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Empowering Democracy: A Socio-Ethical Theory

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ABSTRACT

Great Britain subjugated colonists using various power strategies, including dehumanization, misinformation, fear, and other divisive strategies. The Founders described these oppressive strategies as "a long train of abuses and usurpations." Throughout the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, the Founding Fathers imbued the people with hope in a government for the people: one unlike that of the monarchy, which sought to protect itself at the expense of colonists. As a result, the Founders created a government more likely to lead with fairness, demonstrate respect for human dignity, unite Americans as one people, empower citizens through hope, and lead the nation toward security. This socio-ethical framework was an abductive discovery nested within a grounded theory study where it had been concluded that the first principles of democracy were woven within the American founding documents. Using Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory, the first principles of democracy—knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, and security—were used to answer an emerging research question: Are there two democratic frameworks in the founding documents, and how do they differ? The first principles of democracy promote a culture of ethics, resilience, and freedom. Their empowering disposition makes them suitable as a normative framework for a democratic government for the people.

Keywords: Democratic social change; Government for the people; Voter empowerment; Nested grounded theory; Universal normative framework.

Introduction

The problem of power is how to achieve its responsible use rather than its irresponsible and indulgent use—of how to get men of power to live for the public rather than off the public.

—Robert F. Kennedy, The Pursuit of Justice, 1964.

Colonists' "repeated petitions" for "redress of grievances" were "answered only by repeated injury" and "a long train of abuses and usurpations" aimed at establishing "absolute despotism" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). However, conscientization and hope led the Founders to develop a counterstrategy against Great Britain's oppressive strategies while risking life and liberty to pursue revolutionary social change. The purpose of this paper is to present a grounded theory of socio-ethical principles based on the first principles of democracy that were woven into the founding documents due to Great Britain's oppressive strategies: knowledge (a proxy for truth), fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, and security (Forde, 2023). They are the principles citizens should expect public servants to incorporate into public policies, their interactions with citizens, and in countering demoralization strategies (i.e., dehumanization, misinformation, fear, nativism, social distinctions, and subjugation).

Additionally, they should be incorporated into the national lexicon to be internalized and integrated—the process of adapting another's values to one's own (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2012). Although there are several distinguishing characteristics between the traditional democratic values and the first principles of democracy, the empowering disposition of the first principles will be the focus of this article as it answers the second part of the research question: How do (the two democracy frameworks woven into the American founding documents) differ? Charmaz's tradition of grounded theory was employed to construct an empowering human-centric framework for public servants "concerned with justice, rights, respect for human dignity, the autonomy of the individual and respect for the community" (Gabr, 2009, p. 2). Consistent with the grounded theory methodology, the Founders will

be quoted to answer the research question and present the grounded theory. Motivational theories and references to sociological theorists and philosophers will be used as triangulation to establish rigor.

Methodology

Glaser and Strauss developed the grounded theory methodology to inductively construct theories. The methodology can be applied to any data type, including audio and visual data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The elements of grounded theory methodology are theoretical sampling, theoretical coding, inductive analysis, constant comparison and contrast, theory generation from substantive data, abductive reasoning, a high level of abstraction, and the optional use of sensitizing concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Sensitizing concepts can facilitate theory construction; however, theorists must also possess theoretical sensitivity. There are two characteristics of theoretical sensitivity: "personal and temperamental bent" and "the ability to apply insight to generate theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 46).

Researchers use theoretical sampling to generate theory by selecting specific samples. The constant comparison method is used to analyze theoretical samples (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Researchers select samples based on intuition or other factors that suggest that the sample will contribute to constructing a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Theoretical coding refers to coding data to produce theoretical codes to construct a theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

The constant compare and contrast method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is used to compare selected samples. As data are compared continuously, differences and similarities are revealed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Blumer (1969), sensitizing concepts facilitate the emergence of relevant incidents during data analysis. Although the principles of grounded theory are used in every grounded theory tradition, different schools of thought debate when the literature review should be conducted (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Classical grounded theory suggests delaying literature review and starting with a blank slate, abandoning assumptions that may prevent novel theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Other grounded theory traditions do not emphasize the necessity of a literature review (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The literature review was delayed for this study.

Compared with Glaser and Strauss' classical grounded theory tradition, Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory is more deliberate about data analysis techniques and specific instances where the constructivist tradition is appropriate (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The constructivist tradition is suitable for exploring social justice and social change through critical inquiry (Charmaz, 2016). Applied critical inquiry is characterized by systemic thinking, multiple perspectives, reflective skepticism, and problem-posing (Bermudez, 2015). Moreover, Charmaz instructs constructivist grounded theorists to use critical inquiry to become aware of "the pervasiveness of the Anglo-North American worldview throughout inquiry" (2017, p. 1) and to examine power relationships, marginality, and inequality (particularly Foucault's theory of power; Charmaz, 2016). Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory was most suitable for examining power relations, social change, and democracy conceptualization in the new American republic.

