



# A Study of Power Relations Within Groups Through the Lived Experiences of Elected Officials

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This study aimed to examine the understanding of power relations within groups through the lived experiences of elected officials using qualitative research methods. The data revealed these leaders to express three types of need for power through achievement, affiliation, and institutional need for power (McClelland & Burns, 1976) as they work within their groups that are a mix of the two major U.S. political parties; Democrats and Republicans. This study used purposive sampling and the participants were interviewed to obtain data using structured questions. This study also examined the data to determine if the elected officials used their power within their group for personalized reasons or socialized reasons. In addition, a literature review explored different types of power, and how groups might express power. The study aimed to function as a pilot test and be used to create a prototype for future studies on the expression of power relations within groups.

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McClelland (1975) was quoted as saying, “If leaders understood how outstanding individuals think and act, they would be able to teach others how to do the same” (as cited in Van Vilet, 2016, para. 3). McClelland and Burnham (1976) explored this success from the standpoint of an individual’s use of power and as being a natural part of the human experience.

The discussion of power is a topic that individuals are uncomfortable discussing due to the connotations that come with it, but important nonetheless (Sikora, 2011). Power is the catalyst for how a leader influences others and how others are influenced (French & Raven, 1953). Its usage is a behavior that is expressed differently by different leaders (Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, 2013; Northouse, 2013). McClelland (1975) explained that everyone has a need for power. However, McClelland added that the need for power must be disciplined so that power is used for the greater good and not for personal gain.

The phenomenon of power's expression can be explored from a multitude of ways, such as examining how individuals use it to function within different social systems. As with social systems, these groups can occur within an array of places. One such place is among members of socio-political group systems. Currently, there exists very little information in general regarding the study of power relations within group dynamics (Arrow, McGrath, & Berdahl, 2000). In addition, even less research exists on the power relations within specific groups such as elected officials. And finally, there is also minimal (if any) research that has been conducted to explore this phenomenon on the two major parties combined (personal communication, April 24, 2017).

To investigate this group system, a qualitative research study was conducted on elected officials who were selected through purposive sampling. These individuals answered five questions that explored their observations and lived experiences with power relations in order to examine what they perceived to be the driving force (motivation) for power and its use as elected officials.

The goal of this study was to conduct a pilot test and create a prototype to explore initial literature, research, and information from the lived experiences of elected officials that can act as an impetus for additional research to be conducted in the near future. In current research there exists very little information on power dynamics within groups and the perspectives of elected officials; moreover, there is even less research using perspectives from both major U.S. political parties (Kellerman, 2008).

### **Problem and Significance of Study**

As elected officials, these individuals serve large numbers of people from an array of generations, all of which have different needs and wants. These include individuals who are fresh out of college and just starting out in their professions, young families, empty nesters, seniors, and businesses. Specifically, according to specialized research by the Center for Generational Kinetics (2017) these individuals range from Traditionalists/Industrialists (born 1900-1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1976), Generation Y/Millennials (born 1977-1995), and the Centennials/Generation Z (born 1996 to current).

All individuals ages 18 and over are eligible and are considered stakeholders as their taxes are used for the needs of their local community, state, and nation. Moreover, all of these individuals have different needs and concerns, which can impact how elected officials opt to use various types of power. Therefore, gaining an understanding of power relations in groups among elected officials would be worthwhile to better understand, as these individuals function as a group, and within groups, to accomplish their work in committees to which they are appointed (U.S. Senate, 2017). All elected officials serve on committees from local municipalities through federal levels. To illustrate, a local school board may have an education committee, policy committee, and

facility committee. The legislative branch may have committees such as agriculture, transportation and infrastructure, judiciary, and finance. Federal bodies have committees that are similar, but a bit more defined. These include standing, select, and joint committees. These committees make up specialty areas such as economic, Library of Congress, and taxation committees as well as specialty committees such as investigative committees (e.g. Watergate), and Class A, B, and C committees (U.S. Senate, 2017).

While it is common knowledge that these elected officials belong to a specific political affiliation, this study uniquely blended the perspectives of both political affiliations (Democrat and Republican) to examine how these leaders perceive power as an individual who is a part of an overall group (elected official). The study also examined the elected officials' understanding of power relations within the groups of which they are a part for the people they serve. Currently, it is common knowledge that the political climate, particularly in the U.S., is in turmoil. While the media and popular press largely divide these two groups (elected officials) into two parties (Democrat and Republican) when reporting, a study that examines these individuals as a holistic group is rare. Unique to this study, the data was coded to find similar categories and themes as expressed by these two groups together, rather than as separate groups, which has currently been the norm.

