians saw their primary role as teaching students in the classroom, whereas the Reformers believed that teachers were also to be participate in the management of schools through such models as site-based councils.

Ideology and Conflict at Meeker

There existed a high level of conflict at Meeker due to the many conflicting values held by the various groups. This conflict was very apparent even before the district mandated the development of a "charter" for the governance of the school with a site-based model. The charter development was a year-long process by which various formal groups met to develop a mission, goals, and a site-based governance structure for the management of the school.

The Reformers and Friends were the most prepared for engaging in political competition for control of the organization. The Reformers held an ideology which included conflict as part of their view of organizational life. They endorsed the inclusion of "conflict resolution skills" as part of the curriculum for the students, a tacit acknowledgment of the endemic presence of conflict in organizational life and society. They also recognized that conflict would be part of the process of reform. A good deal of their efforts in the charter development process were around creating structures for the provision of conflict resolution. The Friends were not ideologically predisposed to conflict, but were socially experienced in organizational conflict. They might be considered the seasoned veterans of conflict at Meeker. They often had resisted efforts by the dominant Guardians and had officially filed grievances against the principal in the past. The Friends and the Reformers responded to organizational conflict as groups rather than as individuals; they withdrew for a period following a conflict and then worked together to promote their cause or to protect their members. The Friends worked together for their mutual protection, and for the Reformers, the idea of working together was embedded in their teaching ideology. Both by ideology and experience, the Reformers and Friends were in a better position for organizational conflict than were the Guardians or Specialists.

14

The Guardians and Specialists, on the other hand, were not prepared to engage in political conflict. The ideology of the Guardians held a view of organizational life where one was "professional" in one's dealings with others. One did not let conflict or personal grievances obstruct one from performing the task expected by the organization. Their view of teaching as an individually-learned craft had not given them the experience or the disposition to organize politically. Consequently, when these two groups did encounter conflict they withdrew as individuals rather than withdrawing and organizing collectively. Included in their ideology was a sense of maintaining an image of virtue and decorum that was required of teachers as role models and which viewed open conflict as tarnishing the image of being "good and dedicated and committed." As a result of being the dominant group for many years, the Guardians were also not experienced in organizational conflict. They had been protected by large numbers of members and by their principal-advocate. When the opportunity was presented to be part of the charter-development process, it is no surprise that neither group chose to participate. They apparently did not understand that the dynamic center of the organization was no longer to be possessed by maintaining proximity to the principal. Under the new charter system, power, especially the distribution of resources, would be determined by a democratic process--something the Reformers understood.

A coalition formed between the Friends and the Reformers to bring about reform at Meeker through the charter process. The Friends modified their language of complaint and adopted the language of Reformers. The Reformers benefited from the political and social support given them by the Friends and responded by taking up the cause of equity for this group of disenfranchised teachers. Both groups dominated the charter development process by volunteering to be members on the charter development committees. They also recognized the emerging importance of parents in the site-base council and actively sought out parental support for their perspectives. The Guardians and Specialists, however, were

uncomfortable with the level of personal and professional conflict involved in this process and chose not to participate.

In the waning days of the charter development process, the Guardians realized that their programs were threatened by the new charter form of government and were angered by what they viewed as the disrespectful treatment of one of the Specialists by the Reformers and Friends. They came to the Specialist's defense and in so doing, formed a coalition with which to defend their political positions. The Guardians, at this juncture were adapting their ideology to include the idea of political organization for the defense of that which was good and right at Meeker. However, since the charter was voted into place in the last few weeks of the school year, their efforts at defense apparently came too late.

