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A) An individualized parent education system using the Personalized System of Instruction (PSI). Parent education in basic behavior analytic strategies and tactics with parenting inventory as source of objectives; measured in parent learn units or objectives, or both
B) Advocacy instruction also as part of the curriculum (e.g., how, where, and what to advocate for your child in the school system)
C) Daily and weekly feedback about their child's performance
D) Critical role in setting objectives for their child
E) Maintenance of followup communication after the child leaves the CABAS School

5) *University and University Consultant Components*
A) Schools serve as practica site for training MA students as teachers or researchers and Ph.D. students as supervisors or researchers
B) Consultant on site one to three days per month; responsibility for maintaining reliability of the CABAS model and introducing changes with the supervisors; summary data of schools posted at the university
C) Subject matter of courses at the university driven by research and practice at the schools
1) Relevant courses in behavior analysis and pedagogy, the epistemology of behavior selection related to pedagogy and curriculum
D) Research publications tied to school efforts (see Table 1)

6) *Community* (board of education, parents, employers)
A) Provide summary of learn units, criterion-referenced objectives for all students combined
B) Provide yearly summary of teacher and supervisor portfolios including learn units taught, objectives taught, and inservice modules achieved by teachers and supervisors
C) Summarize costs per learn units and objectives for students (Greer, 1994b)
D) In the future, provide ongoing assessments of the relationship between objectives achieved and postschool effects.



# 6

# RACISM

HAROLD E. BRIGGS and ROBERT I. PAULSON

## INTRODUCTION

Most White Americans are aware that our democracy is less than perfect. Historically, White citizens have discriminated against minority groups and attempted to exclude them from the mainstream of American life. Today, however, many Whites tend to see the problem of racial discrimination as either having been perpetrated in the past, or in terms of prejudices held by a minority of bigots (whom they assume to be either Southerners or blue-collar workers). Few White Americans appreciate the fact that well into the 20th century the bulk of scientific, psychological, and social theories supported racist arguments (see Gould, 1981). Nor do they realize that liberals tended to use these arguments, too. At all levels of society, many people—including writers, scientists, presidents, statesmen, and educators—subscribed to beliefs of White superiority in one form or another. Furthermore, many of today's so-called enlightened explanations for social problems, which are accepted by much of White society, are little more than subtle forms of the same line of reasoning. In fact, these explanations have a strong historical continuity with ideas expressed earlier in our history by people we would now call racist (Fredrickson, 1971; Gosset, 1965).

In this chapter, we will use a behavioral analysis perspective to explore the problem of institutional racism. Prejudice is an individual phenomenon; therefore, we will discuss it in passing. We believe that such individual phenomena are shaped by societal processes (Gaines & Reed, 1995), particularly reinforcing and punitive consequences, and until this macrolevel is addressed, little change can be expected at the individual level. Furthermore, considerably more attention has been paid to the subject of prejudice than to institutional racism (Duckitt, 1992), and this chapter represents one attempt to rectify this relative inattention.

In the first part of the chapter, we will briefly discuss the prevalence of racism in this country. We will then focus on the weaknesses associated with the traditional explanations of racism. Current theories of racism will be augmented with behavioral analysis, so that a new learning theory framework for looking at the problem of institutional racism can be established. Affirmative action will be used as an extended case example of this approach. We will conclude with a discussion of the implications for policy and practice to address this problem.

## INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

One of the results of the civil rights movement of the 1960s was the extensive documentation of racism in all aspects of American life (Blauner, 1972; Knowles & Prewitt, 1969; Schwartz & Disch, 1970; Tabb, 1970). This research culminated in the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner, 1968). The Kerner Commission, as it came to be called, declared that the United States was moving toward becoming two divided nations. In every area, African Americans fared less well than Whites. Although there can be no argument that individual African Americans have made substantial progress—that there have been improvements for the Black middle class since the 1960s—as a group African Americans, in particular the poor, have fallen further behind. During the 1980s, federal assistance to the inner cities was cut substantially. Staples (1988) saw this change in federal funding as an opportunity for the government to redistribute resources to Whites:

> While insisting on governmental aid to private schools and increases in the so-called entitlement programs such as social security, veteran benefits unemployment insurance that benefit the white middle class, they [whites] call for reductions in welfare, food stamps and public housing that minorities heavily rely on. (p. 2)

The result of such White insistence, according to Staples, has been that

> While every statistic available shows Blacks to be underrepresented in every positive area of American life, and to be losing what gains were achieved in the 1960s and 1970s, the eighties bear witness to the fiction that reverse discrimination is a more serious social problems than white racism. (Staples, 1988, p. 3)

Whether one is talking about housing, education, income, health status, or occupational status, African Americans still fare significantly worse than their White counterparts (Hacker, 1995). Within the social service sectors such as foster care, mental health, juvenile justice, and general assistance, people of color receive more restrictive modes of treatment even if they have the same diagnosis as Whites. When age is held constant, women, children, and the elderly are the poorest in this country; when race is added, African American children and senior citizens are at the bottom of the income structure (Baun, 1991). Social services in many instances have perpetuated these differences. Steno (1982) emphasized that the differential experiences of African American children are a consequence of inadequate service delivery systems and the racism inherent in these systems (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). Similarly, the differential treatment effects of African American men and boys have been explored by Gibbs (1988) and Wulczyn (1991) as producing limitations on the life chances and experiences in service delivery systems. In other words, the color line continues to be a major determinant of placement in the social hierarchy. This even seems to be true within the Black community as well (Hall, 1992). In the next section we look at theories of racism that seek to explain these different outcomes for African Americans.

### Conceptual Models of Racism

As noted in the introduction, many theories of racism focused on individual prejudice and discrimination rather than on organizations or society. *Individual racism* refers to attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors of individuals that result in unequal treatment or opportunities for minorities (we will provide examples later in this chapter). In contrast, *institutional racism* focuses on organizational policies and practices that have unequal consequences for minorities, regardless of whether these policies are accompanied or undergirded by racist beliefs. With the advent of the civil rights movement, it was no longer socially acceptable in most situations to talk openly in a prejudiced manner or to practice overt discrimination. In its stead there arose a new kind of individual racism and racist theories. We will examine this new breed of racism first, before turning to a discussion of institutional racism. The new racism, instead of classifying social problems in terms of biological inferiority, shifts the explanation to one of cultural inferiority. The effect of this cultural determinism is the same (Briggs, in press). Minority group members are still blamed for their condition, whereas White social institutions that maintain White privilege

escape condemnation. These explanations are part of the process described by Wellman (1977) whereby White middle-class people are able to explain structurally generated contradictions in terms that are not in conflict with their egalitarian ideals. These explanations of social problems, which invoke cultural determinism, are widely used by White Americans, especially liberals who practice a new form of racism.

Robert Blauner was right in saying that "prejudiced attitudes are not the essence of racism" (Blauner, 1972, p. 9), but he underestimated the closeness of the relationship between extremist prejudiced ideas and the beliefs held by the rest of "reasonable" White society. As Blauner pointed out, it is reasonable White society that helps to maintain racism in America despite its "favorable" opinion of minority groups. Prager's (1973) analysis of the beliefs of White people established that a common ideology of whiteness does in fact exist despite apparent differences in beliefs of different social groups. This result provides further evidence that there are links among prejudice and the other social explanations of the same phenomena.

