Democracy in the Workplace and at Home

Democracy in the Workplace and at Home: Finding Freedom, Liberty and Justice in the Lived Environment

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P U B L I S H I N G

I would first like to dedicate this dissertation to my Mother who devoted her life to helping others as a high school counselor and for always encouraging me to never be afraid of learning and to find my own path in life.

I would next like to dedicate this dissertation to my Father with whom I enjoyed many philosophical discussions on life and social issues and who also encouraged me and supported me in my continued pursuit of education and knowledge.

I will forever be indebted for the continued encouragement and support you both provided me and you will both live on in my heart and through my memories.

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ABSTRACT

The book explores how participants view the relationships between democratic principles such as freedom, liberty, justice, and equality in work and home environments and their impact on the health and productivity of people living within these environments. This information can be used to determine the gap between legal democratic instruments that established the published laws and rights and the participants understanding and awareness of these rights.

The first step in effectively capturing information from the participants involved developing a virtual ethnographic research system architecture prototype that allowed participants to voice their opinions related to democracy and how the application of democratic principles in various lived environments such as the workplace and home can affect their health and productivity.

The dissertation starts by first delving into what democracy is within the context of general social research and social contracts as related to everyday interactions between individuals within organizational environments. Second, it determines how democracy affects individual human rights and their well-being within lived environments such as their workplace and home. Third, it identifies how technological advances can be used to educate and improve democratic processes within various lived environments such that individuals are given an equal voice in decisions that affect their health and well-being, ensuring that they able to secure justice and fairness within their lives.

The virtual ethnographic research system architecture prototype tested the ability of a web application and database technology to provide a more dynamic and longitudinal methodology allowing participants to voice their opinions related to the relationship of democracy in work and home environments to the health and productivity of the people who live within these environments. The technology enables continuous feedback as participants are educated about democracy and their lived environments, unlike other research methods that take a one-time view of situations and apply them to continuously changing environments.

The analysis of the participant's answers to the various qualitative and quantitative questions indicated that the majority of participants agree that

a positive relationship exists between democracy in work and home environments and the health and productivity of the individuals who live within these environments.

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PREFACE

Have you ever felt that you had no say in how your work assignments were managed or the amount of time you would be allowed to complete an assignment? Have you ever felt stressed when you were not allowed to participate in the decisions that affected your work and home life? Have you ever felt you were treated unfairly or unjustly and had no voice in what options you had in seeking justice in your work or home environment? Have you ever felt frustrated that in a democratic society you seem to have no freedom or liberty or justice at work and at home? These are all important realizations that point to a lack of democracy in our lived work and home environments resulting in feeling a loss of freedom, liberty, and justice as they relate to the human rights we seek in our everyday lives.

After nearly thirty years of college, observations in work and home environments and discussions with hundreds of individuals related to their work and home concerns, I have become aware of major conflicts that exist between an individual's daily life and the democratic principles of freedom, liberty and justice. Many people I have talked with and observed over the past thirty years seem less aware of the founding principles of human rights in a democratic society than the socialized definitions of success through commercialized gains in money and social position. Through extensive research in workplace democracy and individual rights, I have become more aware of the conflicts between the concepts of democratic rights and the socialized importance of material gain. I have found that people are often unaware of their rights in the workplace and at home and when they do become aware, they often cannot afford legal counsel or fear losing their jobs or relationships if they attempt to protect their rights to life, liberty, property, and happiness. These conditions lead to great stresses in their lives.

A number of years ago I started having a lot of health problems and after my doctor had performed a number of tests, she asked me if I was having any stress in my life. After reflecting on the times when I felt sick versus when I felt better, I started to become aware that there was a pattern related to the level of stress in my life and my health issues. I have done a great deal of research related to workplace democracy and its ability to

create less stressful and more liberating work environments along with extensive research on productivity as it relates to freedom and happiness in my various graduate research projects. In my concern for how people are impacted by stressful, non-democratic home and work environments, I have decided to research the effects of these environments on individual freedoms, health conditions, happiness, and productivity.

Through my research I show how the perception of a lack of democratic freedoms in the workplace and at home can create stressful work and home environments where individuals struggling for greater security in their lives are making their lives less liberating, more controlled, and driven more by success based on wealth and position and less by health and happiness. This leads to my research question related to the impact of democratic principles such as freedom, liberty, justice, equality in work and home environments, on the health and productivity of individuals within these social environments (Figure 14).