Groups, Coalitions, and Conflict

Coalitions were the establishment of significant links between groups for the accomplishment of a common goal. The Reformers and the Friends came together to accomplish the mutually beneficial goal of changing the power structure of Meeker Elementary. Likewise, the Guardians and the Specialists came together to defend their existing positions within the power structure. Coalitions could cross ideological lines, as was the case with the Friends and the Reformers; they did not, in the case of Meeker, however, cross lines of power. Coalitions formed between groups who occupied similar power levels within the organization. Ideological differences were set aside to accomplish similar goals with respect to power. Hence, the Reformers overlooked obvious ideological differences in the more traditional members of the Friends, and the Friends embraced ideological changes similar to ones they had resisted before, all in the effort to minimize the power differential between themselves and the center of the organization. Similarly, the Guardians and the Specialists moved toward one other in an effort to maintain their current positions politically.

In Figure 1, the groups of Meeker are arranged according to two axes: perceived level of power within Meeker Elementary and the degree to which they are ideologically

The groups of Meeker according to level of power and ideological commitment

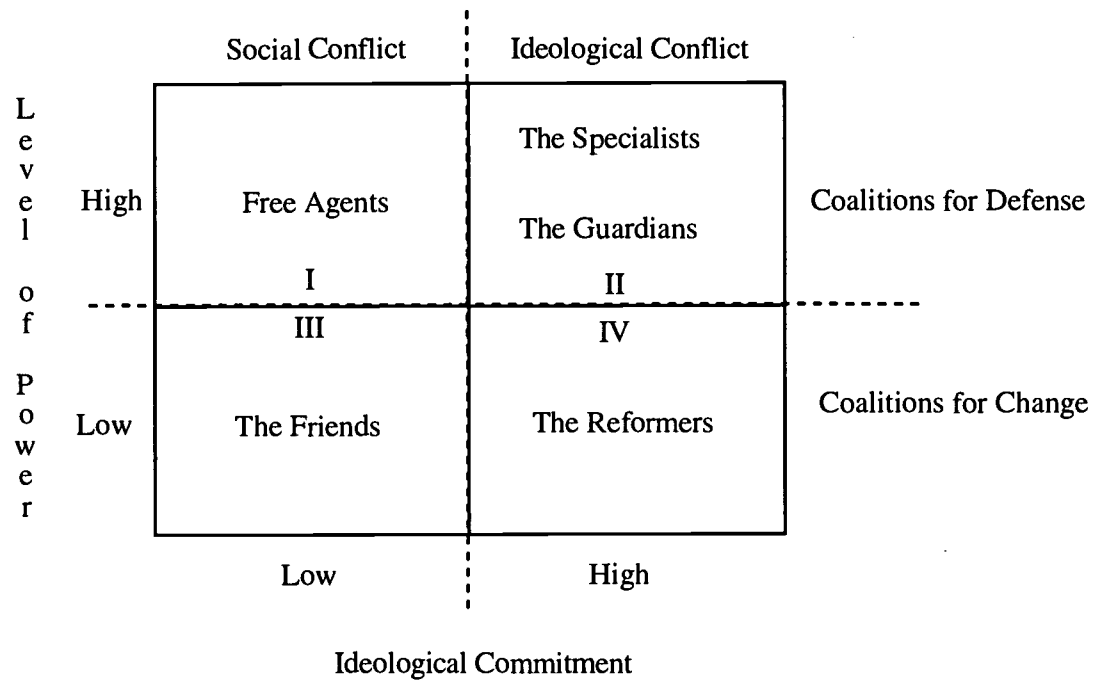|		Social Conflict	Ideological Conflict	
L				
e				
v			The Specialists	
e	High	Free Agents		Coalitions for Defense
l			The Guardians	
o		I	II	
f		III	IV	
P				
o	Low	The Friends	The Reformers	Coalitions for Change
w				
e				
r				
		Low	High	

Ideological Commitment

Figure 1. This diagram shows the groups of Meeker as they relate to the axes of level of power within the organization and their degree of ideological commitment (Michaelis,1997).

committed. Those groups located in the upper two quadrants, I and II, are members who were viewed as being "powerful" within the organization. They had access to the principal or had been given responsibility or control over decision-making processes regarding programs and resource allocation.