Research Question: What is the perception of power relations in groups among elected officials and how do they understand the use of power?

## Literature Review

Hart (2005) explained that a literature review is a selection of various documents, which consists of information regarding a perspective on a topic that can be used to inform views on a proposed study. The following will consist of information that will help to form the beginning stages of this exploration in addition to supporting the position that power relations exist among group members who serve as political leaders.

### Types of Power Sources

In order to gain an understanding of power's expression, it is important to explore the types of power as expressed by others. Northouse (2013) and Yulk (2013) defined leadership as influence. However, the driving force behind what enables an individual to influence, whether it is an event, belief, or attitude is power (Northouse, 2013, p. 9). It does not matter if the influence is from a teacher, governmental official, or doctor; power is the tool that leaders use to influence (Northouse, 2013).

Many theorists have studied this expression of power, but the grandfathers who first began to understand the phenomenon are French and Raven (1953). French and Raven

were one of the first to explore power on the basis of power being conceptualized through social aspects such as within group behavior. According to these theorists, there are five bases of power that can be facilitated through dyadic relationships of individuals influencing and individuals being influenced. These include expert, coercive, legitimate, referent, and reward power. French and Raven noted that expert power is based on an individual's knowledge and competence, coercive power has the capacity to punish, legitimate power is based on formal status or authority, referent power comes from being admired by others, and reward power is based on access to resources that provide the individual with the capacity to reward.

Yukl (2013) described these powers as power sources and explained that there are correct ways for these power sources to be used that is important for individuals to understand. To illustrate, Yukl stated that individuals should use expert power as credibility for projects (such as proposals) due to the individual's experiential knowledge. Next, individuals should use coercive power as a means for policy and rule implementation, which can help to keep work on track in addition to maintaining ethical climates. Individuals should use legitimate power as a means for making requests through politeness and reason. This type of power can help to get ideas into action. Following this is referent power, which Yukl explained should be used by individuals to display positive reinforcement, support, and sincerity to others in the group, also adding this display of power can be helpful for role modeling. And finally, Yukl suggested that individuals should use reward power to motivate others when goals are met. This can help to build confidence in addition to reinforcing hard work behaviors.

According to this, when these sources of power are applied within groups each member could make a significant impact for the good of the group and those they serve. Otherwise, power could be used for destructive purposes that can lead to damaging the group as well as placing it at risk for abusive purposes such as using power for personal gains.

### **Power as a Social Actor Used to Influence Group Behavior**

Despite French and Raven's insights on the type of power sources, and Yukl's ideas to effectively enact on these sources, still missing is a specific focus on how these concepts are observed within group dynamics such as what exists among elected officials.

One such theorist who considered this was Burns (1978), who analyzed power from a relational viewpoint. Within this perspective, Burns did not consider power as just a means to use over others. Instead, he believed that power was something that could be used in relationships such as within groups to achieve mutual goals. Political scientist Dahl (1957) explained earlier that power does not merely reside in the actor, but resides within relationships. Arrow et al. (2000) defined these types of relationships as group

member interchanges and interpersonal influences within a group. While much research and analysis exists on topics such as organizational politics (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013), less has been done on politicians themselves and how power is expressed among these group members, even though the two seem to be mistakenly intertwined to have the same meaning. Instead of a focus being on who wins, it becomes an issue of which party wins, thus introducing the focus to be on political behaviors rather than the power relations within groups. In an organizational sense, the political party can be department versus department or site versus site. Instead, political tactics are more often considered rather than how power was expressed among members (Yukl, 2013).

While authors such as Hatch and Cunliffe (2013) thoroughly examined political environments as being a social actor for power, the personal relationships among group members and their expression on how individuals personally express power has not been examined. Yukl explained that this was due to organizations having a larger focus on how to use political tactics for appointments and promotions for key positions, and how to influence important decisions. In doing so, there exists more examinations on how coalitions form to use power for the maintenance of status and dominance, rather than on how individuals themselves within a group are using their power to influence (Yukl, 2013).

### **The Need for Power and Power Motivation**

McClelland (1975) took this thinking to a new level to explore the drive behind power itself, and found motivation to be key. McClelland referred to this as his Motivation Theory. He explained that there are three types of motivation that ignite the use of power to include an individual's motivation for affiliation (to be accepted by others), achievement (the ability to reach goals), or institutional (the desire to influence others), which are all types of primary needs.

