Democracy Or Power Of Control: Insights From Haitians And Other Educators For Leveraging The Democratic Polarities.

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Abstract

The polarities of democracy framework is founded on critical theory ideas that seek to achieve social change by overcoming oppression and violence, which both endanger humanity's survival. Benet expanded the theory by utilizing Johnson's concept of polarity management as a conceptual framework. Viewing the polarities of democracy model as a unifying paradigm can help in organizing, leading, and evaluating democratic social change activities aimed at creating healthy, sustainable, and just communities. According to the argument, Democracy is seen as a remedy for oppression rather than a mere dichotomy. In order to reach that point, it's important to recognize the presence of 10 values, with each being crucial on its own yet not enough individually, forming five polarity pairs. The study aimed to explore the perspectives of Haitian educators and other instructors familiar with public education in rural areas on the challenges and opportunities for enhancing access to quality public secondary education in places such as Pointe L'Abacou, Haiti. Throughout the study, all five pairs were considered, but three pairings of the polarities of democracy theory were used to address this gap.

Keywords: Democracy, Education, Haitian educators, Polarity, Polarities of Democracy, Polarity management, oppression, Education in Rural areas, Public secondary education, social change.

Introduction

As defined by Johnson (1992), polarity management refers to groups of opposites that are unable to work effectively on their own. A polarity has two opposing sides that are interdependent, and it is not feasible to pick one as a solution while disregarding the other side of the spectrum. When there is an insurmountable issue rather than a problem that might be addressed, and a polarity exists, one must use polarity management. In other words, if a polarity exists and there is an insurmountable issue that cannot be addressed and solved, it is a polarity. Once it identifies as a polarity, Johnson argued that it must be leveraged effectively. Benet (2013) proceeded to state that while the polarities of democracy can be viewed as a goal to strive for, they can also be considered a tool for determining if political systems are becoming more democratic, which is a positive factor, or less democratic, which can be dangerous (Benet, 2020) Thus, social change agents are responsible for engaging in strategies that strengthen our democracy and contribute toward more democratization.

Ten Values of Polarities of Democracy

According to Benet's (2006), 10 fundamental values are crucial for the sustenance of democracy. None of these values can be considered sufficient by themselves. The 10 values are organized into five polarity pairs, as follows.

Freedom and Authority

This polarity states that while freedom is a prerequisite for democracy, a certain level of power is essential to maintain social stability and order. According to Benet (2006), the freedom components allow for a less "oppressive and degrading work environment" (pp. 84–85). Similarly, authority is essential for governments to deter citizens from committing infractions. However, authorities shouldn't put restrictions on the rights of citizens to be free.

Justice and Due Process

Benet (2006) wrote that justice is used to "overcome oppression and restrain the use of power" (p. 144). Justice also aids those who do not have positions of authority and fosters the opportunity for all members of society. Individuals who are "least advantaged" are also encouraged by justice to be protected (Benet, 2006, p. 151). While the due process polarity has the advantage of restricting the use of power, it also has the potential to redress unfair occurrences or conditions, uncivil or disrespectful behavior, and prevent infringements on individual and group rights. Benet viewed justice as a tool for combating oppression and restraining abuse of power when it is leveraged effectively along with due process. It aids those with little power, protects those with little power, and promotes equal opportunity for all.

Diversity and Equality

Benet posited that both poles had advantages and disadvantages. To be more specific, he examines Butts's (1980) strengths and constraints, which Butts included in his civic values theory for a democratic society. Self-worth, opportunity, and societal stability all contribute to the positive features of diversity. When distinct stages (of experience and thought) were evaluated, as well as a larger opportunity for individuals or organizations, diversity had a positive. In terms of race, gender, class, and extreme poverty, the disadvantages of diversity include the establishment of inflexible, hierarchical power relations, which lead to the institutionalization of dominance and oppression in society. The advantages of equality include the eradication of inflexible hierarchical power relations, which could lead to the abolition of poverty and the promotion of self-esteem. According to Benet (2013), the negative effects of equality include the suffocation of inspiration, creativity, hard effort, dedication, and commitment to excellence, as well as the loss of protection and respect for individual rights and distinctions.

Human Rights and Communal Obligations

This polarity focuses on the human rights of minorities who are marginalized as a result of omission and hence excluded from political participation (Benet, 2006, 2013). Individual and community protection, safety, security, self-fulfillment, and self-esteem are some of the advantages of human rights. Collaboration, cooperation, communication, and a broad-based vigilance that stretches from the individual to small groups to the community at large are all positive components of communal responsibility. Human rights' negative features resulted in power concentration, oppression, subordination, and the dissolution of individual and group rights. Disenfranchisement, neglect, miscommunication, and dysfunctionality were also used to show some of the disadvantages of communal responsibility. Thus, when these poles are not leveraged effectively, the consequences may be harmful to the community (Benet, 2006, 2013).

