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## ABSTRACT

The purposes of this report are to present the narrations of the slide-tape presentation "Cultural Differences in Industry," and a readers theater script "Understanding Cultural Differences," and to document and describe their development and possible use. These materials were designed as training tools for teaching cultural differences between the black ghetto culture and white middle-class culture, primarily to white college students and white supervisors and foremen. By understanding cultural backgrounds of individuals from different cultures, it was anticipated that one could more correctly interpret the motives and actions of others and reduce the conflict and misunderstanding which might otherwise occur. The objective of the slide-tape presentation was to present a systematic listing of eight of the most salient cultural differences between the white middle-class culture and the black ghetto culture. A theoretical or historical explanation is given for each difference, and some of the possible effects of these cultural differences in industry, such as misunderstanding and conflict, are described. In the readers theater script, these cultural differences are portrayed in a real life setting showing two quite opposite interpretations of a black employee's behavior. (Author/JM)

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Illinois Studies of the Economically Disadvantaged

SUPERVISOR TRAINING PROGRAMS ON MINORITY

EMPLOYMENT: SUGGESTED CONCEPTS AND PROCEDURES

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Technical Report No. 16

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## Preface

This report is part of a series which is concerned with the economically disadvantaged. We have shown, thus far, and will continue showing in reports to be published shortly, that economic disadvantages are associated with and presumably create characteristic ways of perceiving and thinking about the social environment which are different from non-disadvantaged groups. Such differences create barriers in communication between a disadvantaged employee and his supervisor, his fellow employees and his subordinates. Such barriers make it more difficult for such an employee to hold a job. If we are to rehabilitate such an employee we must train both the employee and the people in his job environment in ways which will reduce such barriers.

This report introduces a slide-tape presentation and a readers theater script which teach cultural differences between the white middle class and the black ghetto culture. A theoretical and historical explanation of the differences is presented and the nature of misunderstandings that might occur as a result of such differences is described.

Harry C. Triandis

## Abstract

Many differences between the Black and White cultures have been suggested throughout the literature on minority employment and Black history. However, these cultural differences and their impact on industrial relations have not been systematically enumerated and analyzed. For this reason, a slide-tape presentation and a readers theater script have been developed as training tools for teaching cultural differences. The objective of the slide-tape presentation and a readers theater script have been developed as training tools for teaching cultural differences. The objective of the slide-tape presentation was to present a systematic listing of eight of the most salient cultural differences between the White middle-class culture and the Black ghetto culture. A theoretical or historical explanation is given for each difference, and some of the possible effects of these cultural differences in industry, such as misunderstanding and conflict, are described. In the readers theater script these cultural differences are portrayed in a real life setting showing two quite opposite interpretations of a Black employee's behavior.

The purposes of this report are to present the narrations of the slide-tape presentation "Cultural Differences in Industry," and a readers theater script "Understanding Cultural Differences," and to document and describe their development and possible use. These materials were designed as training tools for teaching cultural differences between the Black ghetto culture and white middle-class culture, primarily to white college students and white supervisors and foremen. By understanding the cultural backgrounds of individuals from different cultures it was anticipated that one could more correctly interpret the motives and actions of others and reduce the conflict and misunderstanding which might otherwise occur. The purpose of such training, (to quote Triandis and Malpass, 1971) is to "increase the probability that each side will 'understand' the other [p. 111]."

The notion that greater cultural awareness facilitates interpersonal interactions has been supported by Bass (1971) in a study of the effectiveness of American advisors in foreign countries. Bass stated that "when both American and host know what to expect of each other, the American consultants' interpersonal competence, consulting skill, and technical knowledge can be brought to bear in a more effective manner than where misunderstandings of opinions, values, and ideology prevail [p. 285]."

During the decade of the 1960's, both industry and government expended a sizable amount of time, energy, and money to hire and train the hard-core unemployed and improve their working environment. All of these changes, however, have not been entirely successful. Many of the new programs designed to facilitate the socialization of the hard-core unemployed into industry can only be described as moderately successful. Others, such as

International Harvester's first experience, have been considered "a flop." The successes, and failures of many industries are very well illustrated by the successes and failures of International Harvester Company. In 1966, International Harvester launched a "New Start" program to employ high school dropouts (Businessweek, 1968). After two years only 6 of the first 50 workers remained with the company. Nevertheless, International Harvester used the lessons of the first attempt to begin another "New Start" which achieved much greater success.

The two most important lessons International Harvester learned during their first attempt which helped them achieve greater success involved (a) a greater number of supporting services, and (b) a reorientation and sensitivity training of their own management (Businessweek, 1968). The supporting services included recruiting the man off the sidewalk, telephoning him the night before his first day of work, picking him up in a company station wagon, eliminating a lot of customary record keeping and immediately starting him on the payroll at regular training pay, free breakfast at the company, and advice concerning spending, buying, city bus lines, and setting alarms. The reorientation of supervisory and training officials as well as first and second-line supervisors consisted of briefings, a tour of the training center, frequent visits to check on the trainees progress, and periodic orientation sessions.

The objective of this reorientation training was to teach the supervisors and foremen to be sensitive to the attitudes, needs, interests, and fears of the new trainees, and to understand their cultural backgrounds. International Harvester learned that this sensitivity and understanding on the part of middle management was critical to the success of their program.

The results of many other training programs have similarly demonstrated the need to train not only the new employees but the supervisors and foremen as well (Acuff, 1969; Byars and Schwefel, 1969; Ganier, 1969; Margulies, 1970; Moore, 1970; Steinman, 1970; Stoessel, 1970; Sullivan, 1970).

The advantages of focusing training on the white foreman and supervisor rather than on the minority employee has been argued by Triandis and Malpass (1971). Briefly, they note that (a) individuals who are poor, disadvantaged, or a minority are generally alienated and therefore less susceptible to group pressures and more resistant to change than middle-class individuals, (b) middle-class behavior is much more under the influence of normative factors than lower-class behavior and, consequently, it is more difficult to train a lower-class individual to behave according to the "white rules," simply because less of his behavior is under the influence of norms, (c) a major characteristic of the ghetto is a lack of interpersonal trust and as long as high levels of suspicion exist, it is difficult to reach an individual through interpersonal appeals, and (d) there are objective characteristics of the ghetto environment such as violence and conflict with the police or organizational constraints which make job adjustment difficult and can be improved more effectively by specific efforts directed at changing the environment.

In summary, there is a critical need for greater understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the minorities in our society. This is true not only in industry where business leaders are trying to conduct successful programs to hire and train the hard-core unemployed; these cultural differences are also important in the daily interactions among all members of society.

### Sources of Information

A list of the most salient cultural differences was compiled through a survey of the literature which included (a) letters from industries sponsoring hard-core training programs, (b) personal communications from training directors and counselors associated with minority employment, and (c) published research reports, especially the technical reports published by the Illinois Studies of the Culturally Disadvantaged (Symonds, 1969; Triandis, 1970; Triandis, Feldman, and Harvey, 1970).

Letters were sent to about 80 companies known to be sponsoring hard-core training programs. Most of these companies were listed in Report to Business No. 2 (1968). The purpose of these letters was to learn what the companies were doing to recruit and train the hard-core unemployed, how successful they were, and what problems and solutions they had discovered. About 60 companies responded by sending either reprints of published material, brochures, or personal letters.

