



RACE AND SOCIAL EQUITY

A Nervous Area of Government

Susan T. Gooden

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M.E. Sharpe
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1 NERVOUSNESS, SOCIAL EQUITY, AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

*Americans must face up to their dream and
decide whether they really mean it to be a reality.*
—Jennifer Hochschild (1995, xii)

What does it mean to be nervous? Nervousness has both emotional and physical characteristics. It may present itself differently from individual to individual. Some of us display outward signs of nervousness—our palms become sweaty, we start pacing or fidgeting, our hands start to tremble. Others may exhibit few outward signs, but we recognize the internal signals—we feel a knot in our stomach, our appetite changes, we find it difficult to focus—our body clearly communicates to us that we are no longer in a comfortable state. While individual markers of nervousness may vary, it is a common human characteristic. We all become nervous from time to time, and particularly in certain situations when we are afraid. Although nervousness is an emotional reaction we all experience, it becomes problematic when it begins to interfere with our ability to perform our daily tasks. Normally, we think of nervousness as an individual emotion. But what about nervousness in organizations?

In this book, I contend that social equity, specifically racial equity, is a nervous area of government. Over the course of history, this nervousness has stifled many individuals and organizations, leading to an inability to seriously advance the reduction of racial inequities in government. Until this nervousness is effectively managed, public administration efforts to reduce racial inequities cannot realize their full potential. For public administrators, nervousness or fear of addressing racial inequities within the services a public agency provides is problematic. It interferes significantly with the daily task of public agencies to provide governmental services in ways that align with our guiding democratic principles as set forth in the U.S. Constitution. As days turn into weeks, weeks into years, years into decades, and decades into centuries, the consequences of failing to address this nervous area of government—racial equity in the distribution and provision of services—are compounded in significant ways, with very real societal implications.

Issues of equity and justice are fundamental concerns of public administrators, who constantly struggle to evaluate the country's social climate and ensure equity in governance (Akram 2004). Such evaluation is unlikely to occur in a serious way if organizations are fundamentally too uncomfortable to directly engage the topic. The result is an important, taken for granted but unacknowledged, context of nervousness, which is debilitating to our public sector organizations and thwarting our progress toward achieving racial equity in governance.

A few years ago, I interviewed several senior administrators who were serving on a steering committee designed to examine racial disparities in Wisconsin's welfare program. The work of the steering committee was quite labor intensive, and the subject matter was sensitive. Essentially, a state agency was dissecting the presence of racial disparities in its welfare program. As I proceeded with coding the interviews, I was struck by the number of times respondents used the term "nervous" to express their disposition toward this examination of racial disparities within their agency. Stated directly, one senior administrator said, "Examining racial disparities is a nervous area of government." This book offers a direct examination of this idea and its implications. What is a nervous area of government? How extensive are racial inequities in American society? How is the nervous area of government manifested in individuals and organizations? What can we learn from public sector organizations that are engaging in this nervousness work? What challenges remain in the path ahead? These are the questions that shape the foundation of this book and define its contribution to the field of public administration.

Race and Social Equity: A "Nervous Area of Government"