The theoretical sample consisted of the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and 14 essays from The Federalist Papers: Nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 14, 22, 38, 42, 43, 51, 54, and 83

(see Figure 1). Saturation, the point at which no new theoretical codes appear, had been reached without incorporating The Anti-Federalist Papers as part of the theoretical sample. Two categories emerged: empowerment and disempowerment. Throughout the founding documents, the American Founding Fathers imbued the people with political hope for a government for the people. Empowerment was derived from substantive content and became a sensitizing concept, facilitating theoretical coding (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006). The data analysis strategy included deconstruction, holistic thinking, systems thinking, situational analysis, dramaturgical analysis, and perspective-taking. Adhering to grounded theory methodology, the findings were derived through comparative analysis, a review of memos, abductive reasoning, and questions related to processes and culture (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The concept of democracy was abstracted and conceptualized as empowerment. Empowerment became a sensitizing concept and a category. The empowerment concepts were determined to be the first principles of democracy: knowledge, fairness, human dignity, unity, hope, and security. These principles were used to construct nested theories.

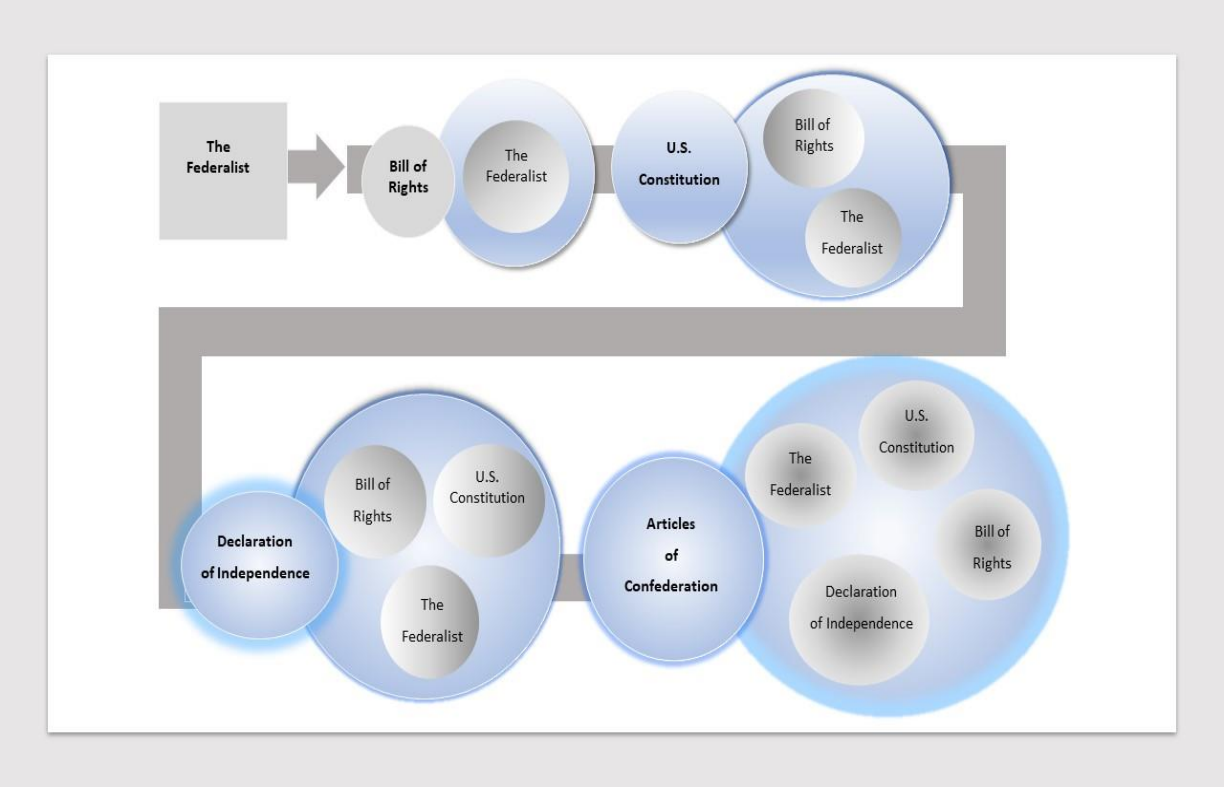

Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

The construction of the socio-ethical grounded theory took a definite form when it was applied at the meso level of analysis to the Continental Congress. The grounded theory evolved from a normative framework to one that is normative and empowering. It evolved from two other nested theories. The first principles of democracy and a conceptual framework were developed to reduce dynamic tension when leveraging democratic values paired as polarities. The empowering disposition of the first principles became the framework's first assumption: Government for the people requires a principled and empowering approach to democracy centered on human dignity. The disposition of the concepts was explored. Empowerment significantly contributed to the Founders' successful response to Great Britain. As a result, of the motivating aspect of empowerment, motivational theories

were reviewed post-theory construction and integrated into the framework as a means of theory triangulation. Moreover, motivation is related to 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).

