

The conceptualization of power

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IN NURSING administration research the concept of power is definitely understudied. A review of the nursing literature revealed not one empirical study of power in nursing administration. Only articles lamenting nursing's lack of power, the need for a systematic study of power, and the methods for obtaining power are currently being published in nursing journals.¹⁻³ A reversal of this present trend is essential if nursing administrators are to acquire and utilize power effectively.

Basic to this much needed research is the crucial step of formulating a clear conceptualization of power and its differentiation from closely allied concepts such as influence and authority. To expedite the research process and increase the significance of the findings, a second essential step must be undertaken before nurses delve unprepared into power research. Much can be learned from a thorough, systematic review of academic power research from other disciplines. Nurse researchers can save valuable time by

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avoiding the pitfalls that power researchers in other fields have already painfully experienced. The findings and suggestions for further research provided by these power researchers in other disciplines can supply nursing with a foundation and starting point from which to initiate their own research in this neglected area.

POWER DIFFERENTIATED

Confusion exists among power theorists as to the meaning of authority, influence, and power. Some theorists, for example, view authority as a type of power,^{4,5} whereas others contend that authority is not power but the legitimized right to use power.⁶⁻⁸ Dahlstrom complicates matters by equating power with influence.⁹ An individual has power, according to Dahlstrom, to the extent that one is able to influence the actions of others. Pichler defines influence as power based on personal resources.⁵ Claus and Bailey do not equate power and influence, but instead view influence as the result of the use of power.⁷ They assert that power is the source of influence. Still yet another view on this power versus influence debate is provided by Bachrach and Baratz.⁶ They argue that the threat to invoke sanctions is what differentiates power from influence.

To prevent confusion, power must be distinguished from authority and influence. Power can be viewed as the superordinate concept under which authority and influence are subsumed. Authority and influence can then be regarded as types of power. Authority is legitimate power that has a limited range. Influence is not a result of power; it is a type of power

that does not utilize sanctions but depends on personal resources. Influence has a persuasive connotation to it and not a forceful one.

POWER CONCEPTUALIZED

Total agreement among the definers of power is nonexistent. A wide spectrum of definitions of power is apparent in the literature. Some definitions view power as the potential to act, whereas some define power as the act itself. In some definitions power is perceived as producing only intended effects, whereas in others unintended effects are also included. In many definitions, power is conceived of as a relationship and not just as an attribute of a person. Some power theorists stress the asymmetrical nature of power. The obvious disagreement among power theorists does serve to identify many of the parameters that need to be addressed in conceptualizing power.

Intention

One such controversy that exists is over the inclusion or exclusion of the word "intended" in the conceptualization of power. Wrong purports that the concept of power should be restricted to the exercise of intentional control of influence.¹⁰ Power, according to Wrong, should not be equated with both unintended and intended influence. Support for Wrong's position is provided by Burns in his assertion that the role of intent or purpose must be included in the concept of power.¹¹ Power involves the purpose or intention of both the influencer and the influencee.

The problem with the conceptualization

of power as only intentional is that this omits the rule of anticipated reactions. In the rule of anticipated reactions, a time lag does not exist between the actions of the person exerting the power and the actions of the respondent.^{12(pp589-591)} It is impossible to measure the separate actions of the influencer and the influencee. For example, the faculty in a university are on strike. One faculty member in the school of nursing anticipates that if she walks in the picket line her dean will disapprove, so she decides not to actively participate in the strike. In this situation the dean did not even have to communicate her position on the faculty's active participation in the strike. That particular faculty member anticipated her dean's negative viewpoint on this matter and decided not to walk in the picket line.