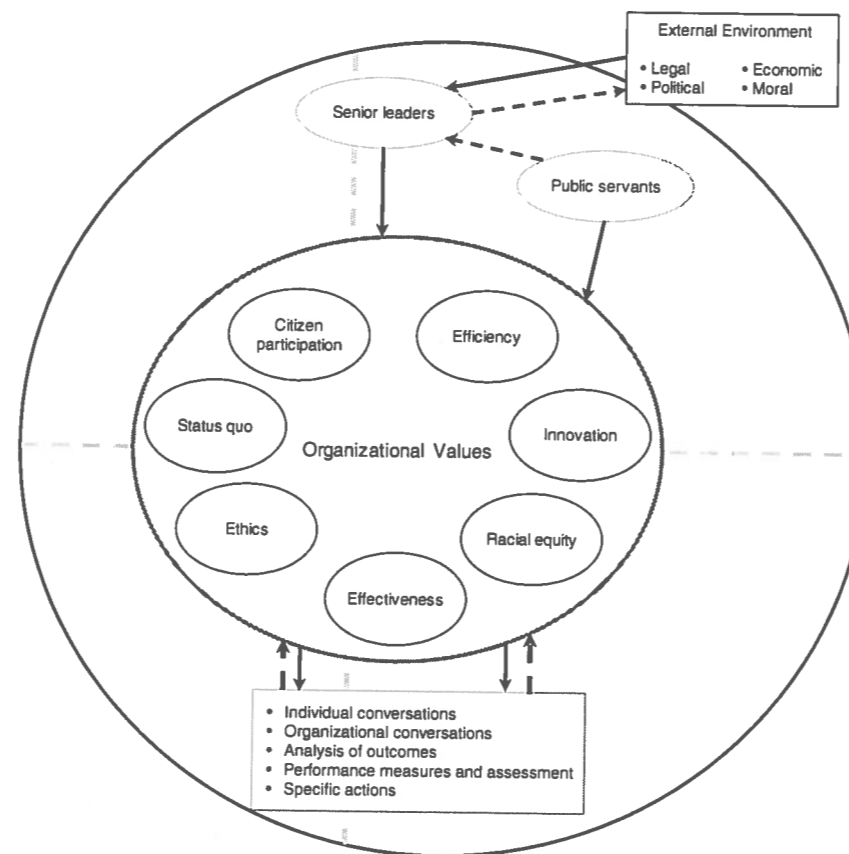
A primary contribution of this book is the introduction of the term "nervousness" into the lexicon of public administration. While the concept of nervousness has not been systematically examined in relationship to public sector organizations, it does have important conceptual lineage. Merton (1952, 364) discusses the "dysfunctions of bureaucracies" in which "the positive attainments and functions of bureaucratic organizations are emphasized and the internal stresses and strains of such structures are almost wholly neglected." Similarly, Merton cautioned against "structural sources of overconformity" where trained incapacity is clearly derived from structural sources (366). In his seminal work discussing dynamics of bureaucracies, Blau (1963) addresses how unofficial norms of groups within bureaucracies can serve as a powerful force toward their acceptance by all members of the group, regardless of individual attitudinal differences; certain behaviors are concealed, particularly if such actions are shameful; questioning provokes hostility and emotional

reactions; myths develop to explain conforming behavior; and ostracism becomes the enforcement penalty for violations of basic norms. Downs (1967) discusses the important concept of "biased" behavior affecting all public administrators. As he conceptualizes it, the four major biases that an official is subject to are (1) distorting the information he passes upward to superiors; (2) exhibiting biased attitudes toward certain policies and alternative actions normally associated with his position; (3) a varying degree of compliance with directives, depending upon which ones he personally favors; and (4) a varying willingness to seek out additional responsibilities and assume risk within his position (77-78).

The conceptualization of racial and social equity, this nervous area of government, is grounded in an extended application of organizational justice. Issues involving organizational justice involve some person or group benefiting or harmed in a manner that is unfair. As Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton (1992, 2) explain, "The justice phenomenon is pervasive in all organizations; however, justice is invisible until attention is focused on it by the experience or perception of injustice." Much of the literature on organizational justice adopts a human resource management perspective that is largely focused on fairness concerns of employees. Such issues include employee recruitment and selection, employee conflict, employee compensation and promotion, and employee layoffs and downsizing (see, for example, Aram and Salipante 1981; Avery and Faley 1988; Clay-Warner, Hegtvedt, and Roman 2005; Ewing 1989; Feuille and Delaney 1992; Folger and Greenberg 1985; Greenberg and McCarty 1990; Tyler and Bies 1990). While these areas are important, understanding the nervous area of government involves an approach to organizational justice that is more systemic. It prioritizes the treatment and experiences of the publics the organization serves. The dominant concern is how the organization provides public justice rather than solely internal, employee justice. Public justice is the larger organizational value within which issues of social equity reside. Although public justice is similar to social equity, the latter is more concerned with the actual delivery of public services, whereas the former is more value-oriented.

