

A Theory of Democratic Social Change and the Role of Disempowerment: Reconceptualization of the American Founding Documents

Angelina Inesia-Forde, PhD*

Independent Researcher, Georgia, United States. Email: angelina.forde@waldenu.edu*

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.38177/AJBSR.2023.5305>



Copyright: © 2023 Angelina Inesia-Forde, PhD. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Article Received: 07 June 2023

Article Accepted: 11 August 2023

Article Published: 28 August 2023

ABSTRACT

Existing social disparities in the United States are inconsistent with Lincoln's promise of democracy; therefore, there is a need for a critical conceptualization of the first principles that undergird American democracy and the genesis of democratic social change in America. This study aimed to construct a grounded theory that provides an understanding of the process of American democratic social change. The result was the construction of two frameworks: the demoralization process that triggers social change, and a formal grounded theory that could explain democratic social change endeavors across different domains and levels of analysis. This democratic social change grounded theory answers the research question: How do the principles of the American founding documents provide an understanding of the process of American democratic social change?

Keywords: Anti-democratic process; Constructivist grounded theory; Demoralization process; First principles of democracy; Theory application to intimate partner violence.

1. Introduction

Democracy has long been associated with quality of life (Radcliff & Shufeldt, 2016; Wang et al., 2019) and the protection of human rights worldwide (Lacey, 2016). In addition, researchers have established a correlation between democracy levels and well-being scores (Radcliff & Shufeldt, 2016). The 11 well-being dimensions that measure democracy are civic engagement, environmental quality, health, housing, income and wealth, knowledge and skills, safety, social connections, subjective well-being, work-life balance, and work and job quality (OECD, 2020). These well-being markers are supported by the UN General Assembly's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and its UN Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment (Knox, 2018).

The OECD (2013) has moved away from solely considering factors based on economic-system measures of well-being and implemented a more meaningful measure of well-being that accounts for objective and subjective measures: the distribution of people, outcomes, and well-being among groups. The evaluation of these markers suggests that United States citizens rate their well-being lower than those of other nations of comparable economic development (OECD, 2020). Social disparity in America has long been a problem, despite the nation being the leading model of global democratic freedom.

In contrast, Switzerland ranks as the 20th largest economy but the third most costly country to live in (OECD, 2019). Nevertheless, Swiss nationals enjoy a higher life satisfaction score, 7.5, than the United States, 6.9—only 0.2 points higher than the OECD (2020) average of 6.7. Although the 11 dimensions are not absolute markers for democracy, and it is impossible to determine whether Switzerland's direct democracy is solely responsible for its high life satisfaction score, the lower quality of life score assigned by Americans indicates compromised well-being and the need for improvements in the areas of human, social, economic, and natural capital (OECD, 2020). The low well-being score may indicate that social inequalities are diminishing America's life satisfaction score.

This study aims to construct a grounded theory using the democratic principles in the nation's founding documents, which could be used to replicate social change, reduce social disparity, and improve the nation's well-being score. With the OECD's (2013) goal to alleviate oppression and achieve sustainable social change, it was essential to understand the American democratic social change process used by the Founders. The purpose of this study was to construct a grounded theory using the constructivist approach that provides a holistic understanding of the process of American democratic social change using the nation's founding documents. The constructivist approach allows critical inquiry (Charmaz, 2016), which involves systemic thinking, multiple perspectives, reflective skepticism, and problem-posing (Bermudez, 2015). A critical approach may facilitate the discovery of anti-democratic tenets that often demoralize and lead to social change in the right climate.

2. Literature Review

Values and principles are used interchangeably to refer to democratic values that are culturally specific to the American way of life. In contrast, principles are "the first basis from which a thing is known" (Terence, 1988, p. 22). They are "the basic initial assumption of any theory, teaching, science, world view, or political organization" (Principle, 2005). Principles are abstracted from particulars found within a domain of knowledge and linked to its substance, along with others like them. The domain of knowledge from which the first principles emerged is democracy. Therefore, democratic values become the particulars that make the first principles of democracy known. Since this study aimed to construct a democratic social change theory using concepts from the founding documents, two prior democratic social change theories compiled using democratic values in the nation's founding documents are reviewed in the absence of frameworks of the first principles of democracy: Butts's democratic civism and Benet's polarities of democracy theory.

Butts (1980, 1988) sought social change through primary and secondary schooling by introducing a framework with two categories. *Unum* includes justice, equality, authority, participation, and personal obligation for the public good or patriotism. *Pluribus* includes freedom, diversity, privacy, due process, and international human rights (Butts 1980, p. 128). Civic values are believed to have positive and corrupt aspects, an axiom adopted by Benet (2006). The corrupt aspects of the civic values under *unum* are law and order, conformity, totalitarianism, majoritarianism, plausible falsehood, and chauvinism or xenophobia, and under *pluribus*: anarchy, unstable pluralism, privatism, being soft on criminals, the superiority of materialism over human rights, and cultural imperialism (Butts, 1988). Although Butts discussed the tension between several civic values, he did not, however, pair values in his framework.

Benet (2006) synthesized Butts's (1980, 1988) democratic civic values as dilemmas to be managed with Johnson's (1996) polarity management framework to develop his democratic social change theory. Benet applied his framework toward workplace democracy by pairing the democratic civic values to meet Johnson's two-pronged test that assesses whether an unsolvable interdependent dilemma-posing problem is suitable for polarity management theory: "Does the problem persist?" and "Are the poles interrelated?" (Johnson, 1996, p. 81). Benet paired freedom with authority, justice with due process, diversity with equality, human rights with communal obligations (Butts's patriotism), and participation with regeneration, later changed to representation. The tension between diversity and

equality, justice and due process, and human rights and communal obligations, is debatable. For example, Habermas argued that the tension between diversity and equality could be resolved with constitutional patriotism (Muller, 2007).

The polarity management framework uses quadrants like the SWOT matrix. The top quadrants indicate positive aspects and the lower quadrants, the negative. In Johnson’s (1996) tension-driven model, true to managing a dilemma, no problem can be neglected or become the focus of a solution for too long. For both sides to produce benefits, poles must be positioned to reduce tension and maximize benefits for both polarities (Johnson, 1996). However, using Johnson’s tension-driven model with shifting dilemmas may negate social change gains made (Benet, 2006; Johnson, 1996). Moreover, (a) Benet’s pairing of democratic values as dilemmas, (b) his using a model with multiple polarities, (c) the tendency of dilemmas to shift and create new problems in other polarities (Benet, 2006; Johnson, 1996), and (d) the corrupt aspects of the democratic values created a need to reconceptualize the nation's founding documents, construct a parsimonious democratic social change theory that could be applied at all levels of analysis, construct a conceptual framework to replace or use, or a combination, in conjunction with Johnson's framework.

3. Method

The theoretical sampling comprised the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and 14 essays (Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 14, 22, 38, 42, 43, 51, 54, and 83) from The Federalist Papers. The Anti-Federalist Papers were excluded because theoretical saturation, the point at which no new theoretical codes emerged, had been achieved. Consistent with grounded theory methodology, the findings emerged from subsequent comparative analysis, a review of memos, abductive reasoning, and questions regarding processes and culture (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; see Fig. 1).