Throughout American history, even the most extreme racist groups have seen themselves as acting within a moral framework; their beliefs and resultant actions were not based on unchristian hatred. Rather, these groups used many "respectable" and scientific ideas widely accepted in their time to bolster and justify their actions. In actuality, the real problem is that conflicting interests generally do exist, and the defense of the White majority's interests or privilege has the same result as actions inspired by prejudice. For example, opposition to school busing for integration purposes may be explained by a concern for quality education rather than racism. This conflict of interest is best illustrated by the recent controversy over affirmative action. Affirmative action has generally been defined in terms of reverse discrimination—that is, the conflict between minority and majority rights. In addition to conflicts over particular privileges, minorities, if nothing else, often represent a real threat to bureaucratic security, that is, operating organizations in a way comfortable to the White male majority, as minority group members are now challenging many of the assumptions upon which organizations operate.

In contrast to the organizational racism perspective, we argue that within organizations, the rewards and punishments are usually distributed in such a way that minority-group concerns are at best secondary commitments, if not contrary to, the best interests of the individual's organizational success. In other words, individuals are not likely to get rewarded and may be punished for championing minority group issues. Under these circumstances a person is much less likely to act in way favorable to minority groups, irrespective of their personal attitudes toward them, because of the organizational consequences to such behavior. If racism is to be eliminated, therefore, many of these seemingly neutral bureaucratic imperatives will have to change.



## The Web of Urban Racism

Harold Baron (1969) was not concerned with analyzing racism in the general society but rather in the interorganizational network that characterizes the urban setting where most minority groups are now located. He argued that direct discrimination and the application of racist, oppressive policies are no longer necessary because the effect of the total system working together is the same as is if each institution was acting alone. This is not so much a result of the process by which the Black middle class has changed its role in the community, although this could certainly be a complementary process, but rather it is a consequence of institutional arrangements and procedures. In any city, there are five major sectors operating: the housing system (including planning), the labor market, the educational system, the political structure, and the welfare sector. This last sector is controlled by the political sector. In any given sector, there is often a division between a dominant White and a subordinate minority subsector that is, of course, subject to the control and the priorities of the dominant system (Baron, 1969). These dual systems developed historically and were initially maintained through the direct application of force that is no longer necessary.

A critical aspect of the dual systems is the way they interlock and reinforce each other in their subordinate status. They are the major means through which racial distinctions are reflected in institutional arrangements. According to Baron (1969), "The second-class outcomes for blacks from any one institutional sector are so strong and enduring because the subordinated subsectors provide concrete organizational forms and procedures which can be bolstered" (p. 144).

Because of this mutual reinforcement, institutions no longer have to actively discriminate to maintain majority prerogatives. In fact, intentional racist actions may not be necessary at all because the procedures effectively do the job themselves. There is no longer a necessity for totally excluding minority group members from these institutions, which, in fact, are actively recruiting at least token representation from minorities. Baron's model indicates that the indirect control and reduction of direct overt oppression that characterize neocolonialism would probably occur in any event because of the structure of interorganizational relationships in the cities. Baron stated the problem well:

> The effectiveness of urban racism is dependent upon the manner in which the racial controls and differentiation in one institutional sector fit together to reinforce the distinctions in other sectors. As the specific barriers become less distinctive and less absolute, their meshing together into an overriding network compensates, so that the combined effect of the whole is greater than the sum of the individual institutions. The minute operations of these institutions are so interrelated

and bolster one another so efficiently they form a coherent system of control without the sanction of a legal framework.

Maintenance of the basic racial controls is now less dependent upon specific discriminatory decisions. Such behavior has become so well institutionalized that the individual generally does not have to exercise a choice to operate in a racist manner. The rules and procedures of the large organizations have already prestructured the choice. The individual only has to conform to the operating norms of the organization and the institution will do the discriminating for him. . . [Furthermore] the actual racial discrimination in a particular institution need not be as great as the differential in its racial outcome, for the other institutional sectors have previously performed much of the discrimination for it (Baron, 1969, pp. 142-143; 160).

Here is a concrete example: A suburban school system does not need to have its school board pass a discriminatory policy to prevent minorities from being in its school system. African Americans are less likely to have the education needed to get well-paying jobs. If a minority group member were successful in getting the necessary education, he or she would still have less chance of getting the same job, and he or she would get paid less than a White person with similar education (Hacker, 1995). Assuming the non-White person was successful in obtaining the job and had the income to buy a house in the suburbs, "steering" occurs among many real estate firms, so that a non-White person is less likely to be shown housing in a predominantly White suburb (Baron, 1969; Williams, 1984). The real estate agents might actually believe that they are following their customer's wishes and that their customers would be more comfortable living in neighborhood with others in the same ethnic group. A Black client, for instance, might be more likely to seek out a Black real estate agent or company that is more likely to have listings and expertise in African American neighborhoods. If, for the sake of argument, the Black person locates a house in a White suburb, he or she is more likely to have problems getting financing for that home. It has also been shown that "red-lining"[1] occurs, particularly in minority group or mixed-ethnicity neighborhoods, which are considered to be less stable. Mixed neighborhoods are frequently on the fringe of a White suburb, and the loan officers involved in the financing process could honestly proclaim the reason for denying the loan was not race but rather the greater risk inherent in the mixed, less stable neighborhood. As can be seen at each step in this example, individuals may be following organizational rules that in and of themselves do not discriminate. The combined effect of these rules, however, results in discrimination based on race. The system as a whole assures that fewer African Americans end up in the White school districts without the school board taking any direct, deliberate discriminatory action.

A better understanding of the way privilege and procedures are interrelated can be appreciated by concentrating on a particular institution.

[1]The term *red-lining* refers to the loan-institution practice of drawing a red line around a neighborhood in which they refuse to invest or lend money.



## Individual Institutions

In this section, we explore how the normal operations of organizations may lead to racist results. Organizations do not operate in a neutral manner but instead reflect the values (and hence, biases) of their decision makers. Organizational procedures develop historically, usually through extending tradition. They are often modified informally in response to organizational needs. Once established, these procedures frequently have an inertia all their own, even when they no longer serve any useful purpose and do in fact discriminate.

These procedures serve important functions for the organization. First they act as a means of control because they standardize the way employees look at the environment (i.e. categorize it). Second, they control the organization's response to inputs. Third they structure rewards and punishment. Once these procedures are mastered by employees through learning the organizational norms and reward structure, they offer security to a worker, who eventually identifies them as the one and only way of doing things.

Another important organizational concern that is affected by these procedures is the reduction of uncertainty (Cyert & March, 1963; Thompson, 1967). It can do this in two ways: (a) by trying to make sure rules are adhered to within the organization; and (b) by creating negotiated interlocks with important elements in its external environment (the "web" to which Baron referred).

