

**AUTHORITY IN ORGANIZATIONS:
ON THE RECONCILIATION OF DEMOCRACY
AND EXPERTISE**

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As values helping to select the preferred locus of authority in organizations, democracy and expertise may easily conflict. But do they necessarily conflict? How might they be reconciled? I will suggest an emphasis on democracy, but a model of democracy that is hypothesized to yield a practical reconciliation of the conflicting values when a third value, that of product quality, is also introduced.

For many, the normative question of whether to vest organizational authority in experts or in democratic institutions might seem academic only. Possible conflict between these two, valued alternatives might hardly be perceived as troublesome because the locus of authority is determined by another criterion altogether; the conflict therefore never arises. That other, and perhaps primary, criterion is *position*. There is a hierarchy of offices and those higher up have more authority than those lower down. In addition, the scope of authority is also compartmentalized by position and is often indicated at least roughly by the name of the unit involved: Sales, Accounting, Under Secretary for African Affairs, and so forth.

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EXPERTISE

Theoretically, however, “position” as such is only very weakly justified as a criterion. It is surely convenient and orderly to have the loci of authority neatly arranged in a hierarchy, but we would not put people into those positions at random. Presumably, we are following the value of expertise; those in higher or different positions of authority are supposedly there because they have greater or different kinds of expertise. If those in authority do not have an adequate supply of the required expertise to begin with, then supposedly they at least have an aptitude for it, or perhaps a basis in prior training, and we presume that the information and experience acquired on the job will soon raise the level of their expertise to the required standard. If the level of expertise is not actually greater than that of all subordinates, it is presumably at least adequate, so that, instead of constantly challenging decisions, others will generally defer for the sake of order and efficiency even if they feel that another decision might possibly be better. It is well known that this general principle of expertise is often violated in practice; those in positions of high authority often have inadequate expertise or less of it than others who might have been selected. Nevertheless, the criterion we have generally accepted normatively and that we therefore feel *should* be followed is expertise. The violations may well provoke silent contempt or resentment. These only serve to demonstrate that merit of some sort is the true, normative criterion.

Expertise was basic to the approaches of many of the classical organizational theorists. Weber (1958:196-224; 1947:324-341, 358-386), for example, emphasized the clear delineation of offices, knowledge of the files, and hiring and promotion based on merit. “Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge.” (Weber 1947:339) I would suggest that nearly all of Weber’s well-known characteristics of bureaucracy flow from two basic principles: predictability and expertise. Taylor’s “Scientific Management,” with its emphasis on finding the one best way to do each component of each job, had expertise as its cornerstone. “Functional foremen” who were

expert in small subcomponents of a job decided just how they were to be done, and higher management was urged to defer to the expertise of these specialists and to mold other organizational policies to the needs and implications of their decisions (see Taylor, 1967; March and Simon, 1958:12-22).

From the beginning, however, there was the recognition in at least some quarters that expertise is inadequate as a sole principle of authority. In Fayol (1949) and Barnard (1938), for example, there is a definite softening and backing away. These scholars do not advocate democracy as such in organizations, but in their writing there is a strong sense that authority will only be functional to the extent that it is legitimated from below, and that the frequent need for subordinates to have a say and for management to be sensitive to the ideas of workers is essential to organizational effectiveness. Historically, Taylorism itself failed to take firm root in American industry largely because, in removing every shred of discretion from the worker, the principle of expertise was thought by some to have been carried too far. Scientific management failed because it was seen by union officials and politicians as leaving workers with too little autonomy, in spite of its having achieved, wherever applied, its twin goals of spectacular output combined with high worker satisfaction (Aitken, 1960; Nadworney, 1955). In the words of one union official, "This system is wrong, because we want our heads left on us." (Aitken, 1960:173).