The socio-economic impact of the problems related to stress in the workplace due to the lack of democracy in these environments is identified in the studies conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the American Psychological Association (APA). These studies point out how stressful work environments have become a growing problem that siphons off more than $500 billion a year from America's economy, creating a loss of nearly 550 million workdays annually due to health issues. These conditions can occur when requirements of a job assignment do not match the abilities or resources of the worker or where there exists a loss of participative opportunities in the work environment (Whetten and Cameron 2002, Page 104; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Report on Stress at Work, 1999).

In order to effectively research how democracy in the workplace and at home impacts stress and productivity, I developed a communicative and educative mechanism that delves into the daily lives of the participants to identify how more democratic work environments enable participants to become more aware of their social and legal rights in the workplace and at home. This mechanism allowed individuals to learn how to create less stressful, and more democratic and liberating work and home environments. The goals of developing the mechanism was to allow participants (1) to identify and recognize strategies for living more liberating lives by understanding workplace rights and (2) to more effectively and democratically manage work and home environments. I envision this research will empower participants by using democratic principles of

freedom, liberty and justice, freeing them from the stress of uncertainty and increasing the security they feel in their work and home environments.

In order to effectively implement the mechanism required for my research, I utilized a research methodology known as a virtual ethnography. This methodology utilizes the internet to allow participants to gain access to an interactive communicative learning system where they can interact with questionnaires, workplace and home scenarios, review best practices and legal rights research related to employment law and family law. This methodology tracked participants' progress as they learnt how to improve their work and home environments and the system is improved based on the input they provide through various levels of questions analyzed by the system. This input assists in learning how to best discover the meanings participants associate with various issues related to democracy in the workplace and at home.

There are several advantages to this type of research methodology. Participants can access the system day or night at their convenience to provide their input. The system can be accessed from any computer system, so participants can interact with the system from libraries, internet cafes, or from the convenience of their home or work environments. The system allows participants to go into whatever depth of description and participation they feel comfortable with. They can revisit and interact with the system at any time and review previous questions and answers that are tracked by the system to assess the participants' learning process. The methodology lends itself to more in-depth longitudinal studies so that the participant's answers and knowledge accumulation can be monitored and analyzed over extended periods of time to better understand the participant's intent and meaning behind their responses. The methodology also enables changes to be made to the system as more is learned about the processes and laws that effect democracy in the workplace and at home from both the participants' input and through further research.

It is my hope that this research and the virtual ethnographic methodology will provide on-going support for long-term policy and program analysis and decisions that are dynamic and longitudinal, allowing participants the opportunity to learn and provide feedback about policies and programs in order to improve their effectiveness. I believe this research mechanism provides a cost effective and a timely approach to performing dynamic in-depth longitudinal research that requires a comprehensive understanding of underlying issues that incorporate the views, meanings and inter-relationships generated by the research

participants, enabling them to learn how to create more democratic, healthier, and happier work and home environments.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY

> "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in government to the utmost."
> —Aristotle

In this chapter, I provide a brief foundational discussion on democracy and social contract as a fundamental component of democracy from a philosophical and historic-theoretical perspective. We begin by looking at the origins of democracy from the 5th-4th century BC in the Greek meaning of democracy; δημοκρατία – (dēmokratía) meaning "rule of the people", which was coined from δῆμος (dêmos) "people" and κράτος (Kratos) "power". Over the centuries, democracy has come to mean many things to different people but the hope is to identify how the founding principles of freedom, liberty, justice, and equality came into existence through social contract research.

Democracy has seen many interpretations that generally follow eras of social struggle and disputes that occur at various levels of societal agreements and understandings, often defined as social contracts. These social contracts have continued to affect individual freedoms as they occur in the daily activities of those governed. These agreements between the participants (the governed) within these social contracts are rarely taken to a level of analysis that examines the impact that they have on the participant's daily work and home lives. The basic theories of governance of human activity are generally contrasted in philosophic generalizations of national and international politics and rarely address the realities that individuals face in their daily lives.

Philosophical Review of Democracy

A discussion of early philosophies of governance might best start with a review of Plato's Forms of Government. Plato's ideal State, though not always attainable, evaluates each form of government by their worth

including (1) *timocracy* where there is one ruler whom the people honor, (2) *oligarchy* where rule is subject to a few wealthy people whose main interest is chiefly material goods, (3) *democracy* where the governance is based on the masses, usually the lower classes who promote freedom and equality, and where classes are abolished, and the final form being (4) *tyranny*, considered the most perverse form of government where one supreme ruler commands all others for the sake of unjust and selfish interest (Sahakian 1968, Page 61).