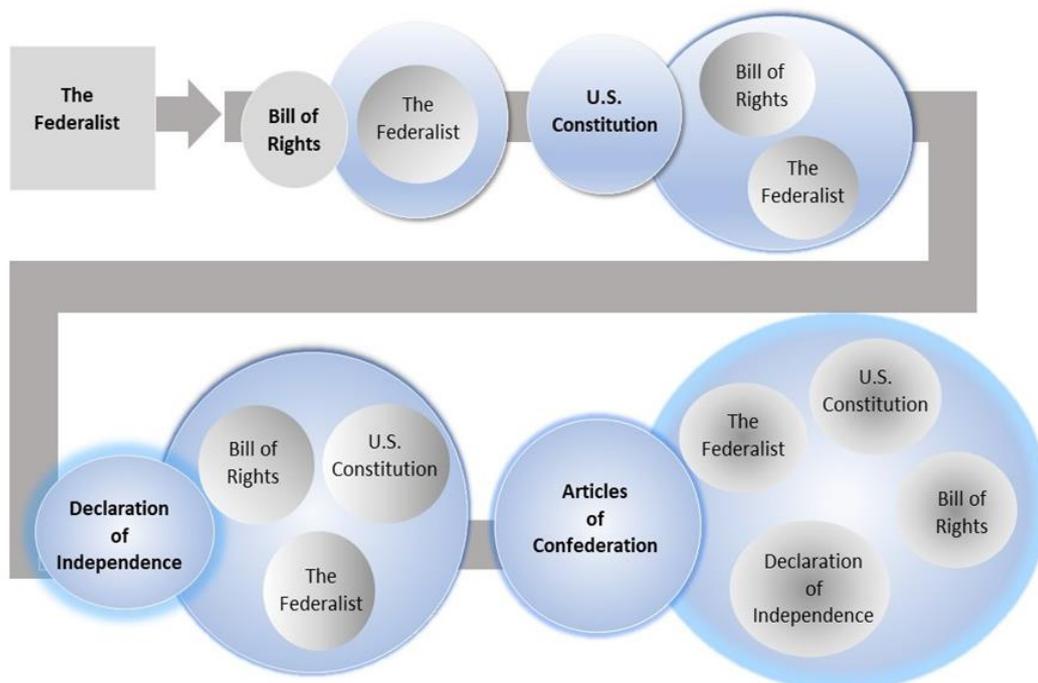


Figure 1. Theoretical Sampling

Data analysis strategies included deconstruction, holistic thinking, systems thinking, situational analysis, dramaturgical analysis, and perspective-taking. Democracy was conceptualized from the substantive content as empowerment, a sensitizing concept that facilitates the emergence of theoretical codes (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006).

In the process of data analysis (see Forde, (2023) Appendices), two research questions emerged: (a) Are the disempowering concepts part of a process intended to stifle democratic change, and (b) How do the theoretical codes contribute to or detract from a richer form of democracy or oppression? Consequently, a second process was introduced: demoralization. Although democratic social change need not be triggered by the demoralization process, it is assumed that it was a catalyst for the Founders' revolutionary democratic social change and is one for intimate partner violence.

The theoretical coding process commenced with open coding followed by selective and axial coding. The goal was to achieve generalization by aiming for the highest level of abstraction in constructing a formal theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that covers substantive areas and applies to various levels of analysis: micro, meso, macro, and global. In order to explore the theoretical codes' dispositions, it was necessary to continue to analyze the data and use abductive reasoning. As a result of deconstruction, their dispositions became apparent. The concepts were discovered to be the first principles of democracy, democracy outcomes, strategies, processes, and motivation (a proxy for empowerment; see Aristotle, 353 BCE/1992; see also Bloch 1959/1986; Christiansen, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; De Leonardis, 1998; Freire, 1970/2018; Killen & Dahl, 2021; Hojman & Mirandad, 2018; Maslow, 1954/1987; Pleeing, et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020; Snyder, 2000; Vinthagen, 2015; Ziedonis et al., 2016). Their dispositions led to the newly emerged research questions.

The two categories identified were empowering and disempowering, each with six subcategories. Knowledge, fairness, human dignity, unity, hope, and security are among the empowerment categories. Misinformation, social distinction, dehumanization, nativism, subjugation, and fear comprise the disempowering category. Based on the research questions that emerged, several grounded theories were developed: the first principles of democracy, the principles of democracy conceptual framework, the socio-ethical principle of democracy, and the either-or approach to democracy. Only two theories are discussed in this article: democratic social change and the demoralization process. Before presenting the grounded theories, the evolution of the social change grounded theory will be described.

3.1. Evolution of the Grounded Theories

The evolution of the grounded social change process theory began at the micro level. The Founders were regarded as intrinsically motivated (Chang et al., 2017). As agentic individuals, they were assumed to follow a process of empowerment, believed to be a process of democratic social change. Considering the Continental Congress's cultural values, the theory's scope was elevated to a meso level. The Continental Congress was assumed to represent the values and strategies of the power elite. The strategic motivational process developed into a macro-level social change theory when it was subsequently applied to the first social justice movement in America, the Revolutionary War. Results from post-data analysis indicate that values can be transferred through internalization and

integration—the process of adapting another’s values as one’s own (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2012). Several social change advocates, politicians, and media outlets rely on this phenomenon as a strategy when seeking public support (Christiansen, 2009; Flynn, 2011). The motivational disposition of the concepts was a major contributing factor to the success of the Founders’ response to Great Britain. Motivation is associated with self-esteem, self-determination, and self-actualization (see Bloch, 1986; see also Christiansen, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Goodwin et al., 2001; Maslow, 1954/1987; Snyder, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). Therefore, a democratic social change process was developed based on the first principles of democracy.

4. Findings

The following section will present the constructed grounded theories in a narrative format, with quotes from the founding documents woven into the text. The demoralization process will be discussed first because “a long train of abuses” (Declaration of Independence, 1776) enabled its construction and what is believed to be the Founders’ counterstrategy: the democratic social change process. Discussion of the latter follows the demoralization process and is applied to intimate partner violence in the Implications for Practice section.

4.1. The Underbelly of Democracy

Society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests, and classes of citizens, that the rights of individuals, or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority.

—*The Federalist No. 51, 1787/1998*

Research Question 1: Are the disempowering concepts part of a process or a strategy stifling democratic change, and what, if anything, reinforces the disempowering behaviors of those who use them?

Research Question 2: How do the theoretical codes contribute to and detract from a richer form of democracy or oppression?

According to the Founders, Great Britain’s use of unjust strategies was the primary reason for adopting a counterstrategy. The perception of being treated unfairly triggered the democratic social change process by motivating the Founders to “establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty” (U.S. Constitution). When the Founders attempted to contact the king, they were met with indifference or “repeated injuries” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). It became apparent to them that Great Britain would not be able to abandon its intention to “reduce them to absolute despotism” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). To preserve human dignity, the Founders adopted a broad perspective that looked beyond themselves, into the distant future. Their vision of securing the nation and its people empowered them to lead the country to safety by bringing allies together and gaining the support of colonists. Security for the Founders was a revolutionary form of government articulated in the Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Constitution.

