A Qualitative Study of Authority from The Perspective of Secondary School Principals

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Abstract

In this research study I examined how four principals of secondary schools interpreted authority and how these interpretations affected their practice. This study involved a presentation of the literature where the concept of qualitative methodology as well as general concepts of authority were reviewed.

Four principals were interviewed and asked to reflect on their feelings and experiences as they related to the practice of authority. Five major themes emerged from their reflections and stories which were: Understandings of the Concept of Authority, Principals’ Enactment of Authority, Thoughts and Experiences related to Challenges to Their Authority, A View of Principals' Challenge of Authority, and Changing Views on the Authority of Principals in Ontario.

The stories of these four principals demonstrated that the practice of authority is complex, dynamic, and contains personal and social tensions. The sharing of these ideas and stories provided a window into the world of these secondary school educational leaders and their experiences with, and enactment of, authority. From this research four recommendations were made to improve educators' practice related to the issue of authority. The importance of this study is that it presents an understanding of the dynamic nature of the process and enactment of authority by these secondary school principals at a unique time in the history of education in Ontario.
This qualitative research provides a snapshot of a particular group of educators at a particular time and place. Others need to add to these understandings and modify these ideas through further research. Understanding the experiences of educational leaders as they negotiate concepts of authority gives a window on this very complex, yet vital, component of education.
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For years I have had as a personal goal engagement in an in-depth research study. Completion of this thesis has been a process of personal growth, as well as being intellectually stimulating and rewarding. Reaching this goal, however, was not a solitary endeavor. There are many people who have helped me to reach the accomplishment of producing this thesis.

My thesis advisor, Dr. Brigitte Harris saw potential in me as a writer and researcher early in my graduate courses. Her inspiration, suggestions and patience enabled me to complete my thesis. She willingly gave of her time to read my many drafts, discuss my ideas, and to offer suggestions. Brigitte also understood and accepted the many competing demands on my time. Without her help and encouragement I doubt I would have completed this thesis. This research study involved interviewing four principals during a very difficult time in education in Ontario. These people were extremely busy, yet gave of their time to assist me in this research. Without their assistance this research would have been quite different and perhaps further delayed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This qualitative study examined the personal and social tensions experienced by four secondary school principals as they engaged in the complexities of negotiating authority in their professional practice. I interviewed four senior administrators and asked them to reflect on their feelings and experiences as they related to their practice of authority. These in-depth, open-ended interviews were recorded and transcribed and examined for reflections and stories related to the issue of authority. The resulting study increases our awareness of how principals understand and negotiate authority within their educational practice, as well as how they make meaning of their roles as authorities and leaders. The dynamic nature of the process and enactment of authority by these secondary school principals is an important characteristic of this research.

Specific recommendations will be made later in this thesis to move this research into educational practice. As well this research provides a snapshot of some experiences and thoughts about authority by these principals at a unique time in the history of education in Ontario. The idiosyncratic nature of this time will be described later in this paper, but briefly it was a time of major upheaval, conflict and tension in education in Ontario.
How Did I Come to This Study?

Through writing an educational narrative in my first Master of Education course, I learned that experience throughout my life journey played a vital role in my development as a teacher. One of the understandings gained through the process of writing this narrative was that I tended to either accept the voice of authority or openly accept while privately defying authority. My educational narrative, which marked the beginning of my attempt to understand the issue of authority on a personal level, led to later studies into the issue of authority on a theoretical and experiential level from the perspective of secondary school educators in the role of principals and vice-principals.

In a subsequent pilot study (An Initial Reflection of the Issue of Authority from the Perspective of a Secondary School Educator), I probed the question of authority in the educational context. In that study I entered into the issue of authority biographically through a colleague's stories. This allowed me to gain an understanding of authority from the view point of this secondary vice-principal. In this same research I also looked autobiographically at a story of an incident when my authority was challenged. At the beginning of my Master's program, I was injured by an intruder, an incident which led me to reexamine my view of authority. In this incident, I saw some trespassers on school property, confronted them, and, with the assistance of two other teachers, accompanied them to the office. In hindsight I believe here I saw my position as having the legal power to
demand that the trespassers stay. As we waited for the police, one trespasser bolted, pushing me against a wall and injuring my back. While I recovered physically, I began to struggle with the issue of authority challenged. Later, in Chapter Five, of this thesis I will reflect on this situation and what I have learned from this research and from experience.

As time passed I began to reconsider my action of asserting authority which had put me at physical risk; I also began to question the actions of the police. If I were not able to be the force of authority in stopping the trespasser from leaving, then surely the police could have pursued the location of the trespasser more energetically and attempted to effect an arrest. In hindsight I was sure that there was an external force of authority which could right this situation.

By restorying that event I was able to see my personal authority in a secondary educational setting as a relationship between rights and responsibilities for both myself and those with whom I come in contact. Even though I was technically correct in acting as I did with the trespassers, I came to understand that I have a responsibility to myself to stop asserting my authority before I jeopardize my personal safety. I came to see my exercise of authority as choosing situations where it is suitable, necessary, and wise to do so. I also see now that I need to choose how to exercise my authority. I recognized that my understanding will continue to grow and to change as I add new stories to my narrative as an educator, but I found through this narrative study that I was able to develop a holistic view
of the complexities and practice of authority both by me and by an educational leader working in a secondary school setting. My use of holistic here refers to Miller’s (1996) concept of holistic “which comes from the Greek word ‘holon’ and makes reference to a universe made up of integrated wholes that cannot simply be reduced to the some of its parts” (p. 3). Through this initial study I gained insight into the issue of authority from the perspective of a secondary school vice-principal.

For my next pilot study I examined authority biographically by interviewing a principal and examining his stories, particularly a problematic incident, in order to gain insight into the issue of personal and professional authority. This qualitative research considered the colleague's story of conflict with a challenging student and his family. A major theme in this principal's stories is the need for balance: balance between the rights and responsibilities of the student and a balance between respect for the rights of the individual and the need for authority to ensure a safe and effective learning environment in a secondary school. This study demonstrated to me the efficacy of narrative inquiry for studies of administrators' meanings and practice of authority. Narrative as a qualitative methodology enabled me to interview in an open-ended, unstructured manner which revealed the principal's meanings. The research material was respectful of the administrator's understandings of authority. "Narrative, the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories
about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p. 260) was particularly well suited to this study because stories are accessible to others. Narrative allows the reader to enter into the story vicariously, engaging the reader at different levels. This unique nature of story is explained by Carter (1993): "This special attractiveness of story in contemporary research on teaching and teacher education is grounded in the notion that story represents a way of knowing and thinking that is particularly suited to explicating the issues with which we deal" (p. 6).

As well as being accessible, narrative is also a mode of inquiry and expression that others can enter into in a way which is holistic, not reductionistic (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). The holistic quality allows for the inclusion of context which enhances understanding by the reader. As will be explained later, an awareness of the educational, political, and emotional context of these interviews is essential to a full understanding of the material in the interviews. Another key aspect of narrative is that it includes the concept of time. Narrative is temporal, past, present, and future, and in all story telling is a reconstruction of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). This quality of narrative allows the interviewee to refer to past experiences, to relate to present situations, and to speculate on the future of education. These characteristics of holistic temporal understandings are important to my study because I was seeking to develop an understanding of how these administrators perceived themselves as authority
figures and how these perceptions related to their educational leadership. I was not seeking to dissect the interview material, but rather to appreciate and develop an understanding from the reflections, stories, and comments of these educators in administrative positions.

Through studying the literature and completing my pilot studies, I learned that qualitative research using a narrative approach is a tool which I can use to examine issues of authority and the tensions involved in the complex practice of negotiation of authority in a secondary school setting. These studies prompted me to further pursue my interest in this issue in a more formalized study, this thesis, in which I reflect on the concept and practice of authority. In the present climate, where authority is being challenged in many levels of society, this issue is especially important. As a new century unfolds post-modernist society is experiencing a time when old patterns are being renegotiated and we do not know what will be considered significant in the future. As educators, I believe we need to consider the issue of authority in the changing kaleidoscope of education.

How Did I Perceive The Problem?

During my varied career in education I have had the opportunity to work with students, parents, teachers, and administrators in large and small schools, in a remote northern school, and in southern Ontario schools. I have taught students in a number of subject areas in elementary and secondary schools in both rural and
urban settings. During these 15 years I have also held the additional administrative positions of department head, assistant department head, attendance counsellor, and vice–principal and principal designate at the secondary level. Near the completion of this thesis I became a secondary vice-principal. From this variety of experiences I have learned that different people enact the same legislative authority in different ways, ways which relate to their personalities, their experiences, and their understanding of their role. These experiences and understandings are rooted in their narratives. My observations led me to group the practices of authority into two types. There seem to be those who rely more on imposing their authority on people and situations, and those who seem to focus more on negotiating authority. There are shades of each of these categories, and people may also move from one area to another, depending on the particular situation and how willing or capable others are to comply. Through this research I aimed to gain a clearer understanding of how administrators perceive themselves as authority figures and the practical tensions involved in their practice which affect that perception.

Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) study of Phil, principal of an inner–city school demonstrates how qualitative study can contribute to our knowledge of the issues of authority in an educational setting. These researchers began by contrasting two ideas about administration, one which viewed administration in terms of organization and management theory and the other that focussed on the
administrator as a person. While they recognized that such extremes would be unlikely to exist, they found them useful as points to consider. For Phil, the principal whom Connelly and Clandinin studied, "administering the curriculum was not a matter of telling people what to do in detail or of having tactics and strategies for implementing policies and curriculum. Instead, administering the curriculum meant the narrative living out of a personal philosophy of education" (1988, p. 196). In Chapter Four of this thesis, similar ideas are expressed by the principals interviewed.

**Problem Statement**

The literature reviewed demonstrates a scarcity of reflections, stories and experiences related to authority. Moreover, accounts of the experiences of secondary school administrators relating to authority issues appear even less in the literature. This research will begin to fill this void. Moreover, the literature related to authority at present tends to be abstract, philosophical, and prescriptive. Therefore, there is a need for the present study in which the stories and reflections of four principals demonstrate the complexity of the practice of authority and the personal and social tensions inherent in it. These tensions and this complexity are not addressed in the body of literature which exists at the present time. In this qualitative inquiry of the personal and social tensions of four secondary school principals involved in the complex practice of negotiating authority, I examined
how these senior educational administrators experience authority and how the meaning of these experiences affects their practice.

**Context of Study**

This inquiry aims to gain an understanding of how these principals perceive themselves as authority figures, and how these concepts of authority relate to their leadership in the school. While concerns about education in general and the issue of authority in particular have surfaced throughout the history of public education in Ontario, the interviews of the four principals which form the basis of this research took place during a particularly tumultuous time in Ontario's education system. The unique and intense tensions in the educational system will be highlighted later in this section. The impact of this climate upon this research study will be explained in the limitations section of this chapter. To frame this study however, I now describe some of the tensions related to authority in education in Ontario.

Discipline and the authority of educators had the attention of the public and the media even during the 1800s and the early part of the 1900s. Phillips (1957) summarizes authority in public education through the last two centuries in Ontario:

In discipline and character education, as in every aspect of school teaching and school administration,
the trend has been away from the exercise of external authority and towards the encouragement of co-operation—away from formulae and rules and towards development of inner power . . . . Every step in this direction was regarded by others as dangerously subversive (p. 543).

Through the questions in the interviews in this study, I tried to gain an understanding of the view of authority of educational administrators in the late 1990s. While educational institutions have often been scrutinized by the media, the public, and the business community, the period from 1995, when the Conservative government of Mike Harris came to power, to the present has been particularly turbulent. As part of a restructuring of many of the governmental sectors in Ontario, the present government is making rapid and massive changes to the educational system. Particularly relevant to education is the legislation contained in Bill 104: Fewer School Boards Act (Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario, 1997) and Bill 160: Education Quality Improvement Act (Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario, 1998). While the issues of secondary school reform and the overall funding of the educational system are still being clarified at the time of writing this thesis, areas of these swift and drastic changes are relevant to this study. Included in this legislation are many issues
pertaining to the practice of authority by educators in administrative roles in school and, indeed, many of these issues surfaced during the interviews. Of particular interest is the change in how the participants see their roles as leaders at a time when the government is demonstrating an authoritarian approach to changes and appearing to use the threat of withdrawal of funds as enforcement. While there are many areas of concern, of particular relevance to this study are the clauses of Bill 160 which deal with the removal of vice-principals and principals from the teachers' federations. From discussions with administrators, I believe at the time of writing this thesis that many educational leaders were considering leaving their administrative roles. Some principals and vice-principals were also considering leaving the profession altogether. It seems to me that there is conflict here between the principals' views of their role and this government's view. This government views principals as managers separate from the teachers, while principals generally very strongly believe that they are part of an educational team. Principals were being removed from the federation at a time when the government was increasing teachers' workloads. Principals were separated from teachers, creating an adversarial setting because these same administrators were forced to enact the government's requirements such as increased teacher workload.

The most relevant issue of Bill 160 to this study was the removal of principals and vice-principals from the teachers' federations which differentiates them and sets them apart. Principals and vice-principals have articulated a vision
of authority which is as a part of a collaborative team. This vision is important to
the context of this study. The view of the four principals interviewed for this study
was that of being a team member, not that of manager, a role they feared would be
forced on them. The implementation of Bill 160, especially the issue described
above, as well as the unfolding of the Secondary School Reform Policy and the
funding formulas, continued during the interviewing and writing stages of my
thesis. The effects of these changes on the role of our educational leaders were
starting to be felt while I was completing this thesis. The limitations this climate
placed upon this research will be explained in the next section. However the fact
that this research study took place during a time of dramatic change in education
was not all negative. Beattie speaks of inquiry during times of change,

The process of inquiry through practice and of the
writing about that practice is one of listening in and of
reaching out, of continuously centering and stretching,
and of constructing and reconstructing more authentic
meanings of our lives. During a time of change, this
process takes place under conditions that disturb the
balance, the harmonies, and the relational modes of
interacting that we know, and it requires us to make
new configurations, constructions, and compositions to
fulfil our change needs (p. 140).

It is in times of change that people often rethink and reflect upon their thoughts
and lives. One of the valuable aspects of this study is as a snapshot documenting
these four principals’ perspectives and reflections at a time of political unrest and
massive changes in the educational system in Ontario. This research adds to our
historical understanding of education in Ontario.

Scope and Limitations

The use of a qualitative research methodology in this study facilitated an
in-depth understanding of how four educators in administrative positions in
secondary schools make meaning of authority and how these meanings affect their
practice. This study refers to, and is therefore limited to, particular administrators
in high schools at a particular time in a public school board in southern Ontario.
Qualitative studies cannot be generalized to another time and place. However, the
process used in this inquiry can be repeated. The understandings gained through
this study will add to the growing body of stories of educators.