In the case of Meeker, the members who occupied these upper quadrants were the Specialists, the Guardians, and some individual non-aligned teachers. The lower quadrants, III and IV, would be occupied by the Friends and the Reformers, two groups who had felt excluded from access to power. The left two quadrants of the matrix, I and III, would be occupied by groups which had low levels of ideological commitment. The Friends occupy quadrant III, in that they had been viewed as not being powerful and were ideologically mixed. The Reformers occupied quadrant III, in that they were ideologically quite committed, but had been viewed as distant from the center of power.

Several insights about groups, conflict, and coalitions become apparent from an examination of the Figure 1 matrix. While the matrix may not describe the groups of every elementary school, it may reflect the nature of conflict in schools with distinct groupings. Some predictions might be made by examining a school's groups in light of these matrices. First, it appears that social groups more often form where there exists ideological similarity. Social groupings can exist across ideological differences, however, it is clear from the matrix in Figure 1, that most of the social groups at Meeker were ideologically homogeneous. It is unlikely there would be a high number of social groups that would fall to the left of the center line.

Second, political coalitions are more likely to form between groups which occupy the same position with respect to power. Groups above the horizontal center line will join with others above that line, and likewise groups below the line will join with others below the line.

Third, this same horizontal line is the demarcation of the groups most likely to have conflict with each other. Groups above the horizontal line are more likely to have conflict

with groups below the horizontal line. The highest level of conflict will probably exist between quadrants II and IV, in that these groups have a strong adherence to an ideological orientation and are on opposite ends of the power continuum. The Reformers, in quadrant IV, had an ideological agenda that could only be implemented through becoming powerful within the organization.

At first glance, there appear to be no groups at Meeker which clearly occupy quadrant I. It is possible, however, that one might argue that indeed there was a category of teachers in quadrant I: the non-aligned male teachers at Meeker. Did these teachers have access to the principal simply because of their personal connections with him? They did not have ideological orientations that particularly aligned with the principal's attempts at restructuring, nor were they central to assisting him in bringing about those changes. But, they did have personal connections to him through out-of-school activities which gave them a form of access not available to other groups.

Figure 2 shows the labels of Figure 1 with more generalized characteristics of groups. The group occupying quadrant II has been labeled the "Dynamic Center." This is the group or groups who have a strong ideological orientation and have close proximity to the highest levels of power. These are the groups in charge of decision-making processes and who have control over resource allocation. Quadrant IV of Figure 2 is labeled the "Revolutionaries." While this label may be too strong, it may well describe the kinds of groups which might exist in this quadrant: groups with a strong ideological agenda that are out of power.

The occupants of quadrant III might be considered the "Disenfranchised." They are the members of the organization who have little in common ideologically or organizationally, except that they are all far from the center of the organization. In order for a group to form in this area, one of two aspects would most likely be present: a strong social connection with each other or a sense of common threat in which group formation is required for protection.

19

Generalized characteristics of groups with respect to power and ideology.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">L
e
v
e
l