Disempowering concepts—misinformation, social distinctions, dehumanization, nativism, subjugation, and fear—were part of the demoralization process that contributed to the colonists’ prolonged oppression and, therefore, detracted from the development of a richer form of democracy. Effectively leveraging the demoralization process

may result in hopelessness, fear, oppression, alienation, and subjugation. Individuals may be prompted to act in response to anti-democratic strategies. However, these strategies are often leveraged successfully as power strategies against unsuspecting people (Edelman & Edelman, 2001). The founding documents have two overarching power strategies: divide-and-rule and unite-and-rule. The divide-and-rule strategy slows social change, whereas the unite-and-rule strategy aims to control factions by promoting a shared interest (The Federalist, 1787/1998). This grounded theory suggests that anti-democratic strategies are demoralizing and lead to subjugation. In concert with the Founders’ belief, the demoralization process starts with a “design to reduce them under absolute Despotism,” (Declaration of Independence, 1776) and uses the natural psychological process whereby people tend to prefer those most like them. Unless socialized to welcome others who differ, individuals bond more closely with those having similar worldviews, attitudes, values, and customs. Since loyalty to one’s nation is integrated and internalized during childhood (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020), people can easily be recruited through nationalism.

4.1.1. Nativism

The process starts with nativism, a sense of being an extension of a familiar status quo versus being “treated by others in no better light than that of foreigners and aliens” (The Federalist No. 22, 1787/1998, p. 182). This strategy can empower the nativist to disempower the out-group by promoting an us-versus-them ideology based on strict inclusion criteria. For example, in the Declaration of Independence (1776), nativism was used to unite different factions in the colonies, including foreigners, by pointing to the king’s obstruction of “Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners” and appealing to their common fear of “the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.” Conversely, Great Britain “constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.” For Great Britain and the king, the monarchy was the source of nativism that fostered the us-versus-them mentality. The process proceeds to social distinction, misinformation, fear, and dehumanization and ends with subjugation (see Fig. 2). Social distinctions provide a similar sense of unity and shared culture as felt by nativist in-group members.



Figure 2. Anti-democratic Process

4.1.2. Social distinctions

Social distinctions are a mass dehumanization strategy based on various socially constructed hierarchical attributes. The benefit of social distinctions is their motivational value, illustrated by the *doxa* that the higher one is in the hierarchy, the more worthy they are of being recognized as human and the happier they are. The disempowering effect of social distinctions is the erroneous belief that human dignity is measured based on material possessions or knowledge. This is because they disregard the value of those deemed useless. Developing hierarchies that empower

some while disempowering others serves a dual purpose: divide-and-rule strategy through nativism and unite-and-rule through identity politics by “giving each citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests” (The Federalist No. 10, 1787/1998, p. 33). The unite-and-rule strategy leads to incremental social change. In addition to creating a faulty perception of human worth, social distinctions also weaken political power by creating the perception of “different interests necessarily” existing “in different classes of citizens.” Possibly because “if a common interest unites a majority, the rights of the minority will be insecure” (The Federalist No. 51, 1787/1998, p. 245).

In contrast to the Founders uniting along political interests and nativism, the king socially distinguished himself through his position and authority by building alliances with others “to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws” and by “giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Despite the king’s attempt to reduce colonists, the latter responded with their greatest act of distinction by acknowledging that, unlike the king’s perception of them being “beasts of burden” (Adams, 1776/2022), “all men are created equal” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). These five words were addressed to all those oppressed and subjected to the abuse and usurpations of the monarchy (Marx & Engels, 1848/2001; Paine, 1894).

4.1.3. Misinformation

Misinformation, often referred to as fake news, interferes with an individual’s self-determination by depriving them of an educated decision informed by facts. This strategy is used to prevent the effects of factions, reconstruct the other politically, and gain control and obedience (Articles of Confederation, 1781; Declaration of Independence, 1776; The Federalist, 1787/1998; U.S. Constitution), reinforce fallacies associated with social hierarchies, and control the narrative with the assistance of the media (Chomsky 1995, 2002; Edelman & Edelman, 2001). Misinformation has promoted the belief that African Americans are inferior and at the level of animals (Kendi, 2016), despite Madison arguing to the contrary in The Federalist No. 54, and it being self-evident that “all men are created equal” (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

The Founders dispelled the misinformation that subjects could not oppose or wage war on the monarchy. This doxa was vigorously challenged by proposing that “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” and the waging of war with Great Britain (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The Founders’ political astuteness was displayed in their use of the strategy of misinformation in declaring themselves as a self-determined people living in a sovereign nation before having won the Revolutionary War (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

4.1.4. Fear

Fear is both paralyzing and motivating, and has been used to control and promote certain behaviors as a disempowering strategy. Throughout the founding documents, fear has been associated with a lack of safety due to national and domestic threats (Articles of Confederation 1781; U.S. Constitution); fear of others (Articles of Confederation, 1781), such as Great Britain’s soldiers, colonists murdering their compatriots, and the “Indian Savages” (Declaration of Independence, 1776); fear of change and novel experiences; fear of loss of power

(Articles of Confederation, 1781; Declaration of Independence, 1776; The Federalist, 1787/1998; U.S. Constitution); fear of being under the control of Great Britain; and of real and perceived loss of money, property, and/or opportunities to Great Britain (Articles of Confederation, 1781). On the other hand, Great Britain's fear of losing control of its colonies was evident through the acts of abuse and usurpations described in the Declaration of Independence.

4.1.5. Dehumanization

In the Declaration of Independence (1776), dehumanization appears as acts of violence, ignoring the plight of others, and a “long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism.” In the Articles of Confederation (1781), dehumanization restricted the freedom of groups of people: vagabonds, paupers, and fugitives of justice. Furthermore, in the U.S. Constitution, dehumanization is evidenced by the graduated recognition of the right to vote and the requirement of Electors. Dehumanization can lead to resistance, psychological abuse, and unhealthy coping mechanisms resulting from attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that disregard respect for human dignity. However, attempts at dehumanization have not always been successful. Successful dehumanization requires the individuals being degraded to internalize and integrate the dehumanizing words and actions. Because power works both ways (Foucault, 2019), the Founders countered the king's attempts with their attempt at dehumanization by referring to him as a despot and a “Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Moreover, the Founders were more motivated to gain independence, spurred by a sense of injustice, than to internalize and integrate the king's opinions, words, and actions (Declaration of Independence, 1776; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

4.1.6. Subjugation

Subjugation involves the leveraging of various strategies to gain psychological, spiritual, or physical control, or a combination. The demoralization strategies, or anti-democratic tenets, are primarily subjugation strategies that use underlying divisive methods to separate rulers from their subjects (Articles of Confederation 1777; Declaration of Independence, 1776, The Federalist, 1787/1998; U.S. Constitution). Great Britain and the Founders tried to subjugate each other through various disempowerment strategies, with the Founders and colonists eventually winning control (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The U.S. Constitution includes laws and mechanisms that some scholars believe are restrictive and anti-democratic (Dahl, 2001) in “Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity” (U.S. Constitution).

