Behaviors that Characterize a Power Play in a Small Group

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Abstract

Power Play is defined as "an attempt by a person, group, or organization to use power in a forceful and direct way to get or do something" (Merriam-Webster, 2015, para. 2). This study involved the design of a research proposal to investigate "power play" in small groups. The literature review established a paucity of research studies in the acquisition and use of power in groups. Additionally, the review showed a scarcity of qualitative studies that provide greater understanding to scholars and practitioners of group member need, acquisition and use of power in small groups. A qualitative study using the socio-rhetorical criticism is proposed to investigate "power play" among three leaders as recorded in Numbers 12. Specifically, the socio-rhetorical analysis of Numbers 12 will inform the conclusions of the investigation and reveal nuances of attitudes and behavior that precede and characterize a power play in a small group. The study will also suggest ways power plays may be resolved in leadership teams.

Keywords: Groups, power, power play, inner texture analysis, socio-rhetorical criticism.

Behaviors that Characterize a Power Play in a Small Group

Studies have recommended flatter organizational structures and more cross-functional teams as the best strategy for successful organizations but leading less-hierarchical systems, and virtual workgroups require more influence and power (Pfeffer, 2010, para. 9). More than ever, scholars and leaders need to understand the role of power in effective leadership to cope with an ever-changing global economy.

Moreover, organizations provide an opportunity for individuals to develop their careers through the acquisition of power as the means for transforming individual interests into activities which consequentially impact other people (Zaleznik, 1970, para. 5). Group members have varying levels of expectations and need for affiliation, achievement, power, and resources (Arrow, et al., 2000, p. 98). Members of a group need a functional level of agreement (explicitly or implicitly) on, (a) how membership status is determined, (b) the acceptable degree of power disparity, and (c) the rules and norms governing the use of power (Arrow, et al., 2000, p. 100). Without explicit or implicit agreement on pertinent issues, conflict and "power plays" may ensue among members of that group. For the

purpose of this study, "Power Play" is defined as "an attempt by a person, group, or organization to use power in a forceful and direct way to get or do something" (Merriam-Webster, 2015, para. 2).

A review of the extant literature reveals that some of the dynamics of organizational behavior such as conflict, stress, and commitment have received a fair amount of attention, but power has relatively been neglected by researchers (Luthans, 2010, p. 312). Northouse (2015) posits that though power is clearly a vital component of the leadership process, research on its role in leadership is scarce (p. 5). The emphasis on flat organizational structures and the resultant prominence of follower empowerment have relegated research on power to a lower level in empirical studies (Yi, Jia & Changkun, 2014, p. 2). Specifically, Arrow et al. (2000) report that only limited research has illuminated how members and activity in a group fulfill or fail to fulfill member needs for power (p. 101). Understanding the dynamics of power is critical to the understanding of group and organizational behavior, particularly leadership effectiveness (Yi, Jia & Changkun, 2014, p. 2).

The goal of this study is to use an exegetical study in Numbers 12 to investigate and understand power play as exhibited between three siblings in a leadership team. The study will reveal nuances of attitudes and behavior that precede and characterize a power play in a small group. The study will also suggest ways power plays may be prevented and resolved in leadership teams.

Groups

From the beginning of time, isolation and solitary life are not the standard behavior for human beings. The Bible records, "It is not good that the man should be alone..." (Genesis 2: 18, KJV). The propensity for humans to gravitate towards each other in groups is a normal social behavior that deserves understanding and critical study. It is widely known that some of the most important events in one's life take place in groups or community. Forsyth (2014, p. 1) posits that the comprehensive understanding of people requires the understanding of their groups. In this section of the paper, we will discuss the definition of a group, the types of groups, group interdependence, group member needs and their goals.