There are a number of important implications to be drawn from this process. People learn to pay attention to those things the organization favors and to use the points of view or "filters" (with their inherent biases) reinforced by the organizational leadership. The very act of categorizing through a set procedure frequently leads to stereotypic action. In relation to minorities, these are most often negative images. In addition, most workers are concerned with fulfilling those criteria used for judging their performance, criteria that will eventually lead to promotions. If these criteria involve procedures that conflict with equal benefits to minorities, the latter will be of secondary importance. Individual commitments to minorities will be at best secondary to those of their profession and their career; they are commitments that will only be met if there is any energy left over after these primary tasks are finished. Furthermore, as Molotch and Wolf (1971) noted in their analysis of the University of California at Santa Barbara,

there usually are no institutional rewards for activities such as either recruiting minorities or providing service to the community, so that even if resources do exist, motivation will be low.

Perhaps most important, because organizational procedures serve to reduce uncertainty and are a form of security for both the organization and the individuals within it, any changes will be resisted. Once a worker learns the ropes and knows how to get the most reward for the least effort, he or she will not welcome any changes of the rules. This is what Blauner (1972) referred to as "bureaucratic security." It is an important privilege of Whites (who usually create these procedures for their own convenience and who thus have a stake in maintaining the status quo). As a result, Molotch and Wolf (1971) observed, "racism is fundamentally the result of past practices being applied to ongoing situations" (p. 38). That is, changes to accommodate different life styles or circumstances will be resisted.

There is an even more important privilege implicit in this discussion of procedures, however. The dominant decision makers in White society have the power to define the codes and premises, the rules and procedures, and the criteria for rewards and punishments in relation to them. These are inevitably designed to make life as convenient as possible and to conform with White middle-class values and standards of behavior such that each person has an interest in upholding and defending these procedures. The power of definition has been considered to be an important mechanism in perpetuating racism by many theorists (e.g., Blauner, 1972).

White institutional resistance to organized minority demands, therefore, may stem as much—or more—from these organizational facts (i.e., the behavioral incentives rewarding and punishing them in the organization) than from prejudice or racist intent per se. Organizational decision makers can, of course, justify their defensive actions in nonracial terms regardless of their ultimate effect. Because, in fact, accepting the minority demands would create a great deal of uncertainty and result in sweeping changes in procedures, they will be strongly resisted.

Molotch and Wolf (1971) showed how the procedures of the University of California do, in fact, result in the unequal distribution of benefits between minorities and Whites, even though they do so inadvertently. For example, extension programs are usually self-financing, meaning that expensive fees must be charged and only courses likely to attract people who can pay the fee will be offered. Such programs cut out courses of interest to minority communities, whose ability to pay is usually less than that of Whites.

The university provides another good example of how racism and racial conflict are reinforced. Procedures for accepting both students and faculty ensure the kind of students and colleagues desired by the White controlling interests. These procedures are, to a great extent, however,



neither relevant nor a fair measure of minority abilities or needs, although the procedures themselves are nonracial in character.

Farrell and Jones (1988), in their content analysis of racial incidents in higher education, concluded that this is a problem that is growing in size, nature, and complexity in all regions of the country. The scope of racial incidents cited by Farrell and Jones (1988) included situations such as racial discrimination, racists remarks, racist behaviors, racist literature, cross burnings, and physical attacks. They described the antecedents of these incidents as risk factors that need to be assessed and modified on university campuses.

After listing recent racial incidents at California State University in Sacramento, Platt (1990) summed them up:

> When we see these separate incidents in their totality and understand their accumulated impact, then we know that racism is much more than a problem of rotten apples or bad attitudes, much more than a matter of personal ignorance or malice. Then it becomes an institutional and structural problem—deeply embedded, persistent, experienced, and skilled in its resistance to change. (p. 33)

The conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that White racial attitudes are not the most important component of racism in America. Rather, it is the way the society justifies and structures its institutions' operations that ends up subjugating minorities and protecting White privileges built into the system. This is a universal phenomenon and is not isolated to a particular segment of White society. The system operates in such a way that direct controls are not necessary, nor are direct racist acts. In order for changes to be made under these circumstances the concept of zero sum power (i.e., gains for minorities mean losses for Whites) must be changed. In certain cases—such as absorbing all minority unemployed people through an expanding economy and public employment without directly challenging White jobs—this would be extremely difficult.

Traditional theories of racism, however, have tended to structure the inquiry and analysis of the problem at the individual level rather than at the societal level. Personality variables have been sought to explain individual acts of prejudice and discrimination. Similarly, these conceptual frameworks have resulted in solutions that focus on how to overcome racist attitudes or how to change individual personalities. The new approaches, in contrast, suggest that programs, policies, and procedures can be changed in such a way that their discriminatory effect is eliminated. This can be done if supported by an appropriate reward structure so that benefits are distributed for aiding minorities; prejudice then would have little effect. Clearly there is a congruence between these newer approaches and applied behavioral analysis. To better understand these issues, we will next explore in greater detail a behavioral analysis of racism.

## TOWARD A BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS OF RACISM

Racism can be understood as arising, at least to some extent, from the interaction of three forms of learning: respondent (i.e., Pavlovian or classical) conditioning, operant (i.e., Skinnerian or instrumental) conditioning, and learning via observation (i.e., modeling or imitation). This latter one is likely a special instance of operant learning. Other factors may be salient, such as sociobiological ones (e.g., Chapman, 1993; Reynolds, Falger & Vine, 1986), but these are the subjects of study of other disciplines apart from behavior analysis. The major explanatory principles of behavior analysis are outlined in the following sections.

### Classical Conditioning

The principles of classical conditioning are familiar to most educated persons who have heard about Pavlov's work with dogs. Certain events that humans can be exposed to are naturally unpleasant or pleasurable, producing correspondingly natural or unlearned reactions. A puff of air in the eye produces an eyeblink, a jab with a sharp object evokes both pain and a flinch, a loud noise produces a startle reaction, and so on. These events are labeled unconditioned stimuli (UCS), and they produce unconditioned responses (UCR). Sometimes neutral stimuli become paired with unconditioned stimuli. If this is done in a particular manner, the neutral stimuli can come to evoke reactions similar to the unconditioned reactions produced by unconditioned responses. For example, if a raised paternal hand is followed by a slap (UCS), which produces pain and a crying and flinching response (UCR), after one or more such occasions, the raised paternal hand itself can produce a flinch. In such cases, the formerly neutral stimulus—the raised hand—has become a conditioned stimulus (CS); the flinch at the sight of the raised hand—a learned reaction based upon experience—has become a conditioned response (CR).

Respondent learning occurs in virtually every animal species ever tested, ranging from one-celled organisms to humans. The capacity for this form of learning is unlearned and apparently present at birth and earlier (Bernard & Sontag, 1947; Kisilevsky & Muir, 1991; Kisilevsky, Muir & Low, 1992). Its adaptive significance in terms of survivability of a species is obvious. Take for example taste aversion. If someone consumes a food or drink (UCS) that subsequently makes him or her sick (UCR), often the subsequent sight or smell of that food or drink (CS) evokes nausea and avoidance (CR) of the product. Rapidly learning to avoid spoiled or toxic foods may help species survive. Many times respondent learning is functional for an individual; however, sometimes it is problematic, as in the case of cancer chemotherapy. Sometimes patients receiving cancer chemotherapy treatments (UCS) experience nausea (UCR) as a side effect of



the medication. It is a serious problem if, after a number of such episodes, patients become nauseated (CR) when entering the clinic (CS), prior to receiving the medication. They become nauseated when exposed to the previously neutral stimuli (the sights, sounds, and smells of the clinic) associated with past episodes of medication-induced illness.