Some of these companies as well as two Job Corps centers were contacted by phone and were visited. The purpose of the visits was to observe the training programs and interview some of the trainees and administrators. About 150 trainees and 15 directors (including the corpsmen and counselors at the Job Corps Centers) were asked to describe their training program and the reactions and attitudes of the trainees toward it. Their observations were very informative, but their explanations of why the trainees behaved as they did were not always consistent.

There were many published reports of training programs from which information was obtained. However, the primary sources from which the list of cultural differences came were the technical reports of the Illinois Studies



of the Culturally Disadvantaged at the University of Illinois, directed by Dr. Harry C. Triandis as the principal investigator.

#### Identification of the Salient Cultural Differences

Communication. One of the most obvious cultural differences between the Black ghetto culture and the White middle-class culture is the different patterns and styles of communication. The confusion and misunderstanding which could result from different "languages" is easy to imagine and has been discussed in several reports (Johnson, 1969; National Association of Manufacturers, 1968, Symonds, 1969).

One training program included in its curriculum outline the definitions of a list of words not likely to be in a supervisor's vocabulary (Johnson, 1969, pp. 189-196). However, in a world of change there probably isn't a set language that will remain constant in a universal way. A counselor at one of the Job Corps Centers possessed a list of 26 different definitions or uses of the word "muther-fucker."

Lack of Self-Esteem. A second cultural difference is the lack of self-esteem or self-worth which many hard-core male Blacks feel. This has sometimes resulted in feelings of self-hatred. "If success breeds success, failure breeds failure. Again, the disadvantaged person is conditioned. To fail is his lot [National Association of Manufacturers, 1968, p. 8]." This process of losing self-respect and self-esteem because of repeated failure and repression has been discussed by Symonds (1969), Silverman (1964) Brady (1963), Rutledge (1969), and Grier and Cobbs (1968). Triandis, Weldon and Feldman (1972) found that black hard-core samples had low self-esteem, but other black samples did not. They also found similarly low self-esteem scores among whites who were old and unsuccessful.

Some of the Black people who were asked to evaluate the present paper, especially the graduate and undergraduate Black students, objected to the notion that many Black people have a self-hatred. For these individuals, who have generally been successful, this is probably a justifiable objection. But among the hard-core unemployed, experiences of failure and defeat are much more common and have caused feelings of self-hatred and loss of self-esteem. It was also suggested that feelings of low self-esteem are tempered by age since many of the young Blacks have been exposed to the "Black Power" and "Black is Beautiful" movements.

Time. A third cultural difference is the way Blacks respond to time. Many of them are not accustomed to scheduling their lives by a clock and a concern for punctuality is alien and puzzling to them (National Alliance of Businessmen, 1968, p. 8). Training programs for the hard-core unemployed have recognized that their trainees have basically been "night" people and have incorporated into their training such topics as the purpose of time clocks, getting to work on time, etc. (Businessweek, 1968; Byars & Schwefel, 1969). Triandis (1970) has noted that many Blacks have little concern for time, since time-oriented action often fails to lead to future rewards.

Personal Control. A fourth cultural difference related to the one above is the lack of personal control most Blacks feel they have over the rewards and outcomes they receive from their environment. Triandis (1970) has noted that the ghetto environment is characterized by conditions in which one's rewards are not perceived to be contingent upon his efforts. This condition is like the basic definition of discrimination: one is rewarded according to his skin color not according to his efforts or abilities. The generalized expectancy of internal vs. external locus of control (Rotter, 1966) has been subdivided for the Black population by Gurin, Gurin, Lao, and

is no more pathological than the compulsive manner in which a diver checks his equipment before a dive or a pilot his parachute.

Closeness of Interpersonal Relations. A sixth cultural difference is the preferred style of interpersonal relations. Triandis, Feldman and Harvey (1971) have suggested that the differing size of the in-group of Black and White groups accounts for the major differences in the preferred style of interpersonal relations. Because of their small in-group, most Blacks have intimate feelings of loyalty and friendship for only a few individuals, usually members of their immediate family only. However, it has also been suggested (National Association of Manufacturers, 1968, p. 18) that there exists a "rare sense of community and brotherhood" in the ghettos. Such a feeling of brotherhood could be explained by the common elements of their environment which bring them together, such as repression, poverty, and discrimination which could be considered a common enemy (Julian, Bishop & Fiedler, 1966).

The close interpersonal relations of Blacks with members of their ingroup, imply suspicion, distrust and formal relations with members of their outgroups. If their on the job ingroup includes only one or two people, but not the foreman, they may prefer formal relations with the formal (call him Mr. and be called Mr.) At the same time life in the ghetto tends to involve more "particularistic" exchanges. That is people respond to others as people not as roles. Thus a worker who has a personal problem may expect the foreman to understand and make an exception. A foreman on the other hand, may think "universalistically"--that is in terms of the general category worker-- and respond legalistically. Such a response would "turn off" the Black worker more than a White worker, because

the White has gotten used to such responses and has learned to put up with them to a greater extent than is the case with ghetto Blacks.

Response to Authority. A seventh cultural difference is the way many Blacks respond to authority. Symonds (1969) has suggested that the failure of many Blacks to respond appropriately to superior-subordinate role relationships is due to the basic family structure of the ghetto families in which the mother exerts most of the authority and makes most of the decisions.

Different Values and Ethics. An eighth cultural difference is the ghetto Blacks rejection of the traditional values and ethics of the White middle-class culture. Referring to the predominant White middle-class values as the Protestant Ethic, Symonds (1969) has indicated that many of the standards of conduct and respectability associated with the Protestant Ethic are markedly different in the ghetto culture. For example, a jail sentence or being fired on a job, does not carry the same implications to many Blacks as it does to most Whites (National Association of Manufacturers, 1967, p. 11). Some of the Black students, who were asked to evaluate the present paper suggested that Blacks had to learn different values and ethics than White people to enable them to survive in a White world. This would suggest that this cultural difference was created by a different socialization pattern for Black children in which they are taught a different set of values and ethics, probably more suited to helping them adapt and survive in a White society.

#### Teaching Cultural Differences

Social psychological research (reviewed by Katz and Kahn, 1966, Chapter 13) has suggested several approaches to changing the behavior of others which can generally be classified into (a) providing the individual

with additional factual information or experiences to create a personal insight, (b) group therapy, such as sensitivity training, which uses the influence and pressure of the peer group, and (c) changes in the organizational environment. Using all of these approaches in an integrated fashion is more effective than using one approach alone. Within the classroom, however, the amount of change in the organizational environment is rather limited. Nevertheless, a classroom experience can use self-insight and group therapy with peer group influences to create a favorable climate to openly investigate cultural backgrounds.

Triandis and Malpass (1971) have identified a need for three types of training about Black and White interactions: (a) affective training -- control of one's own affect or emotion and the affect of others; (b) cognitive training -- learning what goes with what; and (c) behavioral-transactive training -- learning through face-to-face contacts, simulated contacts, or programmed interactions. A set of training materials have been developed by Cherrington (1971) to expose university students in a classroom setting to cultural differences. These materials include (a) a slide-tape presentation which presents a systematic listing of the preceding eight cultural differences with a theoretical explanation and some examples of each, (b) a 25 minute film in which many of the above cultural differences are portrayed in a real setting showing two quite opposite interpretations of a Black worker's behavior, and (c) a set of two interaction exercises which are simple management games in which groups of students perform a simple task and examine their own and others attitudes and behavior. The slide-tape presentation is primarily a tool for cognitive training since it presents a theoretical or historical explanation for the

eight cultural differences and discusses some of their possible effects in the community. The film and interaction exercises, however, are primarily tools for behavioral-transactive training since they are designed to provide face-to-face contacts and programmed interactions.