Socio-Ethical Grounded Theory

It has been posited that the democratic principles were woven into the nation's founding documents to promote fairness by reducing the effects of asymmetric power associated with disempowerment strategies used by Great Britain (i.e., misinformation, social distinction, dehumanization, nativism, fear, and subjugation; Forde, 2023). In contrast, the first principles of democracy are knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, and security. The first principles were used to construct a normative framework that reflects the spirit of the Constitution while supporting the democratic ideal of a government for the people, which implies the support for respect for human dignity. Hence, two democratic frameworks can be found within the U.S. founding documents: a democratic values framework for the people and a normative framework of democratic principles for the people's representatives. Traditional democratic values were distinguished from the first principles of democracy by the distinct characteristics of the frameworks: (a) The democratic values are culturally specific, whereas the democratic principles are universal; (b) The democratic principles framework is normative, whereas the democratic values framework is political, and; (c) The democratic values framework relies on extrinsic empowerment, whereas the normative framework relies on intrinsic empowerment.

American democratic values are culturally specific to America and thus restrict the number of cultures open to embracing those values. Democratic principles are universal and undergird a wide range of democratic values. For example, 83% of nations welcome education as a constitutional right (Heymann et al., 2020), while the United States has not (Black, 2018, 2020, 2022). The abstract disposition of the principles permits a variety of culturally specific democratic values that uphold human dignity. Democratic values are political rather than normative. The political nature of the democratic values can be observed in The Federalist Papers No. 54 (1787/1998; i.e., "The true state of the case is, that [slaves] partake of both these qualities: being considered by our laws, in some respects, as persons, and in other respects as property," p. 545/546) and in international relations (Chomsky, 1995). Finally, the principles rely on intrinsic empowerment. Agentic individuals rely on intrinsic empowerment in pursuing "Life, Liberty, and Happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). In contrast, democratic values create dependence on the government for extrinsic empowerment (i.e., minorities wait on the government to recognize them as imbued with human dignity to enjoy human and civil rights (U.S. Const. amends. XV, XIX, XXIV, and XXVI; The Federalist Papers, 1787/1998; the Articles of Confederation).

A socio-ethical framework could empower public servants and constituents to improve the individual and collective experience. Moreover, a socio-ethical framework could uphold the endowment of "certain unalienable rights" (Declaration of Independence, 1776) by making human dignity, instead of equality without equity—the moral aspect of equality, the focus of government action. A culture that values a socio-ethical framework upholds "All men are created equal" and the people's "right to alter or abolish [government] and to institute a new government ... most likely to affect their safety and happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776)—two of many empowering

phrases found with the nation's founding documents that continue to inspire Americans. The assumptions of the socio-ethical framework of democracy are that:

✓ Government for the people requires a principled and empowering approach to democracy centered on human dignity.

✓ Humans are most empowered and reach their fullest potential when acknowledging their intrinsic human dignity.

✓ The framework is a strategic empowerment process that leads to sustainable social change.

Motivational Value of the Democratic Principles

The first principles concepts have a motivational effect (see Christiansen, 2009; see also Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Freire, 1970/2018; Killen & Dahl, 2021; Maslow, 1954/1987; Pleeging et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020; Snyder, 2000). Motivational theories—self-determination theory, self-actualization theory, theory of hope, and equity theory—will be used to discuss the motivational disposition of the concepts. The first principles are also processes and transformational. Cuza (De Leonardis, 1998), Durkheim (1982; Greco, 2023), Dobruska (Greco, 2023), Comte (Greco, 2023), and Bloch (1959/1986) are not motivation theorists; however, their works affirm the motivational disposition of unity and hope. The framework upholds human beings as agentic, autonomous individuals against whom arbitrary political divisions should not be used. They establish the essence of a government for the people. Following is a discussion of the motivational value of the first principles of democracy. Because much of the discussion in the Declaration of Independence centers on unfairness, equity theory will be given the most attention as it effectively illustrates the relationship strain between the colonists and Great Britain. Equity theory also supports the effect of negative emotions resulting from perceptions of justice and affecting self-respect, the respect for others, and possibly leading to vengeance (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

Knowledge

The power of knowledge was established before Greek philosophers and, more recently, with Sir Frances Bacon (1597/1996), who acknowledged that "knowledge itself is a power" (p. 21). Three concepts are discussed in Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Of the three concepts, knowledge is reflected in competence, mastery, success, and growth (Ryan & Deci, 2020). For Dewey, knowledge is imperative for personal growth, social development, and professional development (1923). Communication of ideas and the formation of bonds are two other important functions of knowledge (Dewey, 1923). Knowledge plays a role in self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020) and self-actualization (Maslow, 1956/1987). In philosophy, wisdom and prudence are intellectual virtues (Aristotle, 353 BC/1992). Prudence is intuitive knowledge based on time, moment, and person-specific circumstances, where the decision made about oneself and one's affairs at a particular moment is the best decision that will not prejudice the person in the future (Aristotle, 353 BC/1992). Wisdom is another type of knowledge, like prudence. However, unlike prudence, wisdom relies on factual knowledge and intuitive reasoning (Aristotle, 353 BC/1992).