Respondent learning does not just apply to simple activities, but also to very complex ones. For example, if certain words are followed by painful stimuli, the words themselves can subsequently come to evoke fear and avoidance (Gale & Jacobson, 1970). Moreover, affective responses to words seem particularly resistant to extinction (Baeyens, Crombez, Van den Bergh, & Eelen, 1988). Once we acquire aversive or pleasant reactions to words, it takes an extremely long time for those conditioned reactions to diminish.

It appears that attributes such as prestige can be induced via respondent conditioning (Blanford & Sampson, 1964), as can the very "meaning" of words (Doyo, 1971; Miller, 1966, Staats & Staats, 1957) and various attitudes (Staats & Staats, 1958). This is not to say that *everything* about attributes, meaning, and attitudes is causally explained through respondent conditioning, only that such learning processes are involved to some, unknown extent. However, to the extent they are involved (and they most assuredly are), an understanding of their role is important in developing ways to potentially prevent or eliminate racism.

The respondent learning of affective or attitudinal reactions need not be acquired through direct, personal experience. Few of us have ever been bitten by a vampire, yet if late one evening Bela Lugosi made an appearance in our bedroom, fangs all aglitter, we would be very frightened, a CR acquired solely through exposure to vampires in the media (movies, television, and books).

Conditioned responses may *generalize*. For example, a person attacked by a bee may come to fear all insects, not just bees. Someone who has been trapped and severely frightened in a small elevator may develop an aversion to being in all small and enclosed spaces, such as closets, not just to elevators.

What are the implications of respondent conditioning for the development of racism? For one thing, we could expect that a person who has an unpleasant experience with someone of a different race may generalize fear and avoidance to all persons of that race (gender, ethnic group, and so forth). Many Black persons encounter abusive Whites, and the anger and resentment engendered by such encounters may spread to a pervasive aversive response to all White people. Similarly, Whites threatened or intimidated by a Black person may come to fear not just that particular person but all Blacks. Consider the media's portrayal of racial stereotypes, particularly those concerning Blacks. Society is subjected to a constant barrage of stories about Black burglars, rapists, muggers, drug dealers, and so forth—stories whose cumulative effect can only yield a harvest of

conditioned emotional reactions characterized by fear and avoidance, the primary features of racism. Typically, media reports mention a perpetrater's race if he or she is Black; no mention of the criminal's race is made if the person is White. This is anecdotal but significant: Jessie Jackson commented not long ago that he was walking the streets of Washington, DC one evening when he heard footsteps behind him. He said that he was relieved when he glanced back to find out that it was a White person!

### Operant Conditioning

The primary processes of operant conditioning involve reinforcement (positive and negative) and punishment (positive and negative). If one receives social acceptance and approval from peers after expressing racist views, then the likelihood that such views will be expressed again is strengthened. Similarly, if the expression of temperate racial viewpoints or tolerance and acceptance of others of a different race is met with derision, condemnation, or other forms of abuse, then the willingness to express such tolerant views will likely weaken. If bullying or mugging or lynching someone of a different race is reinforced by one's peers, then such activities can be expected to increase. If the affirmative action efforts of a personnel manager are met with disdain, it can be predicted that strong efforts at affirmative actions will weaken.

Parents, of course, are also major sources of contingencies provided to children and youths, and parental reinforcement and punishment practices are especially salient in establishing racial attitudes. If a White child places a poster of a Black movie star or singer in his or her room, and that action is followed by parental ridicule or other punishment, it is possible that the Black star will become less favored by the child (of course the opposite is possible if parental nagging is reinforcing!).

Such early childhood experiences are critical in determining how Whites respond to minorities. Greenberg and Pyszczynski (1985) found in their research that Whites who were socialized early to discriminate on the basis of race tended to recall these stereotypes and to negatively evaluate African Americans either when they overheard ethnic slurs or subsequently observed an African American behaving in a manner consistent with the stereotype. In follow-up research, Kirkland and Pyszcynski (1987) found that persons who overheard ethnic slurs also negatively evaluated people who were in association with the person of color.

The antecedents of modern racist behavior (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1990) are early socialization, predisposed racial attitudes, and belief systems. These antecedents are supported by unclear, ineffective, or nonexistent punitive contingencies for the display of racist behavior (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1983). Environmental cues, however, are important in signaling whether racist behavior will be reinforced or punished based



on prior experiences in those settings. This is why it is important for organizations to have clear policies and incentives that reinforce nondiscriminatory behavior and punish racist behavior. If racist behaviors are not punished, or if the organizational culture reinforces racism informally, than nondiscriminatory behavior will be extinguished.

### Observational Learning

If a child is exposed to a consistent stream of racist remarks from parents, we should not be surprised to find the child expressing similar sentiments. If these are then reinforced and modeled by one's peer group outside the home, then the stage may be set for a strong racist repertoire that can be lifelong. People become racists, in part, by watching others engage in discriminatory behaviors without suffering punitive consequences for such behaviors, or even being reinforced for them. The lack of consequences is a cue, signaling that there is no cost or penalty for displaying racist behaviors.

Just as racism can be learned by watching others, nonracist behaviors can be learned through cooperative arrangements, collaboration, participation in shared decision making, and though other positive contact experiences. Weigel and Howes (1985) indicated that positive interracial interactions are possible; however, the way in which people of color are depicted in the media and their interaction with Whites reinforces preexisting stereotypes. For many people, media influence is the most frequent exposure and the most powerful influence. In some areas of the United States, Whites never meet people of color except through television. Although it occurs much less often now, historically television advertising reinforced negative stereotypes of minorities. Similarly, news coverage of racist activities can be a double-edged sword. While it focuses attention on these issues, it also presents persons who would not normally get exposure an opportunity to present their views to a much wider audience. The extent to which such people are in positions of authority (e.g., Governor George Wallace standing in the schoolhouse door to block black students from entering) can further provide modeling to persons who have been reinforced—or not punished—for such behavior in the past. At best, it presents a mixed message as to what is acceptable.

On the institutional level, Weigel and Howes (1985) recommended the need for strong leadership, egalitarian norms and practices, and enforcement of egalitarian standards. Those in subordinate positions will observe what racial behaviors are practiced by their supervisors—and what the consequences are—and model their behavior based on these experiences. Weigel and Howes (1985) concluded that:

> since racial prejudice is embedded in a network of beliefs and values that reflect deference to established authority and preoccupation with

> . . . conventionally acceptable standards of conduct, the contemporary racist may be particularly responsive to the forceful invocation of normative standards by persons in authoritative roles. (p. 135)

A more complex model of behavioral analysis is necessary when discussing racism on an organizational level. Thus, in the next section, we present a more complex, multiple-contingency model that allows one to look at the parallel reinforcement systems simultaneously operating within organizations and society. We will use the implementation of affirmative action programs as an extended case example of how such an organizational behavioral analysis of racism can be conducted using this more complex model.