As explained briefly the context of this research was that of intense tensions
and rapid change within Ontario's educational system. In the secondary system,
preparation of school timetables for the upcoming year had not begun in June.
This is a major process related to staffing usually beginning in March. The delay was due to the implementation and interpretation of Bill 160 and the resulting change in teaching load and preparation time. These pressures and the related tensions of possible strike action, principals' removal from the federation, reduction of extracurricular activities, and media coverage resulted in a very difficult situation in which to undertake interviews. While interviewing in this situation did result in capturing thoughts at a very unique historical time, the heightened tensions did impact on the interviews. After a number of postponements, the interviews took place where and when they could be set up, often on short notice. I was very appreciative of the interviews given and did not request additional sessions; in hindsight such follow-up meetings might have provided helpful information and stories, and this is a recommendation I would give others considering such research.

What I had initially hoped would be interviews involving a collection of stories and reflections about authority came to involve more answers to questions. The thesis interviews did, however, contain many interesting stories, reflections, and thoughts about authority. The presence of stories did allow me to include a narrative aspect to this research. Part of the reason for the research results being more limited than I had hoped was my use of interview questions. This is a limitation because of the questions directed the interviews in specific directions. In my initial pilot studies I had found that using a general question had been difficult
because discussions, while interesting, were strained and unfocused. I therefore chose to give participants questions for their consideration before these thesis interviews. These questions were very focused and therefore limited my results. In future studies I would recommend a balance of these two approaches. Having the interview questions did however put people at ease and I believe helped gain their acceptance of interviews at this difficult time. The selection of the principals who were interviewed was also problematic in relation to gender. My rational for selection of principals will be explained in detail in the methodology section. The issue here is that I had the idea that I wanted a variety of characteristics among the principals, one of which was gender. In hindsight I might have foreseen the difficulty inherent in this concept. Historically in the school board where these principals worked women only recently started becoming principals at the secondary level. In my selection the female principals were also the newer principals, the males were the ones with more years of experience. By choosing two female and two male principals I got a combination that made it difficult for me to develop insight into differences and similarities between reflections and stories of male and female principals. There are hints of the issue of gender though in the material presented. I would recommend other researchers give attention to this area of study. Despite these limitations, however, I believe, as will become evident in Chapter Four, useful and thought provoking ideas, reflections, and stories related to authority resulted from these interviews.
Understanding the experiences of these four principals as they negotiate concepts of authority will give educators insight into a very complex, yet vital, component of education. This research provides a means whereby an in-depth understanding can be developed of how educators in administrative positions make meaning of the concept of authority and how this affects their practice.

**Summary and Overview of the Thesis**

This study used a qualitative research methodology to examine how four principals in secondary schools in Ontario experienced authority and how the meanings of these experiences affected their practice. I considered how I came to do this study and the nature, purpose, and context of this research. The literature review begins with a discussion of qualitative methodology and narrative research. Next, contributions from the literature which added to the understanding of the issue of authority as related to secondary school administrators are probed. Again and again in this literature review, types or forms of authority emerged. Whether the classification or understanding is that of Plato (Grube, 1935), Weber (Freund, 1968), or Holt (Jones & Jones, 1990), there was a common understanding of a formal or legal authority, a traditional authority, and often a personal authority or charisma. The methodology of this research is presented in Chapter Three and the selection of principals to be interviewed is explained. The use of a qualitative research methodology in this thesis facilitated an in-depth understanding of how
these four educators in administrative positions in secondary schools make meaning of authority and how these meanings affect their practice. In Chapter Four five themes which emerged from the interviews are presented. In the conclusion I discuss my research findings, including a dynamic definition of authority, present recommendations, and discuss implications of this study for practice and research. The definition presented of authority is based on and developed from my experiences as an educator, literature surveys, my pilot studies, and the research and writing of this thesis. Next four recommendations are made concerning the understanding and practice of authority in education, including suggestions for teacher education, principals' qualification courses, and the relevance of story and reflection for new administrators. Specific areas for further study are suggested. I believe that this research provides an in-depth understanding of how these principals made meaning of the concept of authority and how this affected their practice as educational leaders.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines the issue of authority in order to gain an understanding of how principals of secondary schools experience authority, and how the meanings of these experiences affect their practice as educational administrators. This literature review begins with a discussion of qualitative methodology. This research has narrative aspects, as some stories are included so narrative research will also be considered in this literature review. Next, contributions from the literature are probed which add to the understanding of the issue of authority as related to secondary school administrators. This literature review provides the conceptual framework for the consideration of the concept of authority. The writings of Weber, Plato, Holt, Dewey and others are considered. This literature describes three types of authority: a formal or legal authority, a traditional authority and a personal authority or charisma. Finally, the idea of personal and legal authority as it emerges in studies on authority in educational administration is considered.

Qualitative and Narrative Methodology

As explained in Chapter One, narrative inquiry, which has been with us since the time of Aristotle (Ricoeur, 1984), is a type of qualitative research methodology. It is used to make meaning of the data collected through the interviews in this study. Carter (1993) observes that “narrative has a long history
in the literature and more recently in the Social Sciences and psychology.”

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) define narrative research in education as,

making of meaning from personal experience via a process of reflection in which storytelling is the key element and in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place . . . Narrative is temporal, past, present and future, and, it is as in all storytelling, a reconstruction of experience (p. 245).

During the last ten to twenty years numerous lines of narrative inquiry have evolved. In her discussion of her exploration for a suitable research methodology Beattie, (1995), explains,

As I searched for a way in which I might conduct my research I focused on the literature in research methodologies and identified qualitative, ethnographic methods as best suited to my purpose. This search lead me into the field of narratology . . . With new understandings of narrative as both phenomenon and method (p. 40-41).
The works of Connelly and Clandinin (1988, 1990, 1991) are based on the concept of narrative as both phenomenon and method. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) point out that teachers have been telling and sometimes recording their stories for many years, but only in the last two decades has narrative become recognized as a legitimate avenue of research (p. 13).

The specific features of narrative which make it the methodology best suited to this study are the allowance for flexibility, its holistic nature, acceptance of the complexities of life experiences, and the subjective, accessible, non-objective style of writing. The temporal aspect of narrative allows for making meaning of the issue of authority through the telling and analysis by administrators of their stories, past, present, and future. Narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research allows sufficient flexibility that the writer and reader may enter into and reflect upon stories and perspectives of these senior educational administrators in order to gain an understanding of their conceptions and practice of authority.

Based on both the above theory and my own experience, I have synthesized the following definition of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a way of entering into and reflecting on one's own personal experiences through story and metaphor. The concepts of time, action, sequence, and observation are significant to narrative inquiry. By reflecting on and entering into their stories and the stories of others, teachers can consider, contemplate, and possibly restructure their own view of themselves and their world of teaching. This thesis involves qualitative research
with narrative elements. Through the stories told by these principals the reader is able to enter, for a time, into the world of these principals. At this point in my academic inquiry, this definition seems defensible, workable, and relevant to this study, and thus will provide a working definition for this study.

**Concepts of Authority**

This section traces the evolution of the concept of authority in the literature as it relates to the issue of authority from the perspective of secondary school principals. The following topics will be considered: types of authority, authority in education, and issues in authority. While different names and divisions are used by different authors to refer to their understanding of authority, there emerge three major classifications: a formal or legal authority, traditional or positional authority, and personal authority. A review of authority as presented in the literature will now begin with a consideration of work of Weber.

**Types of Authority**

Authority has been classified into types by German sociologist Weber, educational theorist Holt, and educational administration theorists Cheal, Melsness and Reeves. Weber, who has been very influential in our understanding of the concept of authority, is described by Turner (1992), as a sociologist who provided a definitive analysis of the nature of authority. In his recognition of groups in
society Weber considered the issue of legitimacy or authority. Weber considered three major types of authority in his analysis of the dynamics of groups in society: legal, traditional and charismatic authority (Turner, 1992, p. 192). While Weber's types of authority are referred to frequently in the literature relating to power and authority, it is important to understand that he is referring to ideal types of authority as opposed to authority as it is practiced in real situations (Albrow, 1990).

Weber's three types of authority are all manifest in the position of principal. Weber's concept of legal authority is described as rational in character, based on belief in the rationally established laws and the legitimacy of the leaders appointed in accordance with the law (Freund 1968). If we then apply this concept, the legal authority of the principal comes from the Education Act (Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario 1996) which provides legal authority. Legal authority then refers to the authority in the law of a state. Another form of authority discussed by Weber is traditional authority. According to Turner (1992), traditional authority means authority dependent on hallowed customs. Traditional authority is based on the belief in the sanctity of tradition in force, and on the legitimacy of those who are called upon to exercise power (Freund, 1968), for example, authority determined by family seniority. Traditional authority is often questioned in the media and by the public today. Elements of it remain, however, and for a principal, this type of authority is derived from the traditional role of the principal.
The final major type of authority identified by Weber is charismatic authority. Charismatic authority is based on the members' abandonment of themselves to an individual distinguished by holiness, heroism, or exemplariness (Freund, 1968). Examples of charismatic leaders are Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. Experience suggests that there is an element of charismatic authority in effective leaders. They seem to carry an air of authority in their character. It seems to me that Weber did not consider the types of authority as isolated concepts, but rather as a way of viewing the whole idea of authority.

Weber’s definition of authority, however, appears static. As this thesis progresses the dynamic aspect of authority will emerge. It is this dynamic aspect which I suggest is missing from Weber’s explanation of authority.

Holt, who wrote about education during the late 1960s, describes another conception of authority. Holt saw all teachers as having,

natural authority, which is the authority based on their knowledge of the subject matter, their ability to develop effective and exciting learning activities, their control of important resources, and their ability to manage effectively and facilitate the classroom group.

Teachers also possess role-bound authority. This is the authority based on their role as teacher and includes
their ability unilaterally to reward or punish student behavior (Jones & Jones 1990, p. 68).

Just as I saw two types of authority in my pilot studies, one internal and the other external, so too Holt sees two types of authority.

in opposition; that is, the more natural authority one uses, the less one needs to use role-bound authority; conversely, the more role-bound authority one uses, the less students can observe or will be responsive to one's natural authority (Jones & Jones 1990, p. 68).

These observations reflect the authority of teachers, but one can certainly generalize to principals. Since principals continue to be teachers in positions carrying additional authority, Holt's thoughts are relevant to this study. In order to be certified as a principal in Ontario, a candidate must be an experienced practicing teacher with the additional qualifications of a principal. Principals are educational leaders (Giles & Proudfoot, 1994, p. 212). The aspect of the principal as educator surfaced during the interviews as principals discussed their enacting of authority in their traditional role of principal, educational leaders, and in their new government-imposed role as managers. Holt then adds to the understanding of
authority in the literature by developing the idea of two types: authority of educators, that of a natural authority based on the teacher's knowledge of the subject and their teaching ability, and role bound authority, the authority of educators based upon their position.

The third group of authors discussing types of authority to be considered in this literature review are Cheal, Melsness, and Reeves (1962). They defined authority as "the power conferred upon an individual or group to make decisions and to see that these decisions are implemented" (p. 27). They saw three specific sources of authority in education. There is, first, legal authority in education, the authority granted by the laws of the province. Second, there is social custom and tradition which might be considered the original forms of authority. Teachers are usually accepted by members of society to exercise authority. The final type of authority discussed is professional authority. Because a profession has a unique body of knowledge, the authors observed that society grants authority to members of the profession in areas governed by that knowledge.

The concept of the hierarchy of traditional organizations will be referred to later in this thesis by the principals being interviewed; therefore, the concept will be addressed here in this literature review. Authors Fayot, Mooney and Urwick studied and described classical management theory (Morgan, 1997, p. 19). The above authors illustrated the theory in a pyramidal chart showing the line of authority from superior to subordinate, which runs from top to bottom of the
organization. Later we will hear the principals interviewed refer to a top down or hierarchal structure. These terms refer to the classical management theory. Hierarchy is defined as a pyramidal structure of organizations that allocates authority and responsibility. Managers are classified as top management, middle management, and lower management (Morgan, 1997, p. 583). The hierarchal approach with its rigid levels of authority is an issue which will be addressed by the principals during the interviews. Their thoughts will be presented in Chapter Four.

The purpose of this section of the literature review was to gain an understanding of how authors have viewed authority in the past. Based on the writings of Weber, Holt, and Cheal, Melsners, and Reeves, types of authority have been presented. Weber saw three major types of authority: legal, traditional, and charismatic. Holt presented two types: natural and role-bound authority. The final group of authors, Cheal, Melsners, and Reeves discussed three types of authority: legal, social custom, and professional. In Chapter Four of this thesis, the research findings, the principals interviewed also explain their ideas about their concepts of authority. Here one element which appears to be missing from the literature will emerge, that of the dynamic nature of authority. The ideas about authority here in the review provide a context to the stories and reflections presented by the principals interviewed. The ideas in the literature review, the principals' views, and experiences as an educator will then lead to the formulation of a working
definition or understanding of authority in education which will be presented later. Turning now from these general concepts about authority in the literature, ideas related to authority to the world of education are next considered.

**Authority in Education**

Authority in education has been considered by both Plato and Dewey. Unlike Weber's three classifications of authority, Plato and Dewey's views were more fluid. Among the many topics considered by Plato were education and obedience to authority. In her thesis on authority, Haralabopoulos (1975) noted that in The Laws Plato said, "The education we speak of is training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen, understanding how both to rule and be ruled righteously" (p. 12). Further, Plato wrote that through education children should develop values such as truthfulness, courage, and goodness (Grube, 1980). Plato's view of authority was one of an exterior force working to mold through education the interior good which exists.

In contrast to Plato, Dewey's (1897) writing at the turn of the last century discussed changes which were then occurring in society and education. He wrote of the need for a change from a more traditional education which stressed exterior authority and knowledge flowing from the teacher, to a more progressive education which recognized that education is a process of living and not a
preparation for future living (Dewey, 1897). Dewey also spoke of a need for balance between individual powers and personal accountability.

Dewey (1897) spoke also of discipline in My Pedagogic Creed, stating, "I believe that the teacher's business is simply to determine, on the basis of larger experience and superior wisdom how the discipline of life shall come to the child" (p. 7). Dewey viewed discipline as "effecting self control directing one's own growth (Stilbéck 1970, p. 27). Later in Democracy and Education (1916), Dewey explained,

Discipline and interest are misunderstood because method and contents are isolated. Discipline becomes a matter of forcing interests upon the child and he accepts these interests because he is afraid of unpleasant results if he does not accept them (p. 9).