In Aristotle's discussions of the six forms of governance, he identifies the more effective forms of government as (1) *monarchy*, (2) *aristocracy*, and (3) *polity;* and the most defective forms of governance as (4) *tyranny*, (5) *oligarchy*, and (6) *democracy.* Aristotle favored a monarchical form of government where leadership was not based on a divine right of kings but on the nature and education of the best qualified person. However, Aristotle felt that any form of government should be based on a primary consideration for the public good and not on private interests (Sahakian 1968, Page 77).

Aristotle exemplified how good forms of government are corrupted. A *monarchy* rule in the interest of the good of the State degenerates into a tyrannical form of government when the monarch's interests turn towards selfish ends, deteriorating into a despot. The *aristocracy* rule (the most capable through natural endowment and education and always limited to a few people belonging to the intellectual elite) degenerates into a corrupt form of the *oligarchy*, when the rule of a few is no longer in the interest of the citizens but of their own financial advancement. The *polity* is "where sovereignty rests with the corporate citizenry who govern themselves under laws protected by a constitution" which can degrade into a *democracy.* In this case, the great masses that rule are not educated to the detrimental consequences of self-interests over the common good; and thus, focus on their personal gain (Sahakian 1968, Page 77). This degradation is reflected in the situation we are currently experiencing with the collapse of the mortgage, and credit and banking systems because of a lack of educative processes to help people become aware of the impacts of unregulated self-interest and greed on the common good.

In comparing Plato and Aristotle's evaluations of different forms of government, both identify a form having a single ruler who has only the *best interest of the people* at heart and is most qualified. Both appear to identify an ideal form of aristocracy. Aristotle however points out that this form of government can also become the most tyrannical form of government. Plato and Aristotle also differ on the oligarchy form of government. Plato indicated that this form of government was of greater

worth, while Aristotle felt it was a degenerative and corrupt form of an aristocracy. Oligarchies tend to be tyrannical by nature because they are reliant on public servitude. Modern democracies may be thought of as elected oligarchies where the masses are ruled by the elected few. While recognizing that democracy can be a degenerative form of polity or one that is based on rule by the masses, both Plato and Aristotle identified it as one of the most empowering forms of government when the masses are educated.

In Aristotle's evaluation of the degradation of the polity form of government, an important insight is made in respect to the realities of human nature. Even our best of intensions are plagued by socially constructed self-interest. We are by nature survivalists who seek self-interested personal gain as a point of survival. Both Plato and Aristotle alluded to the importance of educating the populace as the key to protecting democratic freedoms. In Plato's republic, a democracy required each person to have equal opportunities; whereas, Aristotle required each child had a proper education in virtue to become responsible citizens concerned for the common good instead of egotistic self-interest (Sahakian 1968, Pages 60, 77, and 78).

Historic-Theoretical Review of Democracy

Building on the philosophical foundation of democratic forms of governance defined by Plato and Aristotle, let us take a brief journey through the history of democratic theories and concepts based on social contracts between people and their governing institutions. This journey will look at some of the major theorists who have contributed to the foundational concepts of social democracy as it relates to freedom, liberty, justice and equality through social contracts. We will start this journey by reviewing the social contracts of equality as defined by Thomas Hobbes and then move to the more contemporary concerns of social justice through communicative legal actions within democratic societies as defined in the works of Jurgen Habermas.

In "The Leviathan", Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) discusses social contracts in relation to the justice people receive within a society. Hobbes considers the nature of equality among people in relation to a person's knowledge and skills, as well as the circumstances that affect the happiness and abilities of individuals within society. Hence, a democracy is based on self-governance of one's knowledge and skills. Hobbes considers commutative and distributive justice important in constructing social contracts that are inclusive and representative of the needs and

desires of all members of society. A democracy based on these concepts requires a more direct democracy between all individuals who are bound in the maintenance of justice and equality through social contracts (Solomon1990, pp. 80-92).