Definition of a Group

According to Forsyth (2014, p. 3), the definition of a group depends on the foci of attention by the different researchers or theorists. Various scholars emphasize different

features or foci of group activity in their descriptions and analysis of groups. Below in Table 1 is a sample of some of the definitions suggested by several scholars:

Table 1: A Sample of Definitions of the Word Group

Foci of Attention	Definition
Purpose	"To put it simply they are units composed of two or more persons who come into contact for a purpose and who consider the contact meaningful" (Mills, 1967, p. 2).
Common Goal	"Two or more individuals interacting with each other to accomplish a common goal" (Ivancevich et al., 2014, p. 551)
Relationships	"A group is defined by the existence of continuing face-to-face relationships between its members" (Smith, 1973, p. 1)
Communication	"…defined as three or more people…with the upper limit based on members' ability to be aware of the individuality of every other group member) who (a) think of themselves as a group, (b) are interdependent…, and (c) communicate (interact) with one another (Frey & Konieczka, 2010, p. 317)
Size	"Two or more people." (Hogg & Cooper, 2003, p. 327)
Interdependence	"A group is a "dynamic whole based on interdependence rather than similarity." (Lewin, 1948, p. 184)

Notwithstanding, this study will adopt the definition presented by Forsyth (2006, pp. 2-3) that states a group is defined as "two or more individuals who are connected to one another by social relationships." The definition presented by Forsyth (2006) is appropriate because it combines three critical essentials, namely, the number of individuals involved in the group, the links or network of associations in the group, and the relationship(s) in the group (Smith, 2015, para. 9). Benson (2001) identified six attributes that a majority of scholars agreed upon as essential features of a group, and he reduced them to three:

- There are parts
- There is relationship between the parts
- There is an organizing principle (p. 4)

Groups are organic, natural, and are defined by others as a group and exist in relation to other groups (Benson, 2001, p. 4).

Types of Groups

Although there are many ways of categorizing groups, two types of categories have persisted and maintained their utility; (a) primary and secondary groups, and (b) planned and emergent groups (Smith, 2015, para. 13). In this study we will employ the second categorization of groups, that is, groups are planned, and groups are emergent. According to Arrow et al. (2000, p. 64) planned groups are formed intentionally either by the members or by an outside individual, group or organization, and emergent groups are relatively spontaneous in their formation. As reported by Arrow et al., the combination of external and internal forces, planned assembly, and emergent processes, acting concurrently, originate and shape all groups in their formation resulting in four categories of groups:

- Concocted groups characterized by external and planned forces dominance.
- Founded groups characterized by internal and planned forces dominance.
- Self-organized groups characterized by internal and emergent forces dominance.
- Circumstantial groups characterized by external and emergent forces dominance. (pp. 64-65)

Group Interdependence

Baron and Kerr (2003, p. 139) posit that group members' outcomes frequently are contingent on the actions of others in the group. Others in the group greatly influence the experiences, emotions, activities and behaviors of one member (Smith, 2005, para. 27). Baron and Kerr (2003, p. 139) have contended, that group members' outcomes usually depend on the actions of others in the group. Additionally, the sharing of common outcomes based on group membership is referred to as common fate by some scholars (Brewer & Kramer, 1986, p. 543).

Member Needs, Goals, and Conflict

Member needs include the need for affiliation, achievement, power, and resources, what is more, these needs constitute the engine of local dynamics such as conflict or power play among members (Arrow, et al., 2000, pp. 98-102). According to Arrow et al. (2000, p. 97), the local dynamics of a group are driven by, (a) individual efforts to achieve personal

goals, and (b) by individual and joint efforts to achieve collective goals. Ivancevich, Konopaske, Matteson (2014, p. 315) postulate that there are three primary causes of intergroup conflict, (a) interdependence, (b) goal differences and (c) perceptual differences, and they also caution that conflict and conflict resolution vary across cultures.

Power

Power is the capability of a person to alter and manage the behavior, attitude, beliefs, and actions of others (Faiz, 2013, p. 385). Nelson and Quick (2012, p. 169) defined power as the capacity to influence and control another individual. According to Pfeffer (2010), whoever has control over valuable resources like information can build a power base (p. 86). A study by McClelland and Burnham (2003) found that leaders who are motivated by a desire to acquire and wield power were more effective than leaders who were interested in being esteemed by subordinates or merely driven by a desire for personal achievement (p. 117).