To understand this thinking in its entirety, McClelland and Burnham (1976) conducted a study to investigate how motivation impacts effectiveness. As stated above, they defined affiliation as the need for being accepted and liked. These individuals will conform to the norms of the group and will move driven towards harmonious relationships. An individual that is motivated by this form of power will likely understand the group member who needs to stay home to care for an ill loved one as the person has strong empathy skills. Next, they defined achievement as the need for achieving goals and success. These individuals will create new goals better than their last set of goals and can use this influence of power to empower the group to stay on track and accomplish the work. However, individuals who express their power through an institutional need, have a strong need for power over the need to be liked or to achieve. According to McClelland and Burnham's (1976) research, this type of power is the most effective, particularly when the individual expresses this through humility, as

it will benefit the greater good, create an effective work climate, and will create “strong group spirit” (p. 104).

As this research demonstrated how to achieve effectiveness, McClelland and Burnham (1976) also identified that the need for power largely depends on the expression of that power. They explained that this expression operates either through a personalized or socialized need for power. Individuals who express the need for power through a personalized expression, are doing so to direct and promote themselves. In other words, members who are motivated by personal power will find that individuals are loyal to them but not the organization they all serve (p. 104). Whenever this individual leaves the group, it will likely disperse or experience disorganization because the other members no longer know what to do (Sikora, 2011). On the flip side, those who express the need for power through a socialized expression are doing so for the greater good of the group (Sikora, 2011). In this case, McClelland and Burnham (1976) explained that members would be enabled to carry on the group’s vision/mission, as a high morale would then exist within the group.

Johnson and Johnson (2013) explained it is necessary that leadership and participation are both equally distributed among group members in order for members to be invested in the group’s work, to implement group decisions, and so that there is satisfaction among the membership (p. 25). Therefore, if power relations among elected officials can carry the same principles within their group, for the sake of the greater good, then this could mark as a starting point for elected officials to exercise socialized power so they can effectively lead those whom they serve.

### **American and World Politics**

Kellerman (2008) stated that Native Americans were beside themselves when they observed there existed a hierarchy among the Europeans. She referred to work by political scientist Samuel Huntington who had observed the essential theme of American politics as opposition to power where anything is better than being a follower. Kellerman wrote that, as time evolved and distributed leadership and human relations entered into the workplace, organizations are still largely hierarchical with superiors controlling subordinates. As a result, Kellerman concluded that America’s political system goes “hand-in-glove with the political system” as “the entrepreneurial individual [is valued] more than the group as a whole” (p. 5).

To many politicians’ imprudence, their followers are neither helpless nor immune to obtaining power. Kellerman (2008) exemplified this in her example of what happened between the Israelis and Palestinians in 2000. Kellerman explained when the Palestinians used suicide bombers to attack the Israelis, to counter attack, the Israelis responded by using targeted killings to destroy the militant leaders. In doing so, not only did they hit their target, they inadvertently also killed Palestinian neighbors and

children. While initially referred to as collateral damage, the world considered this act to be “immoral and illegal” (p. 19). Despite Israeli pilots being heavily trained to follow orders as part of a strict military, twenty-seven pilots drafted a letter directed to the Israeli military leadership issuing a moral statement to declare they will not “harm innocent civilians” (p. 19). Prime Minister Ariel Sharon considered their resistance as a very serious issue not to be taken lightly. Several months later Sharon did decide to disengage from Gaza, and stated that Israel was “stuck” (p. 19). In this case, Sharon examined what was occurring and concluded that the best and finest young men were reaching a breaking point and used clever tactics by going to the public and press to find resolution (Kellerman, 2008, p. 20).

### **Elected Officials Use of Power within Groups**

In addition to Burns (1978), Folger, Poole, and Stutman (2013) also examined the relational view of power and implied that power is essentially dependent on resources such as communication. However, Folger et al. (2013) added that for power to have an impact, others must endorse those resources, and those resources are based on “pervasive social processes” (p. 143). As a result of power being relational, it is worth exploring the relations of power in groups. However, to keep the scope of this topic from being too broad, this paper will explore the lived experiences of elected officials, as they are responsible for serving the public and work within groups to become elected and perform their service.

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted by using qualitative research methods. Sample size in qualitative research is much smaller than what is used in quantitative research (Mason, 2010). However, Mason (2010) explained that sample size must be large enough to examine all viewpoints as participants can have various opinions and perspectives. This helps to achieve saturation. On the same token, if there is too much data, the information becomes redundant and overly excessive. Therefore, before the research begins, the qualitative researcher should determine the appropriate sample size so that saturation can be reached (Mason, 2010; Padgett, 2008).