The purpose of the slide-tape presentation was to present factual information regarding cultural differences. By giving a person additional factual information about cultural differences it is possible for that person to increase his cognitive differentiation concerning the behavior and characteristics of others. Then, hopefully, he will be willing to change his behavior to be consistent with this new information. However, the extensive research in attitude change (McGuire, 1969) has shown that the individual may not attend to the information or receive it and even if he does receive it he may not believe it or change his behavior to be consistent with his belief. Some of the methods which have been used to overcome this resistance to change, and which are proposed here, are (a) group interaction and discussion (see Katz and Kahn, 1966, Chapter 13) and (b) vicarious experiences of others (see Berger and Lambert, 1968, pp. 136-149).

The purpose of the interaction exercises was to have students interact with each other in the performance of a task and then discuss their feelings and their interpretations of their behavior and other's. Interaction exercises have been used to help Samoan and Palagis participants, at a Comprehensive Health Planning workshop in American Samoa, look at their cultural differences and learn to work more cooperatively and effectively together.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Personal communication from Dr. Milton G. Holmen of the University of Southern California who directed this conference.

In the film, "Understanding Cultural Differences," a new foreman tells a Black director of a training program about the difficulty he is having with a Black worker. The purpose of the movie was to provide class members with a vicarious experience in which a White foreman feels certain that he understands a minority member but is told by a knowledgeable person that his interpretations of this member's behavior are incorrect. As the conflicting ideas and interpretations are first discussed and then argued the viewer is allowed to examine his own interpretations of the behavior described and then compare his own resolution with that which he observes on film.

An alternative and perhaps more effective use of the story portrayed in the movie, "Understanding Cultural Differences" is to have it performed as a "readers theater" by the participants of the training program (either students or supervisors). The readers theater form of presentation is similar to role playing except that the participants are given the dialogue to read rather than improvising their own dialogue. The readers are asked to play the part of an assigned character as realistically as possible; however, a readers theater consists of dramatic reading, not dramatic acting. Consequently, there is no "movement on stage."

Much of the literature on role playing suggests that a readers theater presentation should serve as an effective tool for attitude and behavioral change, especially if it is combined with subsequent role playing. Several theoretical explanations for the effects of role playing on attitude change have been proposed which specify the conditions which must exist for role playing to be effective. One theory takes account of the "self-persuasion" character of role playing and emphasizes the importance of positive and

negative incentives in determining the outcome (see Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, 1953, pp. 222-237).

In one of the earliest studies on the influence of role playing on attitude change, Janis and King (1954) found that Ss exhibited greater attitude change in the advocated direction on an issue for which they were asked to improvise arguments supporting an extreme position than on issues where they simply listened to other's arguments and read a prepared outline. They concluded, essentially, that "saying is believing" because the individual is stimulated to think of the kinds of arguments, illustrations, and motivating appeals that he regards as most convincing. Janis and Gilmore (1965) have proposed an "incentive" theory to explain why a person who plays a role that is inconsistent with his attitude set changes his attitudes in the direction of the role he plays. According to this "incentive" theory, when a person accepts the task of improvising arguments in favor of a point of view at variance with his own personal convictions, he becomes temporarily motivated to think of all the good positive arguments he can, and at the same time suppresses thoughts about the negative arguments which are supposedly irrelevant to the assigned task. This process of "biased scanning" increases the salience of the positive arguments and therefore increases the chances of acceptance of the new attitude. This finding, that improvisational role playing is a more effective attitude changer than simply listening to a persuasive speech or even reading a prepared speech aloud, has been supported repeatedly in a variety of situations (e.g. Elms, 1966; Harvey and Beverly, 1961; Janis and Mann, 1965; Scott, 1959).



A gain in attitude change would not be expected, however, if resentment or other interfering affective reactions were aroused by negative incentives in the role playing situation. Instances of negative incentives would be information that lowers the prestige of the sponsor (the person assigning the role to be played) or that leads to his being perceived as a manipulative person who is trying to influence people for his own personal aggrandizement or for other alien purposes. Any signs of exploitative intentions in the behavior of the sponsor would also be expected to operate as negative incentives, evoking responses that conflict with the positive incentive value of improvising arguments in support of the conclusion assigned by the sponsor. Elms and Janis (1965), for example, have found smaller attitude change among individuals who were asked by a negative sponsor (a Soviet Agency) than by a positive sponsor (the U.S. State Department) to write a counter-attitudinal essay supporting a program of sending American students to a four year Russian university to study communism. Likewise, Janis and Gilmore (1965) found smaller attitude change among individuals who were asked to write a counter-attitudinal essay on the importance of mathematics by a sponsor for exploitative commercial advertising than by a public-welfare motivated sponsor.

Kelman (1953) has suggested that attitude change is a function of response restriction, i.e. a communicator's ability to restrict the range of responses of his audience to the response which he favors. Thus, conformity in the communication situation will increase attitude change to the extent to which supporting responses are produced, and decrease attitude change to the extent to which implicit interfering responses are produced. Supporting responses are in part a function of the size and

certainty of rewards and the indecision of the situation. Interfering responses are, in part, a function of the felt pressures for conformity. Kelman found more attitude change among a group of school children who were given a mild incentive to write convincing essays in support of a new attitude position than among a group given no incentive or another group given an incentive but subjected to high pressure to conform.

Dissonance theory has made predictions regarding the effects on attitudes of having individuals engage in role playing or other counter-attitudinal behavior which have, in part, been diametrically opposed to incentive theory. According to dissonance theory (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959) dissonance is produced when a person says or does something contrary to his private belief or inclination. The dissonance may be reduced by changing the private belief to make it less discrepant with the act. The greater the dissonance that is aroused, the greater the probable change in attitude. Studies by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) and Cohen (Brehm and Cohen, 1962) have shown that the greater the reward offered (beyond that which was necessary to elicit the behavior) the smaller was the change in attitude. In these studies, the reward was money (\$20 or \$1 and \$10, \$5, \$1, or 50¢).

Much of the controversy between incentive and dissonance theory has now been resolved (see Brehm, 1965; Carlsmith, Collins, and Helmreich, 1966; Elms, 1969) and this resolution suggests several implications for teaching cultural differences. To the extent that dissonance arousing stimuli are present, the predictions of dissonance theory are found: small incentives rather than large incentives induce greater attitude change. But when dissonant stimuli are not present the amount of attitude change will vary

directly with the magnitude of the reinforcement. Maximum dissonance is aroused under conditions which lead to insufficient justification for behavior: (a) high choice (i.e. no coercion to role play), (b) small offer of reward, (c) low threat of punishment (for not participating) and (d) low positivity of the sponsor. This would suggest that the script "Understanding Cultural Differences" could be most effective in changing attitudes when the participants are reading from a prepared script with little improvising or "choice" on their part, the script should be used as an initiator of ideas for further improvised role playing. Three-man groups could rotate the roles of observer, supervisor, and consultant and respond through role playing to such problems as (a) a supervisor thinks that the loud and crude conversations of his Black subordinates are offensive to others e.g. customers (b) a Black employee refuses, or does not want to perform some small unpleasant task which must be done but is not directly assigned to him, (c) a Black employee finishes his job early and refuses to help anyone else (d) a White employee feels that it is unfair for a Black employee to be promoted to a comparable job without having met the same requirements, etc.