Taylor's theory in fact suggests the potential and often the actual contradiction that is the theme of the present inquiry. The job must be done in the one best way, and that way is to be determined by the experts. The workers are to be consulted because their first-hand experience yields them a good deal of knowledge that is valuable in the working out of the one best way, but they do not have all of the necessary information, and therefore they are not permitted an authoritative voice in the final decisions. But what if, psychologically, certain workers could not perform the job at peak levels of effectiveness and efficiency unless they *did* have a voice in the final decisions—unless they did "have their heads left on them?" A moment's thought shows that

under these circumstances, the achievement of the one best way is a logical impossibility unless the workers and the experts are the same people. If they are not, then the principles of democracy and expertise are in conflict.

DEMOCRACY

The human-relations movement arose from the ashes of Taylor's scientific management. The impetus for the movement was apparently not simple; rather, a variety of values and motivations stimulated both scholarship and practice as the call for worker participation spread throughout the Western world. A variety of forms were studied, advocated, and used.

Dachler and Wilpert (1978) organized this variation into four models of participation in organizational decision making. The *Socialist Theory* model rests on the principle that the proletariat should govern the industries; it results in such forms as Workers' Councils, as in Yugoslavia, and strong union participation in high-level decision making, as in West Germany (Blumberg, 1968). The *Democratic Theory* model, with both American and European roots, rests on the practice of democracy as a value. Here, participation in organizational decision making is seen both as good in its own right and because of the training and practice it provides for performing the duties of a citizen in the wider democratic polity. The *Human Growth and Development* model, with Maslow's (1943) needs hierarchy as a basis, rests on the theory that as lower needs such as those for food and shelter are satisfied, higher needs such as those for self-actualization press for attention. Participation develops some of the self-knowledge that assists the climb up the needs hierarchy and it is a necessary part of the self-actualization that is called for at the top. There are unanswered questions here as to how much and what kind of participation are required by this model (Dachler and Wilpert, 1978:7-8), and there must of course be the further question as to why the organization should assume responsibility for the psychological well-being of its employees. The answer to these questions must lie in one of the other three models, so that this one cannot stand alone. For

the most part, it is the fourth model that seems to provide these underpinnings (cf. Dachler and Wilpert, 1978:7-8): human growth and development will be good not only for the individual, but for the organization. This fourth model, the *Productivity and Efficiency* model, rests on psychological and sociological theories which hypothesize that participation results in greater productivity, mainly because it yields higher levels of morale (or job satisfaction) and commitment to the organization.

Viewed as justifications for participation, not only Human Growth and Development but all four of these models are in trouble. That is, experience appears somewhat surprisingly to indicate that the participation value as applied to work organizations is wrong-headed—that it may be highly desirable as a societal norm but is misplaced as an organizational norm. The difficulties are well revealed in the course of a brief overview of research and history in connection with the human-relations movement.

Much of the encouraging of participation in America as part of this movement falls under the Productivity and Efficiency model, no doubt due in part to the fact that the research tended to be funded by private companies. In hundreds of studies, organizational change in the direction of worker participation was initiated, or differences in the spontaneous levels of participation among units were observed, and the effects on satisfaction and productivity were estimated. As is well known, the research results were extremely disappointing to those who believed (and believed in) the hypothesis (Perrow, 1979; Locke and Schweiger, 1979; Mohr, 1982). On the average, productivity gains simply did not appear to result, and even a slight preponderance of satisfaction gains found in the studies using that dependent variable was apparently more an artifact of the research processes employed than a result of the real effects of participation (Mohr, 1982:123-153).

Faced with these frustrations, and with a moral dilemma that also arose among social scientists, a "power equalization" movement was advocated (Leavitt, 1965). The moral dilemma arose because the introduction of participation often involved the manipulation of workers by social scientists (Leavitt, 1965). The

workers were gathered together to discuss a policy decision that had already been made by management, but without the workers' knowledge, and it was expected that the participation groups, with social scientists as discussion leaders, would arrive at the predetermined conclusions themselves. Not only did this bother the consciences of many social scientists, whose very interest in the subject matter sprang from humanitarian values, but it did not always work. The groups sometimes defied the efforts even of highly skilled discussion leaders.