Four elected officials were selected using purposive sampling so two individuals from both the Republican and Democratic parties were represented in the data collection process. This helped so that the results can be more generalizable (Patton, 2015). The interviews occurred in person at a local Starbucks facility, by phone, and by email correspondence. Individuals were asked five questions developed from the literature as well as demographical information. After I transcribed the interview, the interviewee reviewed the material to confirm that I transcribed the information accurately in order to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the data (Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2015). Siedel (1998) stated that conducting qualitative data is similar to solving a jigsaw puzzle. Just

as an individual needs to sort and identify the pieces to complete the picture, the researcher closely examines the data and codes it to find a complete picture (Siedel, 1998). In order to effectively code the data, I familiarized myself with the text and read and reread it (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). The transcript was coded using first and second coding cycles (Saldana, 2016).

The coding procedure that was used for the qualitative data analysis (QDA) involved two types of coding cycles. The first coding cycle involved Descriptive Coding and In Vivo Coding. Descriptive Coding was used so that words and key phrases could be summarized (Saldana, 2016). In Vivo Coding was used so that the participants' voices could be honored by also using words and phrases used or expressed by them (Saldana, 2016). The second coding cycle used Pattern Coding so that data could be put into themes and categories by observing patterns that emerged from the first coding cycle (Saldana, 2016). By engaging in this coding cycle, I was able to eliminate unnecessary codes so that similar categories and like themes could be combined into the same group. This helped me to pinpoint themes and choose what was of relative importance (Saldana, 2016; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

This study took a heuristic approach to the QDA rather than an objective approach. West (2001) discussed that the heuristic approach to QDA is beneficial for several reasons. First, West explained that heuristic inquiry encompasses great potential for disclosing truth while generating comprehensive knowledge. Moreover, this type of research permits the researcher to explore his or her personal involvement with the research. West (2001) also pointed to observations by Moustakas (1985) who first began to take a hard look at heuristic analysis and stated that this approach permits the researcher to engage fully with the research while still being able to remain unbiased. Therefore, a heuristic approach to the QDA allows the researcher to be actively engaged, whereas with objective approaches, the researcher is detached from the topic (West, 2001).

As I have a background as an elected official for a four-year term, the heuristic approach enabled me to examine the data as an individual who has experience in this field. While it is still important to practice reflexivity so that I do not become biased in my observations (Cozby & Bates, 2015; Padgett, 2015), this approach enabled me to utilize my ethos (credibility) and experiential background to explore insights that may be missed by those who do not have any experience in this field (Ramage, Bean, & Johnson, 2011; West, 2001) as this field is extremely challenging to enter as it is dependent on the electoral process. Moreover, as an elected official for the Board of Education, I was able to cross-register on each party's ballot, which is only possible for school board officials and judges. All other parties, including POTUS, have to register on the ballot belonging to their registered party. This added detail is most unusual and, from what can be observed by the literature, it is not likely that anyone else has conducted this type of research.



## Demographics

The following transcript consists of four interviews with leaders who serve as elected officials in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. All participants gave verbal permission to use their responses for this study and were assured their identities would be kept confidential. Each participant has gone through the election process and has been sworn in by a judge to dutifully serve the people in the city of Pittsburgh. Two participants function as School Directors for the Board of Education and two others function as County Councilmen. Three of the participants are between the ages of 54 and 71 and one participant is between the ages of 21 and 40. One participant is female and the other three are males and the three males are in their first four-year term, whereas the female is in her third term. This is possible since she serves as a School Board Director. Currently, there are no term limits for School Board Directors or Judges. Two of the elected officials are registered Democrats and the other two are registered Republicans.

### First Cycle of Coding

The first cycle of coding is written as italicized in [brackets] within the participants' responses and then listed at the end of each question. The Descriptive and In Vivo codes are listed at the end. A hierarchal list was then created from the In Vivo codes and the Descriptive codes. The second coding cycle used Pattern Coding to create the categories/themes from the codes. While remaining objective to what the participants reported, I took a heuristic approach (West, 2001), which is an intentional approach (particularly with the In Vivo Coding) to look for and predict themes (Padgett, 2017). I was able to do so as a result of my experiences as an elected official and work with other elected persons. This also better helped me to identify if there was an expression of power as identified by McClelland (1975) and McClelland and Burnham (1976), in addition to other information that emerged such as leadership styles.