Finally, various anti-democratic strategies are evidenced in the “Trail of Tears,” slavery, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the “Yellow Peril,” the Mexican Exodus, and the continued disempowerment of minorities, blue-collar workers, and others. They seem to point to the genesis of the institutionalization of power strategies that remain part of the political and organizational culture because “all experience hath shown, that mankind is more disposed to suffer, whereas evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed” (Declaration of Independence, 1776; Articles of Confederation, 1781 art. I, p. 1; The Federalist, 1787/1998).

Disempowering strategies rely on the psyche for long-term control of individuals' thoughts, actions, and behaviors. Understanding the process and reasons behind disempowerment, be it control, fear, or a means to an end, makes the use of empowerment strategies intuitive. Democratic social change at the individual and relational levels is a likely intuitive counterstrategy. A re-analysis of history and social structure may serve as a reminder for why these strategies were used then and are no longer necessary in America's distinct and modern democracy. Taking part in reliving America's historical past tarnishes the nation's dignity and undermines the unity of the multicultural society bound by the U.S. Constitution. The next section discusses the process of democratic social change.

4.2. Democratic Social Change Process

Empowerment concepts played an important role in the development of a grounded theory of democratic social change. Empowerment strategies have a motivational disposition that inspires individuals and communities because empowerment is as much a communal trait as an agentic strategy "integral to the formation of modern capitalism" (Bakan, 196, p. 14). Accordingly, empowering concepts (a) lead to emancipation; (b) promote hope; (c) push individuals, organizations, and policies toward an empowering praxis; and (d) promote sustainable positive social change. Empowerment is characterized by "Self-protection, self-assertion, [and] self-expansion" (Bakan, 1996, p. 14).

The process of democratic social change is linear (see Fig. 3). Individuals are empowered at every stage of the social change process. Empowerment begins with the knowledge and awareness of a problem. Awareness leads to the second empowering process, the evaluation of fairness, which elicits an attitudinal, behavioral, and affective response (Christiansen, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). The person then moves to the stage of human dignity. In acknowledging their humanity and the right to be treated with respect, the individual acknowledges that they are as human as the individual who has leveraged unfair treatment against them. Hope is the next stage, wherein one can plan and imagine courage-infused solutions that can be implemented with the support of others (Snyder, 2000). Unity is the penultimate stage of social change. The process of hope allows individuals to envision the support of others who can assist in achieving security and sustainable social change. Security is the final cause of democratic social change and can be expressed as "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776), or more broadly to include national security and the 11 well-being dimensions used to measure the level of democracy: civic engagement, environmental quality, health, housing, income and wealth, knowledge and skills, safety, social connections, subjective well-being, work-life balance, and work and job quality (OECD, 2020).



Figure 3. Democratic Social Change Process

4.2.1. Knowledge

The social change process is likely to have commenced with knowledge and strategies that facilitated deep reflection on the events that shaped the reality of the Founders and their relationship to the Crown, how colonists

perceived the events, and how the relationship between the Founders and the perception of colonists reflected on the sense of self. Great Britain's oppressive policies did not antagonize the Founders overnight. "Prudence, indeed," dictates "that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Instead, "in every stage of these oppressions," they "petitioned for redress in the most humble terms;" their "repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). They "warned" the Crown "from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over" the colonies (Declaration of Independence, 1776). They "have reminded them of the circumstances of their emigration and settlement" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Nevertheless, with the consent of its monarchy, Great Britain used its power to leverage a "train of abuses and usurpations" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). These gestures affected perceptions of justice and the evaluation of a "Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people" (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

4.2.2. Fairness

The Founders' reactions to the unfairness they experienced correspond to the literature on reactions to justice perceptions. Reactions to justice perceptions are "behavioral, attitudinal, and affective" (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001, p. 279). The flood of emotions as a reaction to Great Britain's oppressive strategies was evident in Patrick Henry's words at the Virginia Convention in 1775, referred to as the "Give me liberty or give me death" speech (Schmittroth et al., 2000) and Samuel Adams's speech at the State House in Philadelphia 1776 where he lacked the "calmness and impartiality which the infinite importance of this occasion" demanded.

From a reflexive gaze on the Founders' attempt to remedy the unfairness experienced at the hands of Great Britain, the gaze turned to the preservation of human dignity. The conscientization of oppression from repeated injuries led the colonists to petition for redress while reminding the Crown of the reason for their emigration (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The colonists' frustration at following the established norms and policies was the cause of a state of mind in which they recognized their invisibility to a king who attempted to establish "absolute tyranny over the colonies" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Consequently, during an era when manhood was equated with dignity, the Founders were snubbed with indignation and marginalized by slights across three realms: political, legal, and psychosocial.

Politically, the colonies were deprived of the consent of the governed (i.e., increased taxes, relinquished right to representation, "dissolved Representative Houses," impeding national and economic growth by "obstructing the laws of naturalization of foreigners" and "refusing to pass others to encourage their immigration hither," and cutting off trade; Declaration of Independence, 1776), of inalienable rights (i.e., Great Britain failed to provide due process rights, security, justice and trial by jury, and quartered armed troops in the homes of civilians), psychosocially, (i.e., troops eating their food, burned towns, repeated injury, bullying), and by not mattering (i.e., unanswered petitions, by Great Britain turning a deaf ear to "the voice of justice and consanguinity" despite petitioning for "redress in the most humble terms"; Declaration of Independence, 1776). Following perceptions of justice, individuals begin to recognize their worth as human beings. The Founders sought respect from the king as his equal.

4.2.3. Human dignity

It was the realization that the Crown was using a “long train of abuses and usurpations in pursuing invariably the same object ... to reduce them under absolute despotism”—considered emasculating at the time—that further fueled their motivation to oppose the doxa that subjects could not challenge the government. Under such a threat, the colonists determined that “it was their right ... their duty to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). This interpretation is suggested because the king “dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The gaze becomes critical during a comparative analysis between the king and the Founders.

What made the king better than the Founders, based on the former’s standing? Everything. The king’s standing overshadowed the colonists, from Great Britain’s geopolitical position to its social, economic, and cultural capital. The only currency the Founders had was hope in a comprehensive political strategy and that “all men are created equal” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Accordingly, the Founders incorporated this idea into The Federalist Papers (1787/1998) and the U.S. Constitution to protect the colonists' dignity. Vinthagen (2015) asserts that recognizing and respecting human dignity is empowering, whereas Hojman (2018) and Ziedonis et al. (2016) found that human dignity may motivate a sense of pride, improve self-respect, and lead to self-determination and well-being. As a result, the colonists' empowerment increased their optimism and desire to become independent. Disempowered or demoralized people do not venture into war, much less win them.