The power-equalization movement is of interest here because it represents a shift away from the Productivity and Efficiency model and toward the first two, and especially the Democratic Theory model. The fact that power equalization also seems to be an inevitable failure, as the analysis of the following paragraphs will conclude, means that none of the four models—and we know of no other—presents an adequate justification for subordinate participation in decision making. If the analysis holds, the conflict between democracy and expertise must be resolved in favor of expertise.

First, support for power equalization in social science research cannot be claimed. This results largely from the fact that power equalization itself is nearly impossible to implement, but research on Workers' Councils under the Socialist Theory model indicates what happens when the implementation of power equalization is simply legislated. Mulder (1971) reviewed the research and found that Workers' Council were mostly ineffective from the viewpoint of socialist or democratic theory. The workers were coopted. The worker representatives did not have the information or training to make an independent contribution to high-level company or industry-wide decision making, and tended to go along with the experts in management (see Falkson, 1971, for a similar tendency in community boards under the American "War on Poverty"). Worse yet, whereas under capitalism the workers could at least object to unfairness and exploitation, in this case they were part of each decision and so had no grounds for complaint. Furthermore, selfishness tended to betray the cause. The job of workers' representative was more pleasant than the job

of line operator, and so representatives frequently sought to become permanent, and frequently succeeded in this. At the same time, their views tended to grow increasingly at odds with those of the rank and file. In this way, representative democracy remained unfulfilled.

Second, it is infeasible to equalize power in organizations. For one, it would result in so wide a sharing of otherwise privileged information that the secrecy norms of competitive capitalism would inevitably be compromised and the system as such could not survive. But beyond that, power cannot be equalized because the bases of power cannot be equalized. Power comes from something. One well-known typology yields five bases of power: reward, punishment, expert, legitimate, and referent (French and Raven, 1960). One might attempt to equalize the power to reward and punish in organizations (hiring, salary, promotion, demotion, firing, etc.), but clearly at the risk of a chaotic politicization of decision making. Power that grows out of expertise is simply impossible to equalize. Equalizing legitimate power, i.e., the authority of official position, means doing away with all of the coordination benefits of hierarchical structure. Referent power—power that comes from charisma, being liked, or having leadership qualities—is similar to expert power in that it rests on personal qualities that cannot be equalized by fiat. Try as we might, there will inevitably be power differences among the members of organizations.

One might seek to implement a form of the theory that would concentrate on legitimate power and the power to reward and punish, and allow expert and referent power to take their natural course, but even this is impractical. The decision costs of democracy are extremely high, probably too high to be tolerated by private or even governmental organizations under a serious implementation of power equalization. No company, city, or country can afford the time for direct or even representative democracy at all levels in the administration. Moreover, the dissatisfaction costs to management are intolerable under prevailing circumstances. If the nominal supervisor is overridden by the subordinates and the decision proves faulty, there is no practical

way of holding the subordinates responsible. For the supervisor, this yields responsibility without authority, a violation of one of the oldest and wisest principles of management (Fayol, 1949) and a source, under serious efforts to implement true democracy, of the inability to recruit managers (Adizes, 1971).

Yet another serious impediment is that it is hard to demonstrate an internal desire for true democracy in organizations. Organizational democracy is mainly an academic idea (Mulder, 1971); there is a lack of push from below. The preference simply to do the job and not to be involved in a lot of decision-making about it has been found both in blue-collar workers (Mulder, 1971), and to some extent even in professionals, where taking home the burdens of decision at night is unwelcome to many (Burns and Stalker, 1961).

Finally, a response to the above is that the pure power-equalization model is too extreme. Nobody advocates complete equalization. Some reasonable, part-way model is meant. But this solution is slippery and difficult to defend philosophically. When do we participate? Who decides this? Why that much participation and not more? Or less? What feasible principles limit the power of the deciders to turn the governing structure into an autocracy or simply into a regular hierarchical system? The difficulty of finding answers to these questions and of leaving the definition of the limits of democracy to management, for example, has led to phony democracy and the manipulation of workers, and is largely the reason for advocating the move to power equalization in the first place.