Participation and Representation

To promote democracy as "a means to overcome oppression," this polarity must be optimized (Benet, 2013, p. 32). Individual control, personal development, education, association, and creativity are all beneficial characteristics of participation. Similarly, building a feeling of community for human connection, as well as empowerment and stakeholder status, were also advantages of representation. Thus, citizens can discover a way to express political and intellectual contributions through society, which can exhibit a type of legitimacy. Further, diverse group representation can aid in the execution of public policies and initiatives, ensuring pluralism. On the other hand, participation may obstruct representation, resulting in a regressive approach to achieving government goals. Correspondingly, citizens may feel overwhelmed through their over emphasis on involvement as well as disengaged or apathetic because of the negative impact of representation. Furthermore, an individual's incapacity to participate in social processes might contribute to a sense of futility. This pair has more to do with my research.

Consequently, I provide many examples throughout this literature review. The 10 values of polarities of democracy lead toward greater democratization when effectively leveraged (maximizing the positive quadrants) or toward less democratization when not effectively leveraged (maximizing the negative quadrants). The effective leveraging of these values can ensure that people live in a prosperous environment where resources are allocated sufficiently.

Democracy or Power Control

The concept of democracy is often subject to misinterpretation, as individuals tend to construe it according to their own unique perspectives. In this regard, Benet (2006, 2013) alluded that people all across the world have embraced the concept of democracy as a means to achieve genuine social change and address environmental, economic, and militaristic problems. However, Benet also noted that true democracy is seldom achieved. Democracy differs from country to country because of the various laws and regulations that apply. For example, Benet (2020) claimed that governance as it is constituted in the United States is a weak form of democracy because it does not correspond to effectively leveraging the polarities of democracy.

Correspondingly, in considering the January 6, 2021, insurgency, one could also argue that democracy is an ideal that the United States appears to be unable to attain. When one political party seems to be encouraging its supporters to try to rule by violently attacking the United States capital and chasing duly elected representatives out of the building to overturn a lawful election and threaten to hang the vice president for certifying it, they appear to be agreed with the United States continuing to exist as a country without being a democratic country. In the United States, the ability to vote seems to be more a privilege than a fundamental right. These notes on the failure to attain the ideal of democracy in the United States are included here because of the United States long history of duplicity about what they're doing to other countries regarding their use of power. Specifically relating this to Haiti, the United States domination of Haiti is described in an article that was published in May 2021 on the U.S. Department of State's website. In the piece, the United States, as is customary, is forcing the Haitian government to hold elections while ignoring the people's desire for security, education, health care, jobs, and other chances to survive democratically. The United States declared that legislative elections are the democratic means to eliminate Haiti's long-standing government by decree and that presidential elections are required to peacefully transition power from one democratically elected leader to another, which indicates full hypocrisy at display. The United States went on to state that the demands of the Haitian people are far too pressing for elections to be postponed any longer and that elections are held when they are due, not when it is

convenient (Chung, 2021). This statement suggests that the United States holds significant influence over the timing of elections in Haiti. Mason (1982) also asserted that no nation has achieved the democratic ideal; and that democracy cannot be viewed as synonymous with any nation, nor can any country serve as a normative standard against which others are judged (p. 28). Thus, Mason's position strengthens my analysis of the United States' position in Haiti's affairs. Haugaard (2010) also claimed that it is a failure to ensure that the promise of democracy is being met for all citizens. Democracy is a mechanism for managing divergence. He proceeded to state that the constraint of divergence within agreed-upon parameters is crucial to the transition from a predatory system to democratic institutions. Based on this statement, Haugaard leads more towards the support of Mason, who further believes that the term democracy has been greatly misunderstood and appropriated by many theorists who are patently un-democratic (Mason, 1982). Subsequently, Mason's concepts are consistent with Benet's polarities of democracy.

Oppression

Discussions about lack of effective public secondary education in rural areas of Haiti are inextricably linked to investigations of oppression in the country's educational system. When a human being is being prevented from the basic human right called education because of lack of government funding, it is an act of dehumanization and of oppression by the government (Freire, 2005). The benefits of investing in universal education at all levels—primary, secondary, and higher—have been proven to benefit individuals, communities, and entire countries. When a country's workforce is more educated, it enhances national production, wealth, and supports national security. Thus, education is an important aspect of society's overall structure (Colclough, 1982; Barro & Lee, 2001; Hanushek, 2003).