Consequently, power is a resource and an effective tool in the hands of whoever possesses and controls it (Faiz, 2013, p. 383). It is expected that disagreements are bound to occur when members of a group pursue their personal quests for power within the group (Arrow et al., 2000, p. 101). Furthermore, the type of power available to members varies among groups and within groups depending on, (a) role assignments, (b) member attributes, and (c) constraints on power disparity between members allowed by the group (Arrow et al., 2000, 100). In this segment of the article, we will discuss power and leadership, bases of power, and power play within groups.

Power and Leadership

According to Northouse (2015), the concept of power is related to leadership because power plays a role in the leadership process (p. 16). To lead an organization or group in the desired direction, the leader needs to develop the ability to acquire, build, and wield influence or power over the followers (Pfeffer, 2010, p. 87). On the other hand, other scholars claim that power involves some level of an imposition of one's' will on the will of another through some form of rewards or punishment (Lee, 2014, p. 763). Lee (2014) postulates that the use of power by an individual undermines the claim that they are leading; they are, in actuality, managing (not leading) a group (p. 764). Therefore, according to Lee, power and leading are incompatible concepts (p. 764). An authentic leader, instead of centralizing power in himself intentionally empowers others to lead (Lopez, 2014, p. 106). Northouse (2015) posits that leaders are often described as wielders of power with the

capacity to dominate others (p. 5). In these instances, power is viewed as a tool, in contrast to the emphasis of others that conceptualize power from a relationship standpoint (Burns, 1978, p. 15). In agreement with Burns, "power is a relationship among persons" (p. 12).

Kellerman (2012) argues that with the advent of modern technology that makes leaders more transparent, the empowerment of followers, and the change in culture, followers now demand more from leaders (pp. 46-51). The status quo has changed; power is no longer synonymous with leadership as followers employ information power to level the playing field. In essence, leaders wield less power and in contrast, followers have more power (Kellerman, 2012, p. 16).

Bases of Power

A question may be asked, where does power originate in a leaders' life? French and Raven (1959) proposed five sources of power within organizations: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, and referent (p. 263). Raven (2008) went on to identify the sixth source of power called information power (p. 3). According to Lunenburg (2012, p. 1), the sources of power are used together in varying combinations depending on the situation, and they are grouped into two categories, namely, organizational power (legitimate, reward, coercive) and personal power (expert and referent). Lunenburg's review of power sources revealed the following:

Legitimate Power. The ability to influence others' behavior because of ones' position within an organization is called legitimate power. Managers enhance that power through policies, procedures, and rules.

Reward Power. The capacity to direct others' behavior by providing them with desirable rewards is called reward power. However, the followers must value the reward potentially offered by the one wielding power, and there needs to be a distinct link between the performance and the reward. Interestingly, followers also have reward power through the use of 360-degree evaluations.

Coercive Power. A person's ability to affect others' behavior by punishing them or by presenting the threat to do so is called coercive power. Coercive power must be used sparingly because of the resultant negative effects, including anger and resentment against leaders who use it. Additionally, employees can also use coercive power through sarcasm and fear of rejection to ensure that group members conform to group norms.

Expert Power. The ability to shape others' behavior because of recognized knowledge, skills, or abilities is referred to as expert power.

Interestingly, experts who are ranked low in the organizational chart may still wield power in the organization. As the knowledge economy grows in today's global market, expert power in organizations will increase.

   Referent Power. A person's capacity to affect others' behavior because they like, admire, and respect the individual is called referent power. Referent power grows out of admiration of another and a desire to be like that person. (pp. 2-5).

