

M-SCALE: ENCOUNTER WITH REALITY

*using an inventory of
attitudes for "sensitization"
training of minority
group supervisors*

A short, heavy-set production superintendent punctuates the air with his cigar to emphasize his point. "You've got to have law and order or you won't have anything in this country. I say this is a basic American doctrine that we've been trying to implement ever since the Westward Movement started. It has nothing to do with white, black, green or blue people. It's just basic common sense."

The neatly dressed attractive young woman leans forward in earnest appeal to the others seated around the circle . . . "You should see what's happening downtown. Our girls are afraid to take any overtime assignments because it means leaving the building after dark. There have been two assaults in the last two months on girls from my building. We're scared to death, and you can't blame us. Something has to be done to make the streets safe for everyone."

The young white management trainee seated next to her nods his head in agreement. When he speaks, it is with a recognizable Southern drawl, "Now, I agree that maybe George Wallace was appealing to the racism in us when he talked law and order during his campaign. But the Nixon stance on law and order was simply expressing what all decent citizens have on their minds . . . something has to be done in this country to restore respect for the law. If something isn't done soon, the country will end up in anarchy!!"

The man across from him can hardly control himself. A meaty black fist pounds the table . . . "You people are as wrong as you can be; the law and order issue is aimed at controlling black people. It's a gun barrel aimed squarely at the head of every black person in this country. Regardless of the political party that uses it, it is an appeal to racism. It is just so subtle that even 'liberal' white people fail to recognize it. You fail to recognize it. So, how can we ever get any understanding what the whole thing is about?" The explosive tone of the speaker is unmistakable. Two others in the circle start speaking at the same time . . .

The interchange described in the preceding is typical of a unique, new approach to "sensitization" training of supervisors and managers who supervise minority group employees. The point under discussion is whether or not "The law and order issue is aimed primarily at controlling black people in the United States." The technique is *encounter*; the essential ingredient is *confrontation with reality*.

The current state of the art of "sensi-

zation" training for managers of minority group employees is difficult to assess because of the wide variation in tools and techniques used by the trainers. Many of the learning activities in current vogue seem to miss the mark completely, others appear to be included only to help make the training "a fun thing" for the participants.

WHAT IS RACISM?

When the disadvantaged or minority group to whom the managers are being "sensitized" are black in color, the central problem is the resolving of black/white issues in the minds of the managers to minimize racist attitudes and their consequences to the manager/minority-man relationship on the job. We define racism as the unwillingness of a person of one race to accept a member of another race as a participating fellow member of the human family . . . to any degree.

Racism may be unconscious, or consciously repressed, only to pop out openly in times of interpersonal stress. There is both black and white racism — either attitude can destroy or impair cooperative endeavor in an organization. For the purpose of this article, however, we will assume the subject of racism in foreman, supervisor or manager sensitization training is largely a problem of white racism and that the management of black/white relations is the responsibility of the white manager. Finally, we assume that the act of coming into awareness of one's attitudes toward black/white relations, the comparison of one's own with those of others, and a confrontation of the "whys" of the differences will serve to ameliorate the worst aspects of one's racism (providing there is a genuine desire to make the disadvantaged or minority hiring program work on the part of the manager).

AN INVENTORY OF ATTITUDES

The device which makes this learning sequence possible is a published inventory of attitudes toward black/white relations in the United States . . . the

JAMES H. MORRISON
*Principal in charge of
Organization and Development Div.,
Lawrence-Leiter & Company.*

*M-Scale*¹. The scale seeks to measure an individual's position on a continuum ranging from cooperative, integrationistic racial attitudes on one end to separatist, polarismic racial attitudes on the other end. On one hand is the concept of one family of man, brothers in reality, working, living and dying together. On the other lies the view of apartheid, separated, divisive existences. If this is racism, it could be either a black or a white variety.

The score of the *M-Scale* is less important to the individual than his realization of his differences from others of "his own kind." The modes of answering each item range from:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

On an item such as "Most white people are actually afraid of black people today," the range of answers of white

1. See *Personality Tests and Reviews*, 1969, c/o Mental Measurements Yearbook, Oscar Burns, Editor, 220 Montgomery Street, Highland Park, New Jersey.

managers in a training session will usually span the total spectrum. The awareness of the range is an initial jolt to the manager's value structure, but the discussion "why the differences" provides the insight so important to the attitude change process. (It is important that time be provided for discussing the "whys" at some length and in some depth.)

Following full discussion of each item, most managers experience a re-evaluation of many of the concepts to which they were originally committed. The "second thoughts" and "third thoughts" first center on the meaning of the *words* of the questions, then on the meaning of the *concept* to the individual. This change in "Attitude" is brought to the conscious attention of the participant by the leader who plays the adjunctive, supportive role in the individual's confrontation with reality. He is never the "lecturer" or "teacher" in any traditional sense of the words.

PHYSICAL ENCOUNTER

The excitement generated by differing expressions on questions such as "White people should feel a sense of guilt at the way black people have been treated in

America the last 300 years," is escalated if both black and white persons are in the discussion groups. One technique of thrusting the participants into physical encounter is to have them line up in rows representing the different answers, then asking them to debate the position. Finally, if they change their thinking after the debate, they are permitted to physically change their row.

M-Scale is often the first time most participants have given any degree of serious thought to their posture on black/white relationship issues. It is an encounter with reality that leads to questioning one's personal attitudes toward the "other" race, both overt and covert.

As with any encounter technique, wounds opened need to be healed before the group disbands. A revelation of the scoring system of the Scale, scoring one's own Scale, a chance to discuss the range of scores, and how one's attitudes are changed during discussion are important culminating activities. The experience provides a healthy stimulus toward greater awareness of one's attitudes and improved behaviors toward subordinates of a minority race. It is a major step in initiating behavioral change in managers.

APPRENTICESHIP EXEMPTED FROM AGE DISCRIMINATION

In a ruling by the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Divisions, apprenticeship has been excluded from the prohibitions imposed by Congress when it passed The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967.

The rule notes that "age limitations for entry into bona fide apprenticeship programs were not intended to be affected by the Act."

The Act, passed by Congress December 15, 1967, was intended to protect the employment rights of individuals 40 to 65 years old; The Age Discrimination in

Employment Act seemed to include apprenticeship, in which the age span has been 18 to 26 in most cases.

In excluding apprenticeship, the Labor Department ruling observed that "entry into most apprenticeship programs has traditionally been limited to youths under specific ages . . . in recognition of the fact that apprenticeship is an extension of the educational process to prepare young men and women for skilled employment."

The ruling concluded that the prohibitions of the Act would not be applied to "bona fide apprenticeship programs."