

The Polarities of Democracy:
A Theoretical Framework for Building a Healthy, Sustainable, and Just World.

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CHAPTER 7 PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

Introduction to Chapter 7

In Chapter 4, drawing on Johnson's (1996) generic polarity of "Doing/Being" (p. 221), I identified both polarities of meaning (where the meanings are opposites) and polarities of function (where one polarity is the means by which the other polarity is achieved). Thus, I have presented freedom-authority, diversity-equality, and human rights-communal obligations as polarities of meaning while I have labeled justice-due-process as a polarity of function. However, I believe the polarity of participation and representation represents a hybrid of a polarity of meaning and a polarity of function. In this respect, this polarity is unique among the five pairs of polarities that I include within the Polarities of Democracy.

Specifically, when the participation-representation polarity is managed effectively, an upside of representation is to serve as a process whereby the individual's ability to engage in participation is strengthened and/or regenerated. In this case, representation serves as a polarity of function, a means by which participation is achieved. Yet in some cases, in order to fulfill its role as a polarity of function, representation will be found to be the opposite of participation, whereby it will allow for an individual's disengagement from the participatory process, thereby providing the individual the needed time for regeneration of participatory inclination and ability. In this circumstance, while remaining a polarity of function, representation also takes on a polarity of meaning.

Thus, in Section 1 of this chapter I explore the characteristics, upsides, and downsides of participation and representation as the fifth and final pair of polarities within the Polarities of Democracy model. Then, in Section 2, I first use the questions that I drew from Johnson (1996) in

Chapter 2 to examine a) whether or not a polarity relationship exists for participation and representation, and b) if so, the extent to which the polarity conforms to the expectations of Johnson's model. I then examine the interrelationship of participation and representation with the other elements of the Polarities of Democracy model.

Section 1. The Characteristics, Upsides, and Downsides of Participation and Representation

Participation vs. Representation

In introducing the participation-representation polarity, I have presented representation as a polarity of function for participation, a necessary means to enable participation to flourish. In this view, participation is presented as an essential element of democratic theory, and certainly it is one of the elements most consistently identified in general and workplace democracy literature as an essential element of democracy. Yet, there are those who challenge this concept, and I address their concerns first.

As I noted in Chapter 1, Young (2002) views representative forms of democracy as necessary not only for nations or large organizations, but also for neighborhoods and workplaces. At the same time, Young supports my position that participation is also necessary for the effective functioning of democracy. But there are theorists who elevate representation to a level wherein it becomes "the distinctive feature of democracy" as noted disdainfully by Pateman (1970, p. 4). Schumpeter (1943), Berelson (1952), and Dahl (1956) are among those advocating this point of view, in which democracy is thought of as only method and the concept that democracy serves as an ideal (such as my contention that the purpose of democracy is to overcome oppression) is rejected.

Pateman (1970) tells us that, beginning with Schumpeter in 1943, an entire school of theorists emerged who have led a significant debate within the field of political science as to the role of

participation as an element of democracy. They have argued that participation (other than voting) should not play a significant role in the democratic process. This school of thought believes that the limitation on participation is necessary in order to ensure stability of the community. Their argument is that significant participation invites chaos because they believe that many (if not most) citizens do not have the capacity to participate on complex issues in an informed way. In this school of thought, participation is linked more with totalitarianism than democracy. Pateman (1970) reports that much of the thinking which informs this point of view arose from very real concerns: "The collapse of the Weimar Republic, with its high rates of mass participation, into fascism, and the post-war establishment of totalitarian regimes based on mass participation, albeit participation backed by intimidation and coercion" (p. 2).

In Schumpeter's (1943) view "Democracy is a political method, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political-legislative and administrative-decisions" (p. 243). Thus, Pateman (1970) tells us that Schumpeter saw democracy as "a theory unassociated with any particular ideals or ends" (p. 3). Interestingly, as is discussed later in this chapter, Schumpeter's view of democracy as a means without ends coincides precisely with that of Mason (1982), who, despite this similar starting point, comes to an opposite conclusion: that the only defining element of democracy is participation.

Pateman (1970) labels the arguments of those in the anti-participation school as "the contemporary theory of democracy" (p. 13). She also tells us that, despite the origins of their opposition to participation arising from their association of it with totalitarianism, at least one proponent of this school incongruently comes to the conclusion that a stable democracy requires a governmental pattern that has a "healthy element of authoritarianism" (Eckstein, 1966, p. 262).

Within the contemporary school of thought, participation is viewed only as playing a limited roll; that is, of ensuring the protection of “the private interests of each citizen” (Pateman, 1970, p. 20).

Pateman tells us that those supporting the contemporary theory of democratic participation base their position on the rejection of a supposed classical theory, without providing citations to back up their interpretation of this supposed classical theory. Pateman debunks the classical theory (as presented by the contemporaries) as a myth and provides citations to show that the classicists’ ideas were much deeper than how they are portrayed by the contemporaries.

Pateman acknowledges that such classicists as Jeremy Bentham and James Mill did provide descriptions of participation that can reasonably be described as conforming to the protectionist views of participation expressed by Schumpeter and the other contemporaries. However, she finds that the reason for this is that “Mill and Bentham are concerned almost entirely with the national ‘institutional arrangements’ of the political system” (p. 19). Pateman tells us that within their construct: “The participation of the people has a very narrow function; it ensures that good government, i.e. ‘government in the universal interest’, is achieved through the sanction of loss of office.”

Pateman (1970) goes on to point out that there are other classicists, such as Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, who provide a competing and more robust version of participation. She refers to these theorists as “theorists of participatory democracy” (p. 20). For these theorists, “participation has far wider functions and is central to the establishment and maintenance of a democratic polity, the latter being regarded not just as a set of national representative institutions but what I shall call a participatory society.”