Power Play

   The power play in small groups is most common during decision-making processes, and it is as much about followers as it is leaders (Jacob, 2007, p. 1). Jacob (2007) argues that power play can be used for individual gain or to help others (p. 1). Zaleznik, (1970) claims that organizations are political structures; they operate by distributing authority and power (para. 2). It is no wonder that individuals are motivated to seek, secure, and use power. Because power is a finite resource, individuals compete for power in an economy of scarcity resulting in a power play within groups and organizations. In other words, individuals in an organization cannot get all the power they want to advance their goals just by asking, instead they gain power at someone else's expense or gain it comparatively resulting in the relative shift in the distribution of power (Zaleznik, 1970, para. 6). According to Zaleznik, organizations are not only inherently political, but they are often structurally pyramids with a scarcity of positions as one moves higher in the pyramid (para. 9). Pfeffer, J. (2014), posits that power play is fundamentally the ability to have things your way when other's best efforts are required, and when others have personal interests and ideas (para. 11). Furthermore, Pfeffer, J. (2010) specifically recommends that powerful people do several things to advance their agendas during a power play:

- Mete out resources to garner support and allegiance.
- Shape behavior through rewards and punishments.
- Advance on multiple fronts.
- Make the first move when a power struggle is looming.
- Co-opt antagonists.
- Remove rivals—nicely, if possible.
- Don't draw unnecessary fire.
- Use the personal touch.
- Persist.
- Make important relationships work—no matter what.
- Make the vision compelling (para. 10-24).

Design of the Study

A qualitative research method is recommended for this study. Specifically, the socio-rhetorical criticism, a multi-dimensional approach to textual analysis introduced by Robbins (1996a), was used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data. The metaphor of a thick tapestry was used to explore the multiple textures of meanings, convictions, beliefs, values, emotions, and actions as found in Numbers 12:1-15 (Robbins, 1996a, p, 18).

Site, Population and Sample

The chosen sample is a leadership team selected from the sacred text (Numbers 12: 1-15), and it is comprised of three leaders (Moses, Aaron, and Miriam). These leaders were clearly chosen by God to lead the Nation of Israel from Egypt to the promised land:

> *For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. (Micah 6:4, New King James).*

The three siblings constituted an effective leadership team that, for the most part, successfully dealt with grave crisis and numerous ordeals for about 40 years (Friedman, 2004, p. 4). The leadership team as found in Numbers 12: 1-15 clearly portrays the nuances of attitudes and behavior that precede and characterize a power play in a small group. The sample also provided clues to how power plays may be resolved and prevented in leadership teams.

Methodology

According to Robbins (1996a), a text is a thick matrix of interwoven networks of meaning and meaning effects (p. 20). Robbin (1996a) originally defined four textures: (1) Inner texture, (2) Intertexture, (3) Social and cultural texture, and (4) Ideological texture (p. 24). However, because of the scope of this study, only one method (Inner texture analysis) will be used in the investigation. The inner texture analysis focuses on numerous ways a text uses language to communicate (Robbins, 1996b, p. 46). Inner texture analysis includes repetitive textures, progressive textures, opening-middle-closing textures, narrational texture, argumentative texture, and sensory-aesthetic texture (Burkus, n.d., p. 3). In this analysis only four components of inner texture will be used: (a) repetitive

textures, (b) progressive textures, (c) opening-middle-closing textures, and (d) narrational texture. Each of those four components found within inner texture analysis are separately analyzed and discussed commencing with a preliminary examination of the narratological units within Numbers 12:1-15, followed by Repetitive Texture, Progressive Texture, Opening-Middle-Closing Texture, and narrational texture.

Narratological Units. Numbers 12:1-15 would appear to have three narratological units within the text, namely, (a) an introduction in Numbers 12: 1-3, (b) a body in Numbers 12: 4-9, and (c) a conclusion in Numbers 12: 10-15. In the introduction, the narrator begins with the account of Miriam and Aaron having an issue with their younger brother (Moses who was the designated leader of the team) marrying a Cushite woman. The introduction section ends with a record of Moses' extraordinary humility (v. 3). The second section of the text (the body) commences with narrator's description of God's reaction to the harsh criticism levied against Moses by Miriam and Aaron (v. 4) and ends with God's anger towards Miriam and Aaron, followed by the tense and ominous departure of God from the tent of meeting (v. 9). The last section (the conclusion) commences in v. 10 with a narrative depicting the horrifying consequences of Miriam's attempt to forcefully get power and control in the leadership team. The concluding unit is closed with Israel waiting for seven days before they could travel because Miriam was "shut up" (v. 14-15). Table 2 below clearly depicts the natural flow of the three narratological units of the text.