Relationship or attribute

Power as a relationship versus an attribute of an actor is a second controversial issue surrounding power. Emerson asserts that power is not an attribute of an individual or group but on the contrary power is a property of a social relation.¹³ Support is present in the literature for this view of power as a relationship.^{14,15} Mechanic, on the other hand, defines power as a force and not as a relationship. Mechanic postulates that power is "any force that results in behavior that would not have occurred if force had not been present."^{16(p138)}

Bierstedt's following definition of power illustrates a third controversial issue of power. Should power be conceptualized as a potential influence? Bierstedt asserts that "power is the ability to employ force, not its actual employment, the ability to

apply sanctions, not their actual application."^{17(p733)} He maintains a strong position that power is always potential and when a person uses power, it no longer is power. Power is then transformed either into authority or force. Emerson is another proponent of power being conceptualized as a potential influence.¹³

The balance of power is yet another area of contention among power theorists. A balance of power occurs when the power of person A over person B is met with an equal amount of opposing power of person B over person A. Emerson contends that when power is balanced, it is not removed from the relationship.¹³ Power is not neutralized when a balance occurs, since both persons can still exert control over each other. Blau asserts that when there is an equal amount of influence on both sides of a relationship, this indicates a lack of power.¹⁸ Power for Blau rests on an individual's ability to either supply punishments or withhold rewards from another person. Power is perceived of as a social exchange relationship in which power is inherently asymmetrical.

Another debatable parameter of power is whether or not power is a fixed quantity. Power has been conceptualized as a fixed quantity in any organization.¹⁹ If this view

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4 of power is accepted, it results in what has been termed the zero sum problem. If power is a fixed quantity in a system, then any increase in power by one person must result in a decrease in power by some other person. The opposing view holds that power is not a fixed quantity because a person in an organization can increase his or her power without other individuals experiencing a decrease in their net power.

Causation

The most recent debate over the conceptualization of power is provided by the political theorists—power as causation. Followers of this power approach argue that power refers to a causal relationship among individuals. Power, according to McFarland, denotes intended social causation. McFarland asserts that social causation occurs when "C's behavior influences R's behavior if and only if C's behavior causes changes in R's behavior."^{20(p6)} When power is viewed as causation, emphasis is placed on intended influence that causes changes in another person's behavior. The major problem with the definition of power as causation is that it does not allow for the inclusion of the rule of anticipated reactions, since "intended influence" is absolute.

Hagel has attempted to remedy this deficit in the conceptualization of power as causation. Nagel instead defines power as causation by preferences. A power relation according to Nagel is "a potential or actual causal relation between preferences of an actor regarding an outcome."^{21(p87)} If an individual does not have a preference regarding an outcome, then he or she does not have any power over it. In this concep-

tion of power, the influence attempt is viewed as caused by a preference. It is a person's preference, a disposition to make certain choices, and not the behavior or action itself that is considered the cause. A person's preference can then be viewed as an indirect cause of another person's change of behavior. Within this conceptualization of power, the rule of anticipated reactions can be included.

Each of these controversial issues must be seriously considered by a researcher before a decision can be made about how power is to be conceptualized in any given research endeavor. An example of a researcher's conceptualization of power could be as follows: Power is a relationship among persons that results in the production of intended and/or unintended effects. Power is not totally asymmetrical. A balance of power can exist wherein one person or group is the power holder in issues A, B, C and the other person or group becomes the power holder in issues D, E, F. Power is not a fixed quantity. It is quite possible that individuals in relationships can obtain more power without other persons losing any of their net power.

ACADEMIC POWER RESEARCH

Elitists versus pluralists

Researchers in the area of academic power are beginning to apply the assumptions and methodologies of community power theorists in their own research. Researchers in community power are primarily divided into two groups: the elitists and the pluralists. Each group holds a different set of assumptions about power

that has important implications for the direction and findings of their research. A basic assumption of the elitists is that power in communities is highly centralized.²² Another closely tied elitist assumption is that over time a power structure has a tendency to remain stable. Power is not tied to issues.

Elitists are interested in reputational power. In reputational research, power is equated with a person's reputation for being influential. Power is measured by rankings of the individual according to how much general power he or she is perceived to possess in relation to other members within an organization. For the elitists, reputed power is equated with actual power. The first question an elitist researcher asks is, "Who runs this community?"²³ Elitists concentrate on categorizing power sources or bases and are not interested in the actual exercise of power.²⁴ Reputational researchers such as Hunter focus on formulating power rankings of individuals according to the amount of general power each possesses.²⁵ When engaged in research, elitists do not collect data on actual behavior in concrete decisions.

