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A Democratic Approach to Hierarchy

Abstract

Hierarchy, centralized or decentralized, is the basis for organizational structure in modern society. Both the public and private sector alike operate within hierarchical structures. The following paper will look at hierarchy as a social construct. Frederick C. Thayer asserts that society's development of *man-based authority* developed alongside the need to settle in urban centers and collect and redistribute food and other resources (1973, p. A-7). Prior to the development of towns and cities, people did not exist based on systems of hierarchy. Ideals of *cooperation and sharing* allowed human beings to survive. With the rise of civilization however, concepts such as *competition and domination* took precedence over all others (Thayer, 1973, p. A-7).

In the context of United States history, it is possible to observe our story as one of the distribution of *wealth and power* in society (Box, 2008, p. 63). With an ever-growing divide between rich and poor, movements and calls for *social equity* are seen as a solution. Former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, Raghuram G. Rajan, believes that Americans are only concerned about issues involving inequality when the situation becomes extreme (2010, p. 29). Otherwise, the public is generally resistant towards change. The establishment of *hierarchy* as a way of organizing public agencies, corporations, and society at large directly combats the fight *for* social equity.

Modern society is divided into extremes. These divides result in more and more public and private organizations promoting alternatives toward social equity, environmental protection, and participatory-based organizational structures. One way of making an organization more attractive to employees is to make it more *humane* (Thayer, 1973, p. 41). Despite the advocacy for greater citizen participation, employee input, and decentralization, very few organizations *if*

any have truly succeeded in accomplishing the task. The problem rests in the *implementation* of the process to make organizations and society more humane. Public policies promoting increased equity are not enough. Organizational attempts to gain more feedback and open up communication between superiors and subordinates is also not enough. A *complete overhaul* of the way the public views society is required to make actual change. According to Thayer, we have *yet to realize just how much change* is needed in the way we look at the status quo (1973, p. 41).

The following paper will examine hierarchy's place in a democratic society. *Does hierarchy promote or degrade democracy? Can hierarchy, whether centralized or decentralized, work in favor of social equity?* Theories of democracy bring with them the assumption that hierarchy is inevitable if not necessary for democracy to succeed (Thayer, 1973, p. 43). Why then have we continued to attack the superior-subordinate relationship throughout history? Frederick C. Thayer mentions the failures of, "Locke's self-interest liberalism, Smith's individual materialism, and Marx's communism" (1973, p. A-17). All of these influential theories claim to help the individual reach his or her full potential and yet they all have resulted in strengthening the authority of those individuals *on top* of hierarchical structures.

Hierarchy may be necessary for citizens to coexist in society, but the current way in which it is implemented is the source of numerous problems. There are alternatives to the current hierarchical systems that run public organizations and society at large. The reformation of hierarchy does have potential, as hierarchy is manmade and is capable of being changed (Box, 2008, p. 34).

The Random Selection of Organizational Leadership

When viewing society and the organizations that allow it to function, we see those who are in positions of authority first and foremost. Men and women who succeed in running an organization, running for elected office, gaining promotions, or who succeed in the market economy are the people that society bases its standards on. Frederick C. Thayer poses the difficult question which few are brave enough to ask – “Is it legitimate to designate some people as the leaders of others?” (1973, p. A-1). Those who succeed in becoming leaders wish to attribute their success to *their own unique abilities*. The belief is that they, not others, are best suited to lead. To the leader, such a belief is preferable to the idea that they came into a position of authority *through pure randomness* or by accident (Thayer, 1973, p. A-3).

There are significant and insignificant people that make up society. The significant people are those who have everything to lose and the insignificant people are those who are *too heavily dependent* on the significant people (Box, 2008, p. 84). It is the dependency that keeps significant people in power. Dependency has been such a prominent aspect of history that those who are on top have come to believe that they *are in fact* more important than those on the bottom (Thayer, 1973, p. A-3). This paradox has left those who are not in power to argue that such a division of authority should not exist.