Participation

I turn now to my examination of participation as an essential element of the Polarities of

Democracy model wherein my view of participation is in juxtaposition with the contemporary theories of Schumpeter and is consistent with the work of Rousseau, J. S. Mill, and Pateman. I begin with my assertion that participation is a human right and go on to explore upsides associated with three interrelated functions that participation serves, particularly in terms of workplace democracy: a) providing worker control of decision-making; b) providing a learning process; and c) impacting human development. In this examination, I am describing participatory systems in which workers have meaningful and effective participation. This should not be confused with pseudo-participatory systems (described by Bernstein, 1976; Verba, 1961; Selener, 1997, among others) in which organizations seek only to create the perception that workers are participating, while real decision-making power remains in the hands of management.

Participation as a Human Right

While I have specified Human Rights as one of the elements of the Polarities of Democracy model, each of the other elements of the Polarities of Democracy (as I noted in Chapter 6) entails both rights and obligations, but they are separated out because of two factors: a) their prominence within the literature; or b) both rights and obligations accrue to each side of the specific polarity. For example, while participation certainly should be viewed as a human right that must be guaranteed, Bernstein (1976) nevertheless sets it apart as a separate element of his model of workplace democratization. As I do with the Polarities of Democracy, Bernstein presents worker participation as such a major element of workplace democratization that it must have its own place in addition to the general category of human rights. Also providing support for the concept of participation as a human right is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Article 23 (4) states “Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his [sic] interests” (p. 5). This certainly implies that worker

participation is indeed a human right.

Pateman (1970) explores the ways in which participatory theorists view participation as essential for humans exercising control over their own lives and their world. Thus, if participation is essential for attaining control over our lives, and if one of the purposes of democracy is to allow people (particularly workers) to gain control over their lives, then participation that enables worker control can be seen as an essential element of workplace democracy and as a human right.

Melman (2001) provides more specificity to the concept of worker control by presenting worker participation in decision making as a human right. Thus, Melman asserts that decisions about technology must be made in the interests of the workers and the community (i.e., organizations have obligations to both workers and to the community). Melman believes that these obligations stem from the reality that production is a necessary condition to ensure survival of both individuals and society. Most significantly, Melman argues that workers have a right to participate in decision-making through workplace democracy because the failure to do so ensures the continued “inattention to occupational illness” (p. 404) such as the devastating problems afflicting workers in the US through the “epidemic of repetitive strain injuries.”

Ellerman (1990) also concurs that worker participation in decision-making is a human right. He states: “Decision-making capacity is de facto inalienable. A person cannot in fact alienate his or her decision-making capacity....’Deciding to do as one is told’ is only another way of deciding what to do” (p. 65). Poole (1975) adds that worker participation is: “the most appropriate solution to the problems of alienation in modern industrial societies” (p. 3). Similarly, Melman (2001) views participation in decision-making as an inalienable right that lies at the heart of the struggle for workplace democracy. Melman states “As I argue throughout this study, workers have struggled constantly to create and

operate an alternative, a disalienated form of decision-making that is at the core of workplace democracy” (p. 13). Melman goes on to place this struggle in an historical context:

The installation of the employment relation introduced new rules for the decision-making and producing occupations, and defined much of the change from feudalism to capitalism. So, too, the introduction of worker decision-making as the guiding principle of production will be the crucial element in a transformation from capitalism to workplace democracy. (p. 393)

Starting from this premise of worker participation in decision-making as a human right, I now examine the upsides and downsides of participation. As will be seen throughout this section, the upsides of participation accrue to both the individual worker and the organization (or the community) as a whole.

Participation: Providing Worker Control of Decision-Making

One of the earliest researchers in the area of workplace democracy, Bernstein (1976) defines participation as worker control; specifically “meaningful participation in decision-making is consistently available to each member (at least within his [sic] area of competence and concern)” (p. 9). Further support for the concept of participation as worker control comes from Karasek and Theorell’s (1990) Demand-Control model that demonstrates the extent to which workers require control over their jobs in order to reduce occupational stress. Shapiro (1999) adds that those who have the most at stake have the greatest claim to the right to participation. Consequently, he recognizes that one of the most significant challenges for participation is to “come up with decision rules that can reconcile the purposes of different activities with the best possible democratic control of the power relations that structure them” (p. 237).

Thus, the challenge becomes ensuring that participation achieves worker control of the decision-

making process. As noted above, Mason (1982) defines workplace democracy solely in terms of participation (contrary to my position). He ascribes no other values to democracy, other than to the extent that they promote participation. He believes that the term democracy has been greatly misunderstood and appropriated by many theorists who are patently un-democratic. He believes that no nation has attained the democratic ideal; thus he finds that, as noted in Chapter 1, “democracy cannot be viewed as synonymous with any nation, nor can any nation serve as a normative standard against which others are judged” (p. 28). He adds that worker participation must be “widespread and effective” (p. 26) particularly as it relates to decision making. Mason further defines “widespread and effective” by stipulating five dimensions of participation: “extensity, scope, mode, intensity, and quality” (p. 154). But this brings up the contradiction in Mason’s position. Since Mason has limited workplace democracy only to the concept of participation, and since effective participation in decision making is only possible with equality of access to information by all, it appears that his concept of democracy must embrace other elements such as equality.

Similarly, Karasek and Theorell (1990) join Mason (1982) in defining workplace participation as effective and meaningful participation in the decision making process. However, they also somewhat confuse the issue by both distancing themselves from workplace democracy (as described in Chapter 1) while equating participation in the decision making process with worker control, a concept that appears to require all of the elements contained within the Polarities of Democracy model. In this vein, they point out that (as noted elsewhere) “The primary work-related risk factor [for occupational stress] appears to be lack of control over how one meets the job’s demands and how one uses one’s skills” (p. 9). They go on to show that: “In many cases, elevation of risk with a demanding job appears only when these demands occur in interaction with low control on the job.” Yet they do not address all of the

other elements within the Polarities of Democracy, each of which appears to be related to the issue of worker control (e.g., my freedom-authority polarity, the effective management of which addresses imbalances of power within the workplace - a factor that significantly impacts the issue of meaningful worker control).