The pluralists hold a set of power assumptions totally opposite to the elitists. As a result the pluralists utilize a completely different research approach to the study of power. The pluralists' basic assumption is that power is widely diffused in a community. No one group necessarily dominates within a community. A second, important pluralist assumption is that power may be tied to issues, and issues can be either short-lived or long lasting. The first question a pluralist

researcher asks is, "Does anyone at all run this community?"²⁴

Pluralist researchers are not interested in reputed power. The power exercise itself is the research focus of the pluralists. Data are collected on specific outcomes in concrete issue areas to determine who exercises power in community decision making. Pluralist researchers are careful, however, to collect data in more than one issue area because of another critical assumption that a similar decision-making pattern will probably not reproduce itself in more than one issue area.

Criticisms have been lodged against both the elitists' and the pluralists' research methodologies. The elitists have been criticized in that their general power rankings are misleading because they assume the overall power of the individuals they ranked to be the same for all the issues in the community. Bachrach and Baratz criticize the pluralists for not taking into account the less apparent face of power.²³ This hidden face of power rests on the assumption that power is not totally reflected in concrete decisions. A person or group can exercise power by preventing policy issues from coming into the forefront and being publicly debated. Power is exercised in this instance by restricting the scope of acceptable decision-making issues. Policy conflicts are prevented from arising on key issues important to the individual or group.

It appears that a combination of both the elitists' and pluralists' research methodologies would yield more fruitful findings in the study of power. The pluralists are correct in their assumption that power is tied to issues, but this belief does not rule

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out the possibility of the existence of a power elite within certain organizations. A major drawback of the pluralists' power research is their exclusion of the ability of a person or group to prevent policy issues from coming into the forefront as a type of power. The elitists' power research also has a major drawback in that their findings are more likely to be contaminated by the respondents' subjectivity than the pluralists' findings. Reputed power is frequently equated with actual power by reputationalists. Reputed power is not actual power. It should be viewed as potential power.

Trends in academic power research

Power researchers of educational organizations heavily favor the reputational method for studying power, even though they do not specifically identify their relationship with the elitists. Perceived power is what is commonly researched. The observation of specific power decisions, which the pluralists argue must be studied, is not a commonly used data collection technique in researching academic power.

Power perception has been researched from the following approaches: vertical, horizontal, interpersonal, and subunit power.²⁶ Interpersonal power is the use of power by one person over another. Subunit power is the exertion of power by subunits within an organization to obtain the critical resources of the organization for their own departments. Vertical power is the use of power in a superior-subordinate relationship. Finally, horizontal power is the exercise of power among peers within an organization to obtain benefits for themselves. Greater emphasis has been placed on vertical and interpersonal power

by power researchers than on horizontal and subunit power. Power perception research has depended either on a single information source or else on the differences between two or more power holders. This latter type of power perception study has not been utilized as frequently as the single information source design.

Measurement of the overall power structure in universities has been researched on a continuum from a nationwide study to a one-university in-depth case study. The majority of empirical research on the measurement of the bases of power is derived from the work of French and Raven.¹⁵ They developed five bases of social power: reward, coercive, expert, referent, and legitimate power. Reward and coercive power stem from the ability of the influencer to mediate rewards and punishments for the influencee. Expert power stems from the influencer's possession of superior knowledge needed by the influencee. Referent power has its basis in the identification of the influencee with the influencer. The fifth basis of power is legitimate power, which is based on the perception of a person that the influencer has a legitimate right to influence one's actions and that there is an obligation to obey.

In the past Emerson's power-balancing styles have not been utilized often by power theorists, but this trend is currently being reversed. Emerson has formulated four power-balancing styles that persons in low-power positions can utilize to help equalize their power relationships with persons in high-power positions.¹³ Style I is the independent person who tries to decrease one's own demand by reducing

motivational interest in the goals of the person in the high-power position. Style II is the outside interest person, who attempts to increase alternative sources of gratification of goals outside the organization. The organizational person is Emerson's third power-balancing style. This person is a hard worker who strives to become indispensable to the organization. Finally is the collegial style person, who seeks to form coalitions with other low-power persons in the organization.

For the most part measurement tools utilized in educational power research have been designed to collect information on reputational power. Measurement tools of self-perceived power have received less attention by academic researchers. The subjectivity of the respondents is a confounding factor that is involved in the measurement of perceived power. A review of the literature revealed that the reliability of perceived power measurement tools is rarely addressed by academic power researchers. Power measurement instruments are at an embryonic stage of development in academic power research. The majority of tools have been utilized once or twice.