Democracy is a system that should allow a conflict to progress from oppression to a more accepted institutional mode of operation (Haugaard, 2010). Hence, Education needs to come to all if democracy is to succeed (Apple, 2010). For instance, Paulo Freire believed that knowledge is power, and that education should be a liberating process. Humanizing education, he believed, was the weapon that awoke people's consciousness and motivated them to examine and change their conditions. When people develop all their capacities, considering not only their own wants but also the needs and ambitions of others, they have a broader conception of humanity. Thus, mass education is essential for establishing freedom from oppression (Freire, 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2005). Similarly, Benet (2020) believed that education is a vital aspect of the ability of people to effectively manage the polarities of democracy. It is governed by a structure and policies and the educational institution's primary goal is to meet the needs of the population they serve. While Haiti's political, economic, environmental, sociocultural, and religious systems have all been afflicted by colonialism, greed, and corruption, the educational system has been particularly hampered and damaged by the wounding of all systems (Bello, 2013; Dantò, 2012: Dubois, 2012; Fouron, 2012; Polyné, 2013; Schuller, 2012; Trouillot, 1995). Thus, the nation's lack of effective public education is oppressing the country, particularly in rural areas. Similarly, the predatory existence of the Haitian state continues to prevent the emergence of a democratic culture and forced it to remain a "hidden transcript" (Fatton, 2002, p. 27).

The lack of access to effective public secondary education in rural areas of Haiti is the most ambiguous morally and politically complex example of dehumanization in Haiti's economy. Most rural Haitians currently lack access to high-quality education, which is essential for long-term social and economic development (USAID, 2020). In comparison to other countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean regions, the Haiti

Education expenditures in 2018 accounted for only 1.7% of Haiti's GDP which is very low; while countries like Brazil 6.1%, Chili, 5.4%, and Cuba 12.8%. Further, as a result of Haiti's current political upheaval in 2019, the GDP falls to -0.9% (UNESCO, 2019; USAID, 2020; World Bank, 2022). The Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle (Ministry of National Education and Professional Training) is in charge of overseeing the educational system of Haiti. According to the latest data, the overall success percentage for permanent Philosophy (Twelfth grade) in 2020 – 2021 was 42.78 %, down from 45.9 % in 2018 – 2019 (Haiti libre, 2021). Further, the most recent USAID (2020) reports indicated that primary school enrollment is 85% whereas only 20% of eligible-age students attend secondary schools; the average years of schooling for Haitians aged 25 and up is less than 5 years; the number of children who could not read at the end of first grade is 75%; and only 61% of the adult population is literate. They went on to declare that most Haitian schools have no government oversight and are pricey in comparison to typical incomes (USAID, 2014, 2020). The irony is that Haitian parents believe that education is the path to a better life for their children; However, per Freire's (2005) perspective, unless they are able to identify their oppressor and subsequently attain self-awareness, their outlook towards their predicament will remain unaltered.

The above-mentioned is inconsistent with Benet's polarity democracy. It appears that these instances of lack of government funding and lack of effective public secondary education in rural of Haiti may have been the result of ineffective management of the human rights and communal obligations polarity pair as well as the participation and representation polarity pair. For instance, the negative aspects of human rights resulted in individual and group discrimination, consolidation of power, oppression, subjugation, and the deconstruction of individual and group rights. In addition, disenfranchisement, neglect, miscommunication, and dysfunctionality are some of the downsides of communal obligations. Similarly, certain negative aspects of participation contributed to stress, disengagement, powerlessness, exhaustion, and aggression. Conversely, the downsides of representation resulted in the needs of certain individuals, namely alienation, obstructionism, disengagement, and disaffection.

Justice and due process should be employed, according to Benet (2006), to "overcome oppression and constrain the use of power" (p.144). The problem is we don't often do that; thus, we need to effectively leverage the polarity of justice and due process to get those positive outcomes. For instance, in addition to helping individuals in power positions, justice should promote equality for all people in society. Justice also pushes for the protection of those who were "least privileged" (Benet, 2006, p. 151). The justice due process polarity has the benefit of limiting the exercise of power, but it also has the power to correct unfair events or conditions, impolite or disrespectful behavior, and stop violations of one's own and other people's rights. In leveraging effectively, the positive aspects of both justice and due process, in Benet's opinion, can be used to fight oppression and stop the abuse of power. As well as support equal opportunity for all, protect those with less power and help those in need.