In contrast, epistemologists discuss factive and procedural knowledge. There are diverse species of knowledge in the substantive data that illustrate knowledge's power. The Founding Fathers used various types of knowledge for national and economic development: wisdom; prudence; factive, procedural, and theoretical knowledge; and

various types of strategic knowledge. The Founding Fathers made prudent decisions "in every stage of these oppressions [by seeking] redress in the most humble terms" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). They acknowledged that "prudence … [dictates] that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Prudence and wisdom were alluded to in The Federalist (1787/1998): a "national government whose wisdom and prudence will not be diminished by the passions which actuate the parties immediately interested" (No. 3, p. 15). By acquiring knowledge, the Founders became more prudent as they progressed toward economic and national development, forged alliances, and established commerce (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Knowledge evolved starkly when comparing the language in the Declaration of Independence (idealistic, i.e., "It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.") with the Articles of Confederation (exclusionary, i.e., "paupers, vagabonds, and fugitives from justice," art. 1), and the U.S. Constitution (the legal strategy, i.e., the elastic clause, Article 1, §8, Clause 18).

Strategic knowledge includes a broad range of knowledge: procedural knowledge (know-how), propositional knowledge (know-that), wisdom, prudence, and understanding ("as mankind is more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, rather than right themselves by abolishing the forms they are accustomed to"; Declaration of Independence, 1776). Strategic knowledge is evidenced in the founding documents, but most notably in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution (a revolutionary form of government with checks and balances). Although outside the scope of the substantive content but related to strategic knowledge and the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, the Founders strategically used geopolitical issues to their advantage to weaken Great Britain's position as a superpower (Crowley, 2019).

Knowledge is important to those who govern; it is also important for the people: for "if the people are sufficiently enlightened to see all the dangers that surround them, they will always be represented by a distinct personage" (John Adams, cited in Staff, 1976, p. 208). The Founders emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge as "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind [that] required that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). To communicate with literate colonists, the Founders wrote The Federalist and used it as part of a deliberative process to allow the people to interact and forge a bond with the government; furthermore, they formed a bond that led them to "mutually pledge to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor" (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

Fairness

Fairness is a species of justice and the ethical aspect of equality (Aristotle, 353 BC/1992). However, from the perspective of colonists as subjects and employees of Great Britain, fairness also corresponds with Ryan and Deci's (2000, 2020) findings on motivation, performance, and feedback. The researchers found that positive feedback enhanced intrinsic motivation, which emerges from within the individual, while negative feedback diminished it (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). The effect of negative feedback is like Cohen-Charash and Spector's (2001) finding on fairness, referred to as perceptions of justice. The equity theory (Adams, 1963) is relevant to understanding colonists' experiences because they were treated as "beasts of burden" (Adams, 1776/2022, p. 1). Thus, their experiences paralleled employees experiencing organizational inequity and seeking organizational justice in the

modern context. Organizational justice, the perception of fairness, forms the foundation of organizational equity research. Organizational equity research has expanded beyond distributive justice to procedural and interactional justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Distributive justice focuses on how outcomes are distributed, such as rewards, salaries, promotions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), rights, obligations, and resources (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). In measuring outcomes under distributive justice, affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions are examined because fairness perception affects all three areas (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001, p. 280). The following discussion of fairness will be based on Cohen-Charash and Spector's (2001) meta-analysis study of perceptions of justice.

The British government gave colonists various *rewards*, including resources, rights, and obligations (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). One of the obligations was the imposition of "taxes on us without our consent, dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people, and abdicated government here by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). As a result, the outcome was perceived as unfair, affecting affect, behavior, and cognitive reactions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001, p. 280). There is a possibility that the colonists perceived themselves and the king as attitudinally similar, sharing the same attitude (beliefs, behavior, and emotions) towards something or someone, i.e., "All men are created equal" (Declaration of Independence), and as equals, they all had a right to fair treatment. However, the king, in contrast, saw the colonists as objects, and therefore attitudinally different in that respect. The colonists were attitudinally equal in terms of the colonists' disregard of "paupers, vagabonds, fugitives of justice" (the Articles of Confederation, 1777), and African American captives (The Federalists, 1787/1998), which influenced the affected people's perceptions of fairness (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983).

Although equity may be preferred in personal relationships, during business relationships, equality is preferred over equity in four areas: perception of attitudinal similarity, perception of future exchange, affective closeness, and relationship duration (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). As subjects of Great Britain, the colonists experienced unfairness throughout their relationship with Great Britain: The king "refused for a long time to cause others to be elected … in the [meantime] exposed [them] to all the Dangers of Invasion from without and convulsions within" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). However, the colonists were moved to "conjure [Great Britain] by the ties of … common kindred;" however, "they, too, have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The evidence suggests the king did not perceive the colonies as attitudinally similar throughout their relationship. Moreover, colonists experienced inequity in "other types of justice judgments," such as procedural and interactional justice (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983, p. 219).