Political scientists have begun to design instruments to objectively measure power in a committee system.²⁷ Academic power researchers have concentrated heavily on perceived power and need to follow the lead of political scientists and begin to design objective measurement tools of power. Statistical analysis of power is another area in which political scientists are more advanced than academic power researchers. Political scientists researching power are beginning to include path analy-

sis in their designs.²⁸ Academic power researchers have yet to attempt this.

A final trend in academic power research that is of particular importance to nursing is the sorely neglected area of female power in educational institutions. Not one study, for example, was found that attempted to differentiate between

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male and female perceptions of power on the university level. The research question of whether or not women in academic administrative positions are equally, more, or less powerful than their male counterparts remains unstudied.

Empirical studies in academic power

The researchers of academic power, as illustrated by the studies included in Table 1, are guilty of contributing to the confusion that exists over the conceptualization of power and its differentiation from the related concepts of authority and influence. Most researchers did identify the theoretical orientation of power they were utilizing in their studies, for example, French and Raven's bases of power. The majority of these theorists, however, failed first to provide their readers with the theoretical definition of power that they were using. Second, they did not make clear the relationship of power to authority

Table 1. Examples of academic power research

Type of power research	Differentiation and conceptualization of power			Data collection methods	Measurement instrument of power	Internal validity	External validity	Statistical analysis	Findings
	Sample								
Single information source of power perception					31-item power instrument which measured power in terms of perceptions of sanctions.	Correlation of 2 indices of a chairman's power was significant at $p < .001$ ($r = .744$).	Findings limited to 4-year state-supported colleges. Not generalizable to large state-supported universities nor private colleges and universities.	Mean power index of average chairman was 47.8 and varied from 19.6 to 65.4. Possible maximum scope was 124.	
A. Vertical interpersonal ^a	Power encompasses authority and influence. Power of an individual in a social situation consists of the sanctions others in the situation perceive that one has available to employ in ways that will affect them.	375 professors representing 5 classifications of academic fields in 5 state-supported 4-year colleges in 2 western states	Questionnaire	5-point modified Likert scale with categories varying from "little or no degree" to "very great degree." Mean power index was calculated. Chairman's influence index derived from questions relating to relative influence of chairman.			Correlation matrix	Correlation of power index and faculty satisfaction of chairmen was significant at $p < .001$ ($r = .42$). Correlation of power index and perceived productivity was significant at $p < .001$ ($r = .36$).	

B. Horizontal subunit ²⁶	No differentiation of power from authority or influence. Horizontal power is the use of influence among co-acting peers to obtain benefits for themselves. Power is the ability of the department to affect decisions so that they conform more closely to what the department wanted.	29 departments at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Interviews Archival records analysis from 1958-1970	1. Representation on the University Research Board 2. Interview-based measure of power with membership on all committees and with membership on the Research Board were significant at $p < .001$ ($r = .61$) and at $p < .001$ ($r = .62$), respectively.	Correlations of the interview-based measure of power with membership on all committees and with membership on the Research Board were significant at $p < .001$ ($r = .61$) and at $p < .001$ ($r = .62$), respectively.	Generalizability of findings limited to a university with extensive research orientation.	Regression analysis Simple and partial correlations	Results for all 3 measures of power indicate departments' ability to acquire outside funds and grants was the best predictor of subunit power. Subunit power is more highly correlated with the allocation of resources which are more critical and more scarce—graduate fellowships.
Differences in power perception of 2 or more persons or groups Vertical ²⁷	No differentiation of power from authority or influence. No specific conceptualization of power given.	Stratified random sample of 80 university departments: 20 each in physics, chemistry, sociology, and political science. A total of 1,164 faculty responses and 49 chairperson responses were received.	Questionnaire	Instrument consisted of 11 items reflecting major decisions in university departments. For each of 4 power holders (individual faculty member, faculty as collegial group, dept. chairperson, and central administration), respondents rated amount of influence on each of 11 items on a 4-point scale ranging	No selection bias was detected by age or rank of the respondents or by comparing the number of early and late respondents by their academic field or quality level.	Limited generalization because faculty surveyed represented only high caliber graduate schools.	2 x 2 x 2 design 1. Field of science: social or physical 2. High or low level of prestige 3. Perceivers: faculty or chairpersons ANOVA	Significant differences were found between faculty and chairpersons' perceptions. For example, faculty perceived chairpersons to have more power in physical sciences than social science. Chairpersons perceived they had more power in social sciences than in physical sciences.