Thus, organizational democracy is an idea that seems to be good, and indeed it must be good, but the research results plus responsible reasoning indicate that it is not. There remains a need to find a meaningful but feasible democratic theory for organizations, or it must be abandoned in favor of the determination of authority by expertise.

COMPETENCE AND INTEREST

Mulder's (1971) conclusion from a broad review of the results of research, including his own, was that participation was likely to be most successful when the individuals involved were

both interested in the matter under decision and competent to contribute meaningfully to the process. This seems a reasonable and sensible dual guideline for participation. It is clear, however, that not all participation schemes imply democracy. We have just seen, for example, that there might be participation in deciding certain questions, but not in deciding who is to decide, and that this would be an inadequate implementation of democracy under almost any model. We pursue the question, then, of how this auspicious guideline might possibly generate a model of democracy as well as a framework for participation. A workable model of democracy so derived might then be normatively compared with expertise as a principle of authority.

One form of participation which has achieved prominence in recent times is quality-control circles (often shortened to "quality circles" in the United States). Briefly, this is a quality-control device introduced into Japanese industry by the American engineer William Deming and widely practiced in Japanese automotive companies, as well as others. Cole (1980) gives us a brief description of the essentials. Groups ("circles") of workers meet periodically with a discussion leader to discuss ways of improving the quality of the product or the effectiveness of the production process. They receive training in aspects of group process as well as in aspects of quantitative analysis and the organization and presentation of proposals. They are given the time and resources to generate ideas and to research their feasibility and quality. If the group finally becomes persuaded of the efficacy and desirability of one of its ideas, its members then make presentations of their findings to appropriate superiors with the goal of convincing management to implement it. They received no material rewards for the acceptance or eventual success of the idea; only honor and personal satisfaction. Many of the Japanese firms that have implemented quality-control circles have been enormously successful, and they as well as outside observers have attributed their success in part to this scheme for participation.

Can quality-control circles serve as a workable and effective model of organizational democracy? First, the method does adhere well in practice to the guideline of competence and interest.

The ideas are generated within the group itself, not brought in from the outside, and they almost always have to do with the parts of the production process in which the particular workers are directly involved. We also take note of the fact that the entire idea of the system is based on the norm of product quality. The atmosphere is fully infused with this norm. That is what we are here for—to build good cars, etc. The history and foundation of the procedure, one must remember, lies in quality-control engineering. The workers know that their participation in the quality-control circles is not for the purpose of proposing new health benefits or retirement packages, but for improving the quality of the product. It is doubtful that the system would succeed without unanimity on this norm, for without it the likelihood is substantial that, just as almost everywhere else, the work groups and the management would tend more strongly to lapse into the organizational politics of self-interest.

The participation under quality-control circles may be abundant and effective, but we question now whether it can serve as a model of democracy. Clearly, it is not a submodel either of the Democratic or Socialist Theory models of participation; it is not driven by an idea of the right to govern. If anything, it is a Productivity and Efficiency submodel, with interest in side effects on human growth and development, perhaps, in some applications. The final decisions rest with management, and the basis of the right to decide is presumably expertise. Moreover, the theory that leads from participation to productivity and efficiency, in this case with an emphasis on the product-quality variant, does not proceed through morale and commitment as intervening variables, but rather through knowledge. By means of their participation, the workers develop knowledge, and this is transmitted to management. If the workers influence management decisions, which they very frequently do, it is not because they have a right to such influence based on democratic norms, but because they have developed and can demonstrate a certain expertise which appeals to the expertise of the managers and is therefore accepted. The model is a model of participation guided by competence and interest, but it is based fully in expertise. The criterion for the

allocation of both formal and informal authority is expertise. What is achieved at best is a good and indeed an instructive mixture of expertise and participation, but not a reconciliation of democracy with expertise. We do learn from the example of quality-control circles, however, that expertise and highly satisfactory, broad levels of participation are fully compatible and also that an important element in such compatibility is the product-quality norm, and we now take these lessons with us to other possibilities for the solution of the central problem.