It has become increasingly important to examine the role of process in organizational justice in recent years. Consequently, in procedural justice, affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to unfairness are organization-focused (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Procedural justice refers to equity in a procedure that facilitates performance outcomes (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). In some cases, procedural justice is the most important factor of organizational justice and the most complicated, consisting of six principles that, if followed, produce a more equitable work environment than would otherwise be the case (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). The six principles cited by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) are paraphrased as follows:

- The consistency rule (consistency over time and across employees).
- The bias suppression rule (measures to suppress self-interest bias in decision-making).
- The accuracy rule (reliability of information used in the process).
- The correctability rule (means of correcting an unfair rule).
- The representativeness rule (representation of the interests of the affected parties in the process).
- The ethicality rule (ethical and moral values of the perceiver are represented; p. 280).

Like distributive justice, perceived unfairness affects the aggrieved employee's cognition, emotions, and behavior. In contrast, distributive justice triggers an outcome-focused reaction by the affected perceiver, and responses to perceived unfairness in the organizational process trigger organization-focused reactions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Beyond these two types of justice, procedural justice principles relate to colonists' experiences. Great Britain had consistently increased colonists' taxes without their consent. Procedurally, the king had "called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Furthermore, he deprived colonists "in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury [and sent them] beyond [the] seas to be tried for pretended offenses" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The colonists appealed to their "native justice and magnanimity … and conjured their common kindred to disavow the king's usurpations" as measures to suppress the king's bias (Declaration of Independence, 1776). However, "their repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Great Britain refused to represent the colonies' interests: "The king [has] refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people unless those people relinquish the right of representation in the legislature [and have] dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Moreover, procedural justice is deliberately lacking based on the king's "repeated injury," refusal to "assent to laws," and contributions to "a long list of abuses and usurpations" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Not only did the king violate democratic principles, but he also intended "to reduce them under absolute despotism" (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

In addition, poor distributive and procedural justice outcomes affect interactional justice, the third type of fairness judgment. Interactional justice, the interaction between the person who controls rewards and resources and the receiver of justice, relates to the interpersonal aspect of organizational fairness and is an extension of procedural justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to perceived unfairness in interactional justice focus on managers' or representatives' interactions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Some factors considered in interactional justice are communication, politeness, respect, and honesty (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). When considering these factors, there is little doubt that the interactions between the colonists as tax-paying subjects of the king were strained. Interactional justice looks at the quality of communication between colonists and Great Britain. Communication between the colonists and Great Britain was one-sided but respectful. The colonists "appealed to" and "conjured" the king and his representatives "but were met with feigned disinterest" by a king who was "deaf to the voice of justice and consanguinity, declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us" (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

Among the organizational justice measures, procedural and interactional justice are most relevant to the Founders' experiences with Great Britain and the democratic social change process. Furthermore, Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) found that males, when contrasted with females, were more concerned about protecting their interests in reward allocation, more likely to react strongly to unfair outcomes, and more likely to have increased self-esteem in the face of unfairness. According to the theory of equity, it could be argued that the Founders' strong reaction to unfair outcomes resulted from a predominantly male characteristic associated with organizational justice. Males also value the group value of increased self-esteem when confronted with injustice. Research on motivation (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Maslow, 1954/1987; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020), as well as the role of emotion in motivation and social change (Christiansen, 2009; Goodwin et al., 2001), supports the interpretation of the Founders' reaction to justice. The indignation from Great Britain's dehumanizing subjugation strategies led to moral consciousness and stirred emotions (see Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; see also Freire, 1970/2018; Goodwin et al., 2001) that mobilized the Founders to "effect their safety and happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). The Founders noted that whereas preceding generations were "disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed," this generation had a high evaluation of themselves in the face of inequity, evidenced by "all men are created equal" and the war for independence (Declaration of Independence, 1776). To that end, they mutually pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to each other and emerged victorious (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

Human Dignity

Although indignation from being treated inhumanely can be motivational (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Freire, 1970/2018; Hojman & Miranda, 2018; Vinthagen, 2015; Ziedonis et al., 2016), recognizing and respecting human dignity empowers and promotes a sense of pride in self, improve self-respect, and lead to self-determination and well-being (Hojman, 2018; Vinthagen, 2015; Ziedonis et al., 2016). Empowerment leads to optimism and emancipation. Human dignity undergirds all ethical principles (Autiero, 2020). Human rights are empirical markers that support human dignity. Nothing can be added to or subtracted from a person's intrinsic worth. "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776) is commensurate with human dignity. Absent respect and recognition of human life's worth, there will be child trafficking, enslavement, cruel experiments, toxic drinking water, and other abuses. The demand for human dignity led to the Revolutionary War. Few behaviors disempower and assault human dignity more than dehumanization and subjugation (i.e., being treated as "beasts of burden;" Adams, 1776/2022, p. 1). Deci and Ryan's (2020) self-determination theory and Maslow's self-actualization theory of motivation contain species of the principles of democracy and thus support the empowerment dispositions of the principles, which are undergirded by human dignity. Using Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory, the three concepts uphold the socio-ethical framework: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The three basic psychological needs foster positive processes (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Of the three, human dignity is manifested most in autonomy, "taking responsibility for one's own actions ... supported by experiences of interest and values" (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 2).