As it stands today, even if a hierarchy is *decentralized*, there are still superiors and subordinates within any organization. Looking at the differences between superiors and subordinates brings to light the concept of the *survivorship bias*. Nassim Nicholas Taleb states that one sees, or at the very least only emphasizes, the survivors of any competition (2004, p. 137). Because competition is a result of hierarchy and hierarchy exists in any organization, the survivorship bias is relevant to public administration and *all* public organizations for that matter

(Thayer, 1973, p. A-1). Organizational leaders and those who study their success tend to ignore the fact that *luck* is often the main reason for success (Taleb, 2004, p. 138).

Herbert Simon gave the field of public administration the concept of *satisficing man*. He was not the first to tackle the subject of bounded rationality, but he was able to articulate it in a unique way. Satisficing man is limited to the information that he is given. He *does not* examine all possible alternatives and in turn ignores the complexities of the decision-making process (Fry & Raadschelders, 2008, p. 224). Satisficing man uses heuristics, or rules of thumb, because he is bounded by the limits of available information and his own cognitive ability (Fry & Raadschelders, 2008, p. 224).

Observing authority figures as satisficing man strengthens the idea that leaders believe they are meant to be in that position. They are not open to the alternative that they came into that position by way of randomness. Taleb, like Simon, asserts that we are trained to take advantage of the information at hand (2004, p. 146). *Any information that we do not see is ignored*. Leaders do not see the fact that the majority of their subordinates possess equal or sufficient characteristics to perform the same tasks that they are performing.

Hierarchy, Human Rights, and Community

Hierarchy and the notion of human rights go hand in hand. Philosopher Immanuel Kant saw human rights as logical and absolute moral principles that can be applied to all (Clapham, 2007, p. 9). To Kant, and numerous advocates of *universal human rights*, these rights imply that each individual ought to act in a way that other *rational* individuals would act and that people are *not* a means to an end (Clapham, 2007, p. 9). In the discussion of human rights, there is a divide

among those who emphasize individual rights and those who emphasize communal rights and the public good.

Society has had a difficult time balancing the need to address the public good with the need to protect the rights of individuals. Karl Marx was of the opinion that a focus on individual rights prevents *radical but necessary* changes to the status quo such as extreme redistribution policies (Clapham, 2007, p. 22). Hierarchy comes into play by either respecting or degrading human rights. Whether or not hierarchy is in line with human rights may depend on the organization at hand. Hierarchy does promote *alienation* however, which can lead to a disregard of human rights. It is easy for those on top, who like everyone else is an example of satisficing man, to ignore the plight of subordinates whom they do not see. There is a clear divide between the levels of traditional centralized hierarchies. One way to fight the growing atmosphere of alienation in organizational structures is to *transform the organization into a community* (Thayer, 1973, p. 50).

One of the most significant principles of management is the concept of *span of control* (Thayer, 1973, p. 7). Span of control refers to the number of workers that one manager can oversee. In their book, *Reinventing Government*, David Osborne and Ted Gaebler spell out the problem of *traditional chain of command and span of control* management techniques. Enforcing the traditional chain of command in an organization leads to increased centralization of hierarchy. Osborne and Gaebler go the opposite direction and propose a *flattening* of organization hierarchy. Flattening and decentralizing organizational structures will create a greater sense of community and *participatory management* within an organization. Middle managers are one the major obstacles faced when attempting to flatten an organization (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, p. 265). In order to justify their existence, it is natural for middle managers to

resist decentralization. Osborne and Gaebler refer to *overcontrol* or what many see as *micromanagement* as a result of enforcing traditional centralized hierarchical structures (1993, p. 265).

Empowering the worker can prevent traditional hierarchy and the alienation that comes from it. To illustrate the benefits of worker empowerment, Osborne and Gaebler cite the example of the New York City Sanitation Department's decentralization. Decentralized organizations that value the input of their employees are more effective than any centralized hierarchical system. These decentralized organizations place an emphasis on the knowledge of their *frontline* workers (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, p. 252). Ronald Contino reinvented the New York City Sanitation Department by eliminating the traditional chain of command and implementing a direct pipeline to the top *for any worker* to voice his or her opinion (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, p. 260). The workers saw changes in procedures as occurring as a result of their input and knowledge rather than the decision of some distant authority figure.