As the model in Figure 1.1 depicts, the nervous area of government is conceptualized by a structural approach that includes both internal and external dimensions. Understanding how the organization effectively or ineffectively provides public justice requires an examination of four core areas that operate within a context characterized by nervousness when racial equity is the focus. These four areas are the external environment; senior public administrators; public servants; and organizational values. All of these areas exist within an overall context of nervousness and influence its intensity within an organization.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Model of the Nervous Area of Government



External Environment

Motivators from the external environment often operate as the catalyst for examination of racial equity. Most external motivators originate from a political, legal, economic, or moral trigger. The political area includes racial-equity motivation provided by elected officials, when political candidates are elected on a specific platform or advance a specific racial-equity concern. Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative, discussed in detail in chapter 7, was largely motivated in the political arena by former mayor Greg Nickels.

The legal area includes laws, regulations, court decisions, and/or litigation concerns advanced by advocacy groups. The examination of racial disparities in the sanctioning of welfare clients in Wisconsin (chapter 5) provides such

an example, as it was prompted by a complaint filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Milwaukee Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Economic triggers advance racial-equity issues on an agency's agenda in monetary terms, such as a cost-benefit analysis, return on investment, behavioral incentives based on large funding sources, or improved overall organizational efficiency. As Norman-Major and Wooldridge assert, "A common focal point of research on the economic costs of social equity is the cost of poverty to society" (2011, 213). A Denver study on homelessness, for example, found that "The cost of services comes to about ten thousand dollars per homeless client per year. An efficiency apartment in Denver averages \$376 a month, or just over forty-five hundred a year, which means that you can house and care for a chronically homeless person for at most fifteen thousand dollars, or about a third of what he or she would cost on the street" (Gladwell 2006, 103).

Moral triggers that land racial-equity items on an agency's agenda include grassroots concerns, civic participation, media attention, or larger shifts in societal perspectives that wield organizational pressure. Legislation that was a direct result of the civil rights movement is an example of a moral trigger of racial equity. Within the model, these external triggers gain the attention of senior public administrators within the agency.

Senior Public Administrators

Senior public administrators largely operate as the concentrated source of tangible power within an agency. "Every organization has an individual or set of individuals at the top decision-making level who can exercise power simply by giving orders and making decisions" (Hall 1991, 137). They also control personnel and budgetary assets and their subsequent allocation within the agency. Although related, leadership and power are distinct. Leadership involves "the persuasion of individuals and innovativeness in ideas and decision making that differentiates leadership from the sheer possession of power" (137). As Selznick (1957) noted, the critical tasks of leadership involve four important tasks: definition of the institutional mission and role; institutional embodiment of purpose (e.g., deciding how the organization will use the means to achieve the desired ends); defense of the organization's integrity (which involves a mixture of organizational values and public relations); and provision of order to internal conflict (among individual employees or subgroups of employees).

Specific to racial equity, senior public administrators communicate important messages and allocate resources that influence the overall value of public justice and the administration of social equity. They operate as impor-

tant translators of the external racial-equity triggers. Their actions influence nervousness intensity and largely determine the acceptable "racial analysis" boundaries within the agency.

Public Servants

Public servants include the bulk of the agency's employees—frontline staff, managers, and midlevel supervisors. In particular, actions of public servants involve daily implementation decisions that affect life-chances of the clients they serve and establish patterns of routine and service with important racial-equity consequences. As Lipsky explains, "They socialize clients to expectations of government services and a place in the political community. They determine the eligibility of citizens for government benefits and sanctions. They oversee the treatment (the service) clients receive in those programs. Thus, in a sense street-level bureaucrats implicitly mediate aspects of the constitutional relationship of citizens to the state. In short, they hold the keys to a dimension of citizenship" (1980, 4).