Although Ryan and Deci's intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are not synonymous with human dignity, they enhance the capacity to explore, challenge, and enjoy oneself (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is

autonomous; however, extrinsic motivation is non-autonomous and does not produce intrinsic satisfaction but is instrumental in that behavior changes based on external rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is that values can become self-determined if internalized and integrated (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). Ryan and Deci (2000) define internalization as the adoption or "taking in" (p. 71) of a behavior, idea, or value. Integration subsequently results in individuals identifying with and adopting the value as their own, thereby making the behavior or value "truly self-determining" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). Moreover, internalization can be facilitated by acknowledging and experiencing others' feelings (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, through the internalization and integration of Patrick Henry's (1775) and Samuel Adam's (1776) values in their Liberty or Death and American Independence speeches, colonists continued their fight for respect for human dignity and independence. Likewise, the Founders used the Declaration of Independence to motivate colonists extrinsically (i.e., "All men are created equal"). The "long train of abuses and usurpations" (Declaration of Independence, 1776) was an appeal to those with "a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, and a monied interest, with many lesser interests" (The Federalist No. 10, 1787/1998, p.34).

In Maslow's (1954/1987) work, human dignity is self-actualization but is associated with esteem. Respect for human dignity was not part of the doxa for the colonists. It can be stated that the colonists participated in their oppression by accepting social distinctions between themselves and the monarchy. The Founders created the social consciousness that "All men are created equal" in intrinsic human worth. Moreover that:

Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute [a] new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness (Declaration of Independence, 1776).

Hope

Snyder developed a motivational theory of hope, defining hope as "the sum of perceived capabilities, along with [the] perceived motivation to achieve [the] desired goal" (2000, p. 8). According to Snyder, Irving, and Anderson, hope is motivational. To Snyder, hope is "a positive motivational state" derived from a "sense of agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to accomplish goals)" (2000, p. 8). Snyder proposed a third definition of hope: "a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed determination) and pathways (planning to meet goals;" 2000, p. 8, 9). Through the trilogy of goals, pathways, and agency proposed by Snyder, hope is as motivational as goal-driven, and the individual's conscious mind is focused on and determined to achieve their goal. People can envision plausible routes to achieving their goals using pathways. Agency is the mental willpower that motivates people towards their "imagined pathways to goals" (Snyder, 2000, p. 10). It is important to recognize that hope is not merely a mental representation or an exercise of imagination. Rather, it is the ability to develop plausible paths through which an individual can achieve their goal, provided they have the willpower to achieve it (Snyder, 2000). Therefore, hope leads to action based on the belief in a favorable outcome (Bloch, 1959/1986; Snyder, 2000) and security (i.e., "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness;" Declaration of Independence, 1776) "in Order to form a more perfect Union …;" U.S. Const.). During

elections and social change movements (Blöser et al., 2020; Pleeging, 2022), hope plays a significant role in disarming and influencing individuals to act. Hope transcends hardship and combats apathy by instilling the courage to imagine better circumstances in the future (Bloch, 1959/1986; Pleeging, 2022; Snyder, 2000). Human suffering can be prolonged by hope (Pleeging, 2022) when there is no immediate pathway to fulfill that which is hoped for. People can eventually envision a positive outcome by internalizing and integrating others' hopes (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020; Blöser, 2020; Pleeging, 2022; Snow, 2018), a process that can be exploited to transfer false hope. The importance of hope extends beyond the fact that it binds the governed with the government. When citizens defer authority to the government instead of taking matters into their own hands, hope increases voter participation, encourages peaceful protests, or empowers the government to make decisions. Hope is essential because it is infused with faith and courage (Bloch, 1959/1986). Hope nurtures the democratic ideals that "governments are instituted among men and derive their just powers from the consent of the governed" (Declaration of Independence, 1776) and that "government by the people, for the people, and of the people shall not perish from the earth" (Lincoln, 1863, p. 1). Hope fosters trust in political leaders, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., vaccinations, public distancing, and mask-wearing; Dwyer, 2020; Kelly, 2020).