The usefulness of these audio-visual materials and exercises has not been examined. Their development was based upon a subjective interpretation of the literature which was partially reviewed here. Consequently, these materials and also the numerous other training programs in industry and the Jobs Corps need to be tested empirically to determine their usefulness and value. Moreover, there needs to be a continuing process of evaluation to eliminate elements that become out of date over time. This need for reevaluation is particularly acute in areas associated with

hiring the hard-core unemployed because that situation is constantly changing.

A radically different training program which could be used as a comparison is one in which the organization makes no attempt to change the attitudes of their supervisors or to improve their understanding of the trainees through a training program per se. Instead the organization seeks to elicit appropriate supervisory behavior toward the new trainee through the use of penalties and rewards. In some organizations, for example, (Sullivan, 1970) the supervisors are simply told that their performance will be evaluated not only on the quantity and quality of production turned out by their group, but also on how well they retain and develop the disadvantaged trainees assigned to them. Sullivan has stated that such a program makes eminently good sense because it adds the inducement of possible rewards for superior performance. This is not to suggest that a knowledge of cultural differences is not important information for reducing conflict or facilitating interpersonal interactions. Rather, it suggests that the supervisor will be motivated to reduce conflict and, as a consequence, he will seek for more information and greater understanding of his minority employees.

The two sections which follows summarize the tape-narration for a slide tape presentation of cultural differences and a script for a readers theater presentation.

Slide-Tape Narration: Cultural Differences in Industry

For many years certain members of minority groups have been deprived of a chance to hold a decent job. They have been classified as "Hard-core Unemployed" because they were financially poor persons who did not have suitable employment and who were either (1) school dropouts, (2) under 22 years of age, (3) 45 years of age or over, (4) handicapped or (5) subject to special obstacles to employment such as being unskilled.

Several factors have contributed to keeping the Hard-core Unemployed from obtaining suitable employment. The hiring policies of most companies have been to hire those individuals who appear to have the highest probability of becoming good employees.

This means that jobs have usually gone to those persons who graduated from high school, who scored high on the company's entrance exams, who have a good work history from past employment, who have middle-class dress styles, who communicate well, and who have a good credit record and a clean police record. It was assumed, and sometimes demonstrated, that such individuals had the highest probability of becoming successful employees.

However, as companies became more ingrained in screening successful people in, they also became more ingrained in screening out those individuals who were culturally disadvantaged and greatly in need of a job.

This meant that the high school dropout would probably not be hired regardless of his reason for dropping out, whether he dropped out for disciplinary reasons of fighting in school, or from not wanting to go any more because he didn't agree with or understand what was going on and was laughed at.

Someone with a police record would probably not be hired also, even if the record only showed that he had been booked for reasonable suspicion of a crime but never convicted.

Someone who had learned to speak using the vocabulary of his peers on the street and who dressed according to the fashions of those in his neighborhood would probably not be hired also.

In fact, even if he were skilled and able to perform the job he might not be hired since he didn't apply for the job because he was unsure he would be accepted or didn't carry through with all the red tape interviews and tests.

When one of the hard-core unemployed does get a job, it is usually a job such as a janitor or dishwasher that is not adequate to support a family. But even if he were skilled and able to get a decent job there is a good chance that he will quit or be fired because of a misunderstanding or disagreement or the general lack of social support experienced by Blacks in the White man's world of work. For these and many other reasons such individuals have become part of the Hard-core Unemployed.

Many business executives, such as those working with the National Alliance of Businessmen, have been taking active steps to create jobs and growth experiences for the Hard-core Unemployed. They have been re-examining hiring standards and asking such questions as "Why is a high school diploma required for this job?" and "Is this aptitude test screening out capable people because its design causes candidates from one culture to receive lower scores than those of another culture?" More than this they have arranged for special recruitment techniques of going into the ghetto to reach the Hard-core Unemployed, for special education to teach them basic arithmetic and English, for on-the-job training to provide them with a skill,

and for special guidance and counseling to help them adjust to the complex world of work.

To create a successful program for hiring the Hard-core, however, business executives have learned that they need to do more than create jobs and train the individuals how to perform them. It is not enough to help only the new employee. Because, not only does the Hard-core trainee have to adjust to his new job and new supervisor, the supervisors and managers have to adjust to the new worker and his cultural background. Frequently, the cultural differences between a supervisor and the new trainee have been ignored or forgotten which often led to serious difficulties in cooperation and personal antagonism.

This conflict has been particularly severe between Black and White cultures. Because they live in the same city and use some of the same language it is easy to overlook cultural differences that can cause serious conflicts and misunderstandings.

This is not to suggest that one culture is better than the other or that the cultures must become unified to avoid misunderstanding and conflict. But it does suggest the need for a better understanding and awareness of cultural differences and how these cultural differences influence the behavior and attitudes of the supervisors and trainees. This need for greater understanding was well expressed by the statement of a program director to management after their first somewhat unsuccessful attempt to work with the hard-core unemployed. "For some strange reason, we forgot to look at life and its problems the way they looked to the trainees. Somehow we overlooked the fact that the trainee would never do things our way if we didn't first show evidence that we understood their problems.

Now, I'm not suggesting that the trainees dictate policies to management. But, I am suggesting that in setting up our next program we find out what success means to our trainees. Find out what happiness means, .....and competition....., and criticism. We must think in their terms, and then we'll be able to show them a better way, and a more productive way."

But not everyone understands cultural differences. For most people, cultural differences are hard to understand, and even more difficult to adjust to and accept. Other people completely fail to recognize cultural differences;; then, instead of interpreting another's behavior correctly, they misjudge behavior and make false attributions.

As a case in point: The manager of a small company liked to be on a first-name basis with a-1 of his employees. However, a young Black girl working in the plant always called him by his last name. This aloofness puzzled him because he felt he had tried to be a decent employer and treat everyone fairly, yet he felt this one employee was rebuffing him. She sensed his awkwardness but was unable to cope with the situation. So, she tried to just keep out of his way and avoid him.

The manager, not knowing what to do, finally checked with a long-time Black employee who explained: "Somehow we even have misunderstandings with the White men who's for us. That young lady has been taught to call older people and unfamiliar people Mr. or Mrs. She just arrived from the deep South and she's not about to call any White employer by his first name. But she likes you and her job so just relax. You be you and let her be her. You've got to understand what she's lived through. In time she'll get to know that you're for real - and then you're Ted." Knowing why this young woman called him by his last name and how she really felt about him and her job helped this manager to behave differently toward her. In a short time the tension was gone and both individuals felt comfortable at work.



Since cultural differences are so important to understand, what are the important differences between the Black ghetto culture and the White middle-class American culture. And secondly, what would be the effects of these cultural differences on a job?

One of the most obvious cultural differences is differences in communication. The normal speaking vocabulary of a ghetto Black may be so unlike his White supervisor's that he will probably not understand his instructions the first time he comes on the job. If he is asked to use a Phillips screw driver he may have to ask what a Phillips screw driver is and even how to use it. It may be a new tool for him.

Other words may be common to both vocabularies but carry different meanings, such as the word fearful. To the White supervisor the word fearful means afraid, but to the ghetto Black fearful describes a man who is tough, unafraid, and respected for his ability to be rough and violent.

The supervisor would probably be rather shocked to be called a "muther-fucker," but he would have to examine the context in which it was said to know which of the 26 meanings of that statement was intended.