4.2.4. Hope

Understanding war and political strategy, the Founders recognized that the king took desperate measures, from “imposing taxes on us without our consent” to tactics to constrain “our fellow citizens taken captive on the high seas to bear arms against their country” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Using the terms “us,” “our,” and “them” throughout the Declaration of Independence created psychological equality between the colonists and the Founders, empowered colonists, and distanced Great Britain. In addition, international politics brought the colonies to the forefront. That drove them to “declare the causes” that compelled “them to the separation” from Great Britain (Declaration of Independence, 1776). By gaining France as an ally, the colonists felt empowered in their ability to disempower Great Britain. They imagined their chances of gaining sovereignty were much higher (Blöser et al., 2020; Snyder, 2000). It is suggested that the Founders gained independence and security by disempowering Great Britain through their national unity strategy.

The Founders were at one time complicit in their oppression (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 2019; Marx & Engels, 1848/2001) by allowing the king to divest the colonies of authority and by seeking the king’s “assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers,” allowing them to suspend “our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). In addition, Great Britain gave her “assent to pretended legislation” and failed to “pass laws of immediate and pressing importance ... necessary for the public good” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Through hope, the Founders created a pathway to usurp the king’s power and empowered the colonists through the words of the Declaration of Independence

(Snyder, 2000). Independence from Great Britain, a goal-related outcome, was sufficient to gain the colonists' attention and imbue them with hope (Snyder, 2000). Using the disempowerment strategy, the Founders stripped the king of authority and empowered the colonists to match their defiance.

4.2.5. Unity

The Founders used the Declaration of Independence as a political tool to secure France's alliance (Treaty of Alliance with France, 1776). France wanted assurance that the colonists were aiming for independence from Great Britain (Staff, 1976). Throughout the Declaration, there are examples confirming that the Founders were no longer complicit in their oppression (Bourdieu, 1991). However, their submission evolved into multiple strategies to gain support for independence from the various factions, such as those with a "landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests" and those "who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society" (The Federalist No. 10, 1787/1998, p. 34). It is suggested that their first strategy for unity was securing each other's commitment by mutually pledging their lives, fortune, and sacred honor. The commitment was sealed with the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, a strategic coalition of colonies against the government of Great Britain.

4.2.6. Security

To safeguard the union, Article IV of the Articles of Confederation contained language to prevent future attempts of treason by securing that "any person guilty of or charged with treason" shall "be delivered up and removed to the state having jurisdiction over his offense" (Articles of Confederation, 1781). Later legislation on "treason against the United States" was included in the U.S. Constitution Article II § 3. The Founders' security strategy included independence from Great Britain to "have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances ... and all other acts and things which independent states may of right do" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). In addition, their strategy included a "republican form of government" (U.S. Constitution Article IV §2), a "structure of government" that furnishes the "proper checks and balances between the different departments" (The Federalist No. 51, 1787/1998, p. 331) to "effect their safety and happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Moreover, they sought economic and physical security to "establish commerce" (Declaration of Independence, 1776) and secure themselves "against invasion ... and domestic violence" (U.S. Constitution Article IV §4).

4.3. Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness criteria for constructivist grounded theory were used to evaluate the quality of the constructed theory. The four criteria are credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021).

4.3.1. Credibility

Credibility was established through the internal and external validity of the data, using an all-inclusive approach. Theoretical codes that appeared across 18 documents were subjected to successive comparisons and other data analysis strategies supporting internal triangulation (Charmaz, 2006). The empirical grounding of findings across documents was illustrated using in vivo codes (Glaser, 2002). The findings were substantiated post hoc through peer-reviewed articles. Motivational theories supported the empowerment and processual disposition of the first

principles. To support the interpretation of democracy's social change process, the Boston Tea Party and Pine Tree Riot were used as triangulation points. National Security Reports of the United States [NSS] substantiated the use of empowerment and disempowerment concepts in America's institutional culture (see Forde, 2023 Appendices). At every stage, memos and reflexivity were engaged in consideration of the author's views and background (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Practitioners working with victims of various types of relationship violence provided feedback to evaluate the reliability of the democratic social change process. Their areas of expertise include law, education, criminal justice, psychology, and politics. Moreover, the credibility and plausibility of the theory were established by extending the framework of democratic social change to other fields.

4.3.2. Originality

There is no evidence of rival explanations for the first principles of democracy in theories of social change movements, democracy, democratic social change, or psychology. As a potential motivational theory for social change, the proposed theory is a novel contribution to democracy (see Fig. 4). In addition, the demoralization process framework was identified as a barrier to democracy and the process that triggered revolutionary social change.



Figure 4. Trustworthiness

4.3.3. Resonance

Resonance was achieved by extending the Founders' lived experience of oppression under Great Britain's rule to intimate partner violence. In addition, preliminary research suggests that the Founders' experiences resonate with school bullying and workplace violence victims (see Forde, 2023).

4.3.4. Usefulness

The usefulness of this framework lies in its motivational-empowerment strategy. It can help improve perceptions of self-worth, self-esteem, self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020), and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954/1987). In terms of practical application, it can help victims of relationship violence and other interpersonal

aggressions cope with or resolve certain violent encounters. It is hoped that the framework will be implemented at the institutional level to help create a sense of safety and community. The framework can also be used as a democracy-monitoring strategy (see Forde, 2023 Appendices).

5. Implications for Practice

Intimate partner violence was examined using the proposed democratic social change framework. Aggressors leverage multiple disempowering strategies against their victims during intimate partner violence. Victims are empowered by recognizing their right to be treated with human dignity and fairness. When human dignity and fairness are not respected, victims may require support from family, friends, and community organizations. Creating a pathway to security for victims of violence is an empowering force that gives them hope (Snyder, 2000). This example illustrates the close relationship between unity and security (De Leonardis, 1998; Durkheim, 1982). The following application of the social change process illustrates how the Founders' experience resonates with victims of intimate partner violence. Thus, intimate partner violence can be addressed through the democratic social change framework.

5.1. Intimate Partner Violence: From Theory to Practice

Globally, intimate partner violence has been identified as a significant public health and human rights concern (McCarthy et al., 2018). With as many as 70% of women in foreign nations reporting being victimized and 80% of men having been perpetrators, intimate partner violence is responsible for perpetrating a larger system of gender violence (McCarthy et al., 2018). This type of violence may take various forms and is perpetrated against an intimate partner, involving control and a variety of power strategies to subjugate the spouse by destroying their self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-determination (Geiger, 2002; McCarthy et al., 2018). Intimate partner violence refers to physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual abuse by an intimate partner (Gerino et al., 2018). Males are more likely to be the perpetrators of intimate partner violence (McCarthy et al., 2018; Sweet, 2019). However, women can also perpetrate intimate partner violence. The democratic social change framework and demoralization process was applied to intimate partner violence. The demoralization process triggers the need to use the democratic social change process as a counterstrategy, and is, hence, discussed first.

5.1.1. Fear

In intimate partner violence, fear is achieved through various strategies (Sweet, 2019; Mshweshwe, 2020). Abusive partners often threaten divorce, physical and sexual violence, withdrawal of financial support, and shaming by exposing personal information and stigmatizing (Capaldi et al., 2012; Mshweshwe, 2020; Pizzirani, 2019; Rozeboom & Sangiovanni, 2018; Sweet, 2019). Geiger (2002) explained that repression and coercion are forms of power that materialize the fear of losing control rather than the ownership of it (p. 12). Fear can take various forms and lead to hypervigilance (Ross, 2017), learned helplessness (Geiger, 2002; Sweet, 2019; Salter & Hall, 2022), escape paralysis, and complex post-traumatic stress (Salter & Hall, 2022).