## WHY AFFIRMATIVE ACTION HAS NOT WORKED: A CASE EXAMPLE

Recent studies have shown that affirmative action programs have not significantly reduced discrimination in public agencies. (For reviews see Katz & Proshanksy, 1987; Zwerling & Silver, 1992.) One reason for this result is the special implementation problems of affirmation action programs. Social service agencies frequently lack appropriate contingencies to implement affirmative action and are thus reluctant to commit resources to it. When implementing affirmative action, administrators have not managed the official incentive system to reflect changes in behavioral expectations and to minimize worker resistance. The uncertainty caused by the changes accompanying affirmative action can further reinforce resistance. Implementation problems also arise if including minorities in the decision-making process changes the balance of power in an organization. Government pressure is needed to generate the necessary task-environment support for affirmative action. In addition, financial incentives are needed to offset the costs incurred by agencies implementing affirmative action programs if real success is to be achieved.

The Bakke case originally focused the nation's attention on affirmative action programs and on how past racial discrimination can be combated without negatively affecting White employees. In this case, Bakke, a White man, contended that he was unfairly rejected from admission to the University of California because minorities who scored lower than he did on certain admission criteria were admitted. Recently, these concerns have been revived by the Republican "Contract With America." The controversies generated by the "Contract With America" and the recent affirmative action/reverse discrimination debate have obscured the fact that affirmative action programs have usually not worked. A number of studies of public organizations and a recent investigation of private companies



(Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993) have shown that minorities and women have made little, if any, progress, particularly in reaching key leadership positions in public organizations (Alstyne & Elliot, 1977; Harver, 1977; Lepper, 1976; Stewart, 1976). It is frequently assumed that much of the reason for the failing of affirmative action plans has been the lack of support from top administrators or the generalized resistance of the staff. Although this has undoubtedly been a factor in many cases, the difficulties in implementing affirmative action plans when such support exists have not been fully recognized. A 1977 study of a public welfare agency in which affirmative action plans were never implemented—despite widespread support from all staff levels—, suggests that there is much in the organizational context and normal operational procedures of public agencies that militates against the successful implementation of affirmative action plans (Paulson, 1977). An analysis of recent organization literature shows why this is so.

### Multiple-Contingency Framework

After years of comparative neglect, there has been a growing interest in implementation analysis (Williams & Elmore, 1967). Yet most of the literature has either borrowed analytic models inappropriate to the context of complex organizations in urban society or has been restricted to describing the generalized obstacles to implementation in the specific case being studied (Gross, Giacquinta, & Bernstein, 1971). An understanding of organizational dynamics is also necessary, however, if corrective and preventive actions are to be taken and if realistic implementation is to take place. Such an understanding is provided by a multiple-system framework based on learning theory and contingency-management practices. A contingency system is defined as the rewards and punishments dispensed, the mechanisms by which they are distributed, and the assessment criteria used for evaluating performance to determine what the appropriate consequences of the performance should be.

The theoretical basis of incentive and contingency analysis is that behavior is determined by its consequences. Some approaches have recognized the need to analyze the interrelationships among individuals, groups, and subunits in an organization because the behavior of individuals in a given unit is, in part, a response to consequences resulting from the other units in its environment (Brethower, 1972; Kunkel, 1970; Luthans & Kreitner, 1974; Mager & Pipe, 1970; Tossi & Hammer, 1974). Nonetheless, none have fully integrated these interrelationships into a single framework. Regardless of the interrelationships, the underlying behavioral principles are the same.

The conceptual underpinning of the behavioral analysis framework is that there are four major sources of reinforcement and punishment (i.e. contingency systems) in a organization. They are the (a) external, (b)

official, (c) unofficial, and (d) intrinsic task characteristics. It is the structure and interaction of these various contingencies that shape and maintain organizational behavior; they must be taken into account when analyzing implementation problems. These four sources are described next and are briefly accompanied by an example relating to affirmative action.

The external contingency system is made of the external task environment elements that regulate an organization or that control important resources (reinforcers). These external elements structure the contingencies (rewards and punishments) for the organization. The assessment criteria used by key task environment elements to measure the organization's performance to determine whether it will be rewarded is crucial in determining the nature of the internal (official) contingencies established by the organization. For instance, the county commission that funds a public agency might insist that the agency adopt an affirmative action program or risk losing its funding.

The official contingency system consists of the important incentives (e.g., promotions, assignments, job discretion, and training opportunities) distributed by an agency through its official mechanism according to agency-set criteria. To illustrate, agency administrators might reward a personnel manager for actively recruiting minorities into the organization and developing a career ladder for them. Similarly, the system might punish workers whose style of service delivery was inappropriate to the needs of the minority clientele being served.

Informal groups that form around work units, common jobs (e.g., secretarial or supervisory), union shops, and professional affiliations can be considered as alternative unofficial contingency systems operating in the organization over which agency administrators have little control. These groups can play an important socialization function and can also become an informal base of power in the organization (Blau, 1963; Crozier, 1964). Such groups can either encourage or discourage active participation in an affirmative action plan.

Finally, there are aspects of a particular job that a worker finds to be either intrinsically rewarding or aversive. These make up the intrinsic reinforcement characteristics of the task. For example, a personnel manager might find filling out affirmative action forms (to show that discrimination did not occur in hiring) to be an unpleasant, added burden to his or her normal responsibilities.

For implementation of a program to be successful, these various contingency systems must interact in such a way that the desired implementation behavior of the workers occurs. The interaction among the systems thus varies with each unique situation. In the examples given, some of the contingencies favored affirmative action, whereas others discouraged it. The outcome would depend on which systems had a greater effect on the



worker at a given point in time. In each of these four sources of reinforcement, however, there are special problems for the implementation of affirmative action programs. In each contingency system, implementation problems existed, all of which were observed in the second author's study of a public welfare agency.

## Implementation Problems of Affirmative Action Programs

Affirmative action programs are especially susceptible to implementation problems because they are peripheral to the primary mission of most organizations; they do not vitally affect the agency's survival and well-being. The extent and type of implementation problems will, in part, depend on what is included in such programs.

Operational definitions of affirmative action programs have eluded most public administrators (Nigro, 1974). Most definitions of affirmative action have usually been restricted to employment and promotional practices as they affect employment opportunities for minorities. Such programs concern themselves only with the effects of agency policies and practices on the employees within the organization. Some affirmative action programs, however, consider the effect of the agency's policies and practices on the clientele being served by the agency. This broader conception of affirmative action considers such questions as: (a) the population being served in contrast to those eligible for services, (b) the style and method of service delivery and its applicability to the life-style of the population being served, (c) the location of offices in relation to minority population concentrations, and (d) inequities in the quality and quantity of service delivered. This broader conception of affirmative action, which addresses the effect of policies both internally and externally, has been used by regional offices of the federal Department of Health and Human Services in its guidelines for the evaluation of public welfare programs, and it will also be used in this discussion.