A second cultural difference is the lack of self-esteem many Blacks feel which has sometimes resulted in feelings of self-hatred. With a lack of personal self-identification and a history of failure, defeat, repression, and not being liked by the dominant White culture, many Blacks have learned to distrust and dislike themselves. Many have learned to accept the White man's negative evaluation of themselves. The consequence of these feelings is the expression of apathy, or sometimes aggression.

"What's the sense of trying to get a job and succeed when you know you're worthless? You'll only fail and confirm your self-coubt. Instead,

don't try. That way you'll be failing because you didn't try, not because you tried and were judged to be incompetent." In this way a little self-esteem is preserved. The consequence of low self-esteem is a resistance to accept compliments or congratulations. Until the Black employee is sure of the motive and sincerity of the supervisor, compliments for doing a good job are usually ignored or disbelieved.

If you don't compete, you don't lose. But neither do you win. If a Black employee's goal is to avoid failure he's not likely to try to get into a special training program, or to try for a promotion, or to look for a new job, or to try to make his present job better. In fact, he might not even want to keep his present job.

Sometimes this repeated failure results in frustration and aggression. To survive and avoid failure some Blacks have learned to become aggressive or even delinquent. Such aggressiveness is often a psychological defense for their fear of failure. If you see something you want, just take it. It might not do any good to work for it.

A third cultural difference is the way Blacks respond to time. Generally, life in the ghetto is free from schedules and appointments. Fathers do not arise at specific times each day to go to work, meals are not on a scheduled basis, bedtime has not been established and adhered to, and there are probably not many who wear a watch. Consequently, most ghetto Blacks disregard time. Coming 10-15 minutes late to work would not seem so wrong to them, certainly not worth getting reprimanded for. For some Blacks, wasting time is not a meaningful concept, either on the job or off, since time isn't important or worth anything. Sometimes salaried Hard-core employees will skip work and not expect to get paid. But then, they can't understand why others get so upset when they don't show.

A fourth cultural difference is the lack of personal control most Blacks feel they have over the rewards and outcomes they receive from their environment. Basically, in the ghetto environment, some individuals see no connection between their efforts and their rewards. The realities of discrimination are that the ghetto Black is often treated according to his skin color, not by his degree of effort and ability. Many Blacks have learned from experience that trying harder won't help them get a better job, the same way that nothing they do will change the size of their welfare checks. Besides, a Black worker might believe that most of the jobs open to him are because of pressure from government. They aren't productive jobs, they're menial and no one expects him to do much. And no matter how well he does, he might lose it. Unlike many of the Whites in higher status jobs, he does not see that he will be rewarded by being sincere, trustworthy and open on the job.

A white supervisor observing a Black employee who feels he has little personal control over his environment would interpret his behavior as basically lazy and unmotivated. However, it is important for the supervisor to realize that laziness, achievement, and motivation are not inherited human qualities but are learned by experience.

This has led the training directors of some Hard-core programs to attempt to teach the trainees that they can control their own environment. Believing that they can obtain greater rewards by trying harder has indeed resulted in greater motivation; but, it is also more risky. Because if they fail, they have to either blame themselves or once again believe that they don't really control their environment.

A fifth cultural difference is the lack of trust and loyalty which ghetto Blacks feel toward other people and institutions. This difference stems not only from their history of repression and discrimination, but also from differences in the size of their "in group." White middle-class Americans define their ingroup as "people like me." This is a broad ingroup, but explicitly does not include people who are very different in political views, culture or race. Ghetto Blacks, however, define their ingroup in more narrow terms, usually just members of their immediate family. One implication of this cultural difference for industry is quite simple.

A White supervisor should realize that it is not natural to expect a Black worker from the ghetto to have strong feelings of loyalty and commitment to the company. If he wants that worker to become loyal and committed, then he and the company have to build that loyalty by reciprocating outcomes.

A sixth cultural difference is the preferred style of interpersonal relations. In the White culture relatively deeper and more genuine interpersonal relations are generally desired among their ingroup, which comprises the majority of their associates. However, among many ghetto Blacks with their narrow ingroup, there is a close interpersonal feeling with only a very few individuals. But there is a light, kidding relationship which is often interpreted as genuine by many Blacks with the majority of their peers and a rather tense and guarded formal relationship with people like the White foreman and management. Consequently, a White foreman is likely to receive less respect, friendship, and cooperation from Blacks than he is in the habit of receiving from White employees. Such discrepancies between

the degree of closeness a foreman expects to receive and what he gets could lead to hostility toward his Black employees.

Another consequence of the kidding relationship which Blacks prefer with their peers is the tendency to tolerate a more tense and argumentative atmosphere. Arguing is sometimes used as a form of entertainment, a way to spend time and amuse oneself. Loud arguing is not necessarily as tense an experience to Blacks as White middle-class people tend to believe. A White supervisor would probably be happy to know that all of the loud arguing and commotion associated with his work assignments was not necessarily a rebellion against his authority. But rather, it was the customary reaction of his Black workers. However, the Black workers might be puzzled to learn that their foremen are not used to loud arguments and even if they are dissatisfied with a foreman's decisions, they are still expected to present their views in a calm, logical, and low-key manner.

A seventh cultural difference is the way many Blacks respond to authority. Superior-subordinate role relationships are not as prominent in the Black culture as in the White culture. When a supervisor gives an order, a new Black worker normally responds to the order based upon the supervisor's personality and his feelings for the supervisor. He does not tend to respond to the supervisor because the supervisor occupies a role in which he has the legitimate authority to give the order.

A significant portion of the Black ghetto families have a matriarchal family structure. The mother, in general, runs the family. She makes most of the decisions which keep the family running and has the greatest sense of responsibility towards the family. When the husband is out of work the wife often feels he has no right to hang around the house, using its facili-

ties or demanding loyalty from her. A consequence of this system of family structure is the psychological alienation and estrangement of the Black male. It also explains why some Black men spend so much time together on the street corners. For here, weaknesses are turned upside down and transformed into strengths and they once again feel like a man among men.

In the home, the authority figure is the mother, but children learn to respond to her out of their love and respect for her sacrifices not because she's the authority. Just like one develops the motive to achieve, one must learn how to respond to authority. Without a father or some other authority figure it's difficult for a ghetto Black to learn how to react appropriately to an authoritative command. Often the police represent the most visible form of authority and the learned response is usually negative and inappropriate.

When the Black worker first comes on the job he may face the situation of being asked by a White supervisor, whom he doesn't really like, to do something, which he doesn't really want to do. Consequently, it may take the Black worker a period of time to learn how to react.

An eighth cultural difference is the ghetto Black's rejection of the traditional values and ethics of the White middle class culture. The predominant White middle-class values center around the Protestant Ethic which places intrinsic value in work as an end in itself, in the wise use of time, respect for authority, ability to defer gratification, motivation to increase one's education and income, etc.

These values seem to be less important in the Black community. The values and ethics which many Black people learn are based upon what they find they must do to survive as Black people in a White world of repression

and discrimination. There is less concern with respectability and jail is apparently not a shameful blot on one's record. It has instead become a badge of honor for some.

Holding a respectable job and performing it well is generally valued by White workers. But in general, the Black worker is mainly interested in the money he receives from work, and if he could get money otherwise he would be just as happy if he didn't have to work. Similarly, most Whites tend to place a high value on education. However, many ghetto Blacks do not tend to attribute value to education and skill development unless it helps them to get a better job or earn more money.