Methods

The findings are based on a qualitative thematic analysis of interviews with 20 participants who shared their perspectives and experiences about the lack of effective public secondary education in rural areas of Haiti. My intent was to explore the perceptions of Haitian educators and other instructors knowledgeable about barriers to or the facilitators of improving access to effective public secondary education in rural areas like Pointe L'Abacou, Haiti. The 20 participants were Haitian educators. Through a qualitative thematic analysis, I identified the themes that address the study's goal and single research question. I used NVivo to organize and tabulate the codes into final themes. The main research question that guided the study was: What do Haitian educators and other instructors knowledgeable about the provision of public education in rural areas perceive as the barriers to

or facilitators of improving access to effective public secondary education in rural areas like Pointe L'Abacou, Haiti?

Demographics

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to collect data from the target population. Although the target size was 15, a total of 23 individuals responded to the email invitations (Appendices A, C, and D), and of those 20 participated in the study. The participants were from Les Cayes, Pointe L'Abacou, Port-au-Prince, and the United States. Five participants were female and 15 were male. All individuals in question were educators who possessed a considerable amount of experience in teaching, ranging from a minimum of 6 years to more than 40 years. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1

Table 1

Demographics and Characteristics of the Participants

Location	Participant ID	Gender	Years in Teaching
Les Cayes	P–1	Male	21
	P–4	Male	28
	P–6	Male	18
	P–14	Female	22
	P–16	Male	6
Port-Au-Prince	P–3	Male	32
	P–9	Male	35
	P–10	Male	14
	P–13	Male	23
Pointe L'Abacou	P–7	Male	40
	P–11	Female	30
	P–17	Female	17
United States	P-2	Male	30
	P–5	Male	25
	P–8	Female	20
	P–12	Male	25
	P–15	Female	7
	P–18	Male	24
	P-19	Male	33
	P-20	Male	40

Result

The data were examined using Saldaña's (2016) thematic coding technique to identify themes that would elucidate the study's goal and research topic. The main research question that was addressed through the analysis was: "What do Haitian educators and other instructors, who are knowledgeable about the provision of public education in rural areas, perceive as the barriers to or the facilitators of improving access to effective public secondary education in rural areas like Pointe L'Abacou, Haiti?" During the course of the analysis, three primary themes emerged. The study indicated that the primary reason for the absence of secondary schools was the government's focus on its political and personal agendas at the expense of the educational requirements of rural residents, leading to inequalities between urban and rural regions. Table 4 below presents a concise summary of

the themes extracted from the gathered data, categorized by the corresponding participants. It also indicates the number of codes that influenced the three themes.

Table 4

Number of Codes Contributed to the Themes

Participants ID #	Theme 1 The government prioritizes its political and personal interests over rural residents' education	Theme 2 Disparities between urban and rural areas	Theme 3 A revolution in the educational system is required to build more public secondary schools for the citizens of rural areas
P–1	10	6	7
P–2	5	7	7
P–3	5	8	3
P–4	5	4	3
P–5	3	3	4
P–6	3	5	5
P–7	7	9	5
P–8	5	5	4
P–9	4	4	6
P–10	10	9	6
P–11	3	2	5
P–12	18	11	10
P–13	5	7	9
P–14	7	6	3
P–15	6	7	10
P–16	13	10	10
P–17	15	9	11
P–18	8	8	7
P–19	6	6	4
P–20	4	4	6

Connecting Study Results to the Theoretical Framework

During the study, I employed the polarities of the democracy model Benet developed as a theoretical framework. The theory proposed that democracy may be attained by managing five polarity pairs: freedom and authority; justice and due process; diversity and equality; human rights and communal obligations; and participation and representation (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013). I employed the theoretical framework to analyze the experiences of the educators that yielded in the emergence of specific meanings and interpretations by the participants. Benet argued that to overcome oppression, it is crucial to strategically utilize the interplay between five pairs, with the

aim to maximize the positive aspects of each pole while minimizing the negative aspects. Upon analyzing the experiences and perceptions of educators, the results indicate that there is a lack of effective utilization in at least three pairs: diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, and participation and representation. Moreover, given the interconnected nature of each polarity within the framework of democracy, it can be inferred that the negative aspects extend to the freedom and authority as well as the justice and due process pair.

Participants offered the following supporting language:

• "Quality education is not a priority for the Haitian government."
• "Politics play a significant role in rural areas' lack of secondary education."
• "Division in educational system."
• "The "Haitian government is weak."
• "Nepotism and corruption."