(Note: Responses were not edited for grammatical mistakes as spoken by the participants. All meetings lasted approximately 30 minutes in duration. The interviews took place at a local Starbucks and were scheduled in hour increments on Thursday, April 20, 2017. The participants were able to review the transcript and confirm that I captured their responses accurately.)

### **Q 1.) What makes outstanding group performance possible? (McClelland, 1975; Van Vilet, 2016)**

#### **Elected Official #1**

“An understanding of the institution and willingness to learn about its operations is essential. Listening to all views also helps to accomplish this during deliberations and allows one’s own opinions to be considered.” [Big Picture] “This helps gather support

for the votes necessary to move forward with goals. A respect for policy and procedure during and meetings by all members is important.” [Respectfulness]

### **Elected Official #2**

“I feel that having deeply shared beliefs, values, goals and commitment to being productive is what makes outstanding group performance possible.” [Morale] “When these things are not integral to a group’s operating principles and practices, it simply cannot become an outstanding performing group.” [Cooperation]

### **Elected Official #3**

“Mutual respect is a key to outstanding group performance.” [Respectfulness] “A sense of actually caring about each other makes a world of difference as well. Our Caucus has changed completely with the addition of 2 new members and retirement of one specific member.” [Morale]

### **Elected Official #4**

“Focus on the task at hand. It seems that when focus is on the task at hand, solving or addressing a problem, we are much more likely to be able to work together and to build consensus around a particular option.” [Responsibility] “I have also found that in this situation, those opposed tend to have a primary agenda different from those working together.” [Cooperation]

## **Descriptive Codes for Q1**

Respectfulness

Cooperation

Morale

Responsibility

**Q2.) How can power be used to motivate a group? (French & Raven, 1953; McClelland, 1975; McClelland & Burnham, 1976)**

### **Elected Official #1**

“Knowing that there is power in numbers and that there is a fair assumption that goals are the same among the majority of the group will motivate a group to initiate and follow through with its goal.” [Cooperation] “On the other hand, a slim majority makes that more difficult.” [Achievement]

## **Elected Official #2**

“Power can be a constructive or destructive force when it comes to motivating group members. If it is used to deceive, demean, divide or damage members of the group, power will be a very destructive force. It likely will be demotivating to the negatively impacted members of the group.” [Cooperation] “If it is used to illuminate, inspire, invigorate, or even at times insulate the group from destructive internal or external forces, power can be a very constructive and motivating force for a group.”

[Achievement] “When group members believe their beliefs, values, goals and commitments are shared by group members, and power is wielded in a way to affirm and bolster such things, group members are very likely to be highly motivated participants in group activities.” [Cooperation]

## **Elected Official #3**

“By serving as Caucus Chair, I try to cheer on our team and also always ensure that we have asset agendas and an organized team.” [Achievement] “This leadership role has increased my own enjoyment in the role of Councilman.” [Achievement] “While we are in the minority we attend more committee meetings and more community events. [Achievement] I think these efforts to encourage and motivate our group have helped in all aspects of our roles.”

## **Elected Official #4**

“Power or Political Capital?” [Intuitional power] “Power used to bully and intimidate is rarely successful in motivating. Political Capital expended in pursuit of an ultimate goal can be very successful.” [Intuitional power]

## **Descriptive Codes for Q2**

Achievement

Cooperation

Institutional Power

**Q3.) Do group members have to have a drive for power in order to reach the group’s goals? Explain. (French & Raven, 1953; Johnson & Johnson, 2013; Northouse, 2013; Yukl, 2013)**

## **Elected Official #1**

“Yes. That drive for power gives the group the confidence not to waiver and the ability to follow through.” [Institutional power] [Insinuation of political affiliations] “The power would be as a body rather than as an individual.” [Cooperation] “However, there is a need for at least a few to have the drive for power in order to lead the group.”

[Affiliation] [Hierarchy] “The group feels more confident moving forward knowing there is a powerful and confident leader to navigate and lead through the challenges.”  
[Affiliation]

### **Elected Official #2**

“Having a “drive for power” is a highly relative construct. If a group has a specific mission, power seeking may be strictly focused on and invested in getting the mission accomplished versus being superior to or in control of others, ideas, decisions and resources.” [Achievement] “If a group does not have a specific mission to accomplish, power seeking (drive) may more easily become focused on being superior to or in control of others, ideas, decisions and resources.” [Achievement] “Having a ‘drive for power’ is not inherently good or bad. It’s function, value and impact depends greatly upon the reason it is being pursued.” [Morale] [Insinuation of political affiliations]