One suggestion arises from a highly unlikely source—a study not of industrial or governmental organizations but of musical ensembles, and in this case not of symphony orchestras, where the conductor is a legitimate autocrat based on the presumption of expertise, but on string quartets, where there are no distinctions among the players in formal authority at all (Murnighan and Conlon, 1991). We take a jump in perspective, therefore, changing from organizations in which democracy must be introduced if there is to be the reconciliation we seek, to one in which the presumption of democracy, or at least equality, is already firmly in place and it is authority in expertise that must somehow be introduced.

We first note that Mulder's (1971) prerequisites for effective participation in organizations are fulfilled in this case, that is, the members of a string quartet are both interested and competent with respect to the decisions in question—decisions about how best to play the music as well as about how to rehearse it effectively. Next, we may see that the importance of the norm of product quality is again supported in this application and is further illuminated in function:

For string quartets, especially successful string quartets, the task is so inspiring by itself that diversity and conflict become a secondary and relatively inconsequential interference. The fact that they never quite achieve their ultimate goal—to produce transcendent, glorious sound that is just beyond their reach—keeps them continuously striving to achieve it. (Murnighan and Conlon, 1991:183)

There is a tension, however, between democracy and leader-

ship. The first violinist is the leader of convenience in many minor ways, but the authors find that for the group to function successfully the first violinist must also lead in major ways. Hhe need not be the best player in the group, but hhe should be the best musician. Hhe should have the sort of "vision" that reliably makes for successful interpretation, and in spite of the presumptions of equality and democracy, hhe must find a way to lead. At the same time, the other three players must find a way to follow.

The authors developed persuasive objective measures of success for British string quartets of the time and noted differences in the way this tension was handled by the most and the least successful groups. Two of the poor attempts at solution were untrammelled democracy (which we will look at more closely in a moment) and compromise. Unsuccessful groups frequently mentioned compromise as a common method of resolving differences, whereas successful ones often noted explicitly in the interviews that compromise was taboo (pp. 177-179). In relation to other possible modes of resolving the tension, the following are three typical excerpts from the data on the least successful groups (p. 175) and four on the most successful:

"In the unsuccessful quartets in general, there was a pronounced tendency for the first violinist to emphasize democracy. One noted, for example, "Just because I'm leader doesn't make any difference.' The other members of this quartet, however, wanted the first to take more authority and exercise stronger leadership."

In several of the least successful quartets, other players "thought that the first violinist did not have the personal power to lead them effectively: 'Enthusiasm, yes, but he doesn't lead. . . . He's a weak leader, no flair, not extroverted enough.'"

In one of the least successful groups, the first violin recognized the necessity to lead in spite of firm, democratic foundations, but hhe and the group did not find the right way to allow this to happen. "The first violin described the group as 'very democratic.' Yet he acknowledged taking control without their consent: 'In concert, I do what I want to anyway.'" Thus,

the intermittent, unlicensed seizure of power was apparently not an auspicious strategy (in fact, this particular first violinist was fired—a traumatic experience for any quartet).

In the successful groups, on the other hand, we note what seems a strange, insistent ambivalence in self reports on the management of the fundamental tension. In almost all of these groups, “. . . paradoxes were managed implicitly. Players enacted both aspects of leader-democracy paradox, subjectively perceiving that they had input (espousing democracy and the right to voice) while objectively giving the first violinist more influence in the group.” (p. 182)

In one of the most successful groups, the “. . . first violinist expressed the two sides of this paradox, saying first, ‘If there are any real problems in the quartet, I suppose I sort them out.’ Almost immediately after, he said, ‘It’s very democratic.’” (p. 174)

In another, the “. . . second fiddle said, ‘He does dominate; he’s an extrovert anyway. He likes central attention. And obviously that’s very good for a first fiddle.’ A little later in the same interview he said, ‘We’re fairly equal as far as decisions.’” (p. 174)