Expanding on the meaning of effective participation in decision-making, Blake and Mouton (1987) describe it as decisions that result in “understanding and agreement” (p. 89). In their definition, decision-making is seen as reaching the soundest outcome rather than reaching the outcome desired by whoever has the most power. Yet they do not suggest a mechanism (other than employer good will) through which disparate levels of power may be controlled.

Melman (2001) does offer such a mechanism and provides further elaboration on the concept of effective participation in decision making. Reporting on the “Partnership Agreement” (p. 296) forged by the Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Company and its unions, Melman finds that: “the most striking feature of the agreement is its emphasis on the importance of consensus decision-making.” He further notes that “Agreement on the use of consensus method by management and union bears upon every aspect of worker and management decision-making, for it constitutes a recognition of the union as a co-equal power.” Interestingly, consensus decision-making is an essential element of Blake and Mouton’s (1987) collaborative leadership style. The difference is that with Blake and Mouton, implementation of the consensus decision-making process remains a prerogative of management that can always be taken away. The contractual partnership reported on by Melman overcomes the disparate power of management versus worker by creating a contractual obligation that must be fulfilled.

But if participation means worker control of the decision-making process, then there are

significant upsides not just for the workers but for the organizations as well. Among the upsides of participation in decision-making, Mason (1982) sees the development of better decisions and notes that this has been recognized as far back as Aristotle. However, Mason continues to ignore the importance of other elements of a democratic system which go into making participation in decision making an equitable process, in which all voices are heard and decisions are reached on the basis of the soundest arguments, not who has the most power. Mason avoids considering that other elements are necessary for democracy by providing the generalization that participation must be widespread and effective. But (as noted above) other essential elements of democracy (e.g. diversity-equality, freedom-authority) are required to enable participation to be widespread and effective.

Melman (2001) explores extensive research that lends support to the idea that one of the upsides of worker participation in decision-making is that it leads to better decisions, and thus, to “increased productivity” (p. 250). In several studies of companies engaged in production, Melman reports that:

What is striking is that the nature of the operations performed is unaltered, as is the design of the machines. What is changed is the maintenance attention given by the production workers to the operation of machines, the care given to the adjustment of the machines and worker attention to uncovering and correcting sources of possible defects. (p. 425)

Schweickart (2002) joins in reporting on the extensive research linking worker participation in decision making with increased productivity. He goes on to add that: “participation is most conducive to enhancing productivity when combined with profit sharing [consistent with the findings of Bernstein, 1976], guaranteed long-range employment, relatively narrow wage differentials, and guaranteed worker rights (such as protection from dismissal except for just cause)” (p. 60).

Providing further support for the idea that worker participation in decision-making benefits both

the worker and the organization, Karasek and Theorell (1990) examine job redesign among health care workers and report that: “increasing the participatory decision-making responsibilities of lower-level staff workers increased their morale substantially and promoted more individualized patterns of patient care which, again, increase the patients’ own capabilities to manage their illness” (p. 198). This leads Karasek and Theorell to “recommend changes like this [increasing worker participation in decision-making] as a strategy to reduce the conventional economic costs of health care--a strategy that could both improve output (patient health) and improve the well-being of health care professionals.” Karasek and Theorell thus conclude that worker participation in decision-making benefits the organization because: “workers have essential information about the actual operation of the system that may never be reflected in the aggregated and structured data bases reviewed by management. This information is vital to productivity” (p. 275).

An additional upside for the organization from worker participation in decision-making is presented by Pateman (1970). She notes the increased extent to which “individuals will conscientiously accept” (p. 27) decisions that have been “arrived at through a participatory decision-making process.” The extent to which such a participatory decision-making process can contribute to both worker satisfaction and organizational excellence also has been extensively articulated by Blake and Mouton (1987).

Finally, Karasek and Theorell (1990) believe that an additional upside of participation (when defined as worker control of the decision-making process) may be to: “offset the negative impact of the job change process itself, often to a significant degree. Thus, if an inevitable stressor in modern society is industrial change, then an effective antidote may be participation in decision making at the workplace” (p. 186).

Participation as an Educational Process

Pateman (1970) notes that the participation of individual citizens in decision making “has a psychological effect on the participants, ensuring that there is a continuing interrelationship between the working of institutions and the psychological qualities and attitudes of individuals interacting within them” (p. 22). Thus, Pateman believes it is the educative function of participation itself that gives the individual the capacity for further participation. This educative function extends to learning the ways in which public and private interests are linked.

Further, the concerns raised by Schumpeter and the other contemporary school advocates regarding the supposed incompetence of most people can be addressed by the use of participation as an experiential educational methodology. The extent to which there actually is a downside of participation brought about by the involvement of unqualified individuals in the decision making process is best addressed not by excluding those individuals from that process but by improving their abilities through successful practice of the participatory process. Indeed, Almond and Verba’s (1963) research supports the idea that participatory democratic experiences in non-governmental settings (such as the workplace) contribute to a sense of political competence in the societal democracy realm. Likewise, Poole (1975) states that worker participation in the decision making process is “the best method of facilitating the development of socially aware and public-spirited people” (p. 3).

Thus, developing adult education practices that can improve the capacity of workers to participate effectively in the decision making process (as I return to in Chapter 8) can play a significant role in preparing workers for participation within society. However, as Blake and Mouton (1987) have demonstrated, while providing such individual skill development is essential for enabling workers to effectively participate, it is not sufficient. Also required are adult education practices that have the

capacity to address the barriers of organizational structure and processes. For this purpose, Blake and Mouton provide exemplary methods that can lead to behavioral changes on the part of those who hold the power that can thwart meaningful participation and instead provide only the token experiences of pseudo-participation. Yet, even these adult education practices may prove insufficient if those who hold the power choose not to pursue such opportunities. Once again, adult education practices applied to social movement efforts become essential in order to work towards the structural changes that are required to ensure legitimate opportunities for participation; so that even those who are otherwise unwilling to create meaningful opportunities for participation find that they are required to provide such processes.