Policemen decide who to arrest and whose behavior to overlook. Judges decide who shall receive a suspended sentence and who shall receive maximum punishment. Teachers decide who will be suspended and who will remain in school, and they make subtle determinations about who is teachable. Perhaps the most highly refined example of street-level bureaucratic discretion comes from the field of corrections. Prison guards conventionally file injurious reports on inmates whom they judge to be guilty of "silent insolence." Clearly what does or does not constitute a dirty look is a matter of some subjectivity. This is not to say that street-level workers are unrestrained by rules, regulations, and directives from above, or by the norms and practices of their occupational group . . . [however] professionals are expected to exercise discretionary judgment in their field. They are regularly deferred to in their specialized areas of work and are relatively free from supervision by superiors or scrutiny by clients. (Lipsky 1980, 13–14)

Racial-equity analysis of patterns of service within an agency is an important dimension of the nervous area of government. It is largely affected by socialization processes within the agency about acceptable and unacceptable behavior. It is both fueled by and provides fuel for core organizational values.

Organizational Values

While the other three identified areas are important factors in understanding the nervous area of government, organizational values are the single most important

factor. All organizations have cultures that largely establish and maintain their hierarchy of values, such as efficiency, effectiveness, quality, citizen participation, and innovation. These values are directly and indirectly communicated within the agency. They define organizational tolerance for racial-equity analysis and its associated acceptable boundaries. These values also affect the elevation and decline of overall nervousness intensity within the organization. The value of public equity largely defines the extent to which racial equity is discussed, administered, advanced, ignored, or evaluated. While racial-equity work can occur through multiple strategies—including, for example, audit studies, statistical analysis, Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping, qualitative assessments of program implementation, and other performance measures—the clear marker of this work is the occurrence of racial-equity conversations within the agency. If racial equity is a clear value of the organization, it is evidenced by related written and verbal communication. (Chapters 3 and 4 examine the nervousness of race talk at individual and organizational levels, respectively.)

The nervous area of government is how an organization considers, examines, promotes, distributes, and evaluates the provision of public justice in areas such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, class, and ability status. This area is "nervous" because examination of such areas has an emotional historical or societal context. It is "of government" because public administrators are responsible for providing services to the public at large, which includes minority groups in each of these areas. It is also "of government" because agencies have both a historical and present-day record in how equitably their services have been provided to these groups. The degree to which this record is open for internal as well as public examination and discussion is also influenced by nervousness.

Additionally, the nervous area of government operates largely on a continuum. When the nervousness intensity is low, this typically signals that the organization is very minimally engaged in these topics as it delivers public services. When the nervousness intensity is high, this usually is a sign that the organization is in the early stages of engaging in these types of analysis. It is a new area of focus for the organization or one that has not recently been seriously considered. While high intensity is expected, especially in the initial stages as the culture of the organization is changing, it cannot be sustained for years. Either it will be ineffectively managed, and the organization will largely return to a low-intensity state; or it will be effectively managed, and the organization will operate in a moderate-intensity state. Moderate intensity is desirable over the long term, because racial-equity analysis remains a vital component of the organization's core values, but it is also a level that facilitates productive and effective delivery of equity in the provision of public services.

Why Focus on Race?

Issues of social equity are not exclusive to race. Gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and disability embody important social-equity dimensions as well. The premise of this book is not to engage in oppression olympics by ranking group inequities relative to one other. Rather, it conceptualizes the idea of a nervous area of government by focusing on the specific area of race. Race and social equity is best understood as *a* nervous area of government, not *the* nervous area of government.

However, the racial-equity component within social equity produces considerable nervousness, which is why this book focuses exclusively on race. Examining issues of race is fundamental to understanding important shortcomings in America's philosophical commitment to justice. In delivering his famous speech, "To the Nations of the World," W. E. B. Du Bois poignantly stated, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the question as to how far differences of race—which show themselves chiefly in the color of the skin and the texture of the hair—will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization" (1900, 85).

Racial inequality remains a fundamental concern today.

Nearly a century and a half after the destruction of the institution of slavery, and a half-century past the dawn of the civil rights movement, social life in the United States continues to be characterized by significant racial stratification. Numerous indices of wellbeing—wages, unemployment rates, income and wealth levels, ability test scores, prison enrollment and crime victimization rates, health and mortality statistics—all reveal substantial racial disparities. (Loury 2002, 4)

All of these areas are shaped or influenced by public administration.