In yet another, the “. . . cellist denied any additional influence for the first fiddle: ‘How is he a leader? He’s one-fourth of a quartet. It’s no more than that.’ Yet observations of his quartet in several recording sessions showed that the first violin was clearly controlling the sessions: He stopped the group when he heard a wrong note or a wrong phrase; he was the one who had to be satisfied before they continued recording; he was totally in charge.” (p. 174)

Thus, under product-quality norms, the contradictions between democracy and expertise appears on the surface to be managed by—hypocrisy! This would not be an entirely novel idea in organization theory. March (1978), for example, explicitly and persuasively acknowledged a role for hypocrisy in the management of inevitable inconsistencies among goals. But although hypocrisy may occasionally be effective, it would seem to be an unacceptable solution, both theoretically and practically, to a major organiza-

tional problem. Moreover, observers of the actors themselves rather than their words alone have no doubt that this was indeed *not* the solution in the case of British string quartets (Murnighan, 1993)—that, on the contrary, avowals of democracy in those organizations were clearly sincere. We need a better conceptualization of the real-life solution discovered by Murnighan and Conlon, one that is not so simple-minded, that is more faithful to these particular events, and that will bear more theoretical weight.

THE VOLUNTARIST MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEMOCRACY

In previous research (Mohr, 1977), I found that when asked how much they participated, people answered relative to their requirements. If their desires for participation were high but the amount permitted were only moderate, their survey response claimed only a small amount of participation. Conversely, if their requirements were low and the objective amount of participation were, again, moderate, they said that their participation was high. Such results are not particularly surprising, but they serve to remind us that people *do* have desires for how others will behave toward them in organizations, on the democracy dimension and no doubt on others as well, and that these desires *do* vary in principle, not only from person to person, but from decision to decision for any given individual. One may surmise from the evidence, for example, that desires along the democracy dimension would vary from decision to decision according to the criteria of competence and interest (Mulder, 1971).

Let us now assume that subordinates were able to participate as much as they wanted, in the sense of having the right to some variety of legitimate authority, with the reservation that the issues be product-quality issues and, since the boundaries of that category are likely to be fuzzy, that they particularly exclude conflict-of-interest or selfish issues, such as one's own pay or comfort on the job. If, now, a person has a low desire for influence on a certain matter, and if indeed the decision is made by others and hhe

simply abides by it, can we say that the governance has been democratic? I propose that we can, and I would label this a "voluntarist" model of democracy—one which requires that official authority be completely decentralized, but not the actual exercise of that authority, nor need there be institutions designed to encourage or substitute for such exercise.

The apparently legitimate objection will be made that, under such a model, we could have a polity in which (a) vast numbers of apathetic "voters" never exercised their right to legitimate influence, (b) there were a conspicuous absence of common democratic institutions, and (c) a few elites made all the decisions; and we would still call the polity "democratic." This would appear contrary to common notions of the requirements of democracy. I do not propose to explore here whether it is contrary or not, but I would hope to establish that it does not affect our case because the question of *organizational* democracy, particularly in the matter of product quality, is different from the question of *societal* democracy. Societal democracy presumes "political" or "accommodational" decision making (Mohr, 1976)¹ because it has to do with the regulation of public life and the allocation of values; there are no superordinate goals, but only competing interests. (When a democratic society does have specific, agreed-upon tasks and goals to accomplish, it assigns them to organizations—typically, administrative agencies that are not required to be internally democratic.) Organizational task democracy, however, has "rational" decision making as a presumption because it has to do with engineering and coordination for the accomplishment of certain ends. For the descriptive question whether democracy obtains in a given modern society, it is at least relevant to claim that, for an affirmative answer, institutions such as elections and

¹ In the framework of the cited article, the typical instrumental behaviors in the political mode of collective decision making are contention and struggle and the choice mechanism is domination. For the accommodational or "firm" mode, the typical instrumental behavior is bargaining and the choice mechanism is satisficing. For the rational mode, the typical instrumental behaviors are analysis and persuasion, and the choice mechanism is maximizing.