Dewey stated that authority figures in school should not impose authority, but cushion or focus life's natural lessons on the child depending on that child's strengths and weaknesses. Dewey (1897) viewed the role and authority of the teacher as a "member of the community [who] selects influences which shall affect the child and assist him in properly responding to these influences" (p. 6). He
therefore saw a shift in the role of authority from an exterior force on the child to a guiding force allowing for the development of the child.

Like Holt (Jones & Jones, 1990), Dewey (1897) also saw authority as coming from the person rather than from an exterior force to be exacted upon the individual. Dewey disagreed with imposed rigid aims, but he did not endorse chaos or aimlessness as guiding principles in education. The initial interviews which were conducted during the pilot studies reinforce this notion of authority from within. Much more recently the following comment was expressed, by Boreen et. al.,

Student behavior can be frustrating, but experienced teachers know that displays of teacher anger, sarcasm, or irritation with the class are almost always counterproductive. Humor is often a far more effective way to resolve management issues before they become significant problems (2000 p. 62).

As I completed interviews for this study, I was aware of Dewey's perspective and that expressed above. To these I added another set of perspectives that of these principals. Each view, whether from theory or a practicing administrator, provides
another perspective on understanding the nature and practice of authority in educational settings.

## Issues in Authority

To this point literature has been considered related to types of authority and authority in education. In order to broaden this overview, consideration now turns to the personal.

The issue of gender will be mentioned briefly here, though it was not considered in-depth in this study. During one of my earlier studies into the issue of authority of administrators, one administrator commented that seldom as an administrator had she felt there was a gender issue. She did describe a situation, however, in which a male teacher in a school where she was a new administrator challenged her authority based on her being female. This example, and my own observations in school settings demonstrate that gender plays a role in this the practice study of authority. As explained in the limitations section, gender was not considered as a major focus of this study; however it does appear to be a factor related to authority. In the areas of further study, I suggest that this be an area of consideration.

While this particular study focuses on the practice of authority in the educational setting, other studies demonstrate the importance of including the personal. Harris (1997) in her article "Ethical Dilemmas in using Narrative
Teaching Methods in Teacher Education" writes of autobiographical inquiry examining the narrative meanings of ethical discussion-making in her teaching practice (p. 16). She writes that "Inquiry into my own narrative had demonstrated the connection between my early experiences of authority and tensions in my teaching practice" (p. 12). This perspective of the complex area of authority negotiated highlights the area of the personal. This acknowledgement of the personal as an issue related to this study of authority will be expanded further in the conclusion of this thesis. As indicated earlier, in their study of administration Connelly and Clandinin (1988) discussed two general concepts of administration: "one that viewed administration in teams or organizations and management theory and the other one that focused on the administrator as a person." (p. 195) These authors were careful to explain that these were extreme descriptions to aid in conceptualizing the idea. Through qualitative analysis of the experience of Phil, a principal, these authors found that for Phil "administering the curriculum meant the narrative living out of a personal philosophy of education" (p. 196). This personal philosophy of education became evident in the interviews for this study, especially relating to the political context in which they took place. From these general understandings of authority, studies related more specifically to authority in educational administration are now considered.
Studies of Authority in Educational Administration

The literature related to authority as practiced by administrators is fairly limited. In Norhouse's (1997) a theory of charismatic leadership, he suggests that charismatic leaders act in unique ways that have specific charismatic effects on their followers. For Norhouse, the personal characteristics of a charismatic leader include being dominant, having a strong desire to influence others, being self-confident, and having a strong sense of one's own moral values. Norhouse's explanation, similar to Weber's, (Albrow, 1990) identifies charismatic leadership as a current leadership style. Consistent with Weber, Norhouse contends that these charismatic effects are more likely to occur in contexts in which followers feel distress, because in stressful situations followers look to leaders to deliver them from their difficulties. Given the tumultuous situation in secondary education in Ontario during which these interviews were taking place, educators may have been looking to their leaders to display charismatic behaviors. Through the questions in these interviews I sought to gain an understanding of the educators' view of authority in this continuing climate of uncertainty. The ideas presented from this research contribute to the understanding of authority, by presenting detailed ideas, experiences, and reflections of these principals.

Charismatic authority has received more attention from researchers since Norhouse's publication. It is often described in ways that make it “similar to, if not synonymous with, transformational leadership” (Northouse, 1997, p. 32).
Transformational leadership is a common term in educational literature in the 1990s. Acknowledging Burns (1978) concept, Leithwood (1992) described transformational leadership as a process in which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (p. 9). Weber's charismatic authority and Burns’ transformation authority stress the common elements of rising to a higher level, of a strength of character.

A type of leadership that emerged at times from these interviews is that of situational leadership. Situational leadership is a model which considers different action and involvement for different situations. Situational leadership is where “the most appropriate leadership style is dependent upon the nature of the task and the commitment and competencies of the follower.” (Bowman & Jarrett, 1996, p. 80). The four styles of leadership in the model described by these authors are directing, watching, supportive and delegating (p. 81). The enacting of different amounts of control over different situations by leaders is evident in the interviews.

Summary

This literature review provided the conceptual framework for the consideration of the concept of authority. In it types or forms of authority have emerged. Whether the classification or understanding is that of Plato, Weber, or Holt, the literature shows that there is a common understanding of a formal or legal authority, a traditional authority, and often a personal authority or charisma.
At this point in this thesis it is useful to synthesize the material presented to this point in the form of a definition of authority. This definition includes the common elements of traditional, personal and legal components of authority. While expressed by various names these three concepts have been frequently referred to in the literature in the past. To these three aspects of authority I now add the concept of the dynamic nature of authority. The following is my working definition of authority based upon and developed from my varied experiences as an educator, this literature survey, pilot studies and research for this thesis. I have come to believe that authority involves the interaction of an individual and their society’s understanding of authority. The three aspects of authority, legal, personal, and traditional interact and are given varying emphasis depending on the situation. The dynamic process of this interaction will be added to this definition as the research unfolds. This working definition of authority then includes the personal and societal dimensions of authority which result from the interplay of the legal, personal, and traditional aspects of a position. Later, in Chapter Four, through the interviews in this qualitative inquiry, a further understanding of how the administrators perceive themselves as authority figures is presented. These understandings, combined with perspectives from the literature, provide further knowledge and insight into the nature of leaders in educational settings. The concept of authority being a dynamic process is fundamental to this research and will be added to this initial definition later in Chapter Five.
This literature review then provided a conceptual framework of some of the historical and present considerations of authority. Next, in Chapter Three, the methodology section, the selection of principals to be interviewed, the format of the interviews, the trustworthiness of the material, and the analysis of the material are described.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The use of a qualitative research methodology in this study facilitated an in-depth understanding of how these principals in secondary schools made meaning of authority and how these meanings affected their practice. As indicated in Chapter Two, this method involves entering into and reflecting on personal experiences of educators through story and metaphor. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, this understanding is useful for parents, prospective teachers, students, administrators, and all those involved in and interested in education. The presentation of the research methodology in this chapter begins with a description of how the principals involved in this study were chosen. Then the format of the interviews is described; the questions asked and the rationale used to determine that the understandings gained were trustworthy are outlined. Later in the chapter, the transcription and analysis of the interviews are explained.

Selection of Principals to be Interviewed

Participants for this study were chosen from a school board as it existed prior to amalgamation, which was mandated by Bill 104 in 1997. Given the complicating nature of the political pressures of this amalgamation of boards, a much more comfortable situation and therefore worthwhile result were obtained by using the previously established boundary, as it provided a structure familiar to the participants. In the board before amalgamation there were approximately 10
secondary school principals. Four of these principals were asked if they would be willing to participate in this study. The principals I asked to participate were a sample of convenience, being educational administrators with whom I was acquainted and who were willing to participate in this study.

The participants were selected based upon years of experience, gender, and school location. Two principals had been either a principal or vice-principal for more than 10 years, and two who had been in these roles for less than 10 years. By including as a criterion people with a variety of years of experience in administration and in their schools, I hoped to gain insight into different perspectives and experience. I also wanted to include two male and two female principals. Another factor I believed should be included was a variety of school settings. Here I selected two of the educators from large urban schools, one from a specialized school, and one from a secondary school in a rural setting. Since I planned to interview four principals, a number of these factors overlapped; for example, the two female principals were also the two principals with the less experience in their roles. As well, the participants were not selected to be representative of each group, but were chosen to bring a variety of perspectives, stories, experiences, and reflections to the interviews.

The four principals were selected then based on the variety of characteristics described above: both male and female, ranging from 2 to 10 years experience as principal, and representative of rural and urban schools. A letter was
prepared outlining the type of research being undertaken, my university affiliation, assurances of confidentiality, and a request for each principal to contact me should he or she be willing to meet for such an interview. Also included was a list of questions for their consideration to assist as each made a decision about whether or not to become involved in this research. I explained that the interview would take a discussion format with stories, and that the questions were for their reflection. I contacted the principals in order to indicate that such a letter would be coming. The letters were then delivered to the schools where the selected principals were located.

The timing of the request for the interviews was particularly difficult because it occurred in 1998, a tumultuous year in education in Ontario Secondary Schools. As was explained in Chapter One, the climate likely impacted on the number and style of interviews and the number of stories included. I was both aware of and involved in the challenges presented by the lack of timetabling for the coming school year. There was a general atmosphere of uncertainty and frustration, combined with the regular end-of-school-year pressures. This was not an ideal time for the interviews, yet this was the climate during which they would take place. It became evident that the fall of 1998 would also pose very definite challenges including a possible teachers' strike. Through the principals' determination and the willingness to cooperate these interviews did take place from the end of June 1998 until July 1998. Had I not known these principals and
had they not been willing to give of their time, I believe this research would not have taken place until a much later date.

Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a further understanding of authority by asking the principals questions about their experiences related to authority, the tensions they experienced, and the insights they had developed into this complex educational issue.

When these in-depth, open-ended interviews, thoughts and stories related to the issue of authority were examined, an understanding was gained into the dynamic nature of the process and enactment of authority. I had previously completed two pilot studies relating to the issue of authority using a narrative inquiry: "An Initial Reflection on the Issue of Authority from the Perspective of a Secondary School Educator", and "Further Reflection on the Issue of Authority from the Perspective of a Secondary School Educator." Both of these pilot studies involved interviewing administrators. Both studies were enlightening and a source of many ideas. My approach to these interviews developed from the research literature (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, pp. 73-75; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, pp. 454-458) from my experience in researching and writing these pilot studies, I learned that questions should be prepared and distributed in advance, even though the interview was to be flexible and open ended. In hindsight, however, the use of
these questions, while they did provide a structure and helped the interviews to proceed well, did focus the material gained and reduced the number of stories and therefore narrative aspect of this study.

The purpose of this study was to examine how these principals perceived and enacted authority and how these experiences affected their practice. From the interviews I was able, as well, to present an understanding of the dynamic nature of the process and enactment of authority.

The three core questions asked of the principals were: how they perceive authority, how they enact authority, and how situations related to challenges to authority have worked out. I provided the following specific questions for their reflection.

1. What is your concept of authority?
2. How does this influence your leadership in your school?
3. How have your ideas of authority changed over your career?
4. Are you able to discuss any situation which caused you to reflect on your concept of authority (stories of your experience)?
5. Would you talk about times in your administrative career when you felt your authority challenged?
6. How did you arrive at your decision to oppose the authority of the government and leave your school during the political protest in October 1997?
7. What happened and how did you feel?
8. How do you deal with challenges to your authority? Would you share a story of your experience?

9. By what kind of conduct and vocabulary do you feel threatened or challenged?

10. Is there anything further which you would like to add, areas of particular interest to you related to this topic, for example, insights into the impact of the present climate on you as an administrator?

These were the questions asked in the interviews. What follows in this paragraph is a brief summary of the process used for the interviews. Mainly the methodology was a synthesis of my previous experiences of interviewing, as well as ideas presented by the author, Creswell (1994). As well McMillan and Schumacher (1997) state that, “qualitative interviews may take several forms: the informal conversation interview, the interview guide approach and the standardized open ended interview. These forms all vary in their degree of structure and planning and the comparability of responses in data analysis” (p. 447). The complexity of interviewing has been summarized by Glesne and Peshkin, “Interviewing, it is not quite the same process for all practitioners, any more than teaching, nursing, counseling, or drawing a picture is. Its variability derives from who is conducting the interview with whom, on what topic, and at what time and place” (p. 15).
The interviews in this research lasted from 45 minutes to 70 minutes and took place in the administrators' offices. This location allowed for privacy (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 73), a familiar setting for the principal, and minimized their time commitment. During each interview I used two cassette recorders to ensure successful taping (Glesne & Peshkin, p. 74). I carried the recorders, tapes, copies of the letter of consent, and copies of the questions in a discreet manner. As a result, only a few minutes were necessary to set up for the interviews.

In order to probe the issue of personal authority, I provided participants with this list of questions in advance for their consideration, although I thought the actual interview might involve only a few general questions to spark discussion. The participants were all encouraged to share any stories or related ideas which they felt were relevant. As it turned out, however, each interviewee followed the questions with additional comments and linkages throughout. It will become evident that their interviews provided a rich source of insight into the nature of these educators' understanding of authority.

**Transcription**

Once the interviews were completed I transcribed them verbatim and labelled them principal one through four according to the order of the interviews. Subsequently, I changed these labels and gave each principal a pseudonym. Therefore each principal's interview was double coded. After I had finished the
transcription, I delivered the appropriate tape and transcript to each principal. This
gave each participant the opportunity to reflect on the material to clarify, verify,
and to add comments should he or she wish to do so. I contacted the principals to
establish an agreeable method of delivering their transcript, to ensure
confidentiality.

**Trustworthiness**

The selection of principals made and the interviews having been completed,
I now turned to consider the trustworthiness of the content of the interviews. The
value of qualitative work is that others may feel personally connected, moved or
persuaded by the narrative. The goal of this section is not to prove truths, but to
show that the material is credible and convincing to the reader, Clandinin and
Connelly (1990) note that rather than judging whether a narrative is "true,"
narratives are judged by such criteria as "adequacy, possibility, depth and sense of
integrity" (p. 245). Narrative inquiry, then, is judged on its faithfulness to the
story, its inner truth, and its engagement of the reader's imagination (Harris 1997,
p. 2). I feel confident that the ideas, understandings, and stories in the transcribed
interviews are credible and trustworthy. I base this conclusion on the number of
administrators interviewed, my acquaintance with the principals, and a familiarity
with their educational context. As well, a systematic explanation of the
methodology of this study was presented in this chapter which adds to the
trustworthiness of this study. Opportunities were provided for the participants to respond to the material. To provide some context, I will include from the literature a consideration of two reflections made by past principals. Each of these aspects related to trustworthiness will now be presented in turn.