5.1.2. Dehumanization

Dehumanization in situations of intimate partner violence may appear as structural exclusion (Sweet, 2019), stigmatization, infantilization, objectification, instrumentalization (Rozeboom & Sangiovanni, 2018, p. 115), and

exploitation. Abusers ridicule; degrade; rape, humiliate; insult (Geiger, 2002; Pizzirani et al., 2019; Salter & Hall, 2022); feign disinterest (Pizzirani et al., 2019); verbally, psychologically, emotionally, and financially abuse (Ross, 2017); control; and create dependence (McCarthy et al., 2018; Mshweshwe, 2020; Pizzirani et al., 2019).

5.1.3. Nativism

Nativism plays a role in intimate partner violence. Gerino (2018) found that “cultural beliefs, social values of reference (specifically machoistic-patriarchal values), as well as racism, and sexism” (p. 11) impact its manifestation. Beliefs and value systems associated with celebrating extreme masculinity increase the risk of intimate partner violence (Hoffman et al., 2020; McCarthy et al., 2018; Mshweshwe, 2020), as do attempts to control a spouse’s religious values and practices.

5.1.4. Social distinctions

Various social distinctions have been explored in studies of intimate partner violence. Women of all educational, social, and economic statuses are victimized. However, disadvantaged, and uneducated women who depend on their spouses are at a higher risk of victimization (Capaldi et al., 2012). More specifically, social distinctions can take the form of tacitly noting class or economic differences and lack of cultural refinement, whereby the partner is ridiculed into assimilating the perpetrator’s values due to embarrassment (Pizzirani et al., 2019). Minorities, and people with “cognitive and physical impairments,” or substance use disorders are particularly vulnerable to this form of abuse (Gerino, 2018, p. 11).

5.1.5. Misinformation

Misinformation in intimate partner violence can come in the form of gaslighting (Sweet, 2019), a strategy that often causes dire psychological effects, such as poor self-esteem, which may lead to victims questioning their sanity (Geiger, 2002; Ogbe et al., 2020); it involves attacks such as referring to partners as irrational, emotional, and childish (Rozeboom & Sangiovanni, 2018; Sweet, 2019). Abusers allege that they love their partner too much or that no one will love them as much as they do in order to create dependence. This strategy is often successful when the abused person believes that they are not worthy of love or respect. In some cases, abusers blame their partners for their loss of control and abusive behavior. Abusers claim they can control themselves if the victim agrees with their requests. In addition, they may persuade their victims that their behavior has changed after witnessing the scars they have caused after their temper subsides.

5.1.6. Subjugation

Distress in marriages often leads to violence, and abusers use various strategies of subjugation, such as tactics of dehumanization (Pizzirani et al., 2019), misinformation, social distinction, nativism, and fear (Mshweshwe, 2020), emboldened by patriarchy (Geiger, 2002; McCarthy et al., 2018; Mshweshwe, 2020). These five strategies serve multiple subjugation goals. However, personal and social transformation can occur through an empowering process, as feelings of unfairness can motivate individuals to act, prompting change (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). However, despite attempts at subjugation them, victims retain the power of autonomy and self-determination (Geiger, 2002). The control strategies used include ignoring their partner’s requests, faking

headaches, their menstrual cycle, reciprocating verbal assaults, desertion, weaponizing the police, and taking matters to court as power strategies (Geiger, 2002). The strategies used are from knowledge gained through experience or socialization as child victims who witnessed intimate partner violence (McCarthy et al., 2018). In addition to the resistance posed using the above strategies, victims can use the democratic social change process as a counterstrategy: knowledge, fairness, human dignity, unity, security, and hope. Unity and security interact strongly in this situation, leading to “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

5.1.7. Knowledge

Knowledge can take many forms depending on numerous factors including culture, wisdom, prudence, and inner strength. For example, knowledge determines when to change the conversation subtly, ignore the invitation to fight, remain silent and to speak up, when to call 911 and speak to the operator, allow the operator to listen in, hang up on the 911 operator after allowing the address to register, or when to use nonverbal communication with law enforcement. Self-protection decisions often rely on wisdom, prudence, and strategy. Although trauma can manifest as loss in dignity, knowledge regarding the effects of trauma may help survivors of intimate partner violence understand that their dignity is intact. Moreover, trauma-informed interactions with law enforcement may reduce feelings of humiliation and shame (Salter & Hall, 2022).

5.1.8. Fairness

Most research on fairness and distress in relationships focuses on married couples (Ross, 2017). Although this may benefit substantive areas, the lack of research on fairness outside marriage and the workplace may limit our understanding in other realms. Problems regarding fairness in marriage arise from firm beliefs in the role of partners and the inability or unwillingness to meet strict expectations (Ross, 2017). Perceived fairness increases the sense of well-being among couples; however, individuals in a couple are least depressed when the balance of power is in their favor (Ross, 2017).

Victims of intimate partner violence search for solutions to end oppressive control, believing that they, not the perpetrators, are responsible for the abuse. They may rationalize the abuse as their spouse being tired, stressed, or working hard for the family and, as a result, assume that the abuse would stop if the victimized partner could make things fairer by cleaning more, cooking better, or disciplining the children according to the spouse’s preference, speaking only when spoken to, and isolating themselves from friends and family. Fairness is being treated with dignity (Salter & Hall, 2022) and seeking the assistance of law enforcement and the court through a temporary protection order. Fairness is also the product of acknowledging and respecting the spouse’s human dignity (Salter & Hall, 2022).

5.1.9. Human dignity

The concept of dignity has been used in traumatology at an individual level (Salter & Hall, 2022). Salter and Hall (2022) support the promotion of dignity at the policy, relational, community, institutional, and macro levels to reduce the effects of shame and humiliation. Survivors of intimate partner violence and rape have emphasized the desire to have their human dignity restored and recognized (Ogbe et al., 2020; Salter & Hall, 2022). Human dignity

may be manifested by acknowledging the importance of self-preservation, self-determination, acting as a protective parent, and living in a safe and peaceful environment (Salter & Hall, 2022).

5.1.10. Hope

There are few scenarios through which hope can be better understood than from examples of intimate partner violence, whether the victim decides to return to the abuser hoping things will change or decides to leave the abuser permanently because it has become clear that things can only get worse. Hope may allow the victim to visualize a significant improvement in the couple's relationship or to imagine how much worse things could get for them. Couple empowerment occurs when couples feel a balance of power and compromise to resolve their problems independently (Ross, 2017). Empowerment mitigates intimate partner violence (Geiger, 2002; Salter & Hall, 2022), and is associated with higher levels of family support (Gerino et al., 2018), intersectional trauma-informed practices (Ogbe et al., 2020; Salter & Hall, 2022), a social network orientation to support, community education (Ogbe et al., 2020; Salter & Hall, 2022), reduced shame, and promotion of dignity (Salter & Hall, 2022).