checks and balances must be in place and functioning well. For organizational democracy, however, under the model of rational decision making, such institutions are completely irrelevant; it is enough that members have the right to exercise participant authority over decisions and have equal access to the process. Are most organizations democratic? By this definition, most companies and agencies and orchestras of the modern world are *not* democratic in most areas of decision, but in certain research teams and task forces, for example, and in string quartets, democracy prevails throughout, whether the members demand a consensus in all decisions or not. This is a “voluntarist” model because the right to exercise authority is there; it is up to the individual to decide where and when to assert that right.

Clearly, organizations are also small polities in part, because many organizational decisions readily evoke the competition of interests—pay, carpeting the office, promotion, and so on, including business-related decisions so constrained by uncertainty as to undermine the credibility of any attempted rational analysis (Cyert and March, 1963). Here the issues are largely allocational, and the descriptive question whether democracy does indeed prevail in a given case should be decided by definitional criteria of democracy, whatever they may be, that are similar to those which decide the same descriptive question with respect to societies. The *normative* question—whether these allocational decisions in an organization *should* be democratic—is a different question from whether (a) a society or (b) the task decisions in an organization should be democratic. That is to say in part that the normative question whether “organizations” should be democratic might productively be divided into the two questions of task decisions and allocational decisions. Of course, both types are frequently involved simultaneously; that is the source of a great deal of theoretical difficulty and unfortunately of confusion, but it does not make the issues intractable. The normative issue with respect to allocational organizational decisions is important, and perhaps the more important of the two. It is also intriguing, especially when it is noted that technical expertise is not particularly to be recommended there as a criterion for the distribution of authority.

One can make the initial case, at least, that technical expertise is essentially irrelevant to the ability to decide issues such as who should get certain benefits and who has received enough, yet it is commonly the case that people whose positions of official authority are justified by their presumed expertise in task areas find that they use that position largely and even primarily in connection with the allocational struggle. However, I deal normatively here only with the organizational task decision. It is desirable as a first step to separate this category out analytically and to find the roles for democracy and expertise within it in order to clarify and purify the more difficult normative issues of governance for allocational organizational decisions. In addition, many will find it desirable at the applications level to think about locating and expanding the pure task decision areas in real, working organizations, as the remainder of this discussion will suggest.

Task decisions in an organization may easily be politicized by allowing competing interests—the allocation of values—to creep into the implications of the presumably goal-oriented issues. The whole organization can be affected in this way and often is, so that bargaining and politics become the rule throughout; no space is left for the rational pursuit of any task goal (Dalton, 1959). It does not have to be so, however. Task decisions in organizations frequently are not in fact political. This is especially true for decisions taken within small units rather than across units, and even for decisions across units in the kinds of organizations that are called “organismic” by Burns and Stalker (1961) or “highly differentiated” by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967)—organizations that are successfully adapted to highly uncertain environments by structures that emphasize lateral, consultative decision making. The maximizing rather than the satisficing criterion (Simon, 1976; Cyert and March, 1963) as readily applies to such decisions, both theoretically and in practice, as it does to decisions in the marketplace. The fact that these decisions have the potential to become either political or rational explains why product quality norms are important: they tend to prevent the politicization of decisions that do not need to become political and to make

domination, bargaining, and compromise counterproductive, as they should be. This is the force of the quote above with respect to quality norms in string quartets, and the effects of such norms are apparently similar even in automotive companies, as in the case of well-functioning quality-control circles.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in string quartets, it is not fuzziness or ambivalence at all that permits the reconciliation of democracy with expertise. True democracy prevails, of the voluntarist sort that is appropriate to task decisions in organizations. In spite of apparent internal contradictions, none of the members of the successful quartets described above misrepresented reality. The first violinists were using their expertise in musicianship and their leadership abilities in ways that are not only appropriate to the setting but consistent with organizational task democracy, as well. The other players were simply exercising their right under such a democratic system to defer to expertise from time to time, as required by their vision of the needs of product quality. All were correct in referring to their system of governance as democratic. At the same time, all were aware that too much exercise of democratic authority could destroy the group and the benefits to be derived from it. In this sense, all were acting as responsible members of a voluntarist democracy. This was no easy role to grasp and to play, as was evidenced by the numerous quartets in which the leadership-democracy tension was not well managed and which either languished or failed completely.