It is a revolutionary idea to decentralize an organization that has existed and operated for a long period of time. In an attempt to improve worker morale, many organization implement small changes that claim to value employee feedback. Where these organizations fail however is by *not actually* taking into consideration the input and knowledge of their workers. Osborne and Gaebler see these workers as the frontline. Michael Lipsky saw these workers in the public sector as *street-level bureaucrats* (1980). Their knowledge is essential to how an organization functions. It is nice to placate to worker morale by listening to their feedback but it is *effective, efficient, and beneficial to everyone involved* to implement changes and take action based on the knowledge of those workers.

Hierarchy and Discretion

Frontline workers and street-level bureaucrats are *agents of social control* (Lipsky, 1980, p. 11). They interact with citizens on a daily basis and are witness to, or often in control of, the citizen's reaction to the service at hand. Frontline workers *ought to* have a considerable amount of discretion while carrying out their responsibilities (Lipsky, 1980, p. 13). Discretion allows the worker to address the specific needs of any particular citizen or situation. Organizational policies and upper management determine the amount of discretion a frontline worker is granted. Ambiguous and open-ended policies allow for more discretion whereas strict and rigid policies limit the worker's options.

Osborne and Gaebler point out that with rapidly changing technologies and time sensitive scenarios, *there is no time* for a frontline worker to wait around for chain of command decisions (1993, p. 250). Discretion is a necessary component of a variety of public sector professions in modern society. Most public organizations are better off if they are able to implement policies and procedures on a more localized and immediate level. Osborne and Gaebler speak of *moving decision-making to the periphery* (1993, p. 251). Flexibility in organizational policies is one way to provide greater discretion in decision-making. Even if an organization feels the need to cling on to limiting the discretion of their frontline workers, they can at least work toward participatory management (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, p. 259). Decentralized hierarchies allow for wider representation of everyone involved.

Traditional centralized hierarchies are especially ineffective when management is of poor quality (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, p. 263). Acknowledging the resources an organization has in its *workers' knowledge and ability* is a sign of proper management. Employees have to feel that the superior or representative assigned to oversee them is able to take action based on their

suggestions. Representatives with *genuine power* reveal to the worker that they do in fact have a real voice in the organization (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, p. 264).

Participatory Hierarchy

According to Frederick C. Thayer, “Hierarchy is unnatural, a cultural behavior pattern we are reluctantly learning” (1973, p. A-6). If we must operate within a system of hierarchy, then it can be done in a more participatory and democratic fashion. Along with Frederick C. Thayer, Robert A. Dahl mentions the emergence of hierarchy and *domination* as having developed after a period of human history based on hunting, gathering, and surviving in smaller groups (2000, p. 10). Despite natural tendencies toward no hierarchical living, hierarchy and domination came to be natural with the development of society.

Dahl describes what he calls *the logic of equality* (2000, p. 10). It involves a push toward democratic participation that allows citizens to involve themselves in any political issue. In his book, *On Democracy*, Dahl lays out five distinct opportunities that can come from providing participatory democracy. They are effective participation, equality in voting, gaining enlightened understanding, exercising final control over the agenda, and the inclusion of adults (2000, p. 38). Of these five, equality in voting directly relates to the topic of hierarchy. If certain members of an organization are *not* given equal representation, the policies created will reflect only the views of the dominant party (Dahl, 2000, p. 39).

We have already determined that authority can bring with it the assumption that one is more privileged or entitled to the position he or she is in. Society’s *significant people* typically enforce doctrines and policies that work to justify their elite status (Dahl, 2006, p. 25). Going back to Simon’s concept of satisfying man, the elite are often of the opinion that those at the

bottom accept their policies. They are knowingly or unknowingly ignorant to the fact that the status quo is not satisfying to those at the bottom (Dahl, 2006, p. 26).

Philosopher John Rawls asserts that political equality is not achieved by reason alone (Dahl, 2006, p. 36). Rather, a combination of reason, moral judgment, and experience contribute to effective political equality. It can be a moral decision to undo traditional vertical hierarchical systems. Giving up power and authority does not benefit, in a current capitalistic and market based sense, those already in power. Dahl writes that this is a major reason why political resources, knowledge, skills and incentives are always *distributed unequally* (2006, p. 51). Participation and cooperation between those on top and those on bottom however will benefit the system or organization as a whole.