o
f

P
o
w
e
r</td><td>High</td><td>The
Personal Friends

I</td><td>The
Dynamic Center

II</td></tr>
<tr><td>Low</td><td>III

The
Disenfranchised</td><td>IV

The
Revolutionaries</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Low</td><td>High</td></tr>
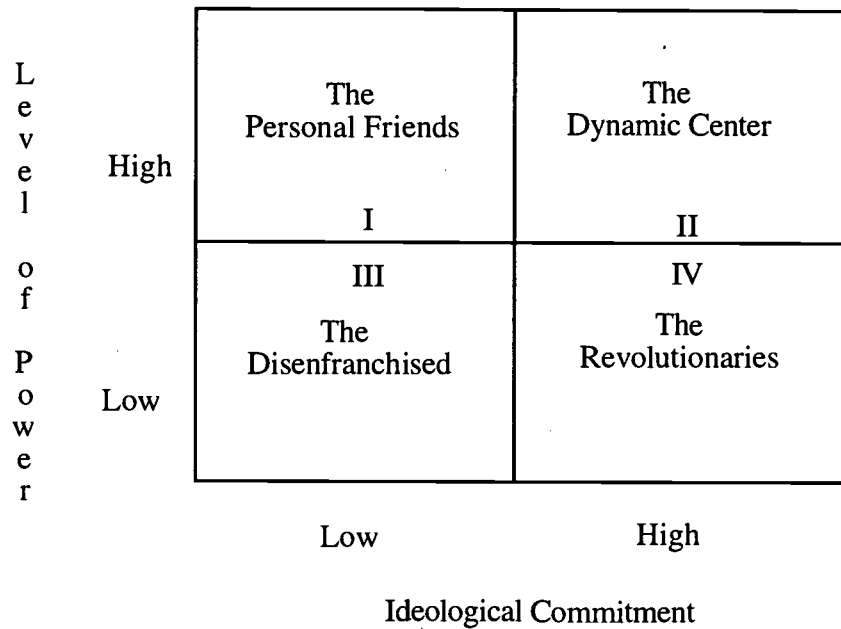</table>

Ideological Commitment

Figure 2. This diagram shows groups within an organization along the axes of proximity

to power and ideological commitment (Michaelis, 1997).

One might speculate on the types of groups which occupy this quadrant in organizations. One example might be a group of smokers who have little access to organizational decision makers. A social group might form around the meeting of these same individuals several times a day to smoke. They might have little in common organizationally outside of the fact that they all smoke. It is conceivable that such a group, while socially based, would work as a group to protect their smoking area if it was threatened.

The occupants of quadrant I are labeled as Personal Friends. A more pejorative term might have been the Good Old Boys. These are individuals who have access to the higher levels of power within the organization primarily through personal, not professional, connections with the occupants of quadrant II. It was not clear whether the teachers that occupied quadrant I at Meeker used their position to their political advantage, but it was clear that some groups believed they had the advantage if they had chosen to use it. In the case of Meeker, these teachers were not politically active, but when the principal was in the middle of professional conflict they supported him personally. One does not have to think long to come up with other possible examples of people who might occupy this quadrant in organizations. These are people who derive their close proximity to the center of power through providing those in power with some personal benefit. In this case, the benefit for the principal was companionship outside of the school. One can imagine other situations in other organizations where the derived benefits may be of a more scandalous nature; or, where those occupying this quadrant do so for their own professional gain within the organization.

Figure 3 shows the kinds of social actions engaged in by the Meeker groups and that might be expected from the generalized groups within the organizational matrix. The action most expected from the occupants of quadrant IV would be that of Competition. Competition will be for control of decision-making processes and resource allocation. This is the quadrant which will attempt to mount the most serious challenge to the groups

21

occupying quadrant II. The occupants of quadrant III will most likely engage in actions that provide Protection for their social group.

The occupants of quadrants III and IV have a similar organizational problem: they are distant from the center of power and most likely would not be successful in a direct challenge to the dominant group. Defensively, both quadrants III and IV have similar actions available to them: withdrawal and resistance. Social or political withdrawal will, most likely, allow these groups to minimize the amount of direct conflict they encounter with the dominant groups. Social resistance for the occupants of quadrant III may foster an increased sense of cohesiveness within the group and create a social buffer to protect the group from uninvited outsiders. Ideological resistance by the occupants of quadrant IV may serve to clarify their ideological positions as opposite of the dominant ideological group and may provide minor symbolic victories for moral support of the group and for ideological recruitment.

Quadrant IV occupants might be expected to use personal connections and informal settings to recruit others within the organization to their ideological perspective. This kind of recruitment will most likely take place in a non-direct low-profile manner, in that they are not sufficiently strong to directly challenge the dominant ideological group. Quadrant III occupants might be expected to engage in social recruitment to bolster the numbers of their social group.