### External Contingencies

There are a number of characteristics of the relations between public social service agencies and their task environments that make affirmative action implementation problematic. First, social service agencies are highly dependent on local governments. Even if federal funding is their principle source of monies, financial resources and budget approval usually must go through the local government structure, and personnel resources must go through a civil service system. In many cases, even relatively minor expenditures and personnel changes must be approved by the local government officials. In addition, publicly provided social services are usually not

a high priority item when compared with other services such as fire, police, waste disposal, or health services; thus, they are placed in a relatively weak position against these key task-environment elements.

This position has several consequences. First, a social service agency could only take limited independent action in implementing an affirmative action program without getting the active consent, if not support, of the local governmental bodies that control these resources. This would, therefore, increase the agency's dependence on these organizations. Increased dependency is usually aversive to organizations in and of itself (Thompson, 1967). Administrators would avoid programs leading to increased dependence wherever possible, and affirmative action falls into this category. Under these circumstances of great dependence, an agency would be expected to follow the wishes of these important suppliers of resources when they have clear preferences, particularly because affirmative action is not directly related to the accomplishment of the agency's mandated goals.

The assessment criteria used to evaluate social service agency performance are a critical part of these external contingencies. The assessment criteria normally used militate against the implementation of affirmative action programs because these programs do not help the agency score well on these criteria. Given the indeterminate nature of social service technology—as well as the technical inability of task-environment elements to adequately evaluate agency performance—social tests and extrinsic criteria such as the number and types of services delivered are usually the major assessment criteria used (Thompson, 1967). It can be seen that, although it is true that affirmative action might improve the quality of services to minorities, the assessment criteria do not measure quality. Therefore, resources are likely to be committed first to those programs that improve assessment measures and second to affirmative action. In addition, the ability to steer clear of controversial issues is often one social test used by key local government officials to judge agency performance.

In conclusion, one reason for the failure of affirmative action programs is that active support of the key task-environment entities, which control the external contingencies, has not been present. Furthermore, such failures can occur even when top agency administrators are committed to the concept of affirmative action. For affirmative action to succeed under these circumstances, it is essential that pressures exist to implement affirmative action from other external sources.

### *Pro-Affirmative Action Pressures*

If key local governmental agencies do not place a high priority on affirmative action programs when left alone to make their own decisions, there are only two sources capable of applying sufficient pressure to make them support the implementation of affirmative action programs.



One source of pro-affirmative action pressure is organized minority groups and their supporters. Because minorities hold little power to offer incentives for change, they can usually only bring about change by exacting costs for continuing to do things in the usual way through organized pressure or disruptive tactics (Molotch & Wolf, 1970). Only in cases where minorities in an organization are sufficiently organized to pressure the agency and can exact such costs will changes be seen as beneficial to all—because the changes will reduce the turmoil. This pressure can sometimes be applied either internally, through minority caucuses and their allies, or externally, via civil rights and welfare rights groups or organizations such as the Association of Black Social Workers.

Decisions to allocate resources to programs are strongly affected by the degree to which constituencies are mobilized to exert pressure on decision makers. But an important reality of affirmative action programs is that minorities will be the only major constituency for the program because they are the chief beneficiaries; many Whites fear they may be affected adversely. Although it is true that women also benefit from affirmative action, all too often, ethnic minorities have been placed in competition with them for a limited number of positions. In many instances, ethnic rather than gender status has been given priority. Furthermore, because affirmative action is peripheral to the key measures of organizational success, this constituency will be relatively weak vis-à-vis other agency program constituencies, simply because the organization does not need it to score on assessment criteria.

Thus, minorities must be sufficiently numerous and well organized to compete with pressures from other program constituencies. Consequently, agency policies that either encourage or discourage the formation of minority group solidarity take on greater importance. One can predict that even in conditions of task-environment neutrality, no affirmative action program will be implemented (all things being equal) in the absence of well-organized minority group activity.

The only other elements in the work environment that are likely to encourage affirmative action are civil rights laws and regulations enforced by government agencies. There are numerous regulations requiring affirmative action programs in one form or another, but there can be great variations in the extent to which enforcement of the laws take place. The kind of sanctions that can be imposed—and the willingness of officials to impose these sanctions—also greatly vary. There is a wide range of official discretion in enforcing such laws, and perceptions of the federal government attitude toward civil rights can be an elusive but, nevertheless, important factor in determining local governments' reactions to such laws (Kimberly, 1975).

Furthermore, local officials charged with carrying out these regulations may respond differentially to government enforcement activity. Some

may implement affirmative action provisions without any government action; others may hurry to respond at the slightest hint of government dissatisfaction (but not until then); still others might not move until the stiffest sanctions are imposed. Although the source of some of the local officials' resistance to affirmative action might be resentment of federal government interference, it seems reasonable to assume that their resistance is a measure of the officials' opposition to the concept itself. Most likely, agency administrators will use the response of local officials as an indicator of their support for affirmative action and will act accordingly.

Clearly, then, government intervention is in the form of imposing punishment on agencies for not adopting an affirmative action program and not in the form of providing positive reinforcement. Consequently, under circumstances in which the task-environment support does not exist and in which minority groups are not strong enough to exert countervailing pressure, an affirmative action program will not get implemented unless government agents enforce the regulations with sufficient pressure to overcome this local resistance.

## Economic Conditions

A task-environment variable that interacts with these other factors and that profoundly affects the implementation of affirmative action is the general level of federal and state funding. If the economy is bad and this results in general funding cutbacks, then resources for affirmative action programs can only be secured by transferring existing resources. However, with an austerity budget there is little organizational slack that would allow a program (or division) to absorb the loss of resources (be it in funds or personnel) in such a transfer without severely hurting its operations. Hence, it would most likely fight such transfers vigorously.

Obviously, in times of financial need it is politically much easier for administrators to live without a program than it is for them to try to cut an already established operation. It would be very unlikely for administrators to commit funds to anything but essential services unless there were strong incentives or pressures to do so. In contrast, under good economic conditions, when agency budgets are expanding, it is much easier to add an affirmative action program because it will not interfere with anyone's ongoing operations. One can thus predict that the worse an agency's financial situation, the more its resistance to affirmative action will be. Furthermore, if such a program already exists, there will be pressures to cut it first.

In the past decade, few of these favorable external conditions have existed for prolonged periods of time. This has contributed significantly to the problems of affirmative action program implementation.



## Official Contingencies

Even if one assumes that official environmental contingencies support the implementation of affirmative action programs, there are elements of the official contingencies that interact with the implementation process of affirmative action programs to cause problems. The usual structure of official contingencies in organizations inhibits affirmative action in two major ways: (a) by not rewarding the new behaviors required and (b) by altering the incentive system in such a way as to produce worker resistance. There are several common manifestations of the first problem.