### **Elected Official #3**

“Absolutely. It is a very, very driven group.” [Achievement] “I believe my leadership has probably led to their success with constituent services, committee participation and community outreach more than legislatively.” [Achievement] “The plus side is that by having organized meetings and a cohesive group we can talk open and honestly about legislation.” [Cooperation]

### **Elected Official #4**

“Not at all. The best elected officials are those that in my opinion are there to serve and solve problems, not those with unbridled ambition.” [Hierarchy] [Institutional] [Insinuation of political affiliations] “I think there is a bit of ego involved in anyone’s running for Public Office but a ‘drive to do the right thing’ helps those in a legislative body reach the groups goals more than a quest for power.” [Morale] [Leadership, Northouse, 2013] I will say that those who are able to build consensus through framing an issue or proposed solution to their viewpoint tend to obtain considerable power.” [Achievement]

### **Descriptive Codes for Q3**

Insinuation of political affiliations

Affiliation

Cooperation

Institutional Power (as in not seeking approval)

Achievement

Morale

Hierarchy (insinuating affiliation and institutional)

Leadership (as described by Northouse, 2013)

**Q4.) How do you solicit feedback from group members (such as a committee) regarding your ideas, vision, and/or goals and, how would the group respond if you were to discontinue your role? (Dhal, 1957; McClelland & Burnham, 1976; Yukl, 2013)**

### **Elected Official #1**

“By researching thoroughly, and speaking individually to committee members, ideas can then be presented to a committee.” [Collaboration] [Affiliation] “The feedback can then be heard by all and a consensus formed.” [Cooperation] “Another member would be appointed to continue my role if I were to step away and the committee would simply carry on... (pause) as it should be.” [Morale] [Institutional power]

### **Elected Official #2**

“I tend to demonstrate a ready willingness to listen to others’ thoughts, and to observe their actions to get indicators of their ardent positions on situations, circumstances and decisions that need to be made.” [Institutional power] “An open and orderly forum where all voices have the opportunity to be heard is the customary way I solicit feedback in formal and informal gatherings where decisions have to be made.” [Collaboration] “My ideas, vision and/or goals may not be sufficient to the accomplishing a specific mission.” [Institutional] “A deficiency may only be discovered to exist in some way when others have a fair chance of providing input and feedback.” [Morale] [Cooperation]

“If I were to discontinue my role as a leader or a member of a group, it would be my hope that my example of demonstrating strong beliefs, values and goals and commitments to being fair, honest, inclusive and responsible would carry on with the group.” [Institutional]

### **Elected Official #3**

“I hosted a Caucus Retreat 4 months after becoming Chairman.” [Achievement] “We did goal setting and even some getting to know you activities. I also always encourage members to send items for the agenda.” [Affiliation]

### **Elected Official #4**

“This depends on what the goal is. I personally try to work behind the scenes going directly to the administration or colleagues with any differences or problems with

legislation and ask relevant questions during committee meetings that I think my constituents would pose.” [Achievement] “Key here is nothing is ever personal but is ALWAYS issue based. If I am proposing legislation, I look to involve others asking them to cosponsor, particularly from the other side of the aisle.” [Political reference of party affiliation] “It is more important to me to get good legislation passed than to get the credit. I can’t speak to how the group would respond should I discontinue my role but I have colleagues from both sides of the aisle who look to me for my opinions and support.” [Political reference of party affiliation]

### **Descriptive Codes for Q4**

Cooperation

Collaboration

Institutional Power (as in building strengths in others)

Affiliation

Achievement (as in goals have higher goals)

Political party reference

Morale

### **Q5.) What motivates you as a political leader? (Kellerman, 2008; McClelland, 1975)**

#### **Elected Official #1**

“The policies, the budget, and their impact on our residents are the important motivators. The total change takes years sometimes, so the ability to stay on course is the challenge.” [Institutional] “Knowing all of the players and the history of the institution is a huge motivator... at the very least in order to pass that knowledge along to newer leaders.” [Political party reference] [Insinuation of political affiliations]

#### **Elected Official #2**

“I would say that wanting to be someone who is willing and able to make a positive contribution to a group’s positive mission in society is what motivates me as a political leader.” [Achievement] “I have greatly benefited in numerous ways from the efforts of others who have led or worked in groups.” [Institutional power] “By participating in an array of groups, I find that on any given day, week, month, or year, I am able to both pay back and pay forward the hard work and kindnesses that enable me to now participate in important activities.” [Affiliation] “I hope that what I do today will

provide the same opportunities for others to do good because; it is far, far better than doing evil, [Morale] or even nothing at all!" [Achievement]