The Economic Student and the Political Student

There is constant debate between market-based systems and government based ones. Both the economic student and the political student would agree however that *efficiency* is an important societal goal (Savas, 1987, p. 7). E.S. Savas claims that government is not sufficient or responsive enough to take care of the public (1987, p. 8). Advocates *opposing* the privatization movement would say the same about the private sector however. For example, Grover Starling writes that many business methods cannot be effectively transferred to the political realm (2011, p. 80).

The economic student learns that greater competition leads to greater overall efficiency (Thayer, 1973, p. A-27). The political student however learns that competition among government agencies leads to inefficiency. Thayer claims that the notion Americans have about the private sector being more productive than the government is a *myth* (1973, p. A-27).

Efficiency is an ambiguous term that can mean be interpreted many different ways. A simple definition would be the ratio of inputs to outputs. When measuring efficiency however, one must first establish what these inputs and outputs are. The public and private sector have *varying inputs and outputs*.

Thayer writes that, “The fact that producers make profits says nothing about efficiency, only of ability to set prices high enough to come out ahead” (1973, p. A-27). The private sector is the first to boast about their ability to perform in an efficient manner. In general though, their field of outputs is limited to profits. If a company can make a profit, they are deemed efficient in modern society’s eyes. For the sake of creating equity within organizations and society at large, the field of outputs for any organization has to be vast. *Outputs are not always tangible* and measurable. How does one measure concepts such as social equity, standards of living, quality of life, or equal opportunity? The private sector is no better equipped to deal with such problems than the public sector. They may possess certain effective management strategies or organizational policies, but they are either equal to or worse off than the public sector when it comes to dealing with issues of public goods and public interests.

Pluralistic and inclusive thinking is a requirement for flattening hierarchies. The private sector is dominated by one-track thinking revolving around the importance of profit margins. *Cost effective* techniques are praised and valued today in both the public and private sector. One of the prominent arguments against greater participation in government is that such an expansive process would cost too much (Thayer, 1973, p. 39). Thayer lays out a process of becoming more cost effective through *cost avoidance*. When government or even organizational policies are designed, not all potential recipients of the consequences of the policy are consulted. Thayer contends that the *unintended consequences* of policies often affect those who were not involved

in the policy making process (1973, p. 39). If we may assume that the street-level bureaucrat knows best in the case of carrying out organizational policies, we may assume that the citizenry knows best in the case of public policy implementation.

Speedy results are often mistaken for efficient ones. Whether it is within a single agency or on a federal level, policies are often passed quickly in order to benefit the short term. Long term and unintended consequences that may result in future problems are ignored. Thayer writes that, "There could be no better way of discovering as many such problems as possible than to include in decision processes those individuals most likely to be affected by them" (1973, p. 39). To deprive the public of participatory government is to deprive them of political equality.

Academia fails when it sets out to perpetuate the myths that have caused societal problems. Students, who will be the future of any field, ought to learn progressive and pluralistic thinking. Raghuram G. Rajan contends that the entire point of *economic modeling* is to establish useful simplifications of the economy (2010, p. 116). Education fails when it teaches students *oversimplifications* of a process rather than useful ones. The problems caused by strict vertical hierarchical thinking are caused because those on top are stuck in their ways. The *oversimplification* or the *standard operating procedures* become the end all be all of any situation. There tends to be little organization wide participation if those on top believe their way and their way only to be correct.

Hierarchy is Not Inherited

Hierarchy, like the status quo, is resistant to change. Traditional hierarchy is based on the *scalar principle* (Starling, 2011, p. 299). The scalar principle states that authority ought to flow vertically from the highest level of authority to the lowest. Grover Starling claims that because

high-level administrators are concerned with reliability, standard operating procedures are implemented within hierarchies to increase behavioral consistency (2011, p. 300). Managers throughout the hierarchy are then tasked with checking and controlling these standard operating procedures. Starling develops three negative consequences as a result of such a system.