The occupants of quadrants III and IV might be expected to form a coalition within the organization for mutual protection and promotion. In the case of Meeker, the Reformers joined with the Friends to take over the decision-making processes of the school. This teaming of the ideologically motivated with the politically disenfranchised is no doubt nothing new with respect to historical revolutions.

The occupants of quadrants I and II might be expected to engage in similar actions within the organization. The occupants of these quadrants are the people with the most to lose from a change in the power structure of the organization. The primary action of

Social actions taken by groups according to their relationship to power and ideology.

	Socially Based	Ideologically Based
High	Maintain Social Relationship with Power	Maintain Control of Political Processes
	I	II
Low	III	IV
	Protection of Group	Compete for Control of Political Processes

Level of Power

Politically Less Active

Politically Active

Low   High

Ideological Commitment

Defensive Strategies:
   Social Withdrawal
   Social Resistance
Offensive Strategies:
   Recruit Socially
   Coalitions

Defensive Strategies:
   Political Withdrawal
   Ideological Resistance
Offensive Strategies:
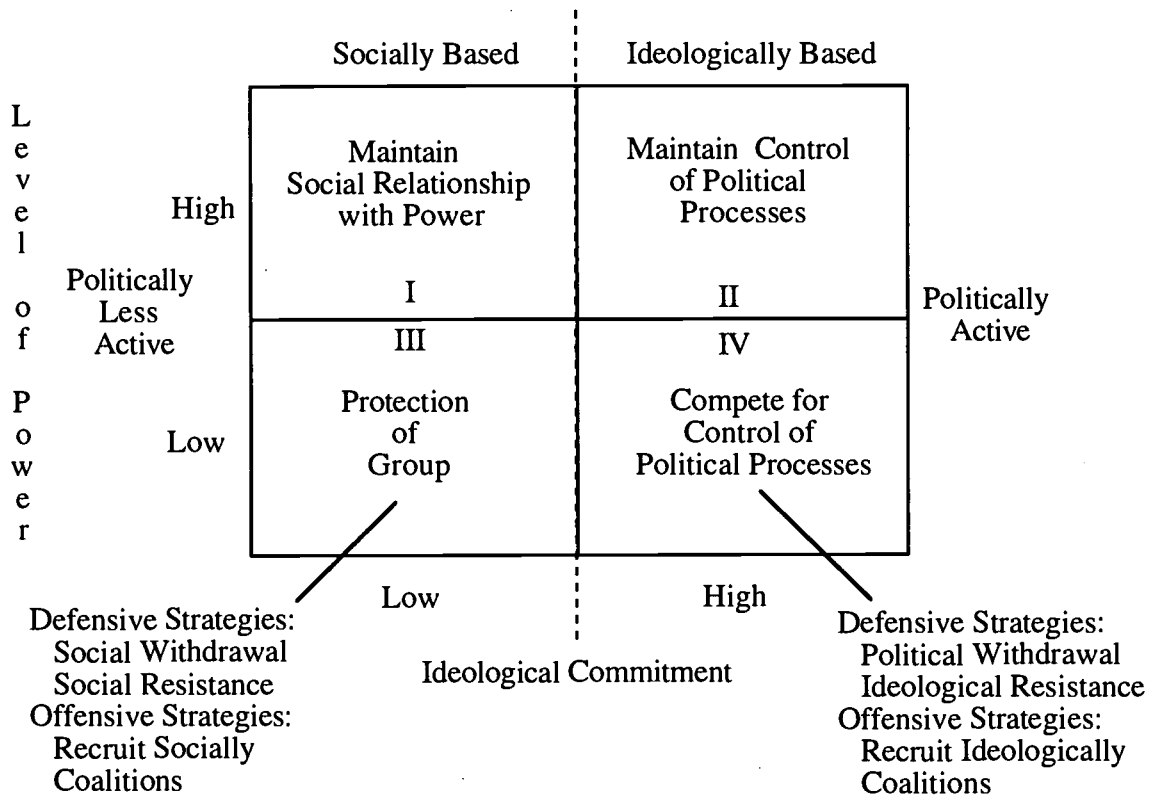   Recruit Ideologically
   Coalitions