5.1.11. Unity to security

Victims of intimate partner violence can seek support by uniting with extended family, close friends, supportive neighbors, and the community (shelters, clergy members, law enforcement, legal services, child protective services, and public assistance; Salter & Hall, 2022). Gerino et al., (2018) found that low levels of support increase the risk of intimate partner violence, whereas higher levels serve as a protective factor against victimization. Low familial and social support may lead to loneliness and isolation (Ogbe et al., 2020). However, security can be provided for victims by participating in safety planning (intimate partner violence safety and school safety plans), legal protection (temporary order of protection and the victim complying with those terms), and financial security (Capaldi et al., 2012; Salter & Hall, 2022). Similarly, support can be in the form of an empowering environment.

6. Discussion

This article discusses two significant findings based on the founding documents: the demoralization process and the democratic social change process. The proposed grounded theory crosses the scope of substantive theory into that of formal theory. Therefore, it can be applied across multiple domains of knowledge, including psychology, criminology, education, business (i.e., intimate partner violence), school bullying, workplace violence, and national security (i.e., National Security Strategy Reports of the United States) as described by Forde (2013) to formalize the grounded theory and illustrate its usefulness. The democratic social change framework could be used as a social movement strategy to bring about parallel democratic social change using an integrated structural, organizational, and individual approach as discussed by Forde (2013; see Qualitative Data Repository for supplemental information]. Implications for practice include applying the democratic social change theory to religion (cult violence), criminal justice (re-entry services, organized crime), healthcare settings (medical neglect), social services (to empower children and families), and public administration (grant writing).

In addition to the lack of existing frameworks for the first principles of democracy, this study has other limitations. The grounded theories were abstracted from the founding documents. This limits the application to democratic social change in America. Moreover, the grounded theories were constructed based on the author's interpretation of

the founding documents; therefore, more research is needed. Future research should focus on supporting, refuting, or extending the grounded theory by analyzing American social policies, the Founders' personal communications, other historical data, or a combination. The practicality of this grounded theory must be explored to determine if the democratic social change framework could facilitate social change at multiple levels, particularly for agentic individuals like the American Founders. Wherein political philosophers may want to re-evaluate the disposition of the concepts as the first principles of democracy, philosophers of power may want to explore the empowerment and disempowerment strategies from a Foucauldian perspective to determine if they could be considered relational power strategies. Also, motivational psychologists may be interested in evaluating the democratic social change framework to determine if it is a useful motivational social change framework.

7. Conclusion

The existing accounts of revolutionary social change in America fall short of providing a convincing analysis of the subject from a holistic perspective. Revolutionary social change in America has historically been framed around one of the five traditional social change theories. Even when a power analysis is employed, scholars use a single lens. This study aimed to construct a grounded theory that answered the following research question: How do the principles of the American founding documents provide an understanding of the process of American democratic social change? The question was answered using Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory approach and incorporating its successive comparison method using various data analysis strategies, such as deconstruction, holistic thinking, systems thinking, situational analysis, dramaturgical analysis, and perspective taking. To understand democracy from a holistic perspective, emergent research questions were followed, and two categories were established: empowering and disempowering.

The concepts used in the social change theory are the first principles of democracy: knowledge, fairness, human dignity, unity, hope, and security. That of demoralization included misinformation, fear, dehumanization, nativism, social distinctions, and subjugation. Wherein the demoralization process can lower self-esteem and cause emotional and psychological trauma, the democratic social change process uses motivational concepts that empower and promote social change at three levels of analysis: macro, meso, and micro. The empowerment concepts promote self-worth, self-esteem, self-determination, and self-actualization (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020; Maslow, 1954/1987; Snyder, 2000; Vinthagen, 2015; Ziedonis et al., 2016). Effective use of this framework could empower victims of interpersonal abuse.

Declarations

Source of Funding

The study has not received any funds from any organization.

Competing Interests Statement

The author has declared no competing interests.

Consent for Publication

The author declares that she consented to the publication of this study.

References

- Adams, S. (1776/2022). The world's famous orations, Volume 8, In F.W. Halsey & W.J. Bryan (Eds.), The world's famous orations (Pages 112–123). Funk and Wagnalls (Original Work Published 1906).
- Articles of Confederation (3/1/1781). Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, Record Group 360; National Archives Building, Washington, DC (Original Work Published 1777).
- Aristotle (1992). *Nicomachean ethics: Classics of moral and political theory*, (M. Morgan, Ed.). Hackett Publishing Co. (Original Work Published in 353 BCE).
- Bakan, D. (1966). *The duality of human existence: An essay on psychology and religion*. Rand McNally. <https://archive.org/details/dualityofhumanex0000baka>.
- Benet, W.J. (2006). *The polarity management model of workplace democracy*. Doctoral dissertation, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.
- Benet, W. (2013). *Managing the polarities of democracy: A theoretical framework for positive social change*. *Journal of Sustainable Social Change*, 5: 26–39. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5590/JOSC.2013.05.1.03>.
- Bermudez, A. (2015). Four tools for critical inquiry in history, social studies, and civic education. *Revista De Estudios Sociales*, 52: 102–118. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7440/res52.2015.07>.
- Bloch, E. (1986). *The principle of hope (Vol.2)* (N. Plaice, S. Plaice, & P. Knight, Trans). MIT Press. <https://archive.org/details/principleofhope0001bloc/page/n9/mode/2up> (Original Work Published 1959).
- Blöser, C., Huber, J., & Moellendorf, D. (2020). Hope in political philosophy. *Philosophy Compass*, 15(5): 1–9. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12665>.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. University of California Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. R. Nice, Trans., Harvard Univ. Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and symbolic power*. [J.B. Thompson, Ed.]. Polity Press.
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.) (2007). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. Sage. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848607941>.
- Butts, R.F. (1980). *The revival of civic learning: A rationale for citizenship education in American schools*. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED200473.pdf>.
- Butts, R.F. (1988). *The morality of democratic citizenship: goals for civic education in the republic's third century*. Center for Civic Education. https://www.civiced.org/papers/morality/morality_ch4b.html.
- Capaldi, D.M., Knoble, N.B., Shortt, J.W., & Kim, H.K. (2012). A systematic review of risk factors for intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*, 3(2): 231–280. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.3.2.231>.
- Chang, R., Adams, N., & Little, T.D. (2017). Action-control beliefs and agentic actions. In M.L. Wehmeyer, K.A. Shogren, T.D. Little, & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), *Development of self-determination through the life-course* (Pages 285–295). Springer Science. doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1042-6_22.

- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2016). The power of constructivist grounded theory for critical inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(1): 34–45. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800416657105>.
- Charmaz, K., & Thornberg, R. (2021). The pursuit of quality in grounded theory. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3): 305–327. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1780357>.
- Chomsky, N. (1995). *Necessary illusions: Thought control in democratic societies*. House of Anansi.
- Chomsky, N. (2002). *Media control: The spectacular achievements of propaganda*. Seven Stories Press.
- Cohen-Charash, Y., & Spector, P.E. (2001). The role of justice in organizations: A meta-analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 86(2): 278–321. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.2001.2958>.
- Christiano, T. (2003). *Philosophy and democracy: an anthology*. Oxford University Press.
- Christiansen, J. (2009). Social movement and collective behavior: Four stages of social movement. *EBSCO Research Starter*, 1: 1–7.
- The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription | National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.
- Dahl, R. (2001). *How democratic is the American constitution?* Yale University Press.
- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2012). Motivation, personality, and development Within embedded social contexts: An overview of self-determination theory. In R.M. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (Pages 85–107). Oxford University Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195399820.013.0006>.
- Declaration of Independence (1776, July 4). A Transcription. National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.
- De Leonardis, D.J. (1998). Ethical implications of unity and the divine in Nicholas of Cusa. *Council for Research in Values and Philosophy*. <http://www.crvp.org/publications/Series-I/I-10.pdf>.
- Durkheim, E. (1982). *The rules of sociological method*. (Steve Lukes, Ed.). The Free Press.
- Edelman, M. & Edelman, M.J.E. (2001). *The politics of misinformation*. Cambridge University Press.
- The Federalist Papers (1787). *Federalist Papers: Primary Documents in American History - Research Guides at Library of Congress*. <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text>.
- Flynn, S.I. (2011). Relative deprivation theory. In J. Christiansen (Ed.), *Theories of social movement* (Pages 100–110). Salem Press.
- Forde, A. I. (2023). *The American Founding Documents and Democratic Social Change: A Constructivist Grounded Theory* (Order No. 30421984). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2803825958). <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/american-founding-documents-democratic-social/docview/2803825958/se-2>

- Foucault, M. (2019). *Power: The essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. (D.Faubion, Eds.). Penguin Books.
- Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed (50th Anniversary Edition, 4th ed.)*. Bloomsbury Publishing (Original Work Published 1970).
- Geiger, B. (2002). From deviance to creation: Women's answer to subjugation. *Humanity & Society*, 26(3): 214–227. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597602026003>.
- Gerino, E., Calderera, A. M., Curti, L., Brustia, P., & Rollè, L. (2018). Intimate partner violence in the golden age: systematic review of risk and protective factors. *Front Psychol.*, 9: 1–14. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01595/full>.
- Glaser, B.G. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2): 23–38. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100203>.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Transaction.
- Glaser, B. (2014). Applying grounded theory. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 13(1): 46–50. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203793206-13>.
- Goodwin, J., Jasper, J.M., & Polletta, F. (Eds.) (2001). *Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hoffman, B., Ware, J., & Shapiro, E. (2020). Assessing the threat of incel violence. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43(7): 565–587.
- Hojman, D.A., & Miranda, Á. (2018). Agency, human dignity, and subjective well-being. *World Development*, 101: 1–15. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.WORLDDEV.2017.07.029>.
- Kendi, I.X. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. Nation Books.
- Killen, M., & Dahl, A. (2021). Moral reasoning enables developmental and societal change. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(6) : 1209–1225. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620964076>.
- Knox, J. (2018). Framework principles on human rights and the environment: A catalyst for grassroots-centered U.S. reform? OxHRH blog. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3523368>.
- Lacey, H. (2016). Science, respect for nature, and human well-being: Democratic values and the responsibilities of scientists today. *Foundations of Science*, 21(1): 51–67. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10699-014-9376-9>.
- Marx, K., Engels, F. (2001). *The communist manifesto*. Intl. Publishers Co., Inc. (Original Work Published 1848).
- Maslow, A.H. (1987). *Motivation and personality*. Addison-Wesley Edu, Pub. Inc. (Original Work Published 1954).
- McCarthy, K.J., Mehta, R., & Haberland, N.A. (2018). Gender, power, and violence: A systematic review of measures and their association with male perpetration of IPV. *PloS One*, 13(11), Article e0207091. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0207091>.

- Mshweshwe, L. (2020). Understanding domestic violence: masculinity, culture, traditions. *Heliyon*, 6(10): 1–5.
- Muller, J. (2007). *Constitutional patriotism*. Princeton University Press.
- Ogbe, E., Harmon, S., Van den Bergh, R., & Degomme, O. (2020). A systematic review of intimate partner violence interventions focused on improving social support and mental health outcomes of survivors. *PLoS One*, 15(6): 1–27. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0235177>.
- OECD (2013). *Guidelines on measuring subjective well-being*. OECD Publishing. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264191655-en>.
- OECD (2019). *OECD economic surveys: Switzerland*. OECD iLibrary. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1787/19990464>.
- OECD (2020). *Measuring well-being*. OECD Publishing. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en>.
- Declaration of Independence: A Transcription (1776, July 4). Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.
- Paine, T. (1894). *Writings of Thomas Paine* (Moncure Conway, Ed.). The Knickerbocker Press.
- Pleeging, E., van Exel, J., & Burger, M. (2022). Characterizing hope: An interdisciplinary overview of the characteristics of hope. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 17(3): 1681–1723.
- Pizzirani, B., Karantzas, G.C., & Mullins, E.R. (2019). The development and validation of a dehumanization measure within romantic relationships. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02754>.
- Principle (2005). *Collins Discovery Encyclopedia* (1st ed.). <https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/principle>.
- Radcliff, B., & Shufeldt, G. (2016). Direct democracy and subjective well-being: The initiative and life satisfaction in the American states. *Social Indicators Research*, 128(3): 1405–1423. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-015-1085-4>
- Ross, C.E. (2017). *Social causes of psychological distress*. Routledge.
- Rozeboom, G.J. & Sangiovanni, A. (2018). *Humanity without dignity: Moral equality, respect, and human rights*. Harvard University Press.
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1): 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68>.
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61, Article 101860. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>.
- Salin, D. (2003). Ways of explaining workplace bullying: A review of enabling, motivating and precipitating structures and processes in the work environment. *Human Relations*, 56(10): 1213–1232. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267035610003>.
- Salter, M., & Hall, H. (2022). Reducing shame, promoting dignity: A model for the primary prevention of complex post-traumatic stress disorder. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(3): 906–919. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/>

1524838020979667.

Secretary of Defense (n.d.). The National Security Strategy (NSS). Historical office: Office of secretary of defense. <https://history.defense.gov/Historical-Sources/National-Security-Strategy/>.

Schmittroth, L., Baker, L., & McConnell, S.A. (2000). American revolution: Primary sources. UXL.

Snyder, C.R. (Ed.) (2000). Handbook of hope: Theory, measures, and applications. Academic Press.

Sweet, P.L. (2019). The sociology of gaslighting. *American Sociological Review*, 84(5): 851–875. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419874843>.

Terence, I. (1988). Aristotle's First Principles. Clarendon Press.

Vinthaghen, S. (2015). A theory of nonviolent action: How civil resistance works. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Wang, Y.T., Mechkova, V., & Andersson, F. (2019). Does democracy enhance health? New empirical evidence 1900–2012. *Political Research Quarterly*, 72(3): 554–569. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912918798506>.

Ziedonis, D., Larkin, C., & Appasani, R. (2016). Dignity in mental health practice & research: Time to unite on innovation, outreach & education. *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, 144(4): 491. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4103%2F0971-5916.200885>.