Four principals were interviewed for this study. While a smaller number could have provided useful information, the inclusion of four enhances the trustworthiness. As explained earlier in this chapter, these principals included both males and females with a variety of years of experience in differing types of secondary schools. While the results are not included in this research, I had interviewed one of these principals and reflected on issues of authority for an earlier paper. Previously a principal had been interviewed and a paper related to aspects of the issue of authority had been completed. All of these interviews, while differing in information, style of presentation, and stories, contained similar themes and patterns of responses. This trend gave me confidence in the integrity of the research material. I have worked more closely with two of the four principals, but have known all of them for the last 5 to 10 years. While this familiarity could be viewed by some as a disadvantage by introducing personal bias, I found it to be an advantage to this research. What I experienced in my educational life, my informal observations of the interviewees in their lives, and the stories and comments in the interviews seemed credible. Eisner (1991) speaks
of this feeling of credibility or feeling of rightness between what people say and
their actions.

I believe that in matters of interpretation, credibility hinges upon a "feel" of coherence or what Goodman calls "rightness." There is, it seems to me, an undeniably aesthetic criterion that we employ in judging the believability of arguments or the relationship between what individuals say and how they behave. When this relationship is incongruent, there is a lack of fit (p. 120).

While the extent of my familiarity with each interviewee varied, the interviews were more revealing because of my knowledge of these professionals and their lives as educators.

The stories and experiences, while not necessarily familiar to me, rang true to my experience with a number of these principals. Related to the issue of professional contact with these principals is my sharing experience of the context of their educational lives. We have worked together in the same board for the last 10 years. The sharing of aspects of the milieu, although from a different perspective, increased my understanding of the educational context in which they
worked. This deeper understanding of context provided a basis from which I could judge that the material of these interviews rang true.

As well, throughout the process of interviewing, transcribing, and writing drafts, the participants had the opportunity to respond and suggest changes. Creswell (1994) emphasizes this as a way of fostering trustworthiness: Discuss plans to receive feedback from informants (also called "member checks"). Take the categories or themes back to the informants and ask whether the conclusions are accurate" (Creswell 1994, p. 158). The interviewees were given the opportunity to respond to the taped and transcribed interviews, as well as an earlier draft of this thesis; however, none of the participants chose to do so. They each did recognize that they received the material. Although asked to contact me if they had particular objections or concerns with the research but none did so. I also recognized that the participants were extremely busy in their professional lives, especially at this difficult time in education.

Clandinin and Connelly (1988) suggest that it is wise to clarify one's own narrative perspective. They here explain the process and resulting understanding gained through writing a narrative.

To start to understand the narrative unities within your own narrative, we suggest you turn to your narrative data. Reread your stories, your autobiography, your
journals, and so on. It helps to begin this task after you have given content to some of the parts, for example, your specific images, rules, personal philosophy, and so on. Once you begin to understand these parts, you can start to look for experiential threads and to reflect on how those threads relate to your past, present, and future directions (p. 75).

Through the process of writing my educational narrative, I recognized authority as an issue for me. As I explained at the beginning of Chapter One, I began the research for this thesis with an awareness that authority had been an issue for me for some time. Thus, I was able to start from a point of awareness, rather than having such a concern arise during the research.

Finally, in my consideration of the trustworthiness of the research material I turn to comments made by two other principals, one in the recent past and the other one long ago. Both of these principals spoke in the literature of their experiences. One already described in Chapter Two was Phil (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). These authors explained: "We share with you a narrative unity from our work with Phil Bingham, a Toronto elementary school principal with whom we have worked closely for several years" (p. 75).

From their research, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) concluded:
For Phil, then, administering the curriculum was not a matter of telling people what to do in details or of having tactics and strategies for implementing policies and curriculum. Instead, administering the curriculum meant the narrative living out of a personal philosophy of education (p. 196).

Turning briefly to a much earlier time, a principal in a school in a southern Ontario school wrote:

The school can do the child no greater service than to inculcate in him the habit of justifying his actions day by day by an appeal to his own standard of what is right. The aim of all government, school government included, is self-government and this aim can never be realized even in part by an elaborate system of prohibitions and penalties. (Jones, 1938, p. 21)

This particular principal, while commenting 50 years earlier than the interviews I completed, reflects on the issue of authority and emphasizes the need for students to develop internal controls. The comments of these two principals
indicate a similarity of thought and experiences concerning authority in that they both speak of drawing forth the internal strengths or authority within people rather than imposing external authority. Later, in Chapter Four, research findings, the thoughts and stories related to authority of the four principals interviewed in this study will be presented. In these interviews the concepts of living one's personal philosophy of education, as well as the need to help students develop judgement and self-control, will also emerge.

In this section on trustworthiness I have provided support for my belief that the understandings of these principals which were presented in the interviews and will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis are credible. Credibility is based on the inclusion of four principals, my knowledge of the educational context, the clarity of the presentation of the research methodology, opportunity for comment by the principals, and my reference to the experiences of past principals. From this confidence in the interview material, I turn now to the process of transcription of the interviews.

**Analysis**

Throughout the transcription process I became very familiar with the 38 pages of the transcribed interviews. The next step in my research was to attempt to make meaning of this information. As stated in my proposal, I planned to "examine these stories in the interviews to reflect upon the meanings related to the
issue of authority." The analysis of the material began with the transcribed interviews. Essentially, two analyses of the research material were completed to look for similar topics or patterns. I anticipated that themes would become apparent (McMillan & Schumacher, p. 533); however, if themes were to emerge I wanted them to emerge from the transcribed interviews, not be imposed by me on the transcribed interviews. Through a process of manipulation, rereading and reordering, a pattern of major themes began to emerge. I began with the strongest themes and began grouping the information. I initially had eight themes which eventually grouped to five themes, which were: Theme 1: Interpretations of the Concept of Authority; Theme 2: Principals' Enactment of Authority; Theme 3: Thoughts and Experiences Related to Challenges to Their authority; Theme 4: A View of Principals' Challenges of Authority; and Theme 5: Changing Views on the Authority of Principals in Ontario.

This research was then set aside and my analysis began again. This time the research material was organized on a question by question basis to collect the responses of each principal to each question. While this structure was interesting, it did not provide the depth or allow for the clarity I was hoping to convey to the reader. This question by question structure did, however, emphasize the existence of the themes which I had discovered in the first organization. I now felt confident that the first approach of five key themes was appropriate for the content of the interviews. I believed the thematic approach (McMillan & Schumacher, p. 533)
would yield the deepest insight into the issue of authority as understood by these secondary school administrators. Throughout the analysis of these transcripts I found it both challenging and essential to be selective when choosing the material to be used. It was important to set the transcribed material aside and occasionally return and listen to the tapes. This practice allowed me to maintain my focus and keep the context of the statements in mind. This kept my analysis and reflections true to the research material. Now the process of working with the material in each theme began in order to understand the ideas and stories of these principals. In Chapter Three the methodology used to collect, analyze, and present the research which forms the basis of this thesis has been presented. As will become evident in the next chapter on research findings, there emerges through a thematic analysis and reflection on the information and ideas expressed in these interviews an understanding of authority as viewed by these secondary principals.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Four principals were interviewed to provide insight into how they perceived and enacted authority. The principals interviewed were: Linda, Graham, Ann, and Neil. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure confidentiality. The principals have all followed the traditional career path: classroom teacher, department head, vice-principal, and then principal. As explained in Chapter Three, the secondary principals interviewed were all from the same public school board in southern Ontario.

The participants' time as principal ranges from 3 to 10 years. Linda is a principal with approximately 5 years experience in an urban high school. She spent about the same amount of time as vice-principal at another large urban high school. Graham has been an educator for more than 34 years and a principal for the last 10 years. At present he is the principal of a large urban high school. Ann has been a principal for about 3 years. At the time of this research she was principal of a smaller high school in a rural area, but she is now principal of a large city high school. Neil is an educator who has had about 10 years experience as a principal. He is the principal of a smaller, but specialized, school which assists high school students who have experienced difficulty achieving in other school settings. The principals, Linda, Graham, Ann, and Neil, are all acquainted since they have worked with one another in secondary schools during their careers.
INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMICS

Chapter 1

1.1 The Nature of Economics

Economics is the study of how individuals, households, businesses, and governments use resources to satisfy their wants. This chapter introduces the basic concepts and principles of economics.

1.2 The Economic Environment

The economy is influenced by various factors such as technology, natural resources, and government policies. This section discusses the role of these factors in shaping the economic environment.

1.3 The Decision-Making Process

Individuals and businesses make economic decisions based on their goals and the available options. This section explores the decision-making process and how it affects economic outcomes.

1.4 The Role of Government in the Economy

Governments intervene in the economy to maintain stability, promote social welfare, and regulate private markets. This section examines the role of government in the economy and the benefits and costs of government intervention.

1.5 The Importance of Economics

Understanding basic economic principles is crucial for personal, business, and policy-making decisions. This section highlights the importance of economics and its relevance in contemporary society.

Chapter 2

2.1 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is the study of how individuals choose to allocate their resources to meet their needs and wants. This section examines consumer behavior and its implications for market demand.

2.2 Production and Cost

Understanding the production process and cost structures is essential for businesses to make informed decisions. This section discusses the production function and cost analysis.

2.3 Market Structures

Markets are classified based on the number of sellers and buyers. This section explores the characteristics and implications of different market structures, such as monopoly, monopoly competition, perfect competition, and oligopoly.

2.4 Market Equilibrium

Market equilibrium occurs when the quantity demanded equals the quantity supplied. This section examines the conditions for market equilibrium and how it affects prices and output.

Chapter 3

3.1 International Trade

International trade involves the exchange of goods and services across national boundaries. This section discusses the benefits and costs of international trade and the factors that influence trade patterns.

3.2 International Finance

International finance deals with the flow of capital across borders. This section examines the role of international finance in the economy and its impact on economic stability.

3.3 Globalization

Globalization refers to the integration of national economies. This section explores the implications of globalization on national economies and the role of governments in managing globalization.

Chapter 4

4.1 Macroeconomics

Macroeconomics focuses on the behavior of the economy as a whole. This section discusses the key macroeconomic indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP), inflation, and unemployment.

4.2 Fiscal Policy

Fiscal policy involves the use of government spending and taxation to influence the economy. This section examines the role of fiscal policy in stabilizing the economy and promoting growth.

4.3 Monetary Policy

Monetary policy involves the management of the money supply and interest rates by the central bank. This section discusses the role of monetary policy in influencing the economy and the tools used by central banks.

Chapter 5

5.1 Economic Growth

Economic growth refers to the increase in a country's output over time. This section explores the factors that contribute to economic growth and the policies that can be implemented to promote growth.

5.2 Economic Development

Economic development encompasses the process of improving living standards and raising the quality of life. This section examines the challenges and strategies for achieving economic development in different regions.

5.3 Environmental Economics

Environmental economics deals with the relationship between economic activities and the environment. This section discusses the environmental challenges facing the economy and the role of economic principles in addressing these challenges.

Chapter 6

6.1 Labor Market

The labor market determines the wages and employment levels in the economy. This section examines the factors that influence the labor market and the policies that can be implemented to improve labor market outcomes.

6.2 Social Security

Social security is a system of government-provided benefits for retired individuals. This section discusses the principles behind social security and the challenges facing the system.

6.3 Health Care

Health care is a critical aspect of economic well-being. This section examines the role of health care in the economy and the policies that can be implemented to improve health care access and quality.

Chapter 7

7.1 Social Welfare

Social welfare programs provide support to individuals and families in times of need. This section discusses the principles behind social welfare programs and the challenges facing the system.

7.2 Education

Education is a fundamental component of economic development. This section examines the role of education in the economy and the policies that can be implemented to improve education outcomes.

7.3 Environmental Policy

Environmental policy involves the regulation of economic activities to protect the environment. This section discusses the principles behind environmental policy and the challenges facing the system.

Chapter 8

8.1 International Relations

International relations encompass the interactions between countries, including trade agreements, political alliances, and conflict resolution. This section examines the role of international relations in shaping the economic landscape.

8.2 Global Governance

Global governance involves the coordination of economic and political activities among nations. This section discusses the role of global governance in promoting economic stability and cooperation.

8.3 Technology and the Economy

Technology plays a crucial role in shaping the economy. This section examines the role of technology in the economy and the policies that can be implemented to foster technological innovation.

Chapter 9

9.1 Economic History

Economic history provides insights into the evolution of economic systems and policies. This section examines the major economic events and developments throughout history and their implications for contemporary economic policies.

9.2 Economic Policy

Economic policy involves the formulation and implementation of policies to achieve economic objectives. This section discusses the principles behind economic policy and the challenges facing policymakers.

9.3 Future of Economics

The future of economics is shaped by emerging trends and technologies. This section explores the potential developments in economics and the role of economics in addressing global challenges.

Conclusion

Economics is a dynamic and evolving field that continues to shape the modern economy. This book provides a comprehensive introduction to the basic concepts and principles of economics, and it encourages readers to think critically about the role of economics in shaping our world.

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary

Appendix B: Case Studies

Appendix C: Further Reading

Index

Additional Resources
In this chapter, five themes are considered which emerged from the interviews. What follows, however, does provide an interesting glimpse of reflection and stories from four principals on the concept of authority at the end of the nineteenth century. The five themes are: (a) Interpretations of the Concept of Authority, (b) Principals' Enactment of Authority, (c) Thoughts and Experiences Related to Challenges to Their Authority, (d) a View of Principals' Challenge of Authority and (e) Changing Views of the Authority of Principals in Ontario.

The first theme to be considered is the principals' interpretations of authority. In this study it becomes clear that responsibility, decision-making, legitimacy, and being a force for positive change are important components of these principals' views of authority. From this foundation to the second theme, the enactment of the principals' authority is next considered. In this section we see how the concepts of the first theme become the basis for action in educational settings. The principals speak of delegation, cooperation, empowerment, and listening in their practice. The relationship between responsibility and empowerment is elaborated upon later. In the third theme, Challenges to Authority, each principal relates a situation in which his/her authority was challenged. Through these stories, some of the personal characteristics which are involved in the enactment of authority are seen, namely: listening, questioning, discussing and reflecting. These stories include challenges by a group of students, by parents, and by a principal when the participant was a department head. These
principals generally perceive authority as more limited now than in the past. We also observe that the authority of the principal is overridden at times. The fourth theme to emerge from the interviews is that of each principal's understanding of his or her opposition to the authority of the government. The principals discuss their perceptions during the autumn of 1997 and reflect on their decision to leave the school in opposition to Bill 160. In the fifth theme I describe the principals' views of shifts in the authority role of principals in Ontario at the turn of the century.