Finally, hope applies to all areas where people aspire, set goals, find pathways, and take action to achieve their goals. Ryan and Deci discuss motivation as enhancing the capacity for exploration, challenges, and enjoyment of oneself (2020). Intrinsic motivation is autonomous. Using Ryan and Deci's (2000, 2020) self-determination framework, hope is reflected in intrinsic motivation. As a result of intrinsic motivation, individuals can seek out new challenges and opportunities, extend the capacity to discover and learn, and "represent a principal source of enjoyment and vitality throughout life" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). When an individual feels secure, has a sense of belonging, and has their feelings acknowledged, intrinsic motivation flourishes (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As a result of their ability to leverage a wide range of knowledge and achieve independence, it can be asserted that the Founders were intrinsically motivated.

Unity

Unity is "an arranged order which is intended to promote individual fulfillment" and "advances the communal good as a means of individual fulfillment" (De Leonardis, 1998, p. 137). As a result of unity, social order is maintained, and society is protected from injustice, isolation, alienation, and social disintegration (Durkheim, 1982; Maslow, 1954/1987; Ross, 2017). Moreover, the power of democracy is based on the principle of unity, the social glue that holds the other first principles together. The spirit of unity promotes a "commitment to the overall well-being of both the community as a whole and each constituent member of the community" (De Leonardis, 1998, p. 138). Accepting "personal responsibilities for enhancing the life of [their] community ... others enhance their own life as well" (De Leonardis, 1998, p. 138). Unity links humanity "through bonds of mutual concern," making "the good of all … the goal of each," creating "a community animated by a spirit of active commitment to the overall well-being of both the community as a whole and each constituent member" (De Leonardis, 1998, p. 137) by accomplishing common goals (Kotzur, 2017, p. 40). Unity is reflected in relatedness, the sense of belonging engendered by respect and care (Ryan & Deci, 2020), and in Maslow's theory, the need for love, belonging, and unity (Maslow, 1954/1987). Unity is evident in "We mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor"

(Declaration of Independence, 1776), in the Articles of Confederation (1775), "to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the different States in this Union, the free inhabitants of each of these States," and the U.S. Constitution, "We the People of the United States".

Security

Maslow's (1954/1987) self-actualization theory contrasts with the self-determination theory. According to self-actualization theory, individuals first satisfy basic needs, followed by satisfying other less immediate needs through a process that leads to self-actualization. Psychological needs that impact motivation and well-being include safety (security) and physiological needs (food and water security), along with love, belonging, and esteem (emotional security, unity, and knowledge; Maslow, 1954/1987) as psychological needs that must be met before one can achieve self-actualization (human dignity). By meeting physiological and safety needs, individuals can satisfy higher needs and become fully autonomous (Maslow, 1954/1987). Maslow's esteem is classified as emotional security in the socio-ethical framework. Esteem can be gained through competence or vice versa. Esteem has two components: the need for mastery and respect from others (Maslow, 1954/1987, p. 45). According to Maslow, individuals need high self-evaluation— "self-respect, or self-esteem, and the self-esteem of others" (1954/1987, p. 45)—which, when satisfied, leads to "feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world" (p. 45).

Several security elements are listed in Kaul's Human Development Report of 1994. Human security is generally measured by well-being (Kaul, 1995). The different types of security include economic, food, health, environmental, social, and political (Kaul, 1995). A sense of security is related to well-being and the common good. Well-being, like security, consists of various components: spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological, social (Ruggeri et al., 2020), and physical (Capio et al., 2014). A more meaningful measure of well-being considers objective and subjective measures of well-being while assessing people, outcomes, and the distribution of well-being among groups (OECD, 2013). However, human security and well-being are primarily determined by national economic security. As with the other principles, security can be a motivating factor, as well as a process and an outcome that facilitates social change.

Security played a significant role in American independence, self-determination, national development, safety, peace of mind, and the unification of colonists against Great Britain. Security was a goal of the Declaration of Independence ("to institute a new government;" 1776), the Articles of Confederation ("to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the different States in this Union;" 1777), the U.S. Constitution ("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"), and The Federalist Papers No. 2 ("It is not yet forgotten that well-grounded apprehensions of imminent danger induced the people of America to form the memorable Congress of 1774;" 1787/1998, p. 10). Security is the essence of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Security contributed to the Revolutionary War (i.e., economic and national security and domestic tranquility), the Articles of Confederation (i.e., national unity and security, criminalized treason, and the foreign emoluments clause), and the U.S. Constitution (i.e., domestic tranquility, common defense, and general welfare). Security also contributed to changes in the American system of

government. It was also a continuous theme of The Federalist, the nation's survival (see the National Security Report of the United States [NSS]; n.d.), and the U.S. Constitution's preamble. As the nation's most influential founding document, the U.S. Constitution addresses security issues: "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). Security "is the final cause of [a] political society" (Erkiner & Akoudou, 2021, p. 3).