The first consequence, which we have already seen, is that hierarchy diminishes personalized relationship (Starling, 2011, p. 300). A goal of any organization should be to promote a sense of community, not diminish it. Thayer speaks frequently of the alienation caused by traditional hierarchies. A decrease in employee morale is a direct result of alienation. Starling's second negative consequence is that supervisors internalize and interpret organizational goals and policies on their own (2011, p. 300). Interpretation can be both positive and negative. We have discussed that discretion is often necessary for frontline workers. Discretion is as well necessary for middle managers, but often times their interpretation is vastly different from that of their subordinates. Starling's third consequence directly relates to Herbert Simon's *satisficing man and bounded rationality*. He asserts that hierarchy causes management to narrow and restrict the decision-making process (Starling, 2011, p. 300). A reliance on standard operating procedures leads to less innovative thinking, especially among those in charge of establishing and controlling such procedures.

In one his most influential writings, *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine wrote that, "we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary" (1776). At the time of his writing, hereditary succession was seen as one of the greatest evils of the monarchical system. The founding fathers asserted that all men were originally equals and any type of hereditary succession flew in the face of such an idea. Paine was writing on a subject that many public administration theorists would further develop. In *Common Sense*, he claims that, "The nearer any government

approaches to a republic the less business there is for a king” (Paine, 1776, p. 19). The same could be said about any organization in contemporary society. The closer any organization comes to a republic, the less business there is for a manager. Thomas Paine saw republican government as a *natural right* (1776, p. 34). He looked at *participatory and representative government* as something that should be standard in society.

A Manifesto in Support of Flattening

The words of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are no less applicable today than they were in 1848. *The Communist Manifesto* was originally published in support of a *workingmen’s* association known as *The Communist League* (Marx, 1848, p. 3). The first line of *Part I* on *The Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat* is almost identical to the messages of more contemporary scholars such as Richard C. Box, Raghuram G. Rajan, and Howard Zinn. Marx and Engel’s work opens declaring that, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (1848, p. 19). Traditional hierarchy is a root cause of the injustice that Marx and Engel’s were speaking out against. *Little has changed since 1848.*

As Grover Starling has pointed out, those on top of centralized and traditional hierarchical structures are less open to alternative ideas and procedures (2011, p. 300). Their narrowing view of *how things ought to be done* becomes the dominant way in which the organization or even a society is run. In 1848, Marx and Engel’s wrote that, “The ruling ideas of *each age* have been the ideas of *the ruling class*” (1848, p. 41). The fact that the ruling class dominates historical writing is the very reason why writers and thinkers such as Howard Zinn have had to publish works like his *A People’s History of the United States*. Hierarchy does little

to promote the ideas, feelings, struggles, and even successes on those on the bottom of the system.

Democratic systems typically respond to injustice, but the response time and effectiveness of the response can be unpredictable (Rajan, 2010, p. 118). Still, any form of hierarchical structure does best for social equity when it exists within a democratic system. Hierarchy, competition, and traditional centralized thinking make it so workers are forced to make difficult decisions related to issues such as health care (Rajan 2010, p. 118). Marx and Engels declared that, “The workingmen have *no country*” (1848, p. 40). Such a declaration is difficult to dispute when we acknowledge the great injustices caused by those in control of society. Simply *having a say* in any organization can make a difference. Marx and Engels saw the workingmen as having no country because those in power controlled whether or not they were able to work, have fair wages, or even be involved in the political process.

Decentralization can lead to greater inclusion of *all ideas that are present* in an organization or in society. The *way* in which decentralized hierarchies are implemented however is crucial to the effectiveness of decentralization. The *ideology* behind a case of decentralization may determine whether or not that organization or government is in fact promoting social equity (Baskaran, 2011). Organizations have to *commit* to flattening the chain of command and to respecting the input of every single worker involved.

An Argument for Decentralization

Frederick C. Thayer asserts that, “We are learning that the individual worker cannot comprehend what it would mean to own the plant in which he works, and that *he has no desire to do so*” (1973, p. 47). There is a growing complacency in the workplace that has swept through

modern society. Rigid hierarchical organizations discourage workers from rising up to any significant organizational level. Instead, the organization tends to alienate the worker into becoming an *extension of the machine* (Thayer, 1973, p. 47). In practice, it is not the organization that adapts to the individual, but rather it is *the individual who adapts to the organization*.