According to the Protestant Ethic one will be appropriately rewarded for his deed and behavior either later in this life or in the life hereafter. However, many Black people are generally not interested in waiting until later life or the hereafter to be rewarded. They have a very short time perspective and resist having to defer gratification. They live for today and provide for today. They don't know what will happen next week or next year and don't care to know since it'll probably be bad.

Promising a new Black employee a monthly pay check when he first starts to work is like promising him nothing. Telling him he can be promoted in 6 months is likewise telling him nothing. To him, what he sees is what he gets.

Other forms of motivation may be equally ineffective with the Black employee because of his different values. Making new rules and attempting to enforce them through threats of expulsion, a 3-day disciplinary lay-off, etc., would probably not change behavior if he doesn't respond to authority, or doesn't value work, or isn't concerned about some permanent file. Offering him the chance to associate more closely with his peers or his supervisor

if he performs well is likewise not an incentive if he doesn't like his peers and dislikes his supervisor. Besides, that reward is not visible today and even if it were he might suspect your motives and intentions, and not trust you.

Obviously, in working with the Hard-core Unemployed there are complex problems that must be examined. In order to maximize the chances of developing a successful program to employ the hard-core, it is imperative that there be a sensitivity to the trainees and their cultural background. If a program is to make sense it is important that the staff start with an open mind, a determination to put aside racist ideas and preconceived notions, and a desire to gain real insight into the problems and difficulties that confront the disadvantaged members of society.

The program also cannot ignore the realities of industrial life and these must be clearly communicated to the trainees. During the early part of a training program, for example, a new trainee might be told..."We know you have a criminal record. That is forgotten. But we have certain rules and we cannot operate this factory if we do not follow these rules. Even if you are caught stealing an item worth 1¢ you will be instantly dismissed, the way we instantly dismiss any White employee who is caught doing something illegal."

However, the program also must not ignore the realities of the Hard-core life. To understand these realities is a first step in launching any effective effort.



UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

CHARACTERS:

Narrator:

Frank Bender: White, M.S. in plant pathology, working for a large petroleum company supervising a project of constructing portable greenhouses in a large city.

Sam Watkins: Black, project director of hardcore training working under Tom.

George Lewis: Black, unskilled worker recently hired to work under Frank.

John Taylor: White, unskilled worker recently hired to work under Frank.

Narrator: Frank is sawing a 2 x 4 on a diagonal slant. John is holding the 2 x 4 and watching Frank. George is holding another 2 x 4 and not paying much attention. After the first diagonal piece is cut John holds it up and looks at it.

Frank: Ok, we need three more; We've got to put one of these in each corner.

Narrator: Frank marks 3 more pieces then moves to the 8 ft. square base and reaches to John for the brace.

Frank: Hold it tight in this corner while I nail it down. (pause)

While we're nailing them, why don't you cut the other three, George. Make sure you have the diagonal cut perpendicular or it won't fit right.

Narrator: Frank motions up & down with his hand to indicate perpendicular.

After hesitating, George puts down the 2 x 4 he's holding and picks up the saw. He looks over the situation for a while and starts to make some bad cuts into the 2 x 4. He moves to the other side of the board as the hammering stops. Frank looks up. John smiles & shakes his head.

Frank: (hesitantly) Have you 'bout got the next one?

Narrator: They wait, George starts to cut again. Frank goes over to see how George is doing.

Frank: (loud & angry) Hey! They've got to be cut straight or they don't fit. They just don't hold well when they're crooked.

Narrator: Frank takes the saw and quickly cuts the next 3 boards while the other two just stand looking.

Frank continues to cut the three pieces. When they are cut he goes over to the frame and Frank and John nail them in place. George helps only when it is obvious that he must.

Narrator: Frank Bender graduated from college about a year and a half ago with a Masters Degree in plant pathology and began to work for a large petroleum company in a major city. Now he has been

assigned to work on a special project studying the effects of air pollution on plant life. The first task is to construct portable greenhouses to put on the rooftops of buildings in the city and near major highways.

Narrator: Two men were hired to work with Frank through the U.S. Employment Service.

George Lewis, 19 years of age, came from the ghettos in the city.

John Taylor is 18 years old and has been a member of an inner-city street gang. Both are young unskilled workers who didn't finish high school.

Frank wasn't too pleased with the hiring of either of the men because of their backgrounds, but was persuaded to accept them because of their need for a job. Frank has had to work very closely with both men to tell them what to do and how to do it. They have completed their second week at work on the project and, in many respects, Frank has not been satisfied with George's performance. He has tried, but has failed so far to obtain the desired changes in George's performance on the job. He is concerned that George is hampering the progress of the project and he is disturbed that he has not been able to get him to improve his work or his attitude.

Frank finally decided to talk to the training director of the company's program to hire the disadvantaged and try to get George in one of their programs. The director of the program is Sam Watkins. Sam has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and has

worked as a social worker prior to becoming the training director. Frank came to Sam, not only because he was Black and the training director, but also because he had heard a lot about the success of the program. Frank believed that Sam was the best person in the company to help him with his problem.

Sam: What's the trouble?

Frank: Well, I have two men working with me on this job. Neither of them are gems really, but at least John seems to be putting something into the job. The other guy, George, though really is a problem. He just doesn't seem to give a damn.... I'd like to help him because basically he seems to be an O.K. guy, and he needs a job, but he's just really slowing the whole job down, and nothing I've done so far seems to have had any effect on him. I just thought maybe you could get him into one of your training programs or something.

Sam: Are both these guys Black?

Frank: No, John is white...but I think he'll turn out O K. They're both high school dropouts, neither of them has much money, and they are both from the city here. Actually, the only substantial difference between them is their color....I've got no real trouble with John, now, but George is really causing me problems.

Sam: What kind of work are these guys doing?

Frank: Well, actually, we all share the work, but I'm responsible for the project. See, what we are doing is constructing portable greenhouses at several locations in the city. We put them up on top of buildings and by roads.

Sam: What for?

Frank: Well, my company is involved in a project to study the effects of air pollution here on plant life.

Sam: I see. Alright, go ahead.

Frank: Anyway, we've been at it now for two weeks and all during this time I've been having some trouble in getting George to perform like he should. You see, John at least seems to give me his best try, but George just doesn't seem to care one way or the other.

Sam: Exactly what do you mean?

Frank: Well....he just louses up all the time and won't cooperate. He's never on time to work in the morning which holds us all up. He won't accept any kind of responsibility. Not even for simple little things like running down to the truck to get a particular tool or something like that. What John or anybody else accepts naturally as part of the job, George just doesn't. He always does less than what's expected of him...he never shows any sort of initiative on his own.

Sam: Maybe he hasn't learned how to do the job.

Frank: Possibly so, but there are still so many times when I know he's just not performing either because he's lazy or he just doesn't realize that he has to produce to keep his job. John was just about as bad at first, but he's doing a good job now.

I've tried the best I can to be patient with George. I've tried to help him change his work habits during the past two weeks, but there has been no improvement at all. I'm afraid he's really got a bad attitude. I came to see if you might be able to get George into a training program, or maybe just talk to him or something. I'd really like to help him, but the way he's tying things up now, if something doesn't change, I'm afraid he's going to find himself out of a job.