Mason (1982) also believes that active participation in one realm contributes to active participation in other realms. Further, he argues that participation in workplace decision making offers the best practice for participation in the governmental process because the workplace most closely approximates the political realm, in terms of the five dimensions of participation spelled out by Mason (i.e., extensity, scope, mode, intensity, and quality). This leads Mason to conclude that “devolving decision making to the lowest level at which issues can be resolved” (p. 165) is essential if workers are to become effective not only in societal democracy, but also in workplace democracy at the higher levels of the organization. Further, Mason believes that “Through the experience of participation in the workplace, the least participatory members of our society will receive training in participation, training they do not receive elsewhere” (p. 193). To the extent that this happens, workplace democracy can be a powerful tool for generating societal participation among those who, as Mason notes, can: “send a message to government different from the one it is accustomed to hearing.” However, Mason fails to account for the problem that those members of society who are the least participative in government

may be the most likely to be unemployed and therefore the least likely to benefit from increased worker participation.

Adding to the concept that practice in participation at the workplace prepares workers to be participants in societal democracy, Lewis (1986) tells us that “it is the direct participation of people in guiding their own immediate affairs [in the workplace] which gives them the competence to control and judge their representatives’ actions” (p. 5).

Karasek and Theorell (1990) point out that their research indicates that participation in the decision making process is an essential ingredient in the learning process. For example, they state: “In our model, learning occurs in situations that require both individual psychological energy expenditure (demands or challenges) and...decision-making capability. As the individual...chooses how best to cope with a new stressor, that new behavior...will be learned” (p. 92). Karasek and Theorell (1990) not only note the importance of workplace participation as a predictor of societal participation, they also ask: “And what about consumers whose leisure is too passive to require consumption of the products of our modern economy? Passive jobs may simply not support an active economy” (p. 54), thus further highlighting the benefits of worker participation not only for the workers but also for the organization and society as a whole.

However, Pateman (1970) links the learning properties of participation with worker control of decision making. She reminds us that an:

Individual’s (politically relevant) attitudes will depend to a large extent on the authority structure of his [sic] work environment...Specifically, the development of a sense of political efficacy does appear to depend on whether his [sic] work situation allows him [sic] any scope to participate in decision making.” (p. 53)

Participation and Human Development

I next examine the relationship between participation and human development. I approach this examination from three perspectives: a) participation's relationship to development of the individual; b) participation's relationship to development of the community; and c) participation's relationship to development of the human species.

Karasek and Theorell (1990) point out that the findings from the research on workplace democratization conducted in Scandinavia may "indicate an important mechanism by which more control [participation in decision-making] at work may reduce job stress: increased worker self-confidence and self-esteem" (p. 255). This increase in worker self-confidence and self-esteem should support the workers' embracing of freedom as specified by Fromm (1941/1965). While the primary upside of this relationship is of benefit to the individual worker, both the organization and society should benefit from: a) the reduced costs of treatment stemming from the decreasing rate of occupational stress; and b) the increased productivity that should accompany that reduction in occupational stress.

Poole (1975) believes that participation in decision-making can serve "as a means of overcoming major social disadvantages which are consequent upon non-democratic modes of decision-making" (p. 3). Again, the primary beneficiary of this relationship is the individual, yet there is also a benefit for the organization and society (e.g., increased productivity, increased buying power, decreased crime).

Another upside of participation, noted by many including Maslow (1954), Aristotle (1961), and Rawls (1971/1999), is that it generates a desire within the individual to seek higher levels of involvement. Rawls has labeled this "the Aristotelian Principle" (p. 377) and tells us that "whenever a person engages in an activity belonging to some [hierarchical] chain...he [sic] tends to move up the

chain. In general, he [sic] will prefer doing the nth to doing the n-1th activity.” In a related vein, Poole (1975) sees worker participation serving as “a stepping-stone to the fulfillment of certain ‘higher echelons’ of needs which are deemed to be common to all men [sic]” (p. 3).

In terms of community development, Pateman (1970) postulates that participation serves as an “integrative function;...it increases the feeling among individual citizens that they ‘belong’ in their community” (p. 27). Again, Blake and Mouton (1987) have provided extensive research demonstrating that this increased feeling of being part of a community applies to the workplace, where a genuine participatory decision-making process generates increased worker commitment to the organization. Mason (1982), drawing on Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, joins in the idea that participation serves to establish and strengthen the sense of community. Yet, once again, Mason’s own views are contradictory to his argument that participation, regardless of the outcome, is the only test of democracy. Unless the individual’s commitment to the common good is seen as an essential element of democracy (as in the Polarities of Democracy model) why does Mason believe that helping to develop that commitment should be considered an upside of participation? While Mason states that participation is the only defining element of democracy, all of his arguments articulate a vision of democracy that is broader than mere participation. In all cases, the good effects that Mason attributes to participation appear to be consistent with the presence of some other essential element of democracy.

Karasek and Theorell (1990) find a further upside to participation in terms of the social interaction that it generates. Their research reveals that group interaction has a positive effect on both the individual and the work environment. For example, they state “As work conditions...are reported to employers not by individuals but rather by groups of individuals, people lose their fear of self-

deficiency and begin to develop a vocabulary to articulate the causes of their work-related problems” (p. 210). Unfortunately, Karasek and Theorell also note that such workplace participation is not the norm within the US culture. Rather, they find that such jobs as: “assemblers and machine operatives... keypunch operators and telephone operators...more clearly than any other [jobs] represent the automated, machine-paced worker on the assembly line; they embody Taylor’s job design principles” (p. 74). Karasek and Theorell label these workers the “isolated prisoner” and report that: “This combination of psychological characteristics appears to have no clear analogue in most animal societies and there is evidence that such jobs represent a clear sociobiological misfit with human physiological capabilities.”