Some scholars believe that *representative* government and democracy can help us escape the faults of centralized hierarchy. It is often not enough to simply change organizational policies. Widespread political change must occur because it is in politics that the beliefs of the *entire society* are taken into account (Thayer, 1973, p. 53). The first step toward representative and decentralized hierarchy can be seen in Woodrow Wilson's 1887 essay, *The Study of Administration*.

A Neutral and Competent Leadership

In order to effectively run an organization, it is the responsibility of leadership to understand the needs of every stakeholder involved. In reference to public administrators, Woodrow Wilson aimed for *practical statesmanship* first and *closet doctrine* second (1887). The same can be applied to any type of organization, although for our argument we will focus on the public sector since government has an undisputed influence on *all members of society*. In the private sector, citizens are consumers *who may opt out* of participating. But in the public sector, citizens *are citizens* who are affected by governmental decisions whether they are active participants or not.

Practical and *neutral* leadership is a prerequisite for successful decentralization. Wilson saw power and authority as more effective when dispersed throughout an organization (1887).

Leadership is responsible for checking and monitoring the actions of others, but a large degree of discretion in the hand of each individual worker is necessary. In his essay, Wilson claims that, “If to keep his office a man must achieve open and honest success, and if at the same time he feels himself entrusted with large freedom of discretion, the greater his power and the less likely is he to abuse it” (1887). Power can be used irresponsibly, but this is only at the highest risk when *all of the power is concentrated* on a select few.

A Direct Line to the Top

Decentralization is only existent if everyone involved in an organization has a direct pipeline to the top. Each employee must be able to voice his or her opinion and feel assured that the opinion is taken into consideration. A direct line to the top does *not* imply a direct line from *top-down* when a decision is made. Grover Starling notes the difference between *line authority* and *staff authority*. Line authority refers to management having direct control over subordinates. Staff authority on the other hand places management in a more advisory and suggestive role when it comes to dealing with decision-making (Starling, 2011, p. 304). *Bottom-up* communication is essential for decentralization to work.

Woodrow Wilson speaks of the *distribution of constitutional authority* (1887). Such a distribution of power can work in any organizational setting. Redistributing power from only being held at the top to being held by all parties of an organization can benefit the organization as a whole. Empowering *all* employees will create a sense of responsibility and purpose in those individuals. A sense of purpose is far preferable to the individual employee feeling as though he or she is being swallowed by the organization. Empowerment and providing open communication will develop a direct pipeline, which involves *all* aspects of the organization.

Flexibility and Decentralization

An organization must be able to adapt to any situation it encounters. Centralized and traditional hierarchies allow for less flexibility than decentralized ones. In a decentralized environment, there is a high amount of discretion and a greater chance of innovation. One of the main criticisms of bureaucracy is that it lacks creativity (Starling, 2011, p. 309). The bringing together of experts from varying disciplines inspires innovation. Accomplishing such a task requires a great deal of flexibility within an organizational structure.

Today's climate of change and advancements in technology and communication require that an organization is adaptable. Centralized hierarchy is slowed down by the traditional flow of communication through the chain of command. In the case of developing new programs or making time sensitive decisions, a centralized hierarchical structure fails to accomplish the task. Only with dispersed discretion and a greater belief that every worker is able to make decisions will an organization succeed in today's society.

Traditional hierarchy emphasizes *standard operating procedures*. In a centralized organization, it is common for certain levels of the hierarchy to be assigned specific tasks. Modern society poses problems that require the input of various groups, workers, or levels of the hierarchy (Starling, 2011, p. 317). An organization with a flexible structure and more network based structure is open to involving different groups with one another to address a single problem. Doing so will alleviate the concern for the *unintended consequences* brought on by a single individual or group carrying out a procedure that will have an impact on the future of the organization. Taking into consideration the input of everyone involved highlights one of the major benefits of decentralization.