Repetitive Texture and Pattern. Certain words and phrases appear more than once in a text. The repetition of words and phrases produces a repetitive texture that may be portrayed in topics, pronouns, negatives, and conjunctions (Robbins, 1996b, pp. 46-50). These patterns of repetition appear most distinctly when exhibited in some diagram (Table 2). The repetitive texture of a Numbers 12:1-15 provides initial glimpses into rhetorical movements within the discourse.

The analysis of the repetitive texture and pattern reveals that the following characters stand out in the text: Jehovah/God, Miriam, Moses, Aaron, and the Cushite woman. Some of the critical statements and words repeated in the text include: "spake/speak against Moses," "shut up," "against," "spoken," "said," "saying," beseech, and "speeches." The important objects and nouns repeated throughout the text include "tent" and "prophet."

Table 2: Narratological Units in Numbers 12: 1-15 (ASV)

THE INTRODUCTION	1. And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Cushite woman. 2. And they said, Hath Jehovah indeed spoken only with Moses? hath he not spoken also with us? And Jehovah heard it. 3. Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth.
THE BODY	4. And Jehovah spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tent of meeting. And they three came out. 5. And Jehovah came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth. 6. And he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. 7. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house: 8. with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of Jehovah shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses? 9. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against them; and he departed.
THE CONCLUSION	10. And the cloud removed from over the Tent; and, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. 11. And Aaron said unto Moses, Oh, my lord, lay not, I pray thee, sin upon us, for that we have done foolishly, and for that we have sinned. 12. Let her not, I pray, be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. 13. And Moses cried unto Jehovah, saying, Heal her, O God, I beseech thee. 14. And Jehovah said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut up without the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again 15. And Miriam was shut up without the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

The analysis (Table 3) shows that the opening controversy over the Cushite woman was not the heart of the matter. After she is referred to in the first verse, the Cushite woman is never mentioned again in the entire text. The subsequent verses reveal that the actual cause of the conflict was a "power play" or a struggle for authority and leadership among the three siblings. Additionally, there are fifteen references to Miriam as opposed to five references to Aaron. Apparently, Miriam was the ringleader of the opposition to Moses' leadership. The repeated occurrence of the words "spake/speak against," "spoken," "said," "saying," beseech, and "speeches" reveal that the conflict was primarily a verbal confrontation. Also of importance is the constant mention of the "appointing authority" in the names of Jehovah or God, and His swift and decisive response to the conflict.

Table 3: Repetitive Texture and Pattern in Numbers 12:1-15

Verse	Quotation	"Jehovah" and "God" all referring to God.	"Moses", "Servant", "lord", "he" "him" all referring to Moses.	"Miriam", "her", and "she" all referring to Miriam	"Aaron"	"spake", "spoken", "words", "speak", "said", "saying", beseech, and "speeches"
1	And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Cushite woman		Once	Once	Once	Once
2	And they said, Hath Jehovah indeed spoken only with Moses? hath he not spoken also with us? And Jehovah heard it.	Twice	Once			Thrice
3	Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth.		Once			
4	And Jehovah spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tent of meeting. And they three came out.	Once	Once	Once	Once	Once

5	And Jehovah came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth.	Once		Once	Once	
6	And he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream.	Once				Thrice
7	My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house:		Thrice			
8	with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of Jehovah shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses?	Once	Four times			Thrice
9	And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against them; and he departed.	Once				

10	And the cloud removed from over the Tent; and, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.			Thrice	Once	
11	And Aaron said unto Moses, Oh, my lord, lay not, I pray thee, sin upon us, for that we have done foolishly, and for that we have sinned.		Twice		Once	Once
12	Let her not, I pray, be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.			Once		
13	And Moses cried unto Jehovah, saying, Heal her, O God, I beseech thee.	Twice	Once	Once		Twice
14	And Jehovah said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut up without the camp seven days, and after	Once	Once	Five times		Once

	that she shall be brought in again.					
15	And Miriam was shut up without the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.			Twice		
		Total: 10 references	Total: 15 references	Total: 15 references	Total: 5 references	Total: 15 references

Progressive Texture and Pattern. Words and phrases in a text appear in sequences or progressions. Progressive texture rises out of repetition and centers on the sequences of words and phrases throughout the text (Burkus, n.d., p. 5).