When organizations change their expectations of worker behavior, there must be appropriate changes in official contingencies, or workers cannot be expected to change. Affirmative action programs are supposed to introduce new priorities in worker behavior; yet, frequently the new expectations are not accompanied by adjustments in the official incentives or assessment criteria. One way of introducing new priorities may be through new tasks and responsibilities. For example, even if affirmative action were restricted to the employment sphere, new tasks such as minority recruitment, training, and the revision of selection and promotion procedures would be necessary. Someone would have to be responsible for hearing and investigating complaints and for mediating disputes.

Although new positions are sometimes created solely to fulfill these functions, all too often these responsibilities are added on to a worker's (usually a minority's) already existing duties with no compensatory reduction in his or her previous responsibilities or increase in salary or rank to reflect the increased workload (Paulson, 1977). Furthermore, this performance will still be evaluated using the traditional criteria geared to his or her initial duties. As a consequence, the employee's affirmative action work will suffer—most workers will be concerned with fulfilling the assessment criteria that lead to organizational advancement.

A second common practice is to add a new position, but one that also has some traditional organization function associated with it, such as a combined personnel manager-affirmative action coordinator. Two consequences result from such a strategy. First, because the traditional functions of the job are more essential for the organization's ongoing needs and its successful performance, those functions are likely to be encouraged more than the affirmative action functions. Secondly, there are likely to be conflicts among the goals, roles, and procedures of the two functions. Such conflicts would likely be resolved to the detriment of affirmative action because alternative action has lowest priority. Personnel managers who are assigned affirmative action responsibilities, for example, would be placed in the position of evaluating their own operations and thus would be expected to make changes that might result in more work for themselves without any increased recognition or reward.

When affirmative action programs include an examination of an agency's service delivery and ongoing operations to enhance their access and effectiveness to minority clients, these usually result in changes in worker behaviors and priorities. But such changes are often not accompanied by changes in the standard operating procedures nor in the assessment criteria. Consequently, workers trying to be more responsive to minority clientele may find that they are in conflict with normal agency operations.

Once standard operating procedures become adopted by an organization, they frequently assume quasi-legal status and, therefore, compliance with them becomes the basis of rewards. As a result, workers will be reluctant to risk modifying or ignoring such procedures for affirmative action purposes (Landau, 1973). In such cases, affirmative action is officially discouraged in two ways. First, there are no built-in rewards for affirmative action-oriented behavior. Second, if workers modify procedures with affirmative action in mind, they might be punished for "violating" agency policy.

In short, there are usually no institutional rewards for workers in any agency to engage in affirmative action-related activities (Katz & Proshansky, 1987), such as recruiting minorities or providing service to minority communities. Therefore, such behaviors will generally be infrequent or otherwise weak (Molotch & Wolf, 1970). Also, if assessment criteria encourage the use of existing standard operating procedures that happen to conflict with achieving equal benefits to minorities, then achieving such benefits will be of lesser importance. Workers' commitments to minorities will be at best secondary to those of their profession and career (Blau, 1963). The commitments will only be met if there is any energy left over after these primary tasks are finished.

A clear hypothesis that emerges from this analysis is that unless the behaviors required to carry out an affirmative action program are explicitly reinforced by changes in the official contingency system and assessment criteria, there is a low probability that they will be carried out or be successful.

Organizational resistance to affirmative action programs can be generated by the official contingencies both directly and indirectly. Personnel practices are a major component of both official contingencies and affirmative action. Affirmative action programs can thus directly change official contingencies by modifying the practices affecting the previous distribution of promotions, assignments, and merit increases between minorities and Whites. This could make minorities an increased competitive threat in the view of the existing majority staff and encourage their resistance to the plan.

When an affirmative action program is restricted to employment, unintended consequences are likely to occur. For example, strategies for increasing the percentage of minorities may raise fears among existing workers. Past abuses—perceived or real—such as favoritism, reverse racism, or



the lowering of standards (as preferential treatment for minorities who meet the qualifications) might reoccur. This is not inevitable, because there can be a clear balance between providing equal or accelerated opportunities for minorities without sacrificing the legitimate interests of existing employees. For employees not to react in terms of their worst fears, administrators must thoroughly explain the affirmative action program to all staff and involve them in a realistic assessment of its effect on the current contingencies.

The official contingencies and intrinsic task characteristics can interact in a number of ways that cause increased uncertainty as a consequence of steps taken to implement affirmative action. This frequently results in increased worker resistance to the program. As a long-term process, affirmative action program implementation can produce ongoing changes in the contingencies and the methods of carrying out official tasks, as well as in the balance of power in the composition of the work force. Each of these changes could be a considerable source of frustration for the work force as well as a considerable source of continuous uncertainty.

The organizational literature emphasizes the importance of reducing uncertainty among individuals and in the organization as a whole. A change that will increase uncertainty will generally be opposed, unless it brings definite benefits that compensate for the change. Because standard operating procedures serve to reduce uncertainty and thus are a form of security for workers, most changes will be resisted (Crozier, 1964). Once rules become adopted by an organization, they frequently assume quasi-legal status and compliance with them becomes the basis of rewards (Landau, 1973). As a reflection of goals and priorities, these procedures become built into organizations so that people construct their activity around this reality (Perrow, 1970). Once a worker "learns the ropes" and knows how to get the most reward for the least effort, he or she will not welcome any change in the rules (Perrow, 1970).

An affirmative action program might change the organizational environment from one in which a worker knows what is expected of him to one in which he is faced with having to learn things all over again. Additionally, the rules for obtaining organizational rewards and escaping punishment are unclear in the new environment. Thus, the job becomes not only more uncertain and aversive, but also more difficult. Specifically, changes in decision premises or procedures that would make the organization more responsive to the different life-styles or circumstances of clients (or minority employees) will be resisted unless workers can see that the change will make things easier for them. Often then, racism is fundamentally the result of past priorities being applied to ongoing situations (Molotch & Wolf, 1970). When making changes in the premises or procedures, organization administrators frequently do not take this history into account, thus encouraging workers' resistance.

## Unofficial Contingencies

Because its importance in decision making and intraorganizational power struggles has been recognized, the informal organization has been receiving more attention of late. Affirmative action programs also affect the unofficial contingencies that shape these informal organization dynamics. For instance, it is inherent in affirmative action programs that some realignment of coalition making will occur (Cyert & March, 1963). If one of the aims of the program is to enable minorities to influence agency policies and procedures, minorities would need to be included in certain decisions where they had previously been excluded. This granting of more power to minorities might result in some other individual or group losing power. It would certainly involve a change in the composition of the decision-making coalitions, resulting in a realignment of power in the organization (Crozier, 1964; Thompson, 1967). This realignment would likely be resisted by the majority of coalition members directly benefiting from such a change—if for no other reason than the uncertainty it would create.

This change in the decision-making coalitions would have implication for internal power struggles. It is conceivable that the implementation of affirmative action would become politicized. It would be used by various groups who thought they could gain by the changes and opposed by those who stood to lose. As described by Crozier (1964), many such struggles concern the control of uncertainty as a source of informal power. In such cases, the ambiguity or specificity of procedures and contingencies that limit uncertainty are of major importance. The procedural and contingency changes produced by affirmative action, then, could provide new opportunities for groups dissatisfied with the negotiated environment existing in the organization under the status quo. Because such changes are more likely to benefit those who want to gain power rather than those who already possess it, the people most likely to support affirmative action will have the least ability to see that it has been implemented. One reason affirmative action programs have not been implemented expeditiously is because implementation plans have not taken into account the current decision-making coalitions and intergroup power struggles.