**Interpretations of the Concept of Authority**

As the principals reflected on their concepts of authority, responsibility, and decision-making, being a force for change, legitimacy, and credibility were common ideas expressed. These principals referred to responsibility as a key aspect of their understanding of authority. As Ann explained, "My concept of authority is basically one of responsibility. I feel that being a person in authority—this is where the buck stops, and that I need to be able to accept that responsibility, and deal with whatever happens." Neil too connected responsibility and authority saying, "the more authority you have, the more responsibility you have." The term responsibility was used frequently through all the interviews, emphasizing the strong position responsibility holds in the way these principals understand authority.
The importance of making decisions and acting on those decisions was also a factor emphasized by these principals when they explained their view of authority. As Linda explained, "Authority to me means that someone has deemed you to have some sort of power or decision making responsibility." Linda stated that in "final decision making . . . the principal can determine how decisions will be made." These two comments reflect the idea of decision-making as an aspect of authority emphasized by each of the four principals.

Another aspect of authority the principals commented on was legitimacy. Legitimacy was included as a characteristic of authority by Graham: "I am the person legally responsible for every decision that happens in the school." These words represent a view of authority which these principals shared. The future of the role and legal aspects of the authority of principals is discussed later in this chapter because they caused concerns for these principals.

As well as responsibility and legitimacy, authority was seen as a factor which allows a principal to make and influence change. Ann explained, "As the one in authority that gives me the strength to be a mediator and to make some positive changes for the kids." Similarly Neil stated, "Authority gives one the opportunity to lead and to influence change or the continuance of things that are good." Characteristics of credibility, being a decision-maker and respectfulness which the previous three principals spoke of were also highlighted in Graham's explanation of authority,
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Concept of authority—Authority—acceptable decision maker, an authority, supposed to be someone who knows something about which he or she is making a statement and therefore, we tend to believe that someone who speaks with authority is creditable, and has some power. Authority has a respectful, but also an intimidating connotation to it.

Here Graham emphasizes that his view of authority is one that includes the qualities of knowledge and credibility.

From these principals' comments about authority, four main aspects of these understandings become evident. Accepting responsibility was key to each principal's view of authority, and the terms of authority and the acceptance of responsibility were directly linked. Secondly, being a decision maker and being able to influence decisions was seen as a major aspect of authority. Thirdly, legitimacy involves the legal aspect of authority in the daily life of principals. The interpretation and enacting of the Ontario Education Act and school board policies are key to the aspect of the legitimacy of authority of principals. Finally, the principals viewed authority as the ability to influence change in a positive direction. They expressed concerns about the ongoing redefinition by society and by the government of their role and their authority as principal. As discussed in
this section, legitimacy, responsibility, decision-making, and being a force for change were key to these four principals' understanding of the concept of authority.

Principals' Enactment of Authority

In contrast to the abstract concepts of responsibility and legitimacy in theme one, these principals spoke in theme two of authority as they saw it expressed in the high school setting. Linda addressed the enactment of authority by explaining that

as a principal ultimately anything that happens in the school, whether I have been directly involved or not in the decision making process, ultimately I have to take responsibility for [them]. The thing is that you can't be the only person to make those decisions—so part of . . . . authority then is entrusting that you can delegate that decision making ability to others.

Similar to Linda's view of delegation were Ann's notions of discussion and cooperation as important components of leadership. This was apparent in Ann's comment when she said, "My leadership in the school is one of cooperation with
everyone involved. I am someone who likes to discuss problems, work out solutions that are amicable to both sides if possible." We see here the recognition of the legal aspects of authority enacted frequently as shared decision making and delegation of responsibilities. Graham too emphasized this point and then spoke of the aspect of empowerment.

Authority makes me a little careful because I realize that I am the person responsible. Legally I'm responsible for every decision that happens in this school—that can be very intimidating from the point of view of looking at the number of interactions that take place [in a school of] 1400 to 2000 people. On the other hand, I have a sense of pride that goes with it too because I do like to empower the people I work with.

Again and again in the principals' comments I saw that the legal aspect as identified by Weber (Freund 1968) was a vital component of enacting authority.

In theme two, Principals’ Enactment of Authority, the participants spoke of other aspects of authority, those of listening to people, knowing how staff feels, and teamwork. These characteristics of authority were highlighted by Neil, who observed, "It's very important when you are in a position of authority to listen."
Later he explained that he saw teamwork as important. He commented that a principal should "know how the troops feel." He saw climate surveys as a key way to do this. As Neil elaborated, what he feels is important to his role as principal is delegation and I guess the way I operate is a lot by consensus. I think that the more information that a person has, then the better a decision can be made and the more likelihood that whatever that decision is, that it can be carried out and followed through. The way I operate, I'm in favor of a cabinet kind of operation—where major decisions are discussed. Often, I will hold the right to make the final decision. That's rare; usually I will go with consensus because that's the best decision. My first responsibility is to kids in a school and that's to do with their safety, programs, with opportunities for them . . . . so that's my number one responsibility.

Neil and Ann clearly articulated their concept of authority as one which includes delegation and consensus. It would seem that there are differences between the more and less experienced principals' views and enactments of
authority. It seems that the more experienced principals were less threatened by challenges to their authority and had more confidence. Given the limited nature of this study I would hesitate to extrapolate this too far. As explained in the description of the participants, the newer principals are also both female. The differences in ideas then may be a result of personalities, experience, gender, education, other factors, or a combination of these variables.

Through the window of these interviews, I was indeed able to gain a glimpse into principals' understanding of the issue of authority. In theme one, Interpretations of the Concept of Authority, they spoke of authority involving legitimacy, responsibility, decision-making and being a change maker. During the earlier consideration of characteristics of authority as expressed by principals, the focus was on educational leadership in the schools. In the second theme, Principals' Enactment of Authority, the view widened to a consideration of the interactions of principals in their schools. The ideas about the practice of authority as principals and leaders in their schools included delegating, empowering staff, listening, and mediating. Each of these could have also provided an interesting theme for further study of the transcriptions.

**Thoughts and Experiences Related to Challenges to Their Authority**

Stories of challenges to their authority reveal underlying values and principles. The common threads of personal skills (listening, questioning,
discussing, and reflecting) emerge. At times, sound educational practices collide with the actions of disruptive students or parental demands challenging the principal's authority. While not asked of participants, I would think they could each have also provided interesting stories confirming authority. This section recounts a variety of experiences. To understand what these principals view as challenges to their authority and how they deal with them, each principal's responses are described individually, and then linked. Linda and Neil spoke of challenges in general, then gave specific examples of challenges by parents. Ann spoke of understanding challenges and used as an example a situation with a group of students involved in vandalism. Graham explained his understanding of what constitute challenges to his authority and the nature of challenges. He chose as his example his experience of working for an authoritarian principal when he was a department head. These principals' explanations and stories aid in our understanding of authority.

Linda spoke of needing time to consider her decisions, to avoid challenges to her authority, the feeling of the changing nature of authority, and responses evoked in her by challenges to her authority. She explained that, when challenged by a parent for what she believes is a sound educational decision, it is sometimes necessary to stand fast on a decision and risk an appeal to a superintendent. Here we see authority as relative where a higher power seems to override anothers
power. As Linda explained, it is important to consider and to attempt to predict situations where a superintendent will support a decision. As she elaborated,

I've been fairly lucky in that I think I've learned not to put myself in a position that I have to back down on and so I've tried to make sure that if I sense that I might have to back down I don't ultimately say no to the person who might challenge.

She recognizes too the changing nature of the authority of principals as more and more people are willing to carry that challenge to the authority of the principal to a higher level, more so in other areas than in her city.

So I'm more cautious of it and I think of that as that position [principal] there are some people that still respect that position. Now . . . . there are more and more people who straight talk to the director and they'll have to come back down to you, but I think terms of the principalship I think that there's a, in [this area] anyway, maybe not in other places, but [here] there is a respect that position being the ultimate say . . . .
As Linda explained, it is important to consider and try to project the development of events and challenges. The following story told by Linda demonstrates two aspects of her views on challenges to authority. First, when Linda believes a decision is the best one educationally, it is necessary to hold fast to the decision even if it means that it may be appealed to the superintendent. Second, Linda reveals her feelings when such a challenge occurs, as she said,

I've felt bullied and not just by men, but by strong mothers who say that "this is the way it is, this is the way I think it is and this is the way it has got to be" but I guess if I feel confident that I'm doing what is right educationally and I'm trying to make the decision that's best for everybody and it may not be what that parent thinks is best for that child and if I know in the whole context I have to hold by my decision. For instance I had a mother who wanted me to open up [another OAC class] last year with I think there was 12 kids signed up and there was no way that class was being cancelled. Well that mother raised a fuss. She faxed [the superintendent] a letter and the superintendent said the mother was not going to go
away. Well—I was not going to offer an OAC class with 12 students . . . . and I knew the superintendent would have a difficult time to tell me to cancel a class with 16 students and to offer an OAC class. It wasn’t important enough and I knew that mother was going on, but I knew ultimately I was the principal and I’ll make the decision and it did go away. The superintendent didn’t think it would go away, but it did and maybe I was just lucky but—some of the bullying and I don’t like that and what happens is I get mad. I don’t like that, but I have to be careful and that I have to watch that I can keep rational and I can try to be understanding when it’s time to be understanding and to be listening rather than to be mad, so that’s the kind of conduct gets to me sometimes.

Linda’s reflections on challenges to authority show that time is needed to consider decisions and that challenges appear to be more frequent in some areas. When Linda believes a decision is the best one educationally for the largest number of students, it is necessary for her to hold to that decision even if it means dealing with feelings of being "bullied." Given the energy, time, and resources,
there may be ways to adapt the school structure to reach a compromise that focuses less on win-lose and more on compromise.

Another principal, Neil, spoke of dealing with challenges through asking for explanations and trying to calm people in order to be able to discuss problems and limitations to his authority, and of behind-the-scenes challenges. He spoke of what he believes to be changes in the level of authority a principal has now, as compared with the past. In a story of authority challenged (which follows later in this section) this principal told of a parental challenge which brings into focus an aspect of the work of a principal. When challenged, Neil explained that he asked "why" in an attempt to understand the situation more clearly. I generally ask "why" when I have a challenge to authority." Neil explained that what he finds most threatening is not loud and aggressive talking, but rather,

the behind the scenes challenge, that's what bothers me
and I think every school has one or two staff members
that think that everyone in the office are jerks and go
about talking about that and I find that more
destructive are the behind the scenes groups.

Neil, as well, speaks of the situation where someone he respects questions him. "I guess what I find most threatening or challenging are people that I respect
a lot in a school that make a comment or question my authority quietly, that's what bothers me the most." Neil also sees his authority as principal as quite limited. "I don't think my authority now compares in any way with authority 20 years ago."

He goes on to explain that at times authority should have been challenged

This is a change I've noticed. In the past decisions made by schools were unquestioningly accepted by parents and I think that was not good because I think that sometimes parents didn't use their right to question, but what I have found more and more recently is that the school's authority is just—if they [parents] don't like it they just go straight to a trustee or straight to a superintendent or most recently they go to [their MPP] with their concerns about how we're mismanaging things. The reality of the changing role of the authority of principals is not isolated, but rather is part of society's overall change in its view of authority.

Neil goes on to illustrate this aspect of the nature of a challenge to his authority and the frustration of having his authority undermined in the following story.
[Two years ago] there was a student in this school that was quite disturbed. There was an incident, a lot of problems on the bus, all kinds of problems here with authority and that year he was here for about a week then he was suspended, then he went to jail. He was back after three months. I guess, he didn't last quite the first day, then he was suspended. Then was back from the suspension—I think he lasted one day, but had problems on the bus . . . . the second day he was here another suspension and this was not for, you know, telling a teacher to "f" off. This was for fairly aggressive behaviour—there was a knife incident and this was a disturbed kid and anyway—kicked him out of school—he turned 16 and I kicked him out—well I had all kinds of meetings with father . . . . And father at one time, you'd talk to him and father was quite supportive of the school. Then something would happen and father's reaction you know I was called anywhere from an asshole to more colorful kinds of things . . . . so the kid appeared the first day of September [last September] and we were full—he
hadn't been in touch with the school or anything, so we
didn't have a timetable for him. We were full and we
had a waiting list so we put him down on the waiting
list and I said to dad we can't, we still have to work
through these people and we'll be in touch. Well dad
went to the board and complained about being a
taxpayer and all this kind of stuff and because I wasn't
taking this guy—anyway I got a phone call from the
board saying "enroll him," and I said "that's not fair"
and I said "number one, the staff is going to think I'm
nuts for taking this guy back, and number two he's not
the next in line, there's a whole bunch of other people
ahead of him, and number three he's not going to last
here. It's going to be a waste of time," but I was still
told to enroll him and I guess that was a definite. Well
their authority overruled my authority so . . . . Yes, so I
enrolled him and put him on a contract and he was here
a total I guess of 3 days and there were three
suspensions—so then I removed him and now the
board did stand behind that because father complained.
The kid ended up in jail again because he badly beat up
his dad, but yes that's an example where that parent complained and there were other parents that had kids that needed to be here and they weren't phoning the board and raising a ruckus and so their kid didn't get in—it didn't seem right to me.

Of particular interest in this story was the parent's challenge to the principal's authority and Neil's frustration with trying to deal with a difficult student. In this story we also see the dilemma of the principal's authority undermined. Where there may well have been particular reasons for the decision to do this, the feeling remains that the principal made what he felt was a justifiable and wise decision which was overruled. This topic of authority overruled could also be an area for further study and reflection.

Another principal, Ann, explained her ideas about challenges to authority by parents and students,

I don't feel very threatened by students—no matter what their behaviour is because they are normally acting out because they are angry. Sometimes they have the right to be angry and sometimes they don't, but they need to calm down, and sit and talk about
things—so students—I don't feel threatened or challenged by. Parents, sometimes I do.

Parental challenge is an issue very relevant to principals' experiences of authority. This is an area which could provide many stories for consideration. Ann continued to explain that her style of handling challenges has not changed, but she emphasized the need to talk to people as seen in this excerpt where she explains how she handles challenges to her authority,

I don't think that I have changed in the past 5 and a half years. I may have changed a little bit from when I was in the classroom because I was more the boss in the classroom, and the fact was that things went my way or no way. Again, I was willing to talk but, more often than not, they were situations that didn't need too much talking. The kids realized they were in the wrong. But as the administrator in a school, I don't think that I've changed my style very much.