The narrator shows the progression of a conflict in a leadership team. The narrator states, "Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses" (v. 1). As already stated, it is not a physical confrontation, but a verbal attack to discredit the God-appointed leader. The narrator adds in verse 2, "And Jehovah heard it." He did not just see it, but He heard it. Words are clearly the primary weapons in this leadership crisis as it escalates. Before the conflict threatens the very survival of the nation of Israel, the appointing authority responds in kind, by calling out the three for a "talk" (v. 3). Initially disguised as an argument over Moses' choice for a wife, it is a struggle for power and control. Table 4 shows the progression of the conflict; (a) the controversy over the Cushite woman used as a smoke screen, (b) the actual conflict over power and control in the leadership team, (c) the divine intervention by God, (d) Miriam's judgment, and (e) finally Miriam's healing and restoration. It is a natural progression of events that, fortunately, ends in a conflict resolution. It is noteworthy Moses had to cry out to God on behalf of Miriam. Again words are used in the final restoration of peace, healing, and harmony in the leadership team.

Table 4: Progressive Texture and Pattern in Numbers 12:1-15.

Verses						
	spake against Moses					
		spoken only with Moses? spoken also with us?	they said			
				Jehovah spake suddenly		
			he said		speak	
					speak speak	
			Aaron said			
						cried unto Jehovah
			Jehovah said			

Opening-Middle-Closing Texture and Pattern. The opening-middle-closing texture is found in the nature of the beginning, body, and conclusion of a segment of discourse (Robbins, 1996b, pp. 50-53). According to Robbin (1996b), repetition, progression, and narration regularly work together to create the first, middle, and final units of text.

As noted earlier, there appear to be three units within Numbers 12:1-15: an introduction in Numbers 12: 1-3, a body in Numbers 12: 4-9, and a conclusion in Numbers 12: 10-15. Table 5 shows Opening-Middle-Closing Texture of Numbers 12: 1-15.

Table 5: Opening-Middle-Closing Texture and Pattern in Numbers 12:1-15.

THE INTRODUCTION: NUMBERS 12: 1-3		
Opening	v.1	A narrative report which introduces the conflict. Miriam and Aaron have an issue with Moses marrying a Cushite woman. Miriam appears to be the ringleader of the attack on Moses.
Middle	v.2	This narrative account reveals the actual cause of the conflict. The account exposes an unfolding power struggle in the leadership team.
Closing	v.3	This is a description of the humble and meek disposition of Moses. This account closes the introductory unit of the text because it is presented in contrast to the ambition and craving for power exhibited by his older siblings.
THE BODY: NUMBERS 12: 4-9		
Opening	v. 4-5	This is a narrative account that describes God's immediate intervention and displeasure with Miriam and Aaron. Before the conflict could escalate any further, God quickly summons the three leaders for a "talk" in the tent of meeting.
Middle	v. 6-8	The narrative depicts God's affirmation of Moses' leadership in the team. Miriam and Aaron are not given a chance to respond to God's decision.
Closing	v. 9	The narrative describes God's anger towards Miriam and Aaron, followed by the tense and ominous departure of God from the tent of meeting.
THE CONCLUSION: NUMBERS 12: 10-15		
Opening	v. 10	The narrative depicts horrifying consequences of Miriam's attempt to get power and control in the leadership team. Miriam is leprous from head to toe.
Middle	v. 11-12	This narrative leads into Aaron's intercession for Miriam to be forgiven and healed from leprosy.
Closing	v. 13-15	The concluding unit of the text shows Moses interceding for his sister. It takes seven days for Miriam to recover fully and the entire nation is forced to wait for her total healing before they can resume their journey.