Figure 3. This diagrams shows the type of social action that could be expected by the occupants of the four quadrants. Quadrants II and IV, which are ideologically based, could be expected to be politically competitive for the control of dynamic center of the organization. Quadrants I and III would be expected to be less active, in that the basis for their existence is primarily social and their actions will be most concerned with protection of these social relationships (Michaelis, 1997).

quadrant II occupants will, most likely, be the maintenance and defense of their control over the organization's decision-making processes. The main activity expected of the occupants of quadrant I will be the maintenance of their position through social connections with the occupants of quadrant II. The conflict at Meeker provided insightful data on the actions of those attempting to gain power in the organization, but was less forthcoming about the actions necessary for the defense and maintenance of the positions of power within the organization. This may be due to the lack of response by the dominant groups in defending their positions of power. Their initial response of withdrawal from conflict, constituted a sort of default on their part in the organizational competition. It wasn't until the last few weeks of school, that they truly understood that they were in competition with other groups. No doubt, the events of the following school year would have yielded interesting data in this regard.

The groups occupying quadrants II and IV are based on ideological similarities, whereas the groups occupying quadrants I and III are primarily socially based. It is, therefore, less likely that the occupants of quadrants I and III will actively engage in the political life of the organization. The occupants of quadrant III will most likely engage only on single issues within the organization that directly affect them since they have no unified ideological agenda which to promote. Likewise, the occupants of quadrant I, are more likely to be politically less active than quadrants II and IV, in that their connection to power is primarily that of a social nature. At the same time, the occupants of quadrant I could be expected to "behave themselves" politically and not oppose those in power, otherwise they risk losing their personal connection. The occupants of quadrants II and IV, however, should be expected to, on some level, be active politically. In the case of Meeker, the occupants of quadrant II were late in coming to the political battleground, but once they realized their programs were threatened they began to organize defensively.

How successful the occupants of quadrants II and IV are, may in large part, depend on the nature of the ideology they espouse. In the case of Meeker, the Guardians' ideology

24

had not prepared them for the political conflict. They had been protected in the past by a strong advocate-administrator, by numerous members, and their values had been embraced by the community in which they taught. They were used to little competition and held to an ideology which promoted a form of "professional niceness" which did not normally allow for open conflict. When the Reformers and Friends formed a political alliance, the Guardians were clearly outclassed by groups whose ideologies were more amenable to political conflict. It appears that the success of groups occupying quadrant II and IV may depend on their level of experience with political conflict and what form of political conflict their ideology supports.

One might guess that the longer the occupants of quadrant II have been there, the more entrenched they would have become, and the more difficult they would be to dislodge. However, it may also be true, that the long-term occupation of quadrant II may lead to a lack of experience in political conflict. Such was the case at Meeker, the Guardians were experientially unprepared to do battle.

When school ended that year, it appeared that the Reformers and Friends, along with the support of the district had occupied quadrant I, the dynamic center, of Meeker Elementary. They had done so not by attempting to take over the former dynamic center of Meeker; that would have required strategies which would have moved them closer to the principal and the inner-circles of Meeker. Instead, they had, in essence, captured the dynamic center and moved it to their location within the organization. They were able to do this because the district had mandated new political structures by which political power might be redistributed. By controlling the charter process, developing coalitions, and by currying favor with parental groups, these two groups were poised to begin the next school year occupying the dynamic center of the organization called Meeker Elementary.

Implications

Administrators may be well-served in undertaking a serious examination of the nature of the informal organization within their school. This is especially true if the school

organization is in a state of conflict. Examining the organization's informal groups from the perspectives of social groupings, ideological orientations, and proximity to political power might reveal insights as to the nature of the organizational conflict and reveal strategies for bringing about reconciliation.