This comment by Ann concerning her feelings surrounding the subject of authority, as a teacher and as an administrator, is interesting. She remarks that,
while she does not feel that she has changed a great deal, she does feel she was more "the boss" in the classroom. Perhaps this is because the classroom is a more contained environment where her position of authority is more clearly defined.

While there is an element of being ultimately responsible as principal for events in the school, there have also been the important elements of collaboration, negotiated solutions, and delegation of responsibility and working with the public which may be part of her different view of her authority. The age of the persons involved may also contribute to Ann's feelings. In the classroom situation, Ann was an adult working primarily with teenagers, while as an educational leader she was often working with adults as well as students.

Throughout her interview Ann emphasized the need to listen to people and the need to talk to people as seen in this excerpt where she explains how she handles challenges to her authority,

I do need to talk it over with someone. I talk to the vice-principal a lot, and the Head of Guidance, and we are sort of an administrative team in the school—the administrative team—we do a lot of talking—and basically when I have made up my mind, then I've made up my mind, and if parents don't like it, or students don't like it, they can appeal it to the next
higher body, but I have usually done my homework, so that I know I am standing on firm ground and will be supported in the decision that I've made.

Here Ann emphasizes the collaborative nature of her understanding of authority. She explains how she seeks opinions of others and carefully considers her decisions. When she has determined that it is not the correct decision, she is prepared to present and to defend her decision.

She told the following story of a challenge to her authority, which illustrates this point:

When I arrived as new principal at school, my vice-principal had been there for a year—just under a year—when I arrived, and there were some senior students, male, that were in the school—who thought that they could run the school the way they wanted to run it, and they constantly challenged our authority, the vice-principal's and mine, to the point where they were vandalizing one of our halls, and we had to deal with these kids. Most of them were too old for us to call the parents—they were over 18, and I'm not sure what had happened in previous years to them, whether they just
decided, that, with a female principal . . . they were going to be able to do what they wanted, or whether they had been suspended in previous years—but our suspensions, in my first year here, went up from about 40 the year before to over 120—so we decided we weren't going to put up with any nonsense from these guys, and we basically continuously suspended them whenever we needed to. As a result, this year has been a dream, comparatively speaking. Some of those same guys are still back here in the school, but they know if something happens they are going to have to deal with it—they are going to be suspended from school, and there will be no, if, ands, or buts—so—I think the situation with these guys—we ended up contacting some parents in some cases because they really needed help in anger management, and that type of issue—but, overall, I think we overcame the challenge to our authority. We ended up closing that hall that had been vandalized, closed it completely to all students and put a little peer pressure on these guys and said, "We need to know who caused the vandalism in the halls, and if
we don't find that out then we are not going to open that hall. It wasn't actually open for a whole year, and we finally reopened it probably in the spring of this year, and said to the kids—that if there was more vandalism in that hall again, it would be closed . . . . it has been perfect since then—so I think the peer pressure worked on some of them, the fact that some of them shouldn't even have been in school worked to our advantage because they didn't come back in September—so it happened in different ways—to different people, but that was quite a challenge, and I do have to think that it was because there was a female principal here for the first time.

This story relates Ann facing a challenge to her authority by students, and making a decision to act by imposing consequences. Ann then sees a positive change in student behavior.

In addition issues other than discipline appear to be involved in this situation. Ann explained that she became the first female principal in this rural high school. This factor, combined with the history of this group of older male students, may have created the situation resulting in the challenge of her authority
The image contains a page of text, but due to the quality of the image, the text is not legible. It appears to be a page from a book or a document, but the content cannot be transcribed accurately from this image.
as principal. Ann articulated that her being the first female principal in this school was likely a factor in the situation. As explained, gender is not a focus of this study; however it should be acknowledged that it is an important element. As identified in writing about authority, gender position and age are major factors involved in creating conditions for challenges of authority. Each of these factors were present in the challenge to her authority Ann described.

Here also the concept of situational leadership fits, (Bowman & Jarrett 1996 p. 81). At times these principals attempt to exert direct control over a situation such as when Ann closed a hall to deal with vandalism and accepted the students’ anger over her decision. Neil’s earlier explanation of working to consensus building in the school shows a different situation and a different way of decision–making suited to him and his situation.

Graham, an experienced educator and administrator, demonstrated judgement when he talked about his enactment of authority. He asked what is really a challenge and emphasized the need to avoid knee–jerk reactions, as well as taking time to reflect. He stressed the need to pick issues carefully, in order to leave time to reflect and time for the many important issues that need attention in education. He spoke of challenges by students and parents and used an anecdote of a challenge to explain that he does not object to being questioned concerning actions and decisions. He said:
Well—I’ve never objected to people asking me why something is being done in a certain way. I had become Department Head of English in my fourth year of teaching . . . . when I went there, I found out that I was working for an extremely authoritarian principal . . . . and I felt very uncomfortable working for this man, and you were working for him, you were not working with him . . . . and probably 3 or 4 months into my short tenure at this school, I started asking questions why?—why things had to be done that way, why we all had to sit in our classrooms when this man went on the speaker and asked three or four students to come to the office—and no peep, no one moved until that happened. I felt that type of authority oppressive, offensive, and counterproductive—other kids in the classroom wouldn’t understand why they had to be penalized while he waited for these people to come down—that type of thing. I asked—why things had to be done that way—He found that extremely threatening and eventually called me into his office,—must have been around March, and told me,
and he was perfectly within his rights, because I was on a green contract [probational contract teacher]—he told me he would not be taking me back the next year, and, basically, if I kept my mouth shut he would give me a recommendation so I could go to another job somewhere else—but it wouldn’t be at this particular school. Well, of course, I being the kind of person that I am, I did not keep my mouth shut, but it would have been impossible to, because people would ask—are you coming back—I’d say no and they’d ask “why not?” What happened was it did blow up and hit the papers. There was a student protest, the end result was that I left it anyway and I had OSSTF [Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation] involved too .... because it obviously wasn’t the climate where I could be happy.

Graham’s experience recorded in this story is one of being required to work in a situation in which he was not to question authority. The situation relates strongly to the manner in which he enacts authority. It seems clear that Graham, while recognizing the responsibility of being in a position of authority, also sees
authority as involving a negotiable approach, empowerment of others, and
delegation. Clearly Graham, holding and enacting these views, would find it
extremely difficult if not impossible to work for someone who viewed his
authority as ultimate. Graham believes it is at times positive to question authority.

Of particular interest in Graham's interview also were his reflections on the
nature of student challenges:

Certainly I have had my authority challenged by some
other students—I guess I believe my communication
abilities are such that, at least one of two things
happen—(a) people don’t bother arguing with me
because they are going to get bathed in a whole lot of
language that they do not want to hear, or they
say—maybe, he is right, or—he’ll carry on the fight
some other way.

Here Graham presented a view of his communication abilities when his
authority is challenged by students. He finds that students usually change their
minds, decide not to argue or find another way to continue the disagreement.
Perhaps, too, there are times when the other person just may not be interested in
confrontation.
From this reflection on challenges to his authority Graham went on to speak briefly of challenges by parents and by students. He referred to the frequently contentious issue of clothing. He explained that:

I guess my approach has been that I figured I wanted a long career and if fashions are going to get me going, like the length of skirts—I do have limits—don't get me wrong. I will define some of those, but they are not the limits that I know a lot of people—I know they won't allow beer shirts in the school—they won't allow hats, whatever, I think that's a bit of a fool's game to get into—that type of thing—you're not only taking on kids, you're taking on their parents, you're taking on the media—societal direction and you're trying to make this little island of purity or less impurity. I guess I'd rather have a real place and a real school and talk about the inappropriateness of certain kinds of language.

Graham articulates his values in this excerpt. He outlines the limits beyond which he will not bend. He believes that it is more productive to pick certain behaviors to deal with and only to deal with them when they are clearly a problem
or they become harmful. This explanation also relates to the concept of situation leadership, that of using authority differently for different people (Lassey & Sashkin, 1983, p. 152). This is not to say that authority is not exerted, but rather the enactment of authority is a choice depending on the situation. Graham recognizes the reality of the real world in which students work and live in the late nineties. He uses the term "inappropriateness of certain kinds of language" and, by doing so, he does not label the student. Significantly Graham avoids picking fights with students.

Related to the issue of clothing, Graham went on in this interview to explain that he draws the line at distasteful slogans and inappropriate language.

I think it is pathetic that some of the messages on shirts etc., but the reality is that I didn't create them and I certainly have sent kids to take shirts off because I felt they were inappropriate. But what—what threatens me or challenges me? One of the things I've always tried not to do is to overreact—it's hard sometimes not to because the tendency is to a knee jerk reaction, but sometimes it is better to, this happens now let's just reflect on it a bit before we jump down someone's
throat—if a kid is wearing a stupid hat—is it insulting?

To whom is it insulting?

Graham explained the positive element of stepping back, taking sufficient time to review and reflect in a situation. He emphasized the necessity to allow time for reflection, to reflect on a situation and to formulate a course of action rather than simply to react to a situation. This awareness of the need for reflection, and the time to do so is highlighted in the recommendations in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Graham related the issue of rules for clothing to the issue of an individual's authority.

There are certain body parts that should be covered, but I guess how they're covered really isn't a huge issue—I'm not going to make a big deal about it. Others might, but then I think you're into a game—playing kind of thing and that wastes more time and can be more disrespectful of one's own authority by getting into that game. So sometimes if it's not doing harm, let it run its course and spend your energy on the many, many things that we need to spend our energies on.
null
These comments demonstrate that, to Graham, it is important to decide what is a challenge and what issues have to be ignored so there is time and energy for the larger issue, education in the school.

In this section four principals described their views of challenges to their authority. We have seen a concern about the changing nature of challenges, the need to develop and use personal characteristics of listening, questioning, and discussing to clarify and, at times, defuse challenges. Each principal elaborated on his/her view of challenges with a story embedded within the interview. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the principals spoke of their authority being challenged by the present Ontario government. The next theme explores a challenge to the government by these four principals.

A View of Principals' Challenge of Authority

During the fall of 1997, a large percentage of educators in Ontario withdrew from the schools in protest of a piece of legislation, Bill 160, a key part of the reorganization of education by the provincial Conservative government. As was discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, Bill 160 was and continues to be a very contentious piece of legislation which put decision-making power and funding under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Government. Each of the principals interviewed left his/her school in protest and remained out for the full two weeks of the protest. All of the other public secondary educational administrators (vice-
principals and principals) in this board as well as many other boards in the province stayed out of their schools during this time. This action of leaving when they were told to stay in the schools defied the provincial government, which has authority for education in Ontario. Some pressure also came from the school boards, although many felt that this school board pressure was a result of pressure on boards by the provincial government. During these interviews, my goal was to gain an understanding of these principals' concept of authority. Given the tumultuous climate of education at the time these interviews took place, it is not surprising that a variety of aspects related to authority in education surfaced. These principals’ concepts of authority came into conflict with the Ontario Progressive Conservative government's enactment of authority over education in the province.

These principals’ decisions to leave their schools was based on the emphatic belief that Bill 160 was morally wrong for the education of Ontario's students. The principals’ decision to leave the schools was logical in the context of the situation or climate of education in Ontario. The concept of situational leadership (Bowman & Jarrett, (1996) p. 81) applies to this series of events shows during which the principals acted in a unique situation. They saw Bills 104 and 160 as wrong. This perceived moral wrong then justified in these principals' minds their decision to defy authority. In this situation, the beliefs of these principals overrode their acceptance of the authority of the government. They refer to
liability, as well as their feeling of being part of the school staff. The fact that the
principals belonged to the teachers’ federation also played a part in their decisions.
When asked how they came to the decision to leave the schools, all of the
principals stated that it was not a difficult decision. For example, Neil commented,
"Certainly I was supportive of that action and I was opposed to what the
government was doing, so I was just like everybody else. I was angry about what
was being done. I found that an easy decision." However, while Neil found the
decision straightforward, he was still concerned about liability.

The issue of liability surfaced in the context of leaving the schools.
However, as Linda explained, the belief that the law was wrong overrode her
concerns about liability. As she said in the interview:

It really wasn’t a difficult decision because we were
part of the federation. I remember the second last day
there was this big scare about liability—the board was
telling us about the principal being the ultimate
authority and if something went wrong and you
weren’t here and you abandoned your duty and if some
kid got into the building and got hurt—and then the
board’s insurance wouldn’t cover us because we had
abandoned our job and we weren’t on the job and they
wouldn't cover us and that I remember it was around 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon the day before we were supposed to going out and we got confirmation that we were being covered, by OSSTF or someone had taken out an insurance policy to cover all the principals up to $500,000,000 liability apart from what the board would normally have . . . .

Linda's feelings highlighted pressures on principals at this difficult time. The government and the school board emphasized that if principals left their schools, they were abandoning their duty. These pressures added to the principals' sense of liability. There were also the parents, students, community members, the media, and the federations each exerting pressure on the principals.

It is interesting to note that these principals also felt that other secondary school principals in their board believed that this bill was a wrong direction for education. As Neil said:

I did not agree with what the government was doing and we were warned, I guess, by certain superintendents and the director about our possible legal liability if we left the school, etc., so I guess it
made some people think twice, but I don't think you will find a secondary school principal [in this board], who even thought twice about whether they should be in the school or not in the school—I mean—you have to work with your staff when you come back, and I didn't agree with what the government was doing, so I had no problems with that whatsoever.

It appears that some at the government and board level were using the principals' sense of liability as a means to put pressure on principals to remain in the schools. Here, we see opposing rights and responsibilities related to enacting authority.

The sense of responsibility, the moral decision in acting against the authority of the government with its Bill 160, is clearly demonstrated by Graham:

Well—as you know—that was not difficult once I knew where Bill 160 was going to take us. My tack all along, and my belief in myself, is that I am an educator. In over 34 years I have gained some right to speak as an educator, and I felt when I read, —where Bill 160 was going, and when, they had the gall, to call
Education Quality Improvement Act—it was an easy decision for me to oppose it in the interest of students—and now that it has been passed and government is still pushing that agenda, I still feel very definitely it was the right thing to do. I couldn’t live with my own conscience if I had not taken the stand to oppose it . . . . I am a great fan of the morality of Thomas Moore—"A man for all Seasons"—where Moore talks to Cardinal Wollesley. He believes—that when a statesman forsakes his private conscience for the sake of his public duty, that he leads his country by a short road to chaos—and I felt I could not ignore my private conscience. That makes it much easier for me to live with myself when I can do that kind of thing.