Throughout this book, I employ Loury's definition of race: "a cluster of inheritable bodily markings carried by a largely endogamous group of individuals, markings that can be observed by others with ease, that can be changed or misrepresented only with great difficulty, and that have come to be invested in a particular society as a given historical movement with social meaning" (2002, 20–21). As he further explains, "What is 'essential' here is that these physical traits are taken to signify something of import within a historical context" (21).

It is important to attend to racial stigma in American political culture because, in general, people do not freely give the presumption of equal

humanity. Only philosophers do that, and may God love them! But the rest of us tend to ration the extent to which we will presume an equal humanity of our fellows. One cannot necessarily count on getting the benefit of that presumption. So in an industrial society of nearly three hundred million people with a history going back centuries, what happens when tens of millions of those people cannot in every situation of moral reflection and significant public deliberation rely upon being extended the presumption of equal humanity? (Loury 2002, 87)

Historical and contemporary racial disparities are grounded in structural racism. The concept of structural racism was largely developed by John A. Powell and researchers from the Kirwan Institute, the Applied Research Center, the Harvard Civil Rights Project, the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, the Institute for Race and Poverty, and the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity. Structural racism

refers to the many factors that work to produce and maintain racial inequities in America today. It identifies aspects of our history and culture that have allowed the privileges associated with "whiteness" and the disadvantages associated with "color" to endure and adapt within the political economy over time. It also points out the ways in which public policies, institutional practices, and cultural representations reproduce racially inequitable outcomes. (Aspen Institute, 1)

Structural racism research involves "a cross section of academics, advocates, practitioners, civil rights leaders and social policy analysts to highlight current racial disparities, explain why race continues to be such a potent predictor of socioeconomic well-being, and identify the implications for policy and practice" (Kubisch 2006, 1).

Structural racism is largely concerned with "discrimination in contract" as opposed to "discrimination in contact." Discrimination in contact refers to "the unequal treatment of otherwise like persons on the basis of race in the execution of formal transactions—the buying and selling of goods and services, for instance, or interactions with organized bureaucracies, public and private" (Loury 2002, 95). Discrimination in contract is the standardization of racial bias through public and private structures. Comparatively, discrimination in contact refers to "the unequal treatment of persons on the basis of race in the associations and relationships that are formed among individuals in social life, including the choice of social intimates, neighbors, friends, heroes, and villains. It involves discrimination in the informal, private spheres of life" (Loury 2002, 96).

Analyzing discrimination in contact involves understanding five dominant contexts that embody structural racism As explained by Kubisch (2006, 3):

1. The values context that allows Americans to operate with the mindset that we live in an equal opportunity nation, where everyone has a chance for self-improvement and where lack of success is due to flaws in individual ability and effort.
2. The knowledge context that normalizes racial inequities and allows Americans to accept statistics about disproportionality in, for example, the educational or criminal justice systems as “just the way things are.”
3. The cultural context that permits racialized images and stereotypes to persist in the media.
4. The psychological context that reinforces a sense of entitlement on the part of the white population and a sense of “non-entitlement” and low societal expectations on the part of people of color.
5. The political context in which power is exercised in ways that sustain white privilege.

Structural racism expands upon institutional racism by recognizing the cumulative effects of social inequity across organizations that compound and reinforce one another in particularly real ways. By comparison, “Institutional racism can be prescribed by formal rules but depends, minimally, on organizational cultures that tolerate such behaviors. Racist institutional decisions neither require nor preclude the participation of racist individuals” (Grant-Thomas and Powell 2006, 4). While structural racism is similar to institutional racism in that individual racial attitudes are not the target, it offers a more expansive framework. As Grant-Thomas and Powell (2006) explain,

The [institutional racism] framework fails to account for the ways in which the joint operations of social institutions produce important outcomes. This is a crucial gap, for it is often the interaction between institutions, rather than the operation of each in isolation, that generates racial group disparities. . . . Structural racism emphasizes the powerful impact of inter-institutional dynamics, institutional resource inequities, and historical legacies on racial inequalities today. (2006, 4)

A fundamental approach within structural racism is that any systematic, intentional promotion of racial equity must include race-conscious action. In particular, color-blind approaches to issues of race are ineffective.