Sam: Yes, I imagine he will....Now, first let me say that I think the best way to help this guy would be for you to do it on the job he's got now rather than to put him into our program. You can work with him one on one, but we can't give him that much individual attention. This, of course, is assuming you can help him. And also, since I really don't know this fellow, any advice I give is based on my experience in general. Can you tell me some specific things that he's done besides come late every day, so that I know a little more about George?

Frank: Well....ah....well, like I said, he's got a real bad attitude and doesn't cooperate. Like the second day at work I asked him to go to the truck for some cross braces and told him how to unhook them with a crescent wrench. First, he asked me why I wanted him to get them--like I wasn't supposed to ask him to do anything.

Flashback ---

George: (rather pleasantly, not in anger) Hell, man, what you tellin' me to do. You think you can just tell me to go git cross braces like that and think I'm goin' to get 'em. Shit no! Why the hell d'ya ask me?

Frank: Listen, George, we've gotta have them---Now get the hell out there and bring them here.

(pause) Then after he went I waited 20 minutes and then had to go get them myself. It shouldn't have taken him 5 minutes but he hadn't even found the crescent wrench sitting right in the tool box.

(pause)

Damnit George, what-in-the-hell do you think you're doing out here? We're in there waiting for you and you've been out here for 20 minutes. You haven't even unhooked them yet. Now listen we've got a job to do and we've got to get it done. If we don't move it along we're going to be growing plants in the winter. We're not going to get it done just standing around either. And by the way, you were late again this morning. You know we're supposed to start at 8:00 don't you?

(pause)

I told him right there he had to start doing better. That was also the first time I mentioned to him that twice he had come late to work. When I got through he didn't say he'd do better or even that he was sorry. He just said "Keep it cool, man." When I ask him to do something monotonous he almost

always argues. Sometimes I think he's kidding but usually he's complaining. And he usually talks so loud too. I think I've really been trying but I don't feel like I'm any closer to him now than I was two weeks ago. I just haven't gotten anywhere with him.

Sam: Well George's problems could be for a lot of reasons. First, you may not fully understand what problems you're dealing with, or you might not really know the best ways to deal with them.

Frank: I guess not.

Sam: First, let's talk about what you're dealing with when you deal with George. You seem to think that the backgrounds of these two guys are pretty similar. I'd bet that there are some very important differences you haven't considered. George has probably grown up in the black ghetto and this environment is really different in many ways. He most likely has a background that is filled with experiences of failure in most aspects of life...in school, in social circles, on the job, and even in his own family.

Frank: Well, I sure think he is failing on this job.

Sam: Probably as far back as he can remember there has been some whitey calling him nigger, putting him down, setting him apart, letting him know where his place in this world was -- at the bottom. You know, after a while you just accept it.



He's probably come to learn that the best way to get what he wants is simply any way he can get it. And if there's no way to get it, then just stop wanting it and it won't matter anymore.

He's probably never had a strong, dependable father figure to model after. The matriarchal family structure - you know - the ol' lady being head of the family, is very common in the ghetto. Maybe his mother was too busy trying to make ends meet to spend much time with him and show him what he's supposed to do. Man, that's something you have to learn.

Frank: O.K., but surely he can see how others act and what is expected of him is he's to accomplish anything, can't he?

Sam: Even if he does, basically the ghetto environment is such that an individual receives little reward for his efforts. A man's effort isn't connected with rewards. He doesn't believe that what he gets is determined by what he does. He figures what he gets is just a matter of chance. Take for example, the process of applying for a job. Many blacks see interviews, tests, and the like simply as clever means for the company to screen them out of jobs. In many cases this is true whether it is intentional or not. It's been shown that many of the screening procedures are culturally biased so as to exclude black applicants. In any case, these guys become convinced that no matter how hard they try, or how well they do, they just aren't going to get that job. And when experience bears this out they just give up trying. I mean, why try when it's out of your hands?

Frank: So what are you trying to tell me?

Sam: What we're talking about here is something that can be called "subjective culture," meaning characteristic ways of seeing and thinking about one's social environment. Differences in the subjective cultures of blacks and whites in different economic levels lead to major barriers in communication. Very often these cats have quite different vocabularies than yours. They might use the same words as you do, but they don't necessarily mean the same things to them as they do to you. This is part of the problem in testing.

Frank: You're telling me that when I ask George to go down to the truck and bring up a crescent wrench or those cross braces or something, and he just acts like he didn't hear me, that's because he didn't understand what I wanted?

Sam: Might be. Probably he's never heard of a crescent wrench before. The fact, is what you may think is a lack of motivation on the job might really be George's way of responding to something he didn't understand.

Frank: (somewhat irritated) So why doesn't he just ask?

Sam: George probably feels bad enough for not understanding your order and he isn't going to make himself look even worse by admitting that he didn't understand it. If you had experienced nothing but put-downs all your life from white folks would you ask and take a chance of looking stupid?

Frank: Maybe not.

Sam: Even if he thought you'd understand, what about the other guy. John. Does he know how he would respond? You see, these guys have experienced so much failure, have so little good to identify with, that they really have very little self-esteem. One of the results of this lack of self-esteem is often apathy. It's like: "Why try to succeed when you know you are worthless? You'll only fail and confirm your doubts." He feels powerless, and so he just withdraws from the whole situation. At least then he's not openly a failure and a little self-respect can be saved.

Frank: Now wait, if he really hates himself why would he brag about getting booked for stealing liquor? That was another bad scene.

One afternoon last week we were picking up some more materials back at the plant. I had to talk to the superintendent about some clearances and asked the guys to straighten some lumber while they waited. They both had a good chance to really impress the superintendent because they knew he was looking for new men to train in the pipe line program. But they really messed up that chance. At least George did. He just sat back there on the lumber and told John about the night he and another kid stole some liquor from a party and he got caught, but let off. He was talking so loud you'd think he was bragging.

George: Hell man, you should have seen that fat bastard trying to find what we'd done with his booze. He promised not to press charges

if we'd tell him. We didn't say nothin'. The pigs hauled us off and booked us for theft, or something like that. They kept us for about an hour but they turned us loose 'cause they couldn't prove we'd taken it. We knew they'd tail us so we split and waited about 4 hours to meet. Then we went back to the hedge where we'd hid it and carted it off. Damn, we had enough booze for both of us for two weeks.

John: Hell how'd you get it over the hedge?

George: Shit, that wasn't hard; we just took turns going over to their booze table and walked off with it. They'd see us, and one guy told me to put it back. But hell, they weren't going to mess up their pretty clothes to stop us.

Frank: He really messed up a good chance -- and they both could have used that training program. I talked to them about that too. I think John was sorry, but George acted like he couldn't care less.

I just can't understand why he passed up such a good chance to get ahead. No one's going to get into a training program with that kind of attitude.

Sam: Again it could be for many reasons. Like I said before, he probably doesn't feel like he has much control over his rewards. So why should he think he'll get into a training program if he does a good job stacking boards.

Frank: But how else is he going to get ahead?

Sam: Besides, that training program might not mean the same thing to him that it would to you. You see, probably he just doesn't share your Protestant Ethic. He's not likely to be highly motivated to get an education or some skill. And work, for him, is probably distasteful and only done for the money. And apparently being booked for stealing liquor is not a shameful disgrace, either. Instead, it may be a badge of honor.

You've got to understand his background before you can understand why he behaves the way he does.

Frank: Wait a minute. Are you saying that I should accept what he does?

Sam: No, I'm not saying you should accept what he does. In fact, if you don't approve of his behavior then you can try to change it.