Conclusion

The concept of hierarchy is *unnatural* to the human experience (Thayer, 1973, p. A-6). It is however a necessary function of modern society *due to years of reinforcement*. In order to promote social equity throughout society, organizations have to push toward more *decentralized* hierarchical systems. Those opposed to such social change are most likely receiving the benefits of current traditional hierarchical structures or they have bought into the myth that centralized hierarchy is the only way in which society is able to function.

Frederick C. Thayer writes that, “A teacher has authority only to the extent that students grant it to him by acknowledging him as an authority for them” (1973, p. A-20). Traditional hierarchy remains unchanged precisely *because* people have become complacent in their positions. The status quo continues on not because it is the most efficient and effective way of doing things, but because it is the way in which the ruling class wishes to continue. Thomas Jefferson himself was a believer that, “a governing class that grows too comfortable with the status quo that often benefits it will be the ruination of the common good” (Sabato, 2007, p. 7). Despite the fact that the founding fathers helped establish the United States based off of the hierarchical structures that they were accustomed to, Larry J. Sabato is of the opinion that they expected the citizenry to continually rework and perfect their Constitution as time progressed (2007, p. 4). Little *significant* reworking of the Constitution has occurred at all.

Decentralizing organizations should not come as a shock to much of the public—only to those who are the most elite. Both the elite and the citizenry have to come to understand society not only in terms of *individual gain* but also in terms of *communal gain*. In extremely ideal rhetoric, Thomas Jefferson insisted that, “every human mind feels pleasure in doing good to another” (Sabato, 2007, p. 10). To Jefferson, the *first and primary* role of government is to

provide care and create happiness for human life. These idealistic views have not been lost since the founding fathers. Richard C. Box asserts that bureaucracy and government's service is *to the public* and they are responsible for sensitivity toward *all* citizens (2004, p. 10).

Democracy is not a selective pick-and-choose type of game. Traditional hierarchy does nothing but reinforce the notion that some are meant to succeed while others are meant to fail. Current economic markets enforce traditional hierarchy and the inequalities that come with it. Robert A. Dahl mentions that, "systems of market capitalism do seem to foster a *consumerist* culture that greatly weakens any potential opposition to capitalism and correspondingly *strengthens its advocates*" (2006, p. 87). The capitalist markets perpetuate the myth that consumerism and individual gain is the ultimate goal in society. On top of the problem of establishing improper societal values, the market economy, *even with government regulation*, inevitably inflicts harm on some part of the population (Dahl, 2006, p. 65).

Most political scholars agree that smaller sample sizes or populations allow for more citizen participation and greater democratic equality (Dahl, 2006, p. 59). It is easier to be effective on a smaller scale. For this reason it is important for public sector organizations to adopt policies of decentralization. The government plays a role in every citizen's life and starting from the *organizational level*, they can make a difference. Decentralized organizations will provide a sense of purpose to all individuals involved.

Osborne and Gaebler provide an insightful understanding of the history of centralized government in the United States. Prior to recent decades, centralization made practical sense because *the nation's capital* was an immense resource of human capital and information (1992, p. 276). Recent decades have provided state and local agencies the ability to deal with the same issues that the federal government once tackled. In many cases too, state and local level agencies

are *more effective and progressive* in their styles of organization (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 276).

Decentralizing the public sector will bring government closer to its citizens (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, p. 277). With such a significant number of public sector workers and government contractors in the United States, it would benefit the government to involve itself with the public. The goal of decentralization should be *maximum participation*. The more accessible those on top of the hierarchy are, the better the organization will function.

In his work entitled, *Agrarian Justice*, Thomas Paine proclaimed that despotic governments aim to have man obey—not to participate (1797, p. 430). A despotic organization can be just as guilty as a despotic government. No matter how benevolent an organization is toward its people, if it is structured in a traditional hierarchy it is functioning *to enforce the inequalities of man*.

Decentralization is a step in the right direction and it must begin on an incremental level *within organizational hierarchies*. A flattening of the superior-subordinate relationship *is* in the best interest of any organization and society as a whole. *Democratic processes* maximize concepts such as political equality, moral autonomy, peacekeeping, human development, self-determination, and general freedom *more than any other alternative* (Dahl, 2000, p. 45). A decentralization of hierarchy will foster *all positive aspects* associated with democratic and representative processes.

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