Table 1 (continued)

Type of power research	Differentiation and conceptualization of power	Sample	Data collection methods	Measurement instrument of power	Internal validity	External validity	Statistical analysis	Findings
Overall power structure in universities	No differentiation of power from authority or influence. No definition of power itself was given. Power structure is a relatively stable distribution of power among agencies, groups, and persons involved in higher education.	4,494 administrators and 2,730 faculty from 68 universities. Sample excluded church-controlled institutions, liberal arts colleges, teachers colleges, and technical institutions	Questionnaire mailed to 10% of faculty and all administrators in each of 68 universities.	Respondents rated from 1 (no say at all) to 5 (great deal of say) how much power they perceived each of 16 groups, agencies, and persons to have in determining the major goals of university as a whole.	Attempted to test selection bias by taking a random sample of 200 nonrespondents and sending them questionnaires to fill out for purpose of serving as controls. Poor response rate prevented any statistical analysis.	Limited generalizability due to the types of institutions of higher education excluded from the sample because it was believed they would be dominated by a single point of view.	Means, standard deviations, and power rankings Goodman and Kruskal's gamma (τ) to detect any relationships between the power of each person or group both within and across universities and perceived university goals.	Top 8 power holders in order of perceived power were president, regent, vice president, dean of professional schools, deans of graduate schools, deans of liberal arts, faculty, and chairmen.
A. Multiple universities ³⁵								
B. Case study ³⁴	No differentiation of power from authority or influence. No specific conceptualization of power. Based on community power theory and the pluralists' conceptualization of power.	693 full-time faculty and administrators at New York University	Interviews Questionnaire Participant observation Document analysis	Respondents ranked 6 groups (trustees, central administration, dept faculty, deans, college faculty, and individual faculty) in relation to amount of power respondents perceived each group to possess on 10 specific issues.	Not specifically addressed	Case study method limits generalizability of findings to NYU.	Goodman and Kruskal's gamma Percentages	Deans were perceived to possess broad power. Deans' 3 strongest areas of influence were budgetary planning, selection of dept chairmen, and faculty promotion. Central administration's strongest influence existed in budget, PR, and personnel.

Bases of social power ³⁵	No differentiation of power from authority or influence. No specific conceptualization of power. Based on French and Raven's 5 bases of power.	685 full-time faculty at 12 liberal arts colleges belonging to a regional association of colleges.	Questionnaire	Amount of influence of the dean was measured by one question. Faculty ranked deans on a scale from 1 (little or none) to 5 (great deal). Bases of dean's power measured by one question: why faculty do things their deans want them to do. Five reasons to choose from corresponded to French and Raven's bases of power. Faculty rated each reason from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). The lower the score, the more important it was.	Partial correlations to rule out the effects of each person's own perception of the amount of dean's influence and bases of dean's influence were performed to test the objectivity of findings. When individual perceptions were partialled out, the relationships between the bases of influence and satisfaction with the deans were scarcely diminished at all.	Generalizability of findings is limited to liberal arts colleges.	Means and standard deviations Simple and partial correlations	Mean level of dean's influence was 3.53 (halfway between moderate and considerable). Expert power was considered the most important basis of dean's power. Legitimate power was rated second, followed by reward, and coercive power, respectively. Faculty were most satisfied with deans whose power was based on expertise and respect rather than legitimacy and coercion.
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Table 1 (continued)