It implies, for example, than an end to formal discrimination against blacks in this post-civil rights era should in no way foreclose a vigorous public discussion about racial justice. More subtly, elevating racial equality above race-blindness as a normative concern inclines us to think critically, and with greater nuance, about the value of race-blindness. . . . It obscures from view the most vital matter at stake in the contemporary debate on race and social equity—whether public purposes formulated explicitly in racial terms (that is, violating race-indifference) are morally legitimate, or even morally required. (Loury 2002, 139–40)

Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres offer a similar assessment: “We concluded that the colorblind paradigm has led to paralysis rather than action” (2002, 37). They further write, “[W]e argue, as a practical matter, that it is impossible to be colorblind in a world as color-conscious as ours. Moreover, efforts to be colorblind are undesirable because they inhibit racialized minorities from struggling against their marginalized status” (2002, 42). As Bonilla-Silva explains,

Much as Jim Crow racism served as the glue for defending a brutal and overt system of racial oppression in the pre-Civil Rights era, color-blind racism serves today as the ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post-Civil Rights era. And the beauty of this new ideology is that it aids in the maintenance of white privilege without fanfare, without naming those who it subjects and those who it rewards. (2003, 3–4)

In essence, “ideological colorblindness inhibits the kind of democratic engagement necessary for confronting some of the most deeply entrenched problems facing our society” (Guinier and Torres 2002, 37). Addressing these entrenched inequities requires public administrators to directly confront the nervous area of government.

Social Equity, Public Administration, and Notions of American Democracy

Social equity is directly related to the democratic principle of justice. It is the concept of fairness applied to all, not just select groups. In some instances, achieving justice requires treating everyone the same; in other cases it means treating groups differently based upon current and/or past inequities. The implementation of justice is context-based—determining what is fair is dependent upon understanding a complex array of historical, political, and social factors. “The ‘social’ aspect of equity means that public administrators are

particularly attentive to differences in fairness and justice based on important social characteristics” (Johnson and Svara 2011, 17).

It is important for public administrators to deliver public services in fair and just ways. This idea is rarely opposed in principle; however, implementation has often fallen short. “Despite the long-standing commitment to fairness as an administrative principle, administrators must be humbled by the realizations that they contributed to the discrepancy and in many places helped to institute inequality in the past by enforcing discriminatory laws and using their broad discretion to advance exclusionary social mores” (Smith 2002).

Although specific definitions of social equity vary somewhat, they all share a common core of justice and fairness. H. George Frederickson (1974) identifies several specific considerations of social equity as:

1. The basis for a just democratic society,
2. Influencing the behavior of organizational man,
3. The legal basis for distributing public services,
4. The practical basis for distributing public services,
5. Understood in compound federalism, and
6. A challenge for research and analysis.

Shafritz and Russell define social equity as: “Fairness in the delivery of public services; it is egalitarianism in action—the principle that each citizen, regardless of economic resources or personal traits, deserves and has a right to be given equal treatment by the political system” (2002, 395).

In 2000, the National Academy of Public Administration’s Board of Trustees authorized a Standing Panel on Social Equity. This panel defined social equity as “[t]he fair, just, and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract, and the fair and equitable distribution of public services, and implementation of public policy, and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy” (National Academy of Public Administration 2000).

This same panel developed four criteria for measuring equity: procedural fairness, access, quality, and outcomes.

Procedural fairness involves the examination of problems or issues of procedural rights (due process), treatment in a procedural sense (equal protection), and the application of eligibility criteria (equal rights) for existing policies and programs. . . . Practices such as failure to provide due process before relocating low-income families as part of an urban renewal project, using racial profiling to identify suspects, or unfairly denying benefits to a person who meets eligibility criteria all raise obvious equity issues.

Access—distributional equity—involves a review of current policies, services, and practices to determine the level of access to services/benefits and analysis of reasons for unequal access. . . . Equity can be examined empirically—do all persons receive the same service and the same quality of service (as opposed to the procedural question of whether all are treated the same according to distributional standards in an existing program or service)—or normatively—should there be a policy commitment to providing the same level of service to all?