This difference between the human species and other animals leads to the more general question of the relationship of participation to the evolution of the human species. Mason (1982) views effective participation as human action that is purposeful and linked to the realization of human potential. In this sense his view is consistent with my view of human agency contributing to the positive evolution of the human species. Also consistent with my assumptions as specified in Chapter 1, Mason (1982) sees the elements associated with democracy stemming from both our selfish and altruistic tendencies. Once again, however, his view of democracy appears to be more consistent with a broader concept of democracy than with the value-free notion of participation that he ostensibly supports. For example, he presents his view of participatory democracy as having:

A different view of man’s [sic] nature; liberal democracy [as articulated by Locke] depicts man [sic] largely as self-interested, acquiring, and manipulative; participatory democracy views man [sic] in a much more favorable light, stressing his [sic] ability to conceive of and maintain communities through his [sic] sincere empathy with other people. It conceives of the proper set

of institutions differently; liberal democracy seeks to fashion governmental institutions into a representative form and allow other institutions to favor the free acquisition of property; participatory democracy departs from the simple utilitarian view of institutions and communities and seeks to open them full to popular participation. Finally, it differs as to the proper view of the good life. Liberal democracy stresses acquiring almost exclusively individualistic values; participatory democracy in addition stresses the value of life shared in common with others. (p. 56)

O'Manique (2003) goes even farther. For him, participation is an essential element in the survival of our species. He specifies participation as human agency, which he argues is responsible for the formation of our human cultures which, through human consciousness, now provide the ability to control our evolutionary process. Yet, O'Manique recognizes that participation, in the form of human agency, can only contribute to our human development if our actions are based on sound information and an understanding of "the origins from which we have evolved" (p. 111), thus drawing on both the decision-making and learning process relationships of participation.

The Downsides of Participation

One of the most significant downsides of participation is the possibility that the individual can become overwhelmed, worn-out, and ultimately disengaged and apathetic. For example, Mason (1982) states that one of the downsides of participation is that it can overwhelm the individual by being all-consuming. He acknowledges that "the purest imaginable democracy is no more desirable than it is possible" (p. 30). But, because Mason equates democracy only with participation, he offers no way to

specify the appropriate level of participation. In contrast, viewing participation and representation as polarities offers us a way to seek the upsides of each while eliminating the downsides.

Karasek and Theorell (1990) note that there can be potential downsides of worker participation in decisions about work procedures, if those workers do not have either the opportunity for interaction with other workers or some activity that would provide a regenerative polarity. Karasek and Theorell report that the “U.S. version of just-in-time assembly production is not really a participative, team approach” (p. 266). Rather, they tell us it is one in which “All parts of the system are pushed to peak performance.” So, Karasek and Theorell find that “While workers...have power to alter work routines in cooperative conferences, they must adhere to these adopted procedures rigidly.” Therefore, Karasek and Theorell conclude that “while these jobs would appear to be enriched and ‘active’ they are instead reported as stressful...new job designs where tasks have been packed in, with no opportunity for rest breaks.”

Bernstein’s (1976) research also supports the idea that there can be a downside to “over-participation” (p. 61). He found that even among the firms that he researched in which advanced democratization had occurred, they realized that when workers became involved in every decision, no matter how consequential, it had “taken up too much of their time...[and] was also reducing their decision-making, as a firm, below optimum”. Shapiro (1999) concurs that participation can require so much time as to become unreasonable.

Bernstein’s (1976) research finds that even in firms with advanced democratization (such as the plywood manufacturing cooperatives in the States of Oregon and Washington in the US) there are still varying levels of participation. He reports that they “exhibit a gradation in participation and political maturity somewhat like that reported by political scientists for political democracies in general: a

proportion of activists, a proportion of ‘occasionals,’ and a proportion of ‘apathetics’” (p. 17).

However, for these advanced cases of democratization, Bernstein reports that “the ‘occasional’ and ‘apathetic’ categories seem much smaller than what has been reported about national politics, and the active participants’ category seems significantly larger.”

Saul (1995) notes a downside of participation in such processes as referenda and direct democracy, which actually divert us from the real issues affecting our lives. He tells us that “The modern referendum, as Napoleon understood when he invented it, is the ideal consummation of the rational as irrational, of the anti-democratic posing as democracy” (p. 113). Saul goes on to say: “both the referendum and direct democracy are a happy marriage with corporatism. The complex, real questions are dealt with behind the scenes....As for the citizenry, they are occupied and distracted by the fireworks of their direct involvement.”

As noted above, while I believe that his responses are inappropriate, Schumpeter (1943) has identified very real downsides of participation. Certainly history teaches us that participation has the potential to take the form of violence and mob behavior.

Finally, Fromm (1941/1965) finds a downside of participation in the: “trait which became so prominent in Calvinism; the development of frantic activity and a striving to do something” (p. 111). Fromm states that: “Activity in this sense assumes a compulsory quality: the individual has to be active in order to overcome his [sic] feeling of doubt and powerlessness.”

Representation

In contrast to those theorists like Schumpeter (1943) who place representation as the key element of democracy while shunning participation, Barber (1984) describes those arguments that reject representation as an element of democracy. But Young (2002) provides ample arguments for

considering participation and representation as paired elements of democracy. She concludes that “representation and participation are not alternatives in an inclusive communicative democracy, but require each” (p. 132).