### **Elected Official #3**

"Helping people." [Servitude] "As elected officials we are in part social workers who just happen to be on the ballot every four years." [Servitude] "Those parts of the position really get me going!" [Achievement]

### **Elected Official #4**

"The desire to do the right thing and provide cost effective, responsive, and efficient government to the citizens of my county." [Leadership] "My satisfaction comes from knowing I am contributing and helping shape what my County will look like in the next 10 years as well as knowing we are leaving it better for the next generation." [Achievement]

### **Descriptive Codes for Q5**

Leadership

Servitude

Affiliation

Achievement (goals)

Institutional

Servitude

In Vivo Codes for Q 1-5 Transcript

Political 2x

Leader 6x

Serve 1x

Listen 2x

Goals 8x

Control 2x

Mission 5x

Others 7x

Values 3x

Respect 2x

Hierarchy of Themes for In Vivo Coding

Goals

Others

Leader

Mission

Descriptive Codes for Q 1-5 from Transcript

Respectfulness

Cooperation

Morale

Responsibility

Achievement

Cooperation

Institutional Power (as in not seeking approval)

Affiliation

Cooperation

Institutional Power (as in not seeking approval)

Achievement

Morale

Hierarchy (insinuating party affiliation and institutional)

Leadership (as described by Northouse, 2013)

Cooperation



Collaboration

Institutional Power (as in building strengths in others)

Affiliation

Morale

Achievement (as in goals have higher goals)

Political party reference

Leadership

Servitude

Affiliation

Achievement (goals)

Institutional

Servitude

Morale

Hierarchy of Themes for Descriptive Coding

Achievement

Affiliation

Institutional Power

Cooperation

Morale

Reference to political party affiliations

## **Second Cycle of Coding**

The second cycle of coding consisted of finding categories and themes from the participants' responses. Saldana (2016) stated that repetitive patterns could indicate the state of human affairs (p. 6). Saldana also stated that the same content of information could be coded differently dependent upon the researcher's goals with the data. For

example, a researcher who is conducting a qualitative inquiry will examine the data differently than a researcher who is conducting an ethnographic study (Saldana, 2016). The study aims to explore the phenomenon of power while also conducting a basic qualitative inquiry to examine how the participants experience the phenomenon through their lived experiences as an elected official. Therefore, the second cycle of coding explored themes and categories through that methodology. Categories and themes are according to strengths in data (hierarchical).

CATEGORY/THEME 1:

There is a strong need of achievement among elected officials.

CATEGORY/THEME 2:

There is a strong need for affiliation among elected officials.

CATEGORY/THEME 3:

There is less of a need for power.

CATEGORY/THEME 4:

There is a strong need for morale.

CATEGORY/THEME 5:

There is a strong need for cooperation.

### **Discussion and Analysis of Categories/Themes**

The results of this study demonstrate elected officials from both parties to have a strong need for achievement more so than any other need for power. McClelland (1975) and McClelland and Burnham (1976) examined what makes a leader a good leader. They stated the most important factor must be that they desire to use their need for power for the greater good. In doing so, this would indicate a socialized need for power rather than a personalized need. According to the data, the participants reflect an interest in morale and working together cooperatively. This indicates a concern for the needs of other people (McClelland & Burnham, 1976).

While this concern is an indication of socialized power (McClelland & Burnham, 1976), the high need for achievement indicates strong evidence that these leaders are highly self-reliant. While having the need for achievement can be positive because these individuals are reliable and get the job done, it also indicates they are at risk for burnout (McClelland & Burnham, 1976; Sikora, 2011). Sikora (2011) revealed in a study that used

McClelland's research on the need for power that, while these individuals can get work done effectively, they lack delegation skills and tend to take on tasks themselves. As a result, these individuals either burn out or, when they leave their role (such as an elected term concluding), successors do not know how to manage the work properly and disparity happens to the group as a result (Sikora, 2011).

The second need the data reveals is a strong need for affiliation, which is to be liked. While this need is important since it brings the "heart" into the group dynamics (Sikora, 2011), these individuals may likely make campaign promises that they cannot keep in order to preserve their need for being accepted by others and being liked. In addition, they may attempt to use their popularity to collect as many votes as possible from other group members for new policies their constituents want to see come to fruition despite those policies not serving the greater good.