Graham here expresses what he believes to be his inalienable right to speak. He speaks here as a visionary. Graham spoke often publicly in defense of public education. This idea of the expression of vision as a part of leadership is summarized by Bennis et al. (1994) who state, "A vision of the future is not offered once and then allowed to fade away. It must be repeated time and again." (p. 61).
Graham's advocacy for the best education for all students put him in opposition to the changes being imposed by the provincial government. As an educator within the educational system in Ontario in 1998, Graham enunciates his difficulty with Bill 160. He does this in a three pronged manner. First, he states that in over 30 years he has gained the right and the authority to speak as an educator. Second, he speaks of his moral obligation as a teacher to appose Bill 160 in the interest of students. The bill has passed and the government is still pushing that agenda. Graham states that he is opposed to this legislation in the best interest of students. Third, Graham speaks of his conscience. Graham is searching his own mind, conscience, and morality and states that he could not ignore his private conscience that this change in education is wrong, and he felt compelled to express his concerns publicly.

Again and again these principals referred to the moral and ethical aspects of their view of authority. Throughout these interviews I came to understand that the beliefs of these four principals overrode their view of the authority of the government. Through this research I saw the moral beliefs of these principals that the content and purpose of Bill 160 were wrong for the educational future of the students of Ontario. Their beliefs were so strong that they were willing to oppose the authority of the provincial government.
Changing Views of the Authority of Principals in Ontario in the Future

Throughout the interviews these principals expressed concerns about their role and the nature of authority in the future. As was seen in the section on challenges, most felt their authority was being challenged more frequently. Ann identified the situation where teachers need to challenge the principal's authority in order to challenge the government's legislation. Linda wondered if, now that principals were out of the federation, teachers might feel more comfortable in coming to the principal with concerns about a colleague's teaching. The role of parents as decision makers was also raised. Neil articulated the thought that principals will have more responsibility but less authority. Graham went on to probe the issue of the principal's responsibility or right to comment on or disagree publicly with the position of the government related to principals.

A prominent concern expressed by all the principals was what their role would be in the future. Linda commented that "there will be a time when we are not sure of our authority." Neil added a different dimension saying that "recently principals seem to be given more responsibility, but less authority." While the duties and responsibilities of the principal as outlined in the Education Act (Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario, 1966) still stand, the nature of the position is being redefined by the government.

This uncertainty concerning their role and authority is causing difficulty in the already complex role of principals. The removal of the principals from the
federations occurred through Bill 160. The effect of this legislation was discussed earlier, but at the time of this research and the political protest of 1997 principals were part of the teachers' federations. Because principals had been and still saw themselves as teachers, many felt that they needed to remain with the teachers' federations. As we have seen during the political protest, many principals left their schools with the staff in protest over the government's directions in education. As a result, or perhaps in retaliation, during the protest the government legislated the removal of the principals from the federations. The four principals interviewed felt that this removal was a major area of concern related to their authority in the schools. They expressed several concerns. As Linda said, this "whole business of taking us out of the federation and the change that's going to make in terms of our authority within the school is a problem." In his interview Neil asked, "How can you work with a group and get the most from a group, but not be part of that group?" Related to this theme Linda said,

So, I think that there will be a time when we're just not sure where our authority, what will happen in the schools because of being out of the federation and how people will view us. I know we already talked about that, they already had that hierarchical view—despite the fact that we were all colleagues in the same
federation, so will it be even more emphasized now that we are out? Will it, will we really be viewed as being on the other side and therefore the bad guy automatically? I don't know, I hope not, but I sense that for some it may mean that as we get through some difficult decisions, having to do some difficult things that some don't like we could very definitely for some widen the gap.

Linda articulates a significant issue, that of being part of the educational team. She describes the dilemma of many educators already having a hierarchical view and how that might be further accentuated now that principals are out of the federations. The issue of hierarchy or levels of authority and changes to the hierarchy is an interesting one. As the authority of the provincial government is being strengthened and exercised through Bill 160 the amount of authority the principal really has come into question. Critical to this is the question of how this change may alter the dynamics of authority; for example, will challenges by teachers become more frequent as administrators are seen by some as an external group? Those in the role of principal may see a further isolating of themselves as they seem more apart from others in education, especially other teachers. Also, one might question how this will impact on the effectiveness of educators in their
ultimate goal of educating students. In addition, Linda noted an interesting aspect of this removal:

I've had staff who seem to think that I won't be bound, or I won't be reminding them they have to be bound by professional ethics, yet they have a great deal of difficulty with colleagues not doing what they think they should be doing and I haven't had that experience or whether that would indeed be the case.

In this quotation Linda raises the difficult issue of whether principals, as members of an external group, might affect some teachers' comfort level in expressing concerns about colleagues.

Ann gave examples of difficulties with year-end calendars, and staffing related to the issue of authority:

Yes—I think that right now is probably the time that I have felt most challenged—and I don't think the teachers mean to do that, but they are put in a situation now where they have to challenge the authority of the administration, and it is a very sensitive situation,
because we were part of the federation until April, and
our hearts are still there, and we know what the
teachers are fighting for—and I personally agree with
what the teachers are fighting for, but, in a small
school like [this one], the staff is very close knit, and
they are very strong OSSTF members, so, for example,
I tried to go to the Heads meeting and set up a time line
for next year—they were not willing to do it. I guess I
felt a little challenged, at that point. I understood
where they were coming from, I knew why they didn't
want to do it, but I thought, how am I ever going to get
anything done, and it was almost a bit of a panic, when
it started—but so basically I said to them if well, "the
next Heads meeting I will come with the timetable, and
you can agree or disagree with it."

In this excerpt Ann presents her concern about the relationship between teachers,
who are still part of the federation, and principals, who have been removed from
this group. Ann is concerned about principals being perceived as outsiders. Like
Linda's concern with the increasingly hierarchical view of education, Ann also
worries about how administrators will remain as part of the educational team if they are increasingly seen as an external group.

Ann also spoke of the change of focus from educational leader to manager of schools. She observed:

I don't know what the job is going to turn into, and I am concerned about that. I talked it over with my husband and said, “if this turns into a job I don't like, I am not prepared to stay in it because I love what I am doing right now.” I love being a principal, but I'm not prepared to turn into a business manager—that's not why I became a teacher, it is not why I became an administrator in a school, and I think it is going to be very interesting to see how the role of principal changes.

Ann articulates her values related to remaining a principal who is an educational leader, not a manager. She expresses her concern about what it means to be a principal and what it may mean in the future. Ann reiterates that she values being a principal as she knows it as educational leader and not a business manager and should she feel that this is no longer possible she would leave her principalship.
Here again we glimpse her strong moral commitment to education and the moral aspect of being a principal, an authority figure.

Neil also gave an example of a dilemma in the present real world of a principal, how he as a leader worked for the best for his school when he could be perceived as working against the desired goal of the board:

Yes—I have a lot of concerns, a lot of questions and they have to do with the management thing Carol, now that we're in kind of a management role, I didn't think, at first I thought that wouldn't make a lot of difference because I'm still me, the staff's still them, we have a working relationship and cripes what's going to change? Nothing really, but there have been subtle changes—there have been some dilemmas I guess, that I've found myself in, where as part of management the board may expect me to agree with a certain stance and you see as principal of a school the kids at [his school] that's what I'm concerned about, that's my focus, and therefore the programs and the staff and everything it's got to, I'm going to fight for [it]. A superintendent can fight for the betterment of the whole board and that
may take away from one school to give to another school and I can understand all that—but to support a stance that's going to chew into [this school] and take away from stuff we have here, how do you do that? How do you take that stance and still be a leader in a school? Still be the principal teacher or still have your school as your concern—it would be like one saying, OK there's a problem with such and such a school, so I'll go with three teachers less—no big deal—you know—because it's better for the board—well if it kills programs here, am I being an effective leader or manager or principal of this school? So, I think all of us—principals and vice-principals are confused.

This description of the position of principal provides insight into Neil's concern about doing what he believes is best for the students in his school in the future. Neil presents a contrasting view of the role of superintendent working for the betterment of the board, and his role as principal being an effective leader advocating for his school and students. This understanding of roles has become uncertain and principals fear they could become more managers and less educational leaders. This role redefinition may add further levels to that hierarchy
of authority in education. While the principals spoke of delegation, collaboration
and problem solving, they were concerned that in the future they would be
implementors of decisions being made at a higher level of a top down educational
hierarchy. This ambiguity of the authority and role of principal and the reality of
the removal of principals from the teachers' federations is causing much concern
and is escalating the level of uncertainty.

Neil discussed another interesting aspect of the changing authority. That
was in the area of decision-making, especially the authority of the school council
and of the principals.

Role of parents is another concern, school
councils—what kind of decision-making areas are they
going to be involved in? We don't know that. There
seems to be a move that they will be involved in
decision making. There are certain aspects of school
life that they should be involved in the decision-
making, but there are other parts where—how can they
make any decision on budget—for example—what role
will school councils play and what will their areas of
authority and how does that mix in with the principal's
area of authority?
Graham noted that not only is the authority of the principal being attacked, but the ability to challenge these changes is also under attack. As he explained,

My authority is being challenged by the government and the member of provincial parliament, when I get a letter which states that I have conducted a political tirade—that famous music night incident, where what I felt, what I was doing was expressing concern for where our school was going, and where our education was going for the—almost, the almost total elimination of the infrastructure, elimination of department heads at a time when new curriculum was supposed to come out. And yet, the response of the government and the Board was that my behaviour was not only inappropriate, but wrong, and that was not my role. There is an issue of authority, and maybe a very interesting one, because I haven't settled this yet, the reason I haven't settled this yet, or moved to settle it yet because there are more immediate issues of dealing with staffing, I think this is a very huge issue of authority. Under this new regime, principals out of the
federation—what is the principal's authority? The principal's authority is defined in the education act—but is also being defined by government—and the authority seems to be that we are authorized to support the government's initiative and we are not authorized to criticize the government's initiative. We might be allowed to criticize them to the Board, we might even be allowed to criticize them to our own colleagues—but we are not allowed to criticize them outside that arena, and I think this is fairly clear too from the incident which occurred in Toronto, with that principal Mr. Tarvon [another Ontario principal who publically expressed his concerns about changes to education]. Where he has made statements to his parent group, and put something in a newsletter—that the M.P. in his riding is taking very seriously—basically . . . . he is personally attacking creditability of his principal.

The main issue here is the difference in the government and the principal's perceptions of authority. As Graham notes, "there is a huge question of authority
here. It seems to me that the authority of the principal is being eroded and increasingly being subordinated to the government's authority.” Related to this is also the ability of principals to publicly question the educational directions undertaken by the provincial government.

Graham later continues to discuss how the authority of the principal is being redefined:

So I think the government is very much trying to redefine authority as it applies to the principal—I believe what they want is us as managers, and my interpretation of that word is that the only authority a manager has is to expect those people whom he is managing to follow the rules as they are set down by the senior manager—so I think we are into that—more of an industrial management model of step-down authority—very little scope and very little room for individual initiative within it.

Graham's concern about the role and authority of the principal included the concern of entrenchment of a top-down authority model.

Neil spoke of principals' responsibility and of the setup for failure;
We principals have the responsibility to staff the schools, we have the responsibility to look at a 22 class size, to look at an increase to 125 minutes a week for teachers, and here's the amount of money for teachers, so the board has the responsibility to meet all those three things, but they can't because you can meet any two of them, but you can't meet all three—you're either going to have to overspend or have bigger classes or have teachers teach more than the 125 minutes. You can't do all three—it's almost built-in failure—whether that's deliberate on the part of the government, who knows?

Neil identified the further erosion of principals' authority through the government's establishment of parameters in the funding formula, which are unworkable, yet must be enacted. The frustration related to the isolation of administration and the undermining of their authority is a common theme in the comments by each of these principals. As has been seen throughout this section these principals have many concerns and questions revolving around the issue of authority.

In this fifth theme, Changing Views of the Authority of Principals in Ontario, all four principals expressed deep concerns about their role as principals
in the future of education in Ontario. They spoke with anxiety of changes such as the removal of principals from the teachers' federations. They saw this as creating or increasing the distance between educators in a leadership role and educators in the classroom. While some of these principals may have embraced change of a different nature, they saw the changes being imposed by the government as opposed to what they believed was the best education for students. They noted the link between the increasing responsibility of principals and the decrease in their authority to effect changes. They stressed the fear that the role of principal will become more and more one of management rather than that of educational leader, and their frustration with such a shift was obvious. One principal illustrated the erosion of the principal's authority in the light of his being reprimanded for questioning the educational direction of the present Ontario government. He sees the government's authority as greatly increased, and the authority of the school boards and principals as diminished. Throughout this section, the principals expressed distress over their reduced authority and their declining ability to offer what they believed to be the best possible learning opportunities for students in their schools.

Summary

In this study, four principals of secondary schools reflected on the issue of authority. From this research insight has been gained into a complex, changing
world of these educational leaders with different backgrounds, experiences, personalities, and educational settings. Responsibility, decision-making, legitimacy, and being a force for change were vital aspects of these principals' views of authority. In the practical world of these secondary school principals, they noted the characteristics of listening, delegating, cooperation, and empowerment as valued aspects of their enacting authority. The principals’ stories allowed a view of the issues as these principals enacted authority. These principals described their decisions to challenge the authority of the government during the political protest of 1997. They expressed their belief that Bill 160 was harmful to the educational future of students in Ontario. These principals saw their protest as a moral issue.

In the fifth theme to emerge from the interviews, Changing Views on the Authority of Principals in Ontario, these principals reflected on their changing role and the changes to the authority of principals in the future. We heard concerns about whether they as principals would be educational leaders or managers of a system. These principals stressed that to be effective principals they needed to be educational leaders, not site managers. Throughout these interviews glimpses have been gained into the world of these principals as they try to find ways to develop educational situations which will provide maximum opportunities for students to learn in their educational settings. In Chapter Five, the research findings are summarized, and implications of this study for research and practice are discussed.
Also presented are recommendations for changes in education related to authority and educators.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This qualitative study examined the personal and professional tensions of four secondary school principals engaged in educational leadership. In researching how principals experience authority and how the meaning of these experiences affected their practice, insight was gained into the way in which these principals perceive themselves as authority figures and how these concepts of authority relate to their leadership in the school.