But what I am saying is that if you want to help him you've got to understand his background first.

Frank: (more calm) I think I can understand what you're saying. But even if it is all true why doesn't he simply respond naturally to a person in authority? I mean he doesn't have to want to better himself or anything to recognize that I'm in charge of this job and that he should respond to that authority like John does.

Sam: What it boils down to is this, in order to be able to respond appropriately to an authority figure you have to have had experience with people in authority. You have to learn how to respond naturally to someone in authority. But, living in the

ghetto doesn't make it easy for a guy like George to have such experiences. And you shouldn't be disturbed by his arguing either. That's probably a form of entertainment for him.

Frank: You talk as if this guy were from a different world. I mean I can see a lot of what you're talking about, but it still seems to me that George must be able to look around him, to see the world in which he has to function, and what's expected of him. I mean I just don't think all of the problems he has can be attributed to his experience in the ghetto. I think a lot of it he just brings upon himself. I mean he's lazy and he just doesn't seem to want to do anything for his own benefit because it takes some effort right now. It's this that I don't understand.

Sam: George has probably also developed a short time perspective. He worries about getting by today and not about what it's going to mean to him a year from now. He has no indication that what happens today will mean anything tomorrow, one way or the other, except that tomorrow will probably be bad.

Frank: O.K. if he just worries about today then why, when he's told to can't he even show up for work on time on any one day. You know he hasn't been on time one day yet, not even the first.

Sam: Just think about that for a minute! Don't you see that could be for any of a hundred reasons. I mean it may seem real simple to you, but George might not even own an alarm clock. Or he might have to take a bus that gets him there late because that's the

only way he can get there at all. He also might just not see the point of being so particular about time. His life just maybe hasn't been so ruled by the clock as yours has been. I mean maybe he never had a dad that got up at 7:45 every morning to get to his office, or a family that sat down and ate dinner together every night at 6:00, or a mother that set his bedtime when he was young and made sure he followed it. Living by the clock is something we human beings learn, you know, it's not something that just comes natural. What's more, if you lay into him about being late to work he might just see it as a nitpicking on your part and just a way to put him down, or an excuse to get rid of him. On top of that, if work isn't a pleasant experience and he doesn't get any kicks out of his job, he may simply like to stay away. Finally he comes late because he realizes he needs the money.

Frank: (quite irritated. speaks rather loudly)

Well you certainly don't think we should just let him show up when he wants and then plan our work around him. If we pushed this far enough we could rationalize expecting him to do nothing except show up to get paid. But how far do we go? I think he must learn to cooperate and work as a team member.

Sam: I agree, just like I think its bad to promote him or give him a job when he doesn't have the skills and qualifications. But how late is he?

Frank: Twice he was almost an hour late, but usually about 15 or 20 minutes.

Sam: There you go. You can bet 15 or 20 minutes doesn't mean as much to him as it does to you.

Frank: (more irritated) But that's not the point. The point is he knows I'm in charge and he knows I expect certain things of him, but he doesn't come through. I mean I've been pretty patient, I think. I haven't really laid into him, as you say, on these things. I've tried to handle it all rationally and when I ask him to change something I mean it constructively and he should know that.

Sam: But, he probably doesn't. You may be trying to be his friend, but he probably doesn't see it that way. Because of their experience ghetto blacks define their ingroup in very narrow terms. Their ingroup consists of people they can trust. There are very few such people. It might not even include a brother or sister, or his classmates in school, let alone his white boss. Also there is usually a great deal of suspicion and hostility toward all that are outside this narrow ingroup because all his life he's been fighting to get and keep the few good things in life that were available to him. Man, he probably just doesn't trust you at all.

Frank: But so far I haven't given him any reason to doubt my good intentions.

Sam: The point is you don't have to. It may not occur to you, but just as white people form stereotypes about blacks, blacks do the same about whites. Your stereotype of a black is stupid, lazy,



oversexed, and I don't know what else. Ghetto blacks see whites as superhuman exploiters, intelligent, cold, calculating manipulators, and most of all as supremely selfish. You don't have to do him any harm for him to mistrust you. He believes you're going to get him sooner or later, and he sees everything you do in that light. You really can't expect to overcome this in two weeks. I mean he doesn't understand you anymore than you understand him.

Frank: (in disgust) Mr. Watkins, I think I understand him a lot better than you give me credit for.

Sam: Frank, that remains to be seen...Do you know why he comes to work late?

Frank: (in anger) Well, I don't think I'll take up anymore of your time.

Sam: Listen, feel free to continue. We really haven't gotten very far.

Frank: (more calmly) No really, I think I've already gotten a lot more than I came for...I want to thank you Mr. Watkins.

Sam: You're very welcome. I hope I've been some help.

Frank: So long.

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Narrator: Well Frank wasn't really sure if all of what Sam said had made sense or if it would do him any good with George. But he had the weekend to think about it until Monday morning when he had to face the situation again.

Scene III (On the Job)

John: Looks like our boy is late again....

Frank: Looks that way....

John: Guess he figures we got nothin' to do but wait till he decides to show up....

Frank: I don't know John....George might have problems that you or I can't even imagine....When he gets here I'd like to talk to him by myself for a few minutes. O.K.?

John: Sure.

Frank: George you're late again....

George: Yeah.

Frank: Does that mean anything to you?

George: Uh...Yeh, you're gonna tell me to get here sooner.

Frank: Yes, I guess I will, but do you know why?

George: That's the way you want it.

Frank: Yes, but why?

George: I don't know man.

Frank: Well let me tell you then. It's for a couple of reasons. First, it's because we've got a job to do and we only have so much time to do it in and if we don't use all that time we might not be able to get it done. Since we get paid to get the job done, I guess it's also part of our job to make sure we use all the time we have. Do you see that?

George: Yeah, I guess.

Frank: Another reason is that because it's part of your job to show up on time, if you don't show up on time you're not doing your job, and if you don't do your job you've got to lose it because there are a lot of people waiting to do it if you won't.

George: Say, are you firing me?

Frank: No George, I'm not. I don't want to do that. That's just it. We've got at least another three months on this project and I think you need this job. Besides if you do alright here there's a good chance that another job will follow after this one's through. And I think it would be to your own good if you could keep on working. Am I right?

George: Yeah...yeah sure. But hear me man, you tell me to get here on time all you want and it ain't gonna do no good. 'Cause there just ain't no way for me to get here on time. I got to take two buses to get here and I get here when the bus gets me here and I can't get here no sooner than that.

Frank: O.K....O.K. George I see that. Now you tell me this, if we could find some way so that you could do it, would you be on time?

George: Sure man...I guess. I mean why not?

Frank: O.K. then are there any earlier buses?

George: Yeah there's one that comes about an hour sooner, but I'm not gonna show up here no hour early.

Frank: Alright, then what if we changed our starting time here to about 15 minutes later? That way you'd be on time and wouldn't have to do anything except make sure you make it to that bus on time. Right?

George: Right, but that's what I'm doin now!

Frank: Yeah, except we're all going to be starting at that time and we'll have to make up the 15 minutes somewhere else. Like either we work later, or we take a shorter lunch. O.K.?

George: Yeah, sure.

Frank: Alright then we're going to haveto talk with John about it and make sure it's alright with him. I'm pretty sure we can work something out so you won't have to be late for work anymore. But this will only work if you make sure to get to your bus stop on time every morning. Have we got a deal now?

George: ....Yeah sure man, we got a deal.

END

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