Type of power research	Differentiation and conceptualization of power	Sample	Data collection methods	Measurement instrument of power	Internal validity	External validity	Statistical analysis	Findings
Power-balancing styles ⁴⁶	No differentiation of power from authority or influence. No specific conceptualization of power. Based on Emerson's conceptualization of power.	324 faculty members from 2 community colleges and one school containing 3 departments in a university. Sample excluded: part-time faculty, administrators, faculty with less than 2 years service, and faculty unknown to majority of their panel of raters.	Questionnaire Panel of Raters	Situation-reaction check list completed by faculty where they identified which power-balancing style they would use in a variety of low-power situations. A panel of raters selected at each of the 3 institutions who categorized each faculty member as to which one of Emerson's power-balancing styles he/she typically used.	The ANOVA of the situation reaction checklist and the panel of raters was significant at $p < .01$ level for styles II, III, and IV.	Sample may be biased since faculty who were unknown to a majority of their panel of raters were omitted from the study.	ANOVA Chi-square Scheffe test	Over-representation of styles III and IV. Professional and vocational fields tended to be over-represented by style III.

and influence as it pertained to their studies. In only two out of the seven studies included in Table 1 were theoretical definitions of power stated.^{26,29} Hill and French were the only researchers to even hint at how their conceptualization of power related to authority and influence.²⁹

Power structures

Measurement of the amount of vertical power that members on one hierarchical level are perceived to have by members on another hierarchical level is a popular research design. Vertical interpersonal power is the power of a superior over a subordinate within an organization.³⁰ The perception of the power of department chairman by professors is one such study.²⁹ Hill and French's power measurement tool is the only instrument out of the seven reviewed that had a reliability check performed on it.

Perrow has directed power researchers' attention to their neglect of subunit or departmental power and also horizontal power.³¹ One example of what research has been done in this neglected area of subunit horizontal power occurred in a large research-oriented university.²⁶

Most power perception studies depend on only a single information source to explore power relationships in universities. Most often the one-source analysis of academic power perceptions is based on faculty or chairpersons. Neumann argues that differences in power perceptions of power holders in various hierarchical levels within a university have been understudied.³² Neumann questions the legitimacy and generalizability of one-source power studies. To help correct this defi-

ciency, Neumann studied the differences in power perceptions between faculty and chairpersons in university departments.

University as community

Research directed at obtaining an overall power structure of universities is a type of power research design frequently encountered in the literature. Gross and Grambsch's study on university goals and power is an example of this research design.³³ Baldrige contends that the methodology of community power studies is indeed useful for researching the political university.³⁴ Community power researchers have dealt with the nature of power, the role of interest groups, and goal-setting activities in goal-diffused communities. Baldrige likens a university to a goal-diffuse local community. Baldrige's power research is an in-depth case study of one university. In his study of conflict at New York University, Baldrige is one of the few university power researchers to study specific power decisions. He utilized a combination elitist-pluralist approach. Baldrige's power-ranking approach provides more information than Gross and Grambsch's approach because power holders were ranked on 10 specific issues, not just on overall power. Baldrige's findings did not clearly support either the pluralist or the elitist power models, but rather suggest a combination of these two models within the university. There was no one dominant power elite. Instead more of a pluralistic atmosphere existed, with several small power blocs or elites, each dominating in specific issues.

Most of the empirical research on the

measurement of the bases of power is derived from the work of French and Raven. An example of this research is Bachman's study of the bases of academic deans' influence over faculty and the faculty's satisfaction with their deans' bases of influence.³⁵ A major criticism of Bachman's questionnaire design is that only one question was devoted to the faculty's general perception of their deans' bases of power. The internal validity of this tool would be increased if more questions had been designed which asked faculty how they perceived their deans' bases of power in specific areas.

The final type of power research design to be discussed is based on Emerson's power dependency theory. Cotton hypothesized that faculty in universities would prefer one of Emerson's power-balancing styles.³⁶ Cotton's research design contained two different measures of power-balancing styles, but neglected to address the reliability of the measurement tools. An interrater reliability check, for example, of the panel of raters would have been an appropriate test for Cotton to have performed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING

Power of nurse administrators

The lack of nurse administrators who are knowledgeable in the use of power as a political tool is the most critical administrative problem facing nursing today.³⁷ Deans of schools of nursing are accused of being ignorant of both informal and formal power games and strategies operating within universities.³⁸ Rarely is a female administrator of a school of nursing more

than a token member of a male-dominated committee. Nursing deans are likened to pawns of powerful men in universities. Female nursing administrators are also accused of behaving in a wifelike manner toward male university administrators.³⁹ Cleland likens deans to housewives asking their husbands for grocery money. In addition, she labels nursing educational administrators as "female Uncle Toms" who in reality possess no power except over powerless women.³⁹

The discussion leveled against nursing deans may be correct, but it is not supported by empirical research. Nurses need to start conducting power research to discover whether or not nursing deans are as powerless as current literature portrays them. If research findings reveal the powerlessness of deans of schools of nursing, further research will need to be conducted on the acquisition and effective use of power as a political tool.