To investigate the extent to which empowerment principles and anti-democratic tenets have been institutionalized, Google was intuitively search for the phrase "White House Reports". There are several first principles of democracy/socio-ethical principles and their species in the NSS: a report mandated by the Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986 (Secretary of Defense, n.d.) and published by every administration since the Reagan administration. In 1987, Reagan sent the first report to Congress. Reports must "include a discussion of the United States' international interests, commitments, objectives, and policies, along with defense capabilities necessary to deter threats and implement U.S. security plans" (Secretary of Defense, n.d., p. 1). The reports were randomly selected by year and compared and contrasted with the other reports (White House, 1987, 1999, 2015, 2017). The subsequent reports were more sophisticated and contained more socio-ethical principles than earlier ones. Several findings suggest that power strategies have been institutionalized, which lends credence to the idea that oppressive strategies have been institutionalized. Despite the NSS being written in general terms, they provide an overview of the nation's national security strategy. However, the function of the anti-democratic strategies in the report is to assess foreign threats to national security and monitor the consent of the governed (Declaration of Independence) and whether the "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth" (Gettysburg Address, 1863), showing that this security is still fundamental to the U.S.

Discussion

Human dignity is the principle that undergirds the other first principles of democracy in the socio-ethical framework. Any government that wishes to be recognized as a government for the people must take a human dignity approach to governance. Human dignity has rarely been accepted in American jurisprudence as being incorporated into the nation's founding documents (Rao, 2007). However, it has been permanently enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution as a national principle, namely the principle that empowered the Founders to demand Great Britain's respect. History, like the Declaration of Independence, The Federalist Papers, and the U.S. Constitution bear evidence that human dignity has never been disregarded due to a lack of knowledge but has been disregarded when forming political strategies used in governance, an approach that can reflect the worst in human nature (The Federalist Papers, 1787/1998).

Policymakers have recognized the importance of human dignity and have attempted to relieve oppression resulting from not recognizing human dignity, albeit through an incremental process, with the most recent examples being Dobbs v. Jackson's Women's Health Organization (2022) and Obergefell v. Hodges (2015). The incremental recognition of human dignity has been through an empowerment process that incorporates or tolerates disempowerment strategies to moderate the pace of democratic social change. This dual strategy has led Congressional members to withhold a unified socio-ethical framework relevant to the republican form of government. This has consequently delayed the integration of socio-ethical principles of democracy into American

political discourse and has subsequently limited human and civil rights. Implementing a socio-ethical framework that acknowledges empowerment and disempowerment would allow Americans to hold their representatives accountable for upholding ethical conduct that preserves and promotes human dignity. The socio-ethical principles framework could guide policy decisions, strengthen democracy, and promote social change.

Conclusion

Although motivational theories were referenced in this work (Adams, 1963; Bloch, 1986; Blöser et al., 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1954/1987; Snyder, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020), no frameworks incorporate all six concepts: knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, and security into a single framework. Maslow included five concepts starting at the bottom with physiological needs leading to self-actualization, while Ryan and Deci integrated three into their model. Snyder, Bloch, and Blöser et al. focused on single-concept motivational theories. A similar phenomenon was observed with democratic concepts.

American scholars have incorporated De Tocqueville's vision of democracy throughout their works since he published *Democracy in America* (1839/2002). A review of seminal works on democracy (Allen, 2014; Black, 2018, 2020, 2022; Butts, 1980; Connolly, 2010; Christiano, 2003; Dahl, 1971, 2001; De Tocqueville, 1839/2002; Giridharadas, 2018; Kendi, 2016; and Mencken, 1926) revealed that scholars often mention only a few American democratic values. Human dignity, education, equity, and unity were mentioned or alluded to by even fewer scholars. With the exception of Butts (1980, 1988), who proposed a decalogue of civic values, democratic values are most frequently discussed through political ideology, with equality reflecting the political left and liberty reflecting the political right (Eisgruber, 2007).

However, because of the universality of the concepts, the framework could be embraced by both originalists and living constitutionalists. In representing “the SPIRIT of the Constitution, [they] will enable … [the U.S. Supreme Court] to mould them into whatever shape it may think proper” (The Federalist (1787/1998) No. 81, p. 529). Traditional democratic values were distinguished from the first principles of democracy by the distinct characteristics of the frameworks:

(a) The democratic values are culturally specific, whereas the democratic principles are universal.

(b) The democratic principles framework is normative, whereas the democratic values framework is political.

(c) The democratic values framework relies on extrinsic empowerment, whereas the normative principles framework relies on intrinsic empowerment.

The socio-ethical grounded theory contains concepts that promote a culture of ethics, resilience, and freedom.

The constructed socio-ethical framework meets Foldvary’s (1980) vision of a universal ethics that does not “replace personal or cultural ethics” (p. 53) or play “a numbers game” but rather “balances benefits against harms” (p. 133). However, the first principles of democracy framework was constructed using creative abduction (see Bruscaglioni, 2016); therefore, further research is required to confirm or disconfirm the disposition of the first principles of democracy as normative, motivating, and conducive to achieving democratic social change.

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

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