Affirmative action affects not only the unofficial contingencies but also the existing informal organization dynamics; such dynamics can be crucial in determining the success of the program. It is the informal contingencies operating in work groups that are the most important because social reinforcement can shape worker behavior—either to aid or to sabotage the implementation of the program. Such groups as union locals and professional associations might have a similar effect.



A less explicit role these contingencies play is in the agency socialization process. Molotch and Wolf (1970) stressed the importance of improving the socialization process for minorities in organizations to maximize their chances for success. As the best vehicle for agency socialization of new workers, the informal group contingencies could become the crucial element in an individual minority's success. The degree to which official contingencies explicitly shape the informal contingencies in the direction of supporting the program and proper socialization will thus be very important in eliminating implementation barriers. The willingness of administrators to let minorities organize themselves on their behalf is part of this.

## Intrinsic Task Characteristics

Affirmative action is usually regulated by federal, state, and local statutes and regulations. These regulations usually require extensive prescribed procedures and documentation to ensure that the legislative intent has been carried out in the program's implementation. These procedures, however, require organizational effort and resources. The additional time and effort required to implement these regulations are all too often added to a worker's ordinary duties and, therefore, are likely to be aversive to most workers—most of whom naturally would prefer their jobs to be simpler. Furthermore, paperwork and procedures in and of themselves are inherently aversive to most workers; therefore, workers are not likely to respond favorably to the detailed requirements of many affirmative action plans. In short, many of the processes required to implement affirmative action programs are likely to be resisted unless substantial new resources are added, and existing workers do not have to implement these additional procedures.

## Decision-Making Process

There is still another aspect of organizational activity, reinforced by all the contingency systems, that militates against the successful establishment of affirmative action programs. This is the normal decision-making process in organizations.

Studies of organizational decision making have suggested that organizations generally make decisions and search for alternative ways of doing things only in response to problems (e.g., Cyert & March, 1963). Thus, it is unlikely that an organization would spontaneously or unilaterally make a decision to implement an affirmative action program. This finding corroborates the assertion that external or internal pressure and support would be necessary. For example, if a civil service department that has always relied on applicants, learning about vacancies on their own—and

that department has had no problem filling vacancies with qualified personnel before—it will not implement a minority recruitment program, unless some external force makes such recruitment a "problem" for the department.

Furthermore, any decision is likely to be related to the way the organization has previously solved such problems and will reflect the stereotyped perceptual biases of the personnel and the organization's communications systems (Landau, 1973). Consequently, it would be unlikely for the organization to choose a solution involving major changes—such as a comprehensive affirmative action plan—when alternatives involving only minor adjustments are available. This is true even if such adjustments would only alleviate the problem on a short-term basis and not provide a long-term solution (Cyert & March, 1963). For example, a small concession to minorities might be made that had a momentarily calming effect but would not alter any of the basic ways in which the agency treats minorities. Inevitably, then, other problems will arise later on a regular basis, problems that will also be resolved by a specific short-term solution. The organization responds to each problem incrementally, treating it as a separate and distinct entity, rather than as a part of a more fundamental problem requiring more drastic solutions. The comprehensive study of organizational practices as they affect minorities and the subsequent adoption of comprehensive measures to form an affirmative action program—which would eliminate any systematic racial inequities—contradict the way most organizations make decisions and solve problems. Affirmative action programs are thus less likely to be adopted than some more incremental alternatives.

### Making Affirmative Action Work

Our discussion thus far has shown that there are numerous obstacles to the successful implementation of an affirmative action program. These implementation problems cannot be overcome if they continue to go unrecognized and underestimated, and positive steps to alleviate them are not forthcoming. Our analysis, however, suggests what some of the most important steps might be for making affirmative action work.

Because task-environment support is so essential and is not automatically forthcoming, more attention must be paid to the role of the federal government in encouraging such support. A joint carrot-stick approach seems to be in order. On the one hand, more recognition of the costs involved in carrying out affirmative action is necessary. Legislation providing funding for such costs, either through their inclusion in ongoing agency budgets or through special restricted grants, is essential. In those cases in which no efforts are being made to implement affirmative action, current laws must be strongly and quickly enforced. Otherwise, affirmative action will be viewed as a low priority, and efforts to achieve the high priority objectives of local governments will be diluted.



Worker cooperation must also be encouraged through official contingencies. New behavioral expectations must be made clear and explicit; adjustments must be made in the workload, assessment criteria, and rewards to reflect additional assignments and expected changes in behavior patterns. Care must be exercised to ensure that the new expectations are explicit; otherwise, workers will be caught in a double bind and will engage in informal actions to minimize such conflict. This situation would be counterproductive to goal attainment (Blau, 1963).

Task-environment and official agency support are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for successful affirmative action implementation. Uncertainty and the aversive aspects of the new behavioral expectations must be minimized. This goal can be done through careful job redesign and additional training, but only if administrators allow for worker input and feedback in the planning and implementation phases. Widespread communication about content, process, and consequences of the affirmative action program implementation will be a necessity if resistance and morale problems caused by uncertainty are to be reduced.

Finally, the importance of informal networks to the success of the program implementation process should not be overlooked. Such networks are an importance source of redundancy for obtaining feedback on workers' misconceptions and concerns and can warn administrators of the need for either further explanation of the program or a different incentive approach. The agency must also reinforce the formation of informal ties among the groups that must cooperate if the implementation is to be successful. In addition, management should solicit the support of unions, professional associations, and other groups that act as more structured informal groups in the organization. Most important, the development of group solidarity among minorities must not be discouraged; if necessary, help should be provided to augment the socialization process for new minority employees. This is critical to their successful organizational careers.

The time has passed when program implementation can be taken for granted. The inherent nature of affirmative action programs itself increases the likelihood that problems will result. If these problems are explicitly recognized in advance, and the kinds of steps outlined here are taken, then there is no reason why these obstacles cannot be minimized and affirmative action programs successfully implemented.

## CONCLUSION

Institutional racism is a social problem that is prevalent throughout American society. For a problem of this magnitude to be corrected, it is essential that we have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the problem. As we have demonstrated, traditional explanations of racism have

not successfully accounted for the persistence and pervasiveness of the problem. Even the more contemporary explanations have not provided frameworks useful for understanding and correcting specific organizational incidences of racism. We believe behavioral analysis adds a powerful tool in both understanding the phenomenon of institutional racism and in developing strategies to resolve the problem (see, for example, Hauserman, Walen, & Behling, 1973). Recognition of the fact that racism is not an individual problem that can be resolved by changing individual attitudes and behaviors is essential. Rather, racism must be viewed as an institutional and societal problem maintained by incentives that reinforce White privilege and fail to adequately sanction policies and practices that collectively result in outcomes negatively affecting minorities.

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