

Durkheim and Martin Luther King Jr.: Theories in the Workplace

Summer 1, 2015 Student

06/19/2015

SOCU 450

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I served five years in the United States Marine Corps as an Electrician Mechanic, so the workplace setting that I am most familiar with is the military work center in an electrician/mechanic shop. Everything has to run smoothly in order to have good production and morale in the work center. In the Military, it takes great leadership skills to be a successful individual when it comes to managing your subordinates. In the year of 2009 I was a Corporal in the United States Marine Corps and had acquired the role of Collateral Duty Inspector. As Collateral Duty Inspector, I was in charge of my specified work center assigned with the tasks of managing all subordinates, inspecting all work in progress, and inspecting all work completed. During my task in the leadership position, I encountered many individuals that simply did not want to go along with the program, which made it difficult for the unit as a whole. I will explain the practical concepts that relate a work center using Durkheim's political theory and Martin Luther King's social theory. Durkheim's political theory focuses on morality as being the one aspect that holds society in a balanced state, one where everyone feels an obligation to meet societies needs and are obliged to a set of professional standards. Martin Luther King's social theory focuses on the importance of using non-violent measures to address the tension between justice and injustice in order to have a functional society. The concept of these theories applies to all individuals involved in a work center in that they need to have a certain obligation for a higher law that needs to be followed and respected, that they can reach a point of difficulty because of conflicting measures, and that they are required to come together as one in order to achieve the goal of a functioning mechanism.

First of all when I was in charge of the work center I emphasized the importance of following the Marine Corps set standards of professionalism. If all individuals took the

set standards to heart and feel and obligation to make a successful contribution to the system, everything can run smooth and problems can be addressed fast. If individuals in a work center do not have a set obligation to follow a moral code, the work center will only lead to a state of an uncontrolled environment of ineffectiveness. Durkheim emphasizes this requirement of society in his writing “Mechanical and Organic Solidarity,” when he states, “We can thus say that, in general, the characteristic of moral rules is that they enunciate the fundamental conditions of social solidarity. Law and morality are the totality of ties which bind each of us to society, which make a unitary, coherent aggregate of the mass of individuals” (Durkheim, Pg58, P3). If individuals of the work center do not follow the set moral code then it can lead to injustice to the fellow co-workers and the leader. Martin Luther King Jr. would deem this behavior unacceptable and invaluable, and according to him, “The enforcement of the law is itself a form of peaceful persuasion” (King Jr., “The Power of Non Violent Action,” Pg266, P2). Martin Luther King Jr. believed in following set standards when they promote justice for all. In a work center, individuals need to follow regulations that are of benefit to all roles within an organization or else they are performing an injustice to their peers.

Secondly, the concepts of Durkheim and Martin Luther King Jr.’s theories, relate to individuals in the work center when they reach a point of difficulty because of conflicting measures. There were times in my leadership role when some individuals were not putting their part in the work center. These idling individuals affected my tasks as a leader and the tasks of their peers, pertaining to production; this conflict leads to negative influence in other aspects. Undetermined subordinates make the role of leader a much more complicated task and the need for more regulations is required. Durkheim

would see these actions in the work center as a anomie, which he explains in his writing “Anomie and the Modern Division of Labor,” when he states, “For, as nothing restrains the active forces and assigns them limits they are bound to respect, they tend to develop haphazardly, and come into collision with one another, battling and weakening themselves” (Durkheim, Pg60, P2). If the issue with problematic individuals in the work center is not addressed, it will lead to other individuals feeling obliged to do the same, only making it worse for all the organization. Martin Luther King Jr. would put emphasis in working together to prevent and overcome negative outcomes and it can be inferred in his writing “The Power of Non Violent Action,” when he states, “A mass movement exercising nonviolence is an object lesson in power under discipline, a demonstration to the white community that if such a movement attained a degree of strength, it would use its power creatively and not vengefully” (King Jr., Pg266, P1). The prevention of such conflicting measures in a work center should be avoided by proper organization and support by the majority of morally minded individuals, using those same morals to make the just decisions.

Finally, the theories of Durkheim and Martin Luther King Jr. can be used to relate the requirement of a functional work center to a well running mechanism. In my work center all individuals knew their set role of daily tasks, this ensured that everything got taken care of in a smooth and timely manner. Durkheim explains the importance of functionality in his writing “Suicide and Modernity,” when he states, “For it can be established only by requiring of one or another group of men, usually of all, sacrifices and concessions in the name of the public interest” (Durkheim, Pg65, P2). Every individual has to be able to sacrifice certain aspects in order to reach the common goal of

finishing all tasks completely and accurately since not all individuals work the same, even though they all are trying equally. King Jr. refers to the importance of a functional society when he states, “ We will take action against injustice without waiting for other agencies to act” (King Jr. Pg266, P2). I had issues brought to my attention as a leader that caused me to change my ways and leading to learning outcomes in my career. A functional work center is required in all aspects even in addressing the issue of injustice so that there is a balance in leadership and labor.

Considering possible weaknesses to these theory concepts, it can be argued that the codes that individuals are required to meet might not be in the interest of the laborer. However, if the code that a leader imposes to his subordinates has all values of morality, it should imply equal fairness and discipline for all individuals. Referring to social equilibrium, Durkheim states, “Only social rules can prevent abuses of power” (Durkheim, Pg60, P3). Pertaining to the fact that there can be difficulty due to conflicting measures, it can be argued that debate can bring about better ideas in the work center. The role of the leader is to maintain proper ideas that will be of benefit to the majority and are just at the same time, if this is done then stubborn conflicting ideas only become problematic and unjust. Referring to non-violent protests, King Jr. states, “We will not obey unjust laws or submit to unjust practices” (King Jr., Pg266, P4). It can be argued that requiring to work together with the goal of functionalism can lead to the delay of some individual’s skills since they have to rely on others that might not be as proactive. In a work center teamwork is required in order to have the best possible production, one individual alone cannot do all work, it takes all possible assets to come up with the best

results. In his writing King Jr. states, “The movement for equality and justice can only be a success if it has both a mass and militant character” (King Jr., Pg265, P6).

The theories of Durkheim and Martin Luther King Jr. can be used on the work center leadership plans. These theories imply the need of a moral code that can aid in the overall management of the work center. The theories define the fact that there will be conflicting measures that are going to need addressing and a proficient leader should be prepared to do it efficiently. Lastly, these theories emphasize the importance of a well organized and functioning work center, one where all individuals are involved so that every aspect of production is taken care of. A work center just like a society needs to have a balance between individuality and production being lead by a professional leader, which takes into consideration the unit as a whole.

References

Lemert, C. (n.d.). Social theory: The multicultural, global, and classic readings (Fifth edition. Twentieth anniversary ed.).