From the data collected, it appeared that the lack of public schools is because of a lack of policy that envisions treating all students equally or providing equal access to public secondary education. Second, the elites in the private sector must be more aware of their position as major players in partnering with the state to improve the development of less fortunate children. So, when I put them all together, it is a political system split into a small elitist group instead of allowing everyone to have the same education, which is the foundation to assist people in achieving what they need in society. The lack of public secondary education in Haiti's rural areas contributes to citizens' lack of democratic involvement and inclusion, as described in the literature review.

This linkage also suggests that the government's lack of rural secondary education efforts might have failed because of the polarities of diversity and equality; participation and representation were not adequately managed (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013).

Several other secondary themes also followed, which allowed for the enlightenment of the different perceptions of the participants on why there is a lack of effective secondary education in rural areas like Pointe L'Abacou, Haiti.

In this study, the participants confirmed their perceptions of rural communities' marginalization and exclusion from participation and representation. The polarity pair of human rights and communal obligations address the human rights of marginalized communities hindered from participating in a democratic system, thereby exemplifying the absence of representative bureaucracy (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013). The government must avoid violating human rights. Communities have obligations to protect their members' human rights. When ignored, this can be detrimental to a community. Therefore, excluding the rural areas in a democratic system to earn an education would be considered an assault on their educational rights, representing an assault on human rights.

Likewise, participation as a polarity of democracy fits into the participants' narratives. Participation in the rural areas in Haiti's educational system is regarded as a human rights concern regarding strategy, education, and literacy progress. The lack of effective public secondary education has been exacerbated by the failure to effectively manage participation and representation, as they are both critical in any educational system of a democratic society.

The study's results identified significant frustration against the Haitian government for ineffectively managing the diversity and equality pair. The perceptions of the participants also suggested that the human rights and communal obligations pair is not being managed. The government engages in the inhumane treatment of the citizens while the government cannot provide public goods such as schools, good roads, and learning materials for rural students. The participants attested to high unemployment, poverty, lack of infrastructure, electricity, and insufficient clean drinking water. Thus, the

government is failing to protect the human rights of the people in rural areas while also
failing to meet the communal obligations of society (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013).
Participants also revealed that the government does not support participation in
the democratic process. The participants allege that some citizens need to be represented
by government leaders effectively. In addition, the findings suggest that the positive
aspects of representation are not being achieved because of corruption among
governmental officials. This also discouraged citizens from participating.

Hence, the results of the study suggest that because of the failure on the part of
the government to effectively manage the polarities of democracy, the lack of secondary
education in the rural areas engulfed the urban areas. It brought insecurity that even the
urban children couldn't continue with school. Participants in the study felt that students in
rural areas are unfairly treated by walking for more than 2 hours to attend a secondary
school, which indicates the failure to achieve justice. This can be achieved only if the
Haitian government can maximize the positive aspects while minimizing the negative
aspects of the polarities of democracy (Benet, 2006, 2012, 2013). Therefore, the
findings suggest that the polarities of democracy may be helpful in planning,
implementing, and evaluating the policy recommendations that I suggested in the study see (Calixte-Hallworth,
2023) to achieve positive social change.

Discussion:

Through the literature review, Haiti has historically been characterized by disarray, challenges, and widespread
corruption. Haiti has encountered unparalleled intervention from the global community, characterized by
unfulfilled commitments, erroneous strategies, and a longstanding tendency to marginalize, notably by the
United States, France, and Canada. The literature review has provided additional evidence to support the notion
that Power of control, the global community, and other oppressive factors have a profound and enduring impact
on Haiti's society and especially the educational system. There is a pressing need for public policy reforms that
can effectively address the current educational situation. The contemporary discourse surrounding Haiti is largely
framed within this historical context, and the ongoing repercussions of oppression continue to shape current
events in the country (see Calixte-Hallworth, 2023). One could argue that the perpetuation of the narrative
labeling Haiti as the "poorest country in the Western Hemisphere" serves the colonial perspective and the
international community's interests in portraying the country in the most negative light possible to downplay
Haiti's significant accomplishments. The context was thoroughly presented in the analyzed books and news
articles, as well as through the perspectives of Haitian educators and other educators knowledgeable about Haiti's
educational system. Using Benet's polarities of democracy theoretical framework and Johnson's polarity
management conceptual framework, the research provided visibility to understanding the historical divide and
inequities within the nation are deeply entrenched by the failure to manage the polarities by the government of
Haiti effectively.

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