Quality—process equity—involves a review of the level of consistency in the quality of existing services delivered to groups and individuals. . . . For example, is garbage pickup the same in quality, extent of spillage or missed cans, in all neighborhoods? Do children in inner-city schools have teachers with the same qualifications as those in suburban schools?

Outcomes involve an examination of whether policies and programs have the same impact for all groups and individuals served. Regardless of the approach to distribution and the consistency of quality, there is not necessarily a commitment to an equal level of accomplishment or outcomes. . . . Equal results equity might conceivably require that resources be allocated until the same results are achieved . . . a critical issue in consideration of equity at this level is how much inequality is acceptable and to what extent government can and should intervene to reduce the inequality in results. (Johnson and Svara 2011, 20–22)

Although the concept of equity can be traced back centuries to Aristotle and Plato, Rutledge (2002) points out that a specific focus on social equity within public administration began in earnest in the 1960s.

My scholarly friends in the profession can trace our current thoughts and dilemmas around social equity back to Aristotle and Plato. Others would stop at Woodrow Wilson’s seminal writings on the study of public administration. But in my own mind, I trace the “invention” of social equity as a practical tool in public administration to the Minnowbrook conferences convened by Dwight Waldo, George Frederickson, and a group of young Turks in the 1960s. (Rutledge 2002)

Against the national 1960s context focused on civil rights, racial inequality, and injustice, the young Minnows noted: “A government built on a Constitution claiming the equal protection of the laws had failed in that promise. Public administrators, who daily operate the government, were not without responsibility” (Frederickson 1990, 228). Reflecting in 2005, Frederickson recalled, “It was during the 1960s that it became increasingly evident that

the results of governmental policy and the work of public administrators implementing those policies were much better for some citizens than for others" (2005, 31).

As Wooldridge and Gooden (2009) contend, the Minnowbrook I conference served as the foundational basis of the New Public Administration. Three major works are generally identified with the New Public Administration: Frank Marini's *Toward a New Public Administration* (1971), Dwight Waldo's *Public Administration in a Time of Turbulence* (1971), and a 1971 article titled "Creating Tomorrow's Public Administration" (Frederickson 1980). The New Public Administration rejected the idea that administrators are value neutral and recognized a constellation of five normative core values that, although legitimate, can often be conflictual. These values are responsiveness, worker and citizen participation in decision making, social equity, citizen choice, and administrative responsibility (Frederickson 1980). "A primary managerial means to achieve social equity includes a managerial commitment to the principle that majority rule does not overturn minority *rights* to equal public services" (Frederickson 1980, 47, emphasis in original). The link between the New Public Administration and social equity is so strong that Shafritz and Russell define the New Public Administration as: "An academic advocacy movement for social equity in the performance and delivery of public service; it called for a proactive administrator with a burning desire for social equity to replace the traditional impersonal and neutral gun-for-hire bureaucrat" (2002, 466).

Frederickson (1990) wrote that he developed the theory of social equity in the late 1960s to remedy a glaring inadequacy in both thought and practice. He suggested that this concept should be a "third pillar" for public administrators, a concept that holds the same status as economy and efficiency values to which public administrators should adhere. As Frederickson explained, "It is time for public administrators of all kinds to ask the so called second question. The first question is whether an existing public program or proposed program is effective or good. The second question is more important. For whom is this program effective or good?" (2005, 36).

The answer to Frederickson's second question requires consideration of how opportunity is structured in the United States. Social structures, including public bureaucracies, are important transmitters of opportunity. "[They] promote racially inequitable distributions of social, political and economic goods and services even in the absence of avowed 'racists,' even absent self-sabotaging behavior by racial minorities, and notwithstanding the play of macroeconomic, cultural and other large-scale factors. Any promising attempt to dismantle the underpinning of durable racial inequality must account for structural dynamics" (Grant-Thomas and Powell 2006, 4).

There is a troubling disconnect between how terms like "opportunity" and "success" are conceptualized and how they operate in practice. Consider, for example, the American Dream. As Hochschild (1995) explains, the American Dream consists of fundamental tenets about achieving success (general defined as the attainment of a high income, a prestigious job, economic security). Success can be absolute, meaning a threshold of well-being is reached; success can be relative, meaning being better off than a comparison point; or success can be competitive, meaning achieving victory over someone else.