In summary, the introductory unit (Numbers 12: 1-3) sets the stage for the conflict among the three leaders. Miriam appears to be the ringleader of a joint attack on Moses. Initially, Aaron and Miriam have an issue with Moses marrying a Cushite woman. However, the introductory account later reveals the actual cause of the conflict. The account exposes an unfolding struggle for power and control in the leadership team. The body (Numbers 12: 4-9) narrates God's immediate displeasure with Miriam and Aaron, and the consequent intervention before the conflict could escalate any further. The body of the pericope also describes God's anger towards Miriam and Aaron, followed by the tense and ominous departure of God from the tent of meeting. The conclusion (Numbers12: 10-15), depicts the horrifying consequences of Miriam's attempt to get power and control within the leadership team by discrediting Moses. The middle section of the conclusion records Aaron's intercession for Miriam for her forgiveness and healing from leprosy. The closing section of the conclusion shows Moses successfully interceding for his sister Miriam to be forgiven and healed from leprosy.

Narrational Texture and Pattern. According to Burkus, the narrational texture analyzes the voice or voices through which the words of the text speak (p. 5). Usually, the narrational texture reveals a pattern that prompts the discourse forward (Burkus, n.d., p. 5). In agreement with Burkus, Poon (2006 posits that the narrational texture and pattern examine "the 'scenes' within the narrative, the active 'voices,' the sequence of the narrative, its plot" (p. 57).

The "scenes" in Numbers 12: 1-15. There appear to be four separate scenes in this pericope. The first scene begins in verse one with Miriam and Aaron's displeasure with Moses; the second scene starts in verse four with God's intervention, and the third scene starts in verse ten with Miriam's infection with leprosy. The fourth and the last scene begins in verse fifteen with Miriam's separation from the camp for seven days.

The "voices" and sequence in Numbers 12: 1-15. There are five distinct voices in the pericope. They include the narrator, Miriam, Aaron, Moses, and God. Scene one begins with the voices of Miriam and Aaron criticizing Moses. The narrator's voice flows in and out revealing the desire of Miriam and Aaron to have more power and recognition in the leadership of Israel. That account is followed by the narrator's description of the humble and meek disposition of Moses in contrast to the ambition and deep craving for power exhibited by his older siblings.

The second scene shows only two voices. The narrator introduces the scene by giving an account of God's displeasure with Miriam and Aaron, and after that, God addresses the three leaders. It is noteworthy that Miriam and Aaron are not given a chance to respond to God's charge against them nor His final decision regarding the matter. God plays the central role in this scene, and all three leaders remain silent.

The third scene depicts four voices. The narrator opens the account in verse ten by showing how Miriam is struck with leprosy from head to toe. The voice of Aaron comes in as he intercedes for Miriam to be forgiven and healed from leprosy. The scene continues with Moses' successful intercession for Miriam. This episode obviously further affirms and consolidates Moses' leadership role in the team. The scene ends with God's voice instructing Moses to separate Miriam from the camp for seven days. The people of Israel all got to know who was God's appointed leader and the consequence of illegitimately seizing power and control in Israel.

The fourth and the last scene has only one voice. In verse fifteen, the narrator gives an account of how the whole nation was forced to temporary halt their journey to allow Miriam to be fully restored. It is an excellent example of forgiveness and love.

The "plot" of the narrative. The "plot" of the narrative of Numbers 12:1-15 focuses on an intragroup conflict involving three siblings working as a leadership team. Because her name appears before that of Aaron, Miriam is arguably the ringleader of the joint insurrection against the authority of Moses (the youngest brother). According to Jehn and Mannix (2001) group conflict may be broadly classified as; (a) task conflict (disagreement over goals and tasks), (b) process conflict (disagreement over methods or procedure), and (c) interpersonal conflict (personality, relational and emotional conflict). Numerous studies indicate that a significant proportion of group conflicts are a result of personal conflicts (Forsyth, 2009, p. 393). According to Forsyth (2009), conflicts have the propensity to escalate (p. 393). There appears to have been a simmering tension among the siblings