A qualitative research methodology with narrative aspects was used in this study. This research methodology was useful because of its engagement of the reader and its holistic and temporal characteristics. Four secondary school principals from a southern Ontario school board were interviewed. The principals interviewed included both genders, and a variety of ages and years of experience. The principals were from rural and urban, small and large schools, and regular and specialized secondary schools. While not necessarily representative of each of these groups, the participants did bring to the interviews a variety of perspectives, stories, and reflections. The findings from research and reflections on these interviews were presented in Chapter Four and are summarized in the following section.
Review of Findings

As has been discussed, five themes emerged from the interviews. In theme one, Interpretation of the Concept and Practice of Authority, four chief components of authority emerged. Responsibility was seen as pivotal to the principals' views of authority. The terms of authority and responsibility were directly linked. Next, being able to make and influence decisions was recognized as a crucial component of authority. Legitimacy was important to these principals. This involves the legal aspect of authority, the authority derived from law, in the daily lives of principals. Last, the principals viewed the opportunity to influence change in a positive direction as an aspect of their understanding of authority. In this first theme, we saw that responsibility, decision-making, legitimacy, and being a force for change emerge as the vital aspects of these principals' views of authority.

In theme two, Principals' Enactment of Authority, the world of these secondary school principals became evident. These principals elaborated on delegating, listening, and empowering others as essential aspects of their enacting authority. Here also some of the principals spoke of the top-down hierarchical structure. The goal of collaborative decision-making appeared to be frustrated by the strengthening of the top-down hierarchical structures of education in Ontario. In particular here was the exercising of control by the government. The way these
two differing approaches to authority are worked out will be important to education.

In theme three, Thoughts and Experiences Related to Challenges to Their Authority, an analysis of their stories presented a view of the issues as these principals enacted authority. Here a concern emerged about the changing nature of challenges, the need to develop and use the personal characteristics of listening, questioning, taking a stand, and discussing to clarify and at times defuse situations. The dynamic nature of authority was illustrated through these reflections and stories. From interview transcripts, stories related to the idea of authority challenged were selected.

In theme four, A View of Principals' Challenge of Authority, we heard how these principals made their decisions and understood their challenge to the authority of the government during the political protest of 1997. While principals earlier here spoke of being a force for change, later they are seen resisting change that they did not feel was good for education. These principals' beliefs were so strong that they were willing to leave their schools with the teachers in opposition to the directive of the provincial government for principals to remain in the schools. All expressed a strong concern that Bill 160 was harmful to the educational future of students in Ontario.

In the fifth theme to emerge from the interviews, Changing Views of the Authority of Principals in Ontario, these principals reflected on their changing role
and the changes to the authority of principals in the future. The link between increasing responsibility of principals and the decrease in their authority to effect changes was articulated. They spoke with anxiety of changes such as the removal of principals from the teachers' federation. They saw this change as creating or furthering the distance and isolation of educators in a leadership role from educators in the classroom.

In this study, four principals of secondary schools answered questions and reflected and commented on the issue of authority. These interviews provided insight to see and present a complex, changing world of educational leaders with different backgrounds, experiences, personalities, and educational settings. The implications of this research to both the literature about authority and the practice of authority by principals and to my growth as an educator will now be presented.

An Understanding of the Issue of Authority

Background to My Understanding of Authority

As explained in Chapter One, I have had during my varied career in education the opportunity to work with students, parents, teachers, principals, and vice-principals in a variety of school settings. I have taught students in different subject areas in elementary and secondary schools, in both rural and urban settings. During these years of teaching I have also held a variety of administrative positions, as well as teaching. From this breadth of experiences I learned that
different people enact the same legislative authority in different ways. This idea was summarized by Hersey (1984) when he was discussing situational leadership,

To successfully influence the behavior of others, the leader should understand the impact of power on the various leadership styles. In today's world many sources of power have been legislated, negotiated or policed away. Since leaders now have less power to draw from it is important to be effective in the use of what is available (p. 75).

As a result of working with numerous people in different situations, I informally observed that educators' enactment of authority relates to their personalities, their experiences and their understanding of their role, and these experiences and understandings are rooted in their narratives and education. I began my research for this thesis with the following concept of authority based on what I observed in schools and learned in previous research studies. While not able to clearly articulate the concept until I began this thesis, I recognized the practice of authority grouped into two types. There appeared to be those who rely more on imposing their authority on people and situations and those who seem to focus more on negotiating authority. There appeared to be shades of each of these
categories, and people seemed to also move from one group to another depending on the situation. As a result of this research, I then planned to develop a clearer understanding of how these administrators perceive themselves as authority figures and what tensions are involved in their practice.

**Implications for Research**

In the literature review in Chapter Two, I provided an overview of concepts of authority. In the literature I noted different approaches, but a common theme of forms or types of authority emerged. Whether the classification or understanding was that of Plato (Grube, 1935), Weber (Freund, 1968), or Holt (Jones & Jones, 1990), there was a common understanding of a formal or legal authority, a traditional authority, and an internal authority or charisma. Based on these concepts synthesized from the literature and the findings of my research into the principals' stories, I was able to develop a definition of authority appropriate to principals' practice. While definitions tend to be static, I believe this understanding or definition of authority needs to be sufficiently open to include the dynamics and tensions inherent in the concept of authority and its enactment by educational leaders. This definition is therefore based on and developed from my experiences as an educator, reading of the literature, my pilot studies, and the research and writing of this thesis.
Authority is a dynamic process involving the interaction of an individual and their society's understanding of authority. The three aspects of authority legal, personal and traditional interact and are given varying emphasis depending on how the individual and those in their society view the situation. Authority does not only involve understanding, but includes the responsibility to act wisely and appropriately.

Within each of the above concepts aspects interact with one another. First, the legal aspect of authority includes written documents, such as the Education Act and school board policies. As well, a perception of what is legal can be developed through the media's handling of legal issues. Second, societal expectations or traditional authority include historical understandings of the authority vested in the principal, as well as local expectations of the authority carried by the principal. Third, authority involves a personal aspect. A person's image or physical presence and gender, style of speaking, listening, and image or mannerisms play a role in authority. This evolving understanding of authority is based on narratives which are in themselves fluid. There are tensions for the individual and society within this definition. There are basic principles which each of us hold as individuals and educators. These are not going to change; however, what may change are the tensions involved and the ways of enacting those principles.

To refocus then I will repeat this definition or understanding of authority which moves forward the understanding of authority in the field of research. To
reitinerate, authority is a dynamic process involving the interaction of an individual
and their society's understanding of authority. The three aspects of authority,
legal, personal and traditional interact and are given varying emphasis depending
on how the individual and those in their society view the situation. Authority does
not only involve understanding, but includes the responsibility to act wisely and
appropriately.

While aspects of this definition have been presented in the literature over
time, the dynamic nature of this understanding is added through this research. The
use of qualitative research in this thesis moves beyond a synthesis of previous
literature and presents insight into the dynamic nature of the process and
enactment of authority by four principals. From the research literature I found the
ideas of legal, personal and traditional were the common elements of authority
(although the terms' names varied). The literature presented however, does not
capture the dynamic nature of authority. Through this qualitative study then I was
able to represent the dynamic nature, complexity, and depth of authority as
experienced by these secondary school principals. Later in this chapter, I will
present four recommendations based upon the understandings of authority
presented in this research. These are recommendations to help move prospective
educators and principals forward, both in their understanding of their own
narratives and an understanding of the dynamic nature of authority.
Through the interviews in this qualitative inquiry, I have gained a further understanding of how four administrators perceive themselves as authority figures. These understandings combined with these perspectives of the literature, provide further knowledge and insight into the nature of selected leaders in our educational settings. The reflections on, the experiences of, and stories concerning educational leaders negotiating authority in secondary schools are not well documented; therefore, the synthesis of this definition of authority based upon the literature and research material of this thesis makes an important contribution to the research into principals' concepts of authority at the turn of this century.

This thesis provides a snapshot of experiences and understanding of authority of particular administrators at a specific time. As was explained, this was an idiosyncratic period in education in Ontario with the introduction of Bill 160, the removal of principals and vice-principals from the teachers' federations, a new funding system, the removal of the power to tax from the school boards, and the release of new curriculum. These issues seem to have highlighted the way these principals see authority. In short, this was a very perplexing period for educators in Ontario. The situation has evolved and changed in some ways, but the understandings here remain significant. One of the significant aspects of this research is that it documents these principal's perspectives of the time of political upheaval in Ontario's educational system. As such, this research contributes to an historical educational understanding. Further research could apply the
methodology of this study to further consider the understandings of what these administrators are thinking and feeling in relation to authority with respect to future situations.

**What does this research mean to me as a person and as an educator?**

I began this thesis having considered the issue of authority on a personal level in my Educational Narrative and on a more profession level in my pilot studies. From this basis, I began this research which was to consider concepts of authority from the perspective of selected secondary school principals. In this thesis, understandings, reflections, and stories related to the issue of authority as seen by these principals were considered. This thesis is a qualitative study involving the telling of stories and thoughts and presenting ideas occurring at a time when many changes were occurring in education. Upon further reflection, however, I now see that the changes were not only occurring within education, changes were also happening within me as a person and as an educator.

During the time span of the researching and writing of this thesis I have experienced and observed challenges to my authority in living my life as teacher, department head, attendance counselor, acting vice-principal, vice-principal and parent of three adolescent sons. Instead of having many separate parts of my life, I now view this research as an illumination of part of my life. I have gradually come to this more holistic view of my life, recognizing this research as part of my life as
a person and educator. As I am nearing the end of this thesis, I now realize that there have been experiences throughout the same time period as writing this paper which have allowed me to further clarify my understanding of authority. At the beginning of this thesis I made reference to a situation I had been involved in where I had seen trespassers on school property, taken them to the office and later had been injured when one of them left the office upon hearing that the police were on their way. Having completed this research and having many more experiences I know now that I would handle such a situation differently. I now understand that positional authority is one form of authority and that at times that aspect will not be a significant enough factor to resolve a situation. I also now see that there will be times that I choose to exercise my authority and times when I decide that it is not wise either from a safety point of view, time perspective or even that the situation is not one that I choose to pursue to accomplish the results I desire. I am also now much more cautious of safety issues and work to defuse conflict. From a personal perspective, this reflective research has enabled me, and perhaps pushed me, to further clarify my view of authority. Completion of this research has allowed me to be much more aware of and comfortable with the dynamic nature and complex aspects of authority.

During the latter part of writing this thesis I was in a transition period in my life. I have now moved into a new stage in my career in education. I am the vice-principal in a large high school quite different from the one I've taught in for the
last 10 years and the schools I taught in previously. Here I have already begun to experience, reflect on, and observe challenges to authority. My reflections on research into and conclusions about authority will provide a clearer perspective as I am moving into this new world. I recognize now that this research has provided for me part of a bridge into this new role. This research has provided impetus for me to clarify my own views related to authority. It has resulted in a much more holistic view of authority in particular and my life in general. From this experience of ongoing research and reflection while in a transition into the role of educational leadership, I make recommendations later in this chapter. I then suggest that sharing of stories and reflections related to the issue of authority may be a helpful tool or bridge for others as they make a transition to a new position of responsibility in education.

**Implications for Practice**

In this research my aim was to further pursue the issue of authority in order to examine how principals of secondary schools experienced authority and how the meaning of these experiences affected their practice. The stories of these four principals demonstrated that the practice of authority is complex and contains personal and social tensions. In this study, principals discussed and told stories related to the issue of authority. The sharing of these thoughts and stories have provided insight into the realm of these educational leaders and their experiences
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with and enactment of authority. The reflection on and sharing of stories in qualitative research provides a method of understanding and interpreting the dynamic process of authority. As discussed, this research provides a snapshot of a particular group of educators at a particular time and place. These understandings of authority, however, are not static. From this research I make four recommendations which I believe will improve practice in education.

**Recommendations Based on this Study**

i) Prospective teachers in educational courses need to consider and reflect on the concept of authority, their own narrative, and the practice of authority by teachers.

ii) Qualifications courses for principals and vice-principals must go beyond a consideration of the legal and situational aspects and dilemmas of authority. A goal should also be to move prospective educational administrators forward, both in their understanding of their own narratives with the inherent tensions in those, and an understanding of the dynamic nature of authority.

iii) Stories provide a way to enter into the practice of authority by educational administrators. There needs to be a mechanism to allow for stories,
tensions, and reflections of authority to be shared which would form part of a bridge of transition for educators moving into the new roles of principals and vice-principals.

iv) An atmosphere which encourages reflection and the sharing of stories related to authority by educational leaders should be fostered.

I believe that the changes to education recommended here would improve the preparation of teachers and educational leaders. Implementation of these recommendations could occur through additions to teacher education, professional development and principal and vice-principal courses, as well as the encouragement of sharing and reflection about the concept and enactment of authority in the world of education.

**Areas for further study**

There are many topics which merit study related to the consideration of authority and educational leadership. Of these I have chosen a number to highlight as I believe they are particularly relevant to research and the practice of authority by educational leaders. First, I feel that the area of parents' perspectives and reflections of the authority of principals and vice-principals would provide helpful understandings and information to educators. This research would assist educators
and parents to work toward the common goal of education of young people.

Second, consideration of gender as it relates to principals’ understanding and enactment of authority would be a very worthwhile area of study. There were references made in this research to gender, and while they were not pursued here this would be a relevant and useful area for future study.

Third, a comparison, reflection, and enactment of these administrators who are more experienced with those who are less experienced would provide insight. One could consider what may be learned over time. Other areas of study could look at the experience of enacting authority by educational leaders; for example, is it a lonely experience or perhaps an exciting experience? As well, as was referred to earlier in the thesis the area of how authority is undermined would be an interesting area of consideration. Consideration might also be given to when it is justifiable to defy authority and who should be denied the right to question authority. As well the views which school councils have of their authority and of the authority of principals and vice-principals would provide an interesting and relevant area of research.

I also recommend that additional studies using the research methodology presented here be undertaken. This study referred to, and therefore was limited to, particular principals in high schools at a particular time in a public school board in
southern Ontario. The results of qualitative studies cannot be generalized to another time and place. However, the process used in this inquiry could be used again. From a historical perspective, documentation of principals' experiences of authority over time is worthwhile. This would give a broader perspective to concepts of authority. As well, it may well provide a continuum of future changes.

Conclusion

This research adds to understandings at an academic level where authority seems to be approached from an abstract philosophical perspective. In developing an understanding of how these principals negotiated authority, I have presented stories, reflections, thoughts, and a dynamic definition about how these principals negotiate authority. This understanding and the methodology used to develop it can now add to the general understanding of the complexity that the world of the principal entails. Specific recommendations have been made to move this research into educational practice. Others now need to add to these understandings and modify ideas through further research.

The understandings gained through this study will add to the growing body of stories of educators. Understanding the experiences of these principals and others as they negotiate concepts of authority will give educators insight into this very complex, dynamic and vital component of education. This research provides
an in-depth understanding of how four principals make meaning of the concept of authority and how this affects their practice as educational leaders at a unique time in the history of education in Ontario.
References