The voluntarist model of democracy makes the reconciliation of democracy and expertise possible on the *logical* level even when those with democratic authority are not the experts. It is the insertion of a third value into the picture—product-quality norms (or other strong, agreed-upon superordinate goals)—that makes the reconciliation possible on the *practical* level. Moreover, where achieved in practice, the voluntarist model of organizational democracy is subsumed under the Democratic Theory model of participation, and, it is hypothesized, will generally score high in

terms of both human growth and development and productivity and efficiency, as well. Since its prevalence is so low at present, one must conclude that it is not easy to implement—if difficult in string quartets then *a fortiori* in governments and industries.

One illustrative potential application not too distant from the string quartet is the academic department. A difference of interest between the two is that the chair, unlike the first violinist, has true hierarchical authority in a wide range of organizational-*political* matters such as the management of an important budget; hhe is not just the “leader of convenience” in these areas. Academic departments are therefore somewhat closer in general to governments and industries than are string quartets. In organizational-*task* matters, however, such as promotion, hiring, curriculum, and graduate admissions policies, democracy frequently prevails officially and the model exemplified by the successful string quartet is evoked. In this perspective, a first requirement for success is that the expertise of the selected chair be adequate. Hhe need not be the best scholar and teacher in the department, but hhe should rank reasonably high. In addition, hhis “vision” and “musicianship” in these areas, hhis intellectual discernment for example, should be such as to command the basic respect of hhis expert colleagues. These task decisions are easily politicized; the allocation of values and the competition of interests creep in readily. In that light, the prevalence and dominance of quality norms are critical. From there, it is a question of the chair’s finding a way to lead and the faculty’s finding a way to follow in the context of a democratic distribution of formal authority. The failure to exercise leadership, the almost exclusive reliance of the chair on consensus and other forms of democratic decision-making—these will be damaging. So, in a similar sense, will a mistaken view of democracy by the faculty that leads it to insist on the exercise of its authority in almost every case in which such exercise would be legitimate.

Although the Japanese experience with quality-control circles is not democratic, it is close enough to suggest that implementation of the voluntarist model under proper leadership may be feasible even when the democracy must be introduced. Economic duress

has made American industries move in a similar direction. It is not unreasonable to anticipate a thoroughgoing implementation of the voluntarist model in these and various other sorts of organizational units once it becomes clear, under quality norms, that democracy need not conflict with expertise.

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組織之權威： 民主制度與專家意見的調和

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摘 要

這篇論文主要在分析民主制度與專家意見，做為組織中權威之分配的基礎，能否相互調和。如果以專家的意見為準，則專家們將主導一切，而非專家們只能遵循辦理；如果採民主制度，則所有人皆有權利發揮其影響力，專家也不比非專家更具權威性。當然這二項權威分配之基準均有其優點，但二者之間只能擇其一。如果必須做一個選擇，則以專家們意見為準似乎較占優勢，因為研究上顯示民主並不是非常可行的；對決策範疇感興趣，有能力幫助決策的制定，以及普遍被接受之產品品質的標準，為能否成功地促使員工們以民主方式或非民主方式，參與決策的決定因素。基於此，吾人提出一種所謂組織民主之「自願者模式」，涵蓋了專家群以理性方式從事組織中的決策。依此模式，民主制度占優勢，但決策參與者體認到品質水準及團體生存的必需性，自願地接受專家的影響。一些例證顯示自願者模式能被圓滿地遵行，且能調和民主制度與專家意見。