over power and control and this particular incident only provided an opportunity for the conflict to come to the fore. To defuse a potential wildfire of dissent and division among the people, God immediately summoned the three at the door of the tabernacle to resolve the conflict (Numbers 12: 4-5). However, the ominous removal of God's presence signaled grave consequences for the dissenters, resulting in Miriam's infection with leprosy (Numbers 12:9-10). Miriam is struck with leprosy, and not Aaron because she is presumed to have been the leader and probably the most vocal against Moses' leadership. Aaron probably knowing that he was also guilty of the same trespass felt partly responsible for his sister's misfortune, commenced to passionately intercede for her healing and restoration (Numbers 12: 11-12). Moses (as the God-appointed leader) successfully intercedes for both offenders. However, Miriam is kept out of the camp for seven days as a public example and warning to would-be dissenters in Israel (Numbers 12:14-15).

Discussion

Through inner texture analysis, we discover that there was a simmering tension in the leadership team and the issue involving the Cushite woman was a smoke screen. According to Arrow et al. (2000), relationship conflicts are often the most destructive and the most disruptive and hence resolving them may be as important as the group task itself (p. 104). The analysis also revealed that power play (a process or procedural conflict) evolved into a destructive personal conflict that threatened to engulf others (for example, Moses' Cushite wife). Research shows that unresolved conflicts of one type can change into a conflict of another kind (Jehn, 1997, p. 532). It is also noteworthy, the demeanor and reaction of Moses to the insurrection mounted by his older siblings reflects a level of laissez-faire leadership style. Moses appears to avoid any confrontation with Aaron and Miriam and adopts a meek and quiet disposition. Research studies have revealed that leaders who exhibit laissez-faire leadership adopted avoiding style when managing conflict with subordinates (Saeed et al., 2014, p. 214). The swift response by God underlies the necessity of resolving dysfunctional conflict before it harms or hinders the achievement of organizational goals. The dispute in the leadership could have ignited a wildfire of dissent and division among the people, and so God immediately summoned the three at the door of the tabernacle to resolve the conflict. Whereas too little conflict can stifle innovation and creativity, too much conflict can be destructive, disruptive, creating chaos and injurious to interpersonal relations (Ivancevich et al., 2014, p. 326). The manner in which God resolved the conflict clearly showed how the leadership team could address future disputes among themselves. Matters regarding the leadership of Israel were to be referred to Him. God was the appointing authority, and He decided what level of power and control each member could receive. Disruptive power play was not an option.

Conclusion

To engage in productive conflict or manage destructive conflict, there needs to be an explicit or implicit format or norms of resolving conflict and reaching consensus (Arrow et al., 2014, p. 105).

Groups must be cognizant that conflict is inevitable and thus ways of resolving competing interests or viewpoints must be clear from the outset. It appears the context and the intensity of power play determine its relative merit in an organization. Not all conflict is necessarily harmful to a group or organization.

Limitation and Further Research

One major limitation of this study is that the analysis performed on this portion of Scripture is incomplete. The complete examination and most expansive interpretation of the text require the full use of the five textures of socio-rhetorical analysis, namely, inner texture, inter-texture, social-cultural texture, ideological texture, and theological texture. However, the scope and time allocated for this project do not permit that course of action. Though, Robbins (1996b) postulates that a text is a dense matrix of an interwoven network of meanings and meaning effects that extend far beyond any possible analysis and interpretation (p. 20). No Analysis of scripture is ever complete because the socio-rhetorical criticism technique presupposes that words work in complex ways to communicate meanings that can only be understood partially (Rogers, 2006, p. 82). Despite the limited scope, the inner texture components used, namely, Repetitive Texture, Progressive Texture, Opening-Middle-Closing Texture, and Narrational Texture were still adequate to reveal the multiple textures of meanings, convictions, beliefs, values, emotions, and actions as found in Numbers 12:1-15. The second limitation is the generalizability of the findings. Characteristic to many qualitative results of research, generalizability is limited to a particular population. A mixed methods research technique with the possibility of triangulation to examine the phenomenon of power play in small groups is highly recommended. Additionally, further analysis that incorporates all the inner texture components of the pericope, plus supplementary intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture and sacred texture is needed to explore a more expansive interpretation of Numbers 12: 1-15 (Robbins, 1996a).

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