As women, deans of schools of nursing as well as nursing service directors are definitely in the minority in high academic administrative positions within today's male-dominated universities. Because of this, nursing educational administrators are at a definite disadvantage in acquiring power and in competing for scarce university resources. To obtain their equal share of resources within the university system, deans of schools of nursing need to concentrate on learning to acquire and utilize power. Power research can provide nursing deans with this valuable information.

The meager information available pertaining to nurses' reactions to potential and actual power confrontations has not

been provided by nurse researchers. It has been discovered that women in the semi-professions (nursing, teaching, and social work) place a higher priority on friendly, personal relationships with their co-workers than on conflict that leads to acquiring power within organizations.⁴⁰ One step that nursing deans need to take is to change these priorities if they are to possess academic power and overcome their handicap as women administrators in male-dominated universities.

Strategies for obtaining power

Until nursing researchers begin to study female power in universities, nursing educational administrators will have to rely on the findings and hypotheses of power theorists in other disciplines. These power researchers can provide nursing deans with valuable information related to strategies that lower ranking individuals can utilize to obtain power in a relationship. Mechanic has posited some hypotheses on how lower ranking persons can obtain power which nursing deans should be aware of.¹⁶ Despite the fact that these hypotheses have not been empirically tested, there is no reason why deans of schools of nursing cannot try out some of the approaches within their educational institutions.

Mechanic's first hypothesis states that the less time and effort a high-ranking person is willing to invest in an area or task, the more likely it is that low-ranking persons in an organization will command the power specific to this task. The second hypothesis declares that the more effort an individual is willing to invest in an area, the more power that person will obtain.

Combining these two hypotheses, nursing deans should first identify areas and issues within their universities where high-ranking administrators do not invest a large amount of their time. Next nursing deans should concentrate their energies on obtaining this unclaimed power attached to these lower priority issues.

When nursing deans find themselves as the dependent persons in power relationships, Emerson provides them with four possible retaliatory actions: withdrawal, extension of a power network, coalition formation, and emergence of status.¹³ Two of Emerson's power-balancing operations,

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extension of a power network and coalition formation, have particular importance for nursing deans. Being in the minority among their administrative peers, nursing deans need to assert themselves and extend their relationships to include, for example, the deans of the schools of law and education. Deans of schools of nursing must come out of their safe cocoons where they are surrounded only by other female nurses.

Use of power bases

Nursing deans should take heed of French and Raven's warnings concerning the use of power bases.¹⁵ These warnings

16 are in the form of hypotheses. First, attempts by a power holder to use power outside one's ordinary range will tend to decrease the power. The use of coercive power will result in increased resistance and decreased attraction of the weaker person toward the power holder. The more legitimate the coercive power is, however, the less resistance will occur. The last two hypotheses that have implications for nursing deans are not in the form of warnings. First, the use of reward power will result in an increased attraction and decreased resistance of the dependent person toward the power holder. Second, referent power has the broadest range of all five of French and Raven's bases of power. If nursing educational administrators are as powerless as the literature portrays them to be, they certainly will not

harm their positions any further by testing out some of the power researchers' hypotheses.

One of the first steps that all nurses need to take to help remedy their neglect of power is to formulate their own conceptualization of power. The methods that nurse researchers utilize to study power and the ways nurses acquire and use power definitely depend on how these nurses conceptualize power. For example, a dean of a school of nursing who believes power is a fixed quantity will utilize totally different power strategies to gain power within the university than a dean who does not believe the zero sum problem exists. It cannot be stressed enough that a person must have a clear conceptualization of power prior to either conducting power research or utilizing power effectively.

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