Therefore, this data indicates that instead of these leaders demonstrating a socialized need for power, the need for power inadvertently becomes displayed as a personalized need for power due to the individuals' drive to achieve goals and to be liked by others. This then takes the form of ego and self-serving goals, rather than service, which an elected official is expected to perform. This also interferes with effective leadership as seen demonstrated by institutional leaders who use their need for power as motivation to lead by strengthening others. These institutional leaders have less concern for great achievement, creating legacy, and popularity (McClelland, & Burnham, 1976). In addition, these individuals consider the greater good, therefore demonstrating socialized power, rather than preserving their potential legacy or roles by demonstrating personalized power (McClelland, 1975; Sikora, 2011). This conclusion is based on the data that revealed the participants have a lesser need for institutional power over achievement and affiliation. If these leaders would function more from an institutional need for power standpoint, then they would not only exhibit a socialized need for power that benefits the greater good, but their groups would be empowered even after their term has ended (McClelland & Burnham, 1976). In addition, in the event the elected official would like to run again for elected office, he or she will have a greater chance of creating a legacy, even though this thinking may seem counterintuitive to the individual (McClelland, 1975; McClelland & Burnham, 1976; Sikora, 2011).

According to the data, the participants also reveal an awareness of political affiliations of others; they demonstrate a need for achievement through competition and affiliation (the need to be liked) through loyalty to their political affiliations. In addition to the data, the participants also demonstrate this through personal conversation and text messages letting me know if I do not like their answers, they can give me new ones. Additionally they asked me if they answered the questions correctly after being interviewed. I assured the participants it was a matter of what they thought was right, not the researcher.

However, while the data reveals this information, the data also reveals the participants have a concern for morale and cooperation within the group. According to Burnham (1997) later studies began to reveal that, while power is a strong motivator, new data is showing a greater emphasis on an individual's personal beliefs system as well. He referred to this as "Interactive Leadership" (p. 3). Despite being lesser themes within the study, they are still reflected strong enough in the data to be worth noting.

### **Future Recommendations**

According to Saldana (2016), the first round of coding is rarely done perfectly. Since this study was conducted as a pilot test for a larger study, it would be good for researchers of the next study to go over the codes at least two more times. Moreover, as the participants communicated the importance of the group behaving in ways that exemplified morale and cooperation, it would be beneficial to incorporate questions to measure these behavioral functions within a group as well. Other topics that can be explored using this data would be leadership styles and traits. According to this data, there was some evidence of transactional and transformational leadership within the groups and surprisingly less evidence of servant leadership traits and styles.

It would also be beneficial to consider conducting a mixed-methods approach so that the participants can be surveyed and then answer several questions verbally when obtaining data. This will also help to eliminate inadvertent bias through statistical analysis (Cozby & Bates, 2015; Patton, 2015). Also, while this research was able to successfully interview candidates equally from both parties, the responses were male dominated. It would be beneficial to find several females from both parties to participate. This can pose a challenge as currently only 17% of women hold seats in the state legislative government out of 535 seats (Hoyt, 2013). Conclusively, it would also be interesting to have more sampling from a variety of generations as three out of four participants were Baby Boomers and only one was from Generation Y according to the demographics. It also might be interesting to examine the participants' expressions of power as discussed by French and Raven (1953) using the five bases of power to gain additional perspectives.

### **Conclusion**

As stated above, while the main focus of this study is meant at this time to meet a doctoral requirement, this study will also act as a pilot test to create a prototype for a project that will be presented in Kreisfreie Stadt Aachen, Germany, at the Institute of Political Science, RWTH Aachen University. Moreover, while the main focus of this function will be the research involving power and its expression and relations within group dynamics, hopefully the study will be publishable in a journal as well. In doing so, I am also planning to continue working with my current professor on the project due to his expertise and knowledge regarding group dynamics in addition to a colleague

from Robert Morris University who has several degrees in political science, works as a professor of political science, and who has agreed to help as needed (personal communication, April 24, 2017). This allows me to seek specialized input from other professionals in the field as well as prevent biased material in the QDA (Folta, Ackerman, & Nelson, 2012). This will also add to the validity, trustworthiness, and authenticity of the results (Patton, 2015). Conclusively, this will help complement the little information that exists on this topic as well as build knowledge for the scientific community, particularly in areas of organizational behavior, group dynamics, sociology, and political science.

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### About the Author

Gia Tatone is a third-year Ph.D. student at Regent University, where she is studying organizational leadership. She worked in the education field for 20 years and was also elected to serve a four-year term for the Board of Education leading in the roles of Executive Board Secretary and Chair of the Education Committee. Currently, Gia teaches at Robert Morris University for the departments of English/Communication Skills and Organizational Leadership.

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