Representation as Regeneration

Perhaps the most significant upside of representation is that it can provide the regenerative process required to enable individuals to participate in the democratic process at the highest possible level. For example, regeneration is grounded in the workplace democracy literature as a scientific and physiological requirement for the human body to be able to perform at peak levels. While Karasek and Theorell (1990) admit that because of the scarcity of the literature their “hypotheses in this area [regeneration and worker health in the workplace] must therefore be speculative” (p. 107); they nevertheless assert: “the importance of this activity [physical regeneration] is attested to by the sheer volume of cell regeneration that is known to occur.”

Another upside of representation that arises from its regenerative aspects (to the extent that it addresses the downside of participation that may lead to exhaustion) is that it may allow for improved human interaction. Karasek and Theorell (1990) note the need for relaxed social interaction. In examining the failure of modern work environments to provide such opportunities, they observe:

What seems to be missing in the modern world is relaxed affiliative behavior, such as the grooming activities displayed in other mammals. This difference, along with the discrepancy between demands and control, seems to be the source of a major potential misfit between human physiology and modern social institutions. (p. 97)

An additional upside of the regeneration that can accompany representation is provided by Fromm (1941/1965) who, as noted above, found a downside of participation in the frantic, meaningless

activity arising from feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. It may be that an upside of regenerative representation, to the extent it allows workers to effectively participate in decision-making (which, as reported by Karasek and Theorell, 1990, can dramatically increase their power and self-esteem), may contribute to the development of the workers' self-confidence, a condition that Fromm believes can contribute to workers embracing their freedom and realizing their human potential.

Also, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) lends support to the idea that regeneration is a human right. Article 24 states: "Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay" (p. 5). Thus, to the extent that representation is necessary to allow the regeneration of participatory inclinations, representation itself may be seen as a human right.

Representation as Legitimation

Representation can provide the rules and structure to ensure that everyone's voice can be heard and considered. Absent formal representative fora, Young (2002) reminds us that it is not always the wisest but often the loudest voice that dominates. Thus, Pitkin (1971) describes representation as including both authorization and accountability.

In this sense, representation can, as Young (2002) tells us, address the "complex realities of democratic process...the web of modern social life [that] ties the action of some people and institutions in one place to consequences in many other places and institutions." (p. 124). Absent this upside of representation, democratic practice that relied only on face-to-face participation would be unthinkable for any activity of broad scale.

Further, Young (2002) notes that representation, if effectively structured, can ensure that

marginalized racial minority groups and/or classes can be assured of the representation that they may be denied through the exertion of power by privileged elites. These structural upsides of representation can be achieved through such means as providing “quotas for women in party lists” (p. 150) or “proportional representation” (p. 152).

Representation and the Workplace

For Melman (2001) representation (in the form of unions) is the essential ingredient for workplace democracy. In the workplace, representation could; a) overcome the downsides of participation such as exhaustion and the resultant apathy; b) provide workers with increased abilities to participate in worker control of decision making; c) contribute to the workers’ capacity for learning and growth (this is especially important as a polarity management tool to enhance the quality of participation beyond the level feared by Schumpeter); d) contribute to the self-confidence and self esteem of workers; and e) contribute to the capacity of workers to embrace commitments to the organization and the community.

The Downsides of Representation

A significant downside of representation is that it may allow the representative to develop increasingly weak relationships with the represented. The more alienated a representative becomes from the represented, the less likely the representation will be effective. When this happens, it detracts from the concept of representation as legitimation.

In addition, in contrast to the potential upside of inclusion for marginalized groups, it is possible that the opposite situation may occur. Representative forms of governance may reproduce the marginalization of groups, and foster an imposition of elite beliefs and decisions on the body politic, whether societal or workplace.

In all of these instances, these downsides of representation may lead to a further downside, the

lack of participation. Young (2002) tells us “When representatives become too separated, constituents lose the sense that they have influence over policy-making, become disaffected, and withdraw their participation” (p. 132).

Having explored the upsides and downsides of participation and representation, I now explore the extent of their polarity relationship. I do so by moving to Section 2, where I use the questions that I drew from Johnson (1996) in Chapter 2 to examine a) whether or not a polarity relationship exists, and b) if so, the extent to which the polarity conforms to the expectations of Johnson’s model.

Section 2. The Polarity Relationship of Participation and Representation

Analysis of Participation and Representation in Relation to the Polarity Management Concept

To analyze the polarity relationship of participation and representation, I now turn to the questions drawn from Johnson (1996) in Chapter 2 to examine: a) whether or not a polarity relationship exists; and b) if so, the extent to which the polarity conforms to the expectations of Johnson’s model.

1. Johnson (1996) asks “is the difficulty ongoing?” (p. 81). Yes. The question of how much participation is appropriate, particularly from the standpoint of how much participation a person can engage in without becoming exhausted, overwhelmed, or apathetic, is not one that can be answered on a universal basis. Each individual possesses varying capacities for participation, and however strong those varying capacities might be, there will always be a need for some process to provide legitimate representation for the individual when the individual’s capacity for participation is exceeded.

2. Johnson (1996) asks “are there two poles which are interdependent?” (p. 81). Yes. Participation absent representation may become overwhelming and thus devolve to apathy. Or, it can lead to the type of frenzied activity described by Fromm (1941/1965). Or, it can degenerate into the kind of mass hysteria feared by Schumpeter (1943). As for representation, because it is primarily a polarity of

function, it is necessary as a means to both enable participation by the individual at the highest level possible, while ensuring that the interests of the individual are represented when it is impossible for the individual to directly participate. However, there certainly are downsides to representative activities that could serve as the regenerative polarity of function for participation, but fail to serve in that function because of the absence of participation. For example, without participation as the polarity to representation, relaxation activities that might otherwise bring about regeneration can easily slip into apathy. Consistent with this observation, Bernstein (1976) has found that when participation is lacking in the workplace, you wind up with apathetic workers. Apathy is one of the downsides of representation (when it fails to perform as a polarity of function for participation). In this case, apathy (a potential downside of representation) is related to the absence of participation (in effect, the opposite of the upside of participation which is more inclined to generate commitment). Thus, apathy can arise from too much participation absent representation, or from activities that could be regenerative but are not because of the lack of participation. In fact, participation itself can be regenerative if is particularly successful (and for some individuals, even unsuccessful participation only serves to regenerate their activities). Particularly because they are primarily polarities of function, neither participation nor representation (or at least representation activities that could be regenerative and/or that also provide legitimate representation for the interests of the individual when direct participation is not possible) works well without the other.