An administrator proposing significant changes to the organization would also be well served to perform such an examination. Understanding the nature of the groups within the organization may assist one in predicting how groups will respond to change, and the kinds of conflicts one might anticipate as a result of implementing change. A knowledge of the political, social, and ideological landscape of the organization would also facilitate the principal in bringing together the significant parties for decisions regarding the implementation process. As was seen at Meeker, bringing only some of the groups to the table for the process of change can make the implementation of change more difficult. Those groups who did not participate in the processes leading up to change were the ones most resistant to the changes.

On a more pragmatic level, it may be advantageous to a district to examine its teacher transfer policy. In the case of Meeker, the principal had little control over the hiring of teachers and yet was charged with bringing about a common mission for the school. Perhaps districts should examine ways in which principals or site-based councils are able to hire teachers who are ideologically congruent with the stated mission of the school.

There are few total-school studies performed in educational research examining the relationship of groups, ideologies, and power. This study put forth several theories grounded in the data generated from Meeker Elementary. While this study cannot be replicated per se, the importance of this kind of research is significant. Millions of dollars and thousands of hours of teacher and administrator time and energy are devoted each year to the process of restructuring schools. And yet little is known about how educational organizations respond by resisting or facilitating these changes. Nor is much known about the influences on the organization which are contextual in nature.

REFERENCES

Bennet, K. P., & LeCompte, M. D. (1990). *How schools work: A sociological analysis of education.* White Plains, New York: Longman.

Brooks, J. G. & Brooks, M. G. (1993). *The case for constructivist classrooms.* Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD

Cusick, P. (1981). A study of networks among professional staffs in secondary schools. *The Educational Administration Quarterly 17,* (3), 114-138.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Hawthorne, New York: Aldine de Gruyter Inc.

Hanson, E. M. (1985). *Educational administration and organizational behavior.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Iannaccone, L. (1962). Informal organization. In Griffiths, D.; Clark, D.; & Wynn, R. (Eds.) *Organizing schools for effective education.* Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc.

Lofland, J. & Lofland, L. (1984). *Analyzing social settings.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Michaelis, R. (1989). *Study of expert elementary teachers.* Unpublished manuscript.

Michaelis, R. (1997). *Competing values in an elementary school: A qualitative study of organizational conflict and change.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Washington State University, Pullman.

Pajares, M. (1992). Teacher's beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research., 62,* (3), 307-332.

Rossman, G., Corbett, H., & Firestone, W. (1988), *Change and effectiveness in schools: A cultural perspective.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Sergiovanni, T. J. & Starett, R. J. (1988). *Supervision: Human perspectives, 4th edition.* New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing.

Smith, L. & Geoffrey, W. (1968). *The Complexities of the urban classroom: An analysis toward a general theory of teaching.* New York, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Tyack, D. & Hansot, E. (1992). *Managers of virtue* . New York, New York: Basic Books.

Wilson, H. (1963). *The group and its leaders.* Unpublished manuscript, Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, as cited in Sergiovanni, T. (1988).

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE
(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Restructuring in Relation to the Informal Organization of an Elementary School

Author(s): Randall B. Michaelis

Corporate Source: Whitworth College, Spokane WA 99251

Publication Date: April, 1998

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 1	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2A	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) 2B
Level 1 ↑ [X]	Level 2A ↑ [ ]	Level 2B ↑ [ ]
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here,→ please

Signature:

Printed Name/Position/Title: Randall B. Michaelis Assoc. Professor

Organization/Address: Whitworth College, Spokane WA 99251-070

Telephone: 509-777-4402

FAX: 509-777-3785

E-Mail Address: rmichaelis@whitworth.ed

Date: 04/15/98

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
1129 SHRIVER LAB, CAMPUS DRIVE
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20742-5701
Attn: Acquisitions

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2ⁿᵈ Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-953-0263
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com