In his work "The Second Treatise on Government," John Locke (1632-1704) considers the rights and duties of citizens and individuals within a society as "natural laws" and views the primary purpose of the social contract as unifying individuals into a community of equality. Locke further indicates that equality is founded on obligations and duties owed to one another in deriving maxims of justice and charity. In Lock's law of nature to govern, reason teaches mankind that no one should harm another with respect to life, health, liberty or possessions. Locke places importance on the consent of the whole versus the majority (or ruling class), which requires that every individual be included to obtain the consent of the whole, moving toward a consensus of sorts. Locke defines the concepts of a constitution in a political society as requiring representation of all members of the community within a social contract. Locke's requirement raises questions concerning the degree to which a representative and exclusionary form of society and governance is effective if some individuals are not represented by interest groups or a ruling class (Solomon 1990, pp. 93-100). Based on Locke's concerns about representative governance, can a form of government based on politically elite representation truly be representative of all the people and can democratic principles of equality and justice be maintained in a representative form of government where the many are governed by the few?

In the following statement, Locke points out the issue of majority consent over the consent of the whole (Solomon 1990, pp. 99):

> *For if the consent of the majority shall not in reason be received as the act of the whole and conclude every individual, nothing but the consent of every individual can make anything to be the act of the whole; but such a consent is next to impossible ever to be had if we consider the infirmities of health and avocations of business which in a number, though much less than that of a commonwealth, will necessarily keep many away from the public assembly.*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) expands on some of the issues of equality and social contract in his work "The Discourse on the Origins of Inequality and The Social Contract". Rousseau speaks of the social contract as moving beyond a vehicle for controlling each other or protecting ourselves, and towards a means of protecting our prosperity through laws. Social contracts within national and state constitutions have

become important vehicles for social control and regulation in today's society but more importantly provide a foundation for maintaining a just and democratic society. Rousseau points out the important differences between the aggregation of social contracts versus subduing the masses through a ruling class and its effect on society (a social industry). He indicates the tendency of tyranny occurring under the 'states of rule' of the few over the many (such as one employer over many employees).

Rousseau's consideration for social contracts places people and all their power "in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole" (a democracy for all the people) (Solomon 1990, p. 113). Rousseau defines the whole as an association that "produces a moral and collective body composed of as many members as there are voices in the assembly, which receives from this same act its unity, its common self, its life and its will" (Solomon 1990, pp. 113-114). This concern for representation in our communities, work and home environments, and the effect of decisions and policies on the whole of society remains with us today. This is particularly a challenging concern when only a few (self-interested) representatives (such as managers) are involved in decision-making for the many (employees) (Solomon 1990, pp. 101-116).

In his work "The Contractual Basis for a Just Society," Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) points out that "among all the contracts by which a large group of men unite to form a society … the contract establishing a civil constitution … is of exceptional nature." For Kant, all social contracts contain "a union of many individuals for some common end which they all share" and where the ends that 'all ought to share' become the absolute primary duty in all human relationships.

Kant positions these conditions of social contract on the following a priori principles (Sterba, 1999, pp. 104-109):

1. The freedom of every member of society as a human being,
2. The equality of each with all the others as a subject,
3. The independence of each member of a commonwealth as a citizen.

Kant goes on to define "man's freedom as a human being" as a principle for the constitution of a commonwealth as expressed in the following formula:

No one can compel me to be happy in accordance with his conception of the welfare of others, for each may seek his happiness in whatever way he sees fit, so long as he does not infringe upon the freedom of others to pursue a similar end which can be reconciled with the freedom of everyone else within a workable general law (Sterba, 1999, p. 104).

Kant expands on this formula by indicating that "the public welfare which demands first consideration lies precisely in that legal constitution which guarantees everyone his freedom within the law, so that each remains free to seek his happiness in whatever way he thinks best, so long as he does not violate the lawful freedom and rights of his fellow subjects" (Sterba, 1999, p.108).

In "A Theory of Justice", John Rawls (1921-2002) discusses social arrangements surrounding social contracts and their effect on individual representation and protection within society. Rawls recognizes the significance of people understanding and agreeing with underlying principles of democratic justice within a society. These principles need to be incorporated into the nature of individual social interactions in daily life. Rawls makes the point that people tend to acquire a sense of justice through these social interactions. Therefore, there is a need to learn moral principles and to "develop a desire to act in accordance with its principles" in daily social interactions (Solomon 1990, pp. 305-312). Rawls defines how social interaction, and more specifically the development of principles of social contracts, can be used to provide more equitable and just agreements between a society and its members. In an equitable and just society, each member is not only responsible for self-governance of their actions but must consider the impact of their actions on other members of society, especially those less fortunate. These principles must be taught and reinforced from an early age and throughout our lives (Solomon 1990, pp. 305-312).