3. Johnson (1996) details three generic polarities (part and whole, self and other, doing and being). Is the polarity consistent with one of Johnson's generic polarities? Yes. In this case participation and representation are primarily a doing-being polarity. Participation is the ideal and representation should be the process through which continued participation is possible, while also providing legitimate

representation for the individual when direct participation is not possible. However, as noted above, sometimes participation and representation also are a polarity of meaning, as when representation allows for forms of regeneration that include non-participative relaxation or disengagement that restores or increases the ability of the worker to engage in further participation.

4. When a polarity exists (as opposed to a solution to be found), Johnson (1996) visualizes his model of polarities as embracing four quadrants with each pole having upsides and downsides. Are there upsides and downsides? Yes. This chapter has specified upsides and downsides of participation and representation. But, if the results of representation actually serve to isolate the individual, (such as through non-participative relaxation or disengagement) then it is possible that representation may lead to apathy. Further, a potential downside of representation may be the loss of the interests of the individual.

5. Johnson (1996) says “the ongoing goal in Polarity Management is to stay in the upper two quadrants as much as possible” (p. 81). Is the goal of this polarity to stay in the upper two quadrants? Yes. The downsides of participation (e.g., exhaustion, apathy) should be avoided and it is through the upsides of representation that this can occur. Also, the failure to maintain the upsides of representation may limit the ability to maintain the upsides of participation.

6. Johnson (1996) says “the clearest opposites...are the downside of one pole and the upside of the other” (p. 9). Are these the clearest opposites? Yes. Once again, if the downsides of participation include exhaustion and apathy, then the upsides of representation are clearly the opposite. Also, the downsides of representation (whether when representation leads to disengagement and apathy or when it fails to represent the interests of the individual represented) are specifically opposite to the upsides of participation.

7. Johnson (1996) says: Whenever there is a push for a shift from one pole of a polarity to the other, it is because those pushing are: 1) Experiencing or anticipating the downsides of the present pole which they identify as the ‘problem,’ and, 2) they are attracted to the upsides of the other pole which they identify as the ‘solution.’ (p. 7)

Is this occurring? Not exactly. In the US the greatest push against participation has come from those who have perceived its downsides but nevertheless have not embraced the upsides of representation. Rather, they have chosen to argue against inclusion of participation within the concept of democracy and have embraced a concept of representation that is limited to the already privileged.

8. Johnson (1996) believes these crusader and tradition-bearing forces both support the positive aspects of the pole they are espousing and fear the negative aspects of the opposite pole. Is this occurring? No. Those who oppose participation generally do not espouse the upsides of representation. Rather they embrace the downsides of representation, limiting representation to the already privileged.

9. When polarities are not recognized and managed, Johnson (1996) maintains that there is a natural pattern of shifting from one polarity to the other. Eventually (assuming power imbalances do not prevent it), he indicates that the downsides of the present pole will prove too much, and the crusaders will be successful in shifting to the opposite pole. The process will then repeat itself, moving back and forth from one pole to the other and moving from the positive quadrants to the negative quadrants in an infinity loop configuration. Under these circumstances we never experience the upsides of both poles simultaneously. Is this occurring? Yes. In the US in particular, the waxing and waning of support for participation appears to be generated by power differentials (opposition to participation on the part of those who have the power) rather than by seeking the true upsides of representation. This situation also is related to the fact that participation and representation are primarily polarities of

function, and only secondarily polarities of meaning.

10. In the case where an organization or society concentrates on only one pole (such as the case where there is an overwhelming power imbalance in favor of either the crusaders or tradition-bearers) Johnson (1996) contends that the upside of that pole is lost and the negative aspects of the pole being focused on will become stronger (i.e., more time will be spent in the downside quadrant of that pole). He says: “Over-emphasize one pole for a long time and you get the downside of both poles. Further, you also tend to lose the benefits [upper quadrants] of both the over emphasized pole and the neglected pole” (p. 156). Is this occurring? Yes. Since the opponents of participation do so not because they espouse legitimate representation but because they seek to deny power to others through limiting their participation, the result is consistent. Lack of participation leads to the powerlessness and apathy that make a person less able or even willing to seek further opportunities for participation.

11. Johnson (1996) believes “There are two major factors which reduce the crusader’s ability to see the whole dilemma” (p. 256). He presents the first factor as:

DURATION:

The longer an individual or group experiences one of the lower quadrants, the more attractive becomes the upper quadrant of the opposite pole and the more difficult it is to see any upside to the present pole or any downside to the other pole. (p. 256)

Is this occurring? No. For those who have been denied participation (and this applies to most workers over the centuries) the opposite is more likely to be true. They are less likely to see the upsides of representation. As for those who overcome this inertia and do see the need for representation, they nevertheless generally remain committed primarily to the upsides of participation.

12. The second major factor that Johnson (1996) believes will “reduce the crusader’s ability to see

the whole dilemma” (p. 256) is intensity. He presents this as:

INTENSITY

The more intense the negative experience in a particular lower quadrant, the more powerful is the crusade to the upside of the opposite pole. Consistent with that, the greater the intensity, the more difficult it is to see the upside of the present pole and the downside of the “ideal” place to which one wants to go. When you combine long duration with a high intensity of suffering, the ability to see all four quadrants is radically impaired. (p. 256)

Is this occurring? Yes. Again, because participation and representation are primarily polarities of function rather than polarities of meaning, those who are crusaders for participation tend not to be crusaders for representation, while those who oppose general participation by the most dispossessed, generally ignore the concept of representation as serving the interests of those who they seek to deny participation.