One of Rawls' most prominent concepts is that of the "original position," where people are placed into a situation defined by certain constraints. In consideration of these constraints, the principles of adjusting ones claims is necessary in appropriately assigning rights and duties to maintain justice and equality. Rawls indicates that these principles must first be general in nature and "capable of serving as a public charter of a well-ordered society in perpetuity…and the knowledge of them must be open to individuals in any generation" (Solomon 1990, pp. 305-312).

Michael Walzer provides important considerations of distributive struggles in his work "Spheres of Justice". Walzer considers human struggles for supremacy and corrupted ideologies embedded in generalized principles of distribution. Walzer suggests limiting political power by widely distributing power so that power exists in a direct and more pure democracy of self-governance. He warns that the distribution of power is not easily obtained "given the well-canvassed dangers of majority tyranny" and that the monopolies in society make the possibility of

democratic government difficult. Walzer indicates that "in theory, political power is the dominant good in a democracy" as long as it is "convertible in any way the citizens choose" (Solomon 1990, p. 343). The problem occurs when monopolies of political power neutralize the power of the citizens (which often occurs in work environments run by autocratic managers). Walzer then indicates that democracy, as Marx recognized, "is essentially a reflective system, mirroring the prevailing and emerging distribution of social goods" (Solomon 1990, pp. 340-347).

In addressing Walzer's concerns over monopolistic structures and moving to a reflective system that mirrors the needs of the individuals within society, a power shift giving individuals greater power in the social institutions is necessary to contribute to and maintain a just society. Major contributors and often powerful political institutions within society include businesses as work organizations as well as families and community support structures. These major contributors provide extremely important environments for educating and communicating support for the equal distribution of power required in the creation of a fair and just society and in establishing a deeper sense of democracy and human equality.

To wrap up our historic journey through the theories of democracy as social governance and contract, I shall finish by turning the focus of our journey's end to the legal aspects of social inclusion and equal treatment through communicative mechanism as discussed in Habermas' article, "The Rule of Law and Democracy" (1999). In his discussion of the relationship between the rule of law and democracy as essential to any constitutional state, Habermas indicates "modern law is legitimated by the autonomy guaranteed equally to each citizen" (Habermas, 1999, p. 181). Law is often viewed as the mechanism to control social actions and to ensure equal and fair treatment of all parties in the social activities in which they partake (social activities such as work and home activities where the majority of our lives are spent) (Habermas 1999, pp. 181-182).

Habermas discusses law in relation to Kantian expressions of 'legality' where "legal norms must be viewed simultaneously in two different ways, as coercive laws and as laws of freedom" (Habermas 1999, p. 182). Legal norms within democratic procedures are a "legitimating force to the law-making process in the context of social and ideological pluralism" (Habermas 1999, p. 184). Democratic procedure "ultimately rests on an elaborate communicative arrangement" (Habermas 1999, p. 184) that requires a 'legally' institutionalized form of communication to ensure the rights of communication and participation, safeguarding the political autonomy of all members of society in their social interactions. This is especially true in work and home environments where people not only

spend the greatest amount of time but have the greatest opportunities for social interaction and learning to become more productive in society and enable them to pursue happiness.

Communicative autonomy and participation requires inclusive work environments that ensure each individual is given the opportunity to participate fully in the decision-making processes. In order to accomplish this, workers need to be fully informed of the political and legal implications of their duties and rights within the distribution of power. This requires access to extensive educative processes related to legal communicative structures that exist within society. Gaining communicative autonomy and participation through educative mechanisms is engrained within the works of John Dewey and Jurgen Habermas as discussed in Judith Green's book, "Deep Democracy" (Green, 1999). In this book, Judith Green (1999) points out that both Dewey and Habermas affirm the importance of 'formally' democratic governmental institutions founded on a broader distribution of education that more generally shares a sense of human equality within all aspects of society (such as work and home environments).

Through this historic journey of democratic theories, moving from the concepts of self-governance of social interactions as discussed in the writings of Thomas Hobbes to the requirements for a legal form of communicative autonomy in a democracy discussed by Jurgen Habermas, there is a clear sense of the importance of social contracts as a foundation for a deeper democracy where individual rights are protected within the daily activities of social life. Democracy must become a way of life at every level of social interaction, including work and home life in order to ensure a society that is just, liberating, free, and equal for everyone whether they are at home or at work or interacting with all the various social institutions.