13. Johnson (1996) believes “there are two major factors which reduce the tradition-bearer’s ability to see the whole dilemma” (p. 258). He presents the first factor as:

INSULATION

Those who benefit most from the upside of a particular pole tend to fall out of touch with those who benefit least and suffer most from the downside of the same pole. The greater the relative benefits a person or group has from the upside of a pole, the more they will insulate themselves from downside realities. (p. 258)

Is this occurring? Yes. Those who benefit most from a lack of worker participation generally have the upsides of participation for themselves. They certainly have fallen out of touch with those who (by being denied opportunities for participation) benefit the least. Further, they are insulated from the day-

to-day reality of those who are denied opportunities for participation. Also, particularly in the US, those who benefit from national representation that excludes the interests of the poor have pursued policies that would further restrict the ability of the poor to participate even in the selection of representatives.

14. The second major factor that Johnson (1996) believes will “reduce the tradition-bearer’s ability to see the whole dilemma” (p. 258) is anticipated loss. He defines this as:

ANTICIPATED LOSS

The greater the anticipated loss from getting caught in the downside of the opposite pole, the more difficult it will be to see the upside of that opposite pole. The combination of insulation and anticipated loss make it very difficult for tradition-bearers to see the whole polarity. (p. 258)

Is this occurring? Yes. Those who have the power to deny worker participation certainly have lost sight of the upsides of either pole as it applies to workers. However, they do not seem to have any difficulty seeing the upsides of participation and representation for themselves. Particularly in the US, this blindness has now extended to the societal realm, where those in power represent the interests of the privileged class and seek to further deny participation to the already disenfranchised because the fear that there will be a more equitable sharing of wealth.

Based on the above analysis, my conclusion is that participation and representation meet the fundamental criteria for polarities as specified by Johnson (1996). They represent a difficulty that is ongoing and there are two poles that are interdependent. On one hand, there is a difficulty maintaining participation at the required level absent some form of representation. On the other hand, representation that could be regenerative can instead lead to apathy absent either the opportunity for

participation or representation that serves only the interests of the most powerful. While participation and representation do not fully conform with the 12 traits anticipated by Johnson, there is enough conformity that, when combined with the fact that they meet the two fundamental criteria, it is clear that they are a polarity.

The Interrelationships of Participation and Representation With The Other Elements of The Polarities of Democracy Model

Rousseau (1983) linked participation with the concept of equality, establishing the essential level of participation as the ownership of property, in order to ensure that each individual has the resources to be able to act independently without being subject to the coercion of those with greater resources. While Rousseau's advocacy of equality was not absolute, even his stress on relative equality seems incomprehensible when viewed against the vast inequalities in wealth and power that characterize our modern world. Yet, as I have explored in other chapters, there are solutions to inequality that can be pursued through the participation (human agency) of adult educators and of others who seek to advance democratic concepts. This linkage of participation and equality is also evidenced in the writing of Cole (1920) and Pateman (1970).

Pateman (1970) tells us that Rousseau also linked participation with issues of freedom and control and that "the more fanciful and sinister interpretations that have been placed on" (p. 25) Rousseau's "most...notorious" statement concerning forcing people to be free "would not have been possible if Rousseau's concept of freedom had been placed firmly in the context of participation." Pateman goes on to explain that for Rousseau, "the way in which an individual can be 'forced' to be free is part and parcel of the same process by which he is 'forcibly' educated through participating in decision making."

As noted above, Karasek and Theorell (1990) suggest that participation in workplace decision-

making may increase worker self-confidence and self-esteem. These are human characteristics that Fromm (1941/1965) found to be necessary to combat our “fear of freedom” (p. xii). Thus, opportunities for participation in workplace decision-making may contribute to our ability to embrace true freedom.

Bernstein (1976) has found that democratization of the workplace includes a feedback loop between participation and the economic rewards provided to workers. Thus, there is an interrelationship between participation and the diversity-equality polarity.

Shapiro (1999) finds an interrelationship between participation and justice. He states: “participation plays a necessary but circumscribed role in ordering social relations justly. Valuable as democratic participation is in managing the power dimensions of collective activities, it is not the point of the exercise” (p. 23).

Shapiro also notes the interrelationship of participation and equality. He argues that corporate power, when allowed to participate unchecked in the democratic process, results in a decision-making process that is skewed in favor of corporate wealth and not necessarily in the interest of people.

Poole (1975) points out the interrelationship between participation and equality. He states that it is necessary for workers to have equal access to the information possessed by managers, in order to participate effectively in the decision-making process.

As noted in Section 1 above, Schweickart (2002) identified four factors that would enhance the ability of worker participation in decision-making to increase productivity: profit sharing, guaranteed long-range employment, relatively narrow wage differentials, and guaranteed worker rights. Thus, he has directly linked participation, justice, equality, and human rights, each of which are elements contained within the Polarities of Democracy.

Conclusion to Chapter 7

In this chapter I have explored the relationship of participation and representation. I have shown the importance of participation to the concept of workplace (and societal) democracy. I have identified representation as a polarity of both function and meaning for participation, particularly to avoid burnout and apathy. I have identified upsides and downsides of both participation and representation and suggested that the upsides of each benefit individual workers, the organization, and the community. I have asserted that upsides of both participation and representation are necessary for both workplace and societal democracy. I have examined the interdependence of participation and representation, and their consistency with the Polarity Management concept. Finally, I have shown the complex interrelatedness of the participation and representation polarity with the other polarity elements contained within the Polarities of Democracy. This concludes my examination of the five pairs of polarities in the Polarities of Democracy model. In the next chapter I draw my conclusions regarding the utility of the Polarities of Democracy.