The premise of the American Dream rests on several tenets, including: (1) there is an equal opportunity to participate and the ability to start over; (2) there is a reasonable anticipation of success; and (3) success is under one's individual control. "The first tenet, that everyone can participate equally and can always start over, is troubling to the degree that it is not true. . . . For most of American history, women of any race and men who were Native American, Asian, black or poor were barred from all but a narrow range of 'electable futures'" (Hochschild 1995, 26). Fulfillment of the second tenet requires "enough resources and opportunities that everyone has a reasonable chance of having some expectations met" (27). The third tenet directly stipulates success as controlled by individual actions and behaviors. "Americans who do everything they can and still fail may come to understand that effort and talent alone do not guarantee success. But they have a hard time persuading others. After all, they are losers—why listen to them? Will we not benefit more by listening to winners (who seldom challenge the premise that effort and talent breed success)?" (30). Certainly, in the research realm, there have been studies ad nauseam on individual deficits and ineffective behaviors. By comparison, the larger structures in which these policies operate are far less frequently analyzed. The individual approach leads "one to focus on people's behaviors rather than on economic processes, environmental constraints, or political structures, as the causal explanation for social orderings" (36). Employing a structural approach requires us to first acknowledge and understand the nervous area of government, which is the focus of this book.

Conclusion

This book is presented by first examining the intersection of race and social equity in public administration, as well as the saturation of racial inequities in the United States. It then applies the concept of nervousness in an individual and organizational basis. I contend that social equity is a nervous area of government, especially where issues of race are concerned. Further, I argue

that organizational nervousness needs to be effectively managed in order for governmental agencies to proactively address social inequities.

Through an examination of contemporary examples at the federal, state, and local level, the book profiles organizations that are directly operating in the nervous area of government. Their approaches provide useful insight for how organizations may begin to effectively undertake this work. Akin to nervousness in individuals, nervousness in organizations cannot be completely eliminated, but it can be significantly reduced. It also considers the role of (and the increased need for) accountability and performance measures in assessing organizational progress.

Finally, the book examines other important contexts for understanding the nervous area of government, including public administration programs as well as comparative, global challenges. It concludes by presenting core principles to equip public administrators to better navigate the nervous area of government.

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2 THE SATURATION OF RACIAL INEQUITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

. . . the path to a more perfect union means acknowledging that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination—and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past—are real and must be addressed.

—Barack Obama (2008)

Racial inequities are an enduring characteristic of the United States. These inequities are profound, systemic, segregated, and cumulative. Public administrators and public agencies are at least partially responsible for the development and maintenance of these inequities. The historical and present-day impact of racial inequities is indirectly affected by actions of the public sector. All public policies involve the distribution of resources. The details of how these resources are distributed, and to whom, are significant and critical to understanding the legacy of social inequity in the United States. Public policies affect nearly every aspect of our lives—tax, education, transportation, criminal justice, housing, agriculture, economic policies—all involve distribution of resources for some and the lack of their distribution to others. Likewise, the administration of these policies also involves the distribution of penalties and sanctions to some, but not to others.

As Stone reminds us, “Every policy involves the distribution of something. There wouldn’t be a policy conflict if there were not some advantage to protect or some loss to prevent. Sometimes the things being distributed are material and countable, such as money, taxes, or houses. Sometimes they are a bit less tangible, such as the chances of serving in the army, getting sick, being a victim of crime, or being selected for public office. But always, policy issues involve distribution” (1997, 55). Delivery of policies involves answering three fundamental questions: “First, who are the recipients and what are the many ways of defining them? Second, what is being distributed and what are the many ways of defining it? And, third, what are the social processes by which distribution is determined?” (1997, 55). The answers to

these questions are shaped, at least in part, by public administrators. As Stone also notes, “distributions do not happen by magic. They are carried out by real people taking real actions, not by invisible hands” (1997, 54). In terms of governmental policies, these real people are public administrators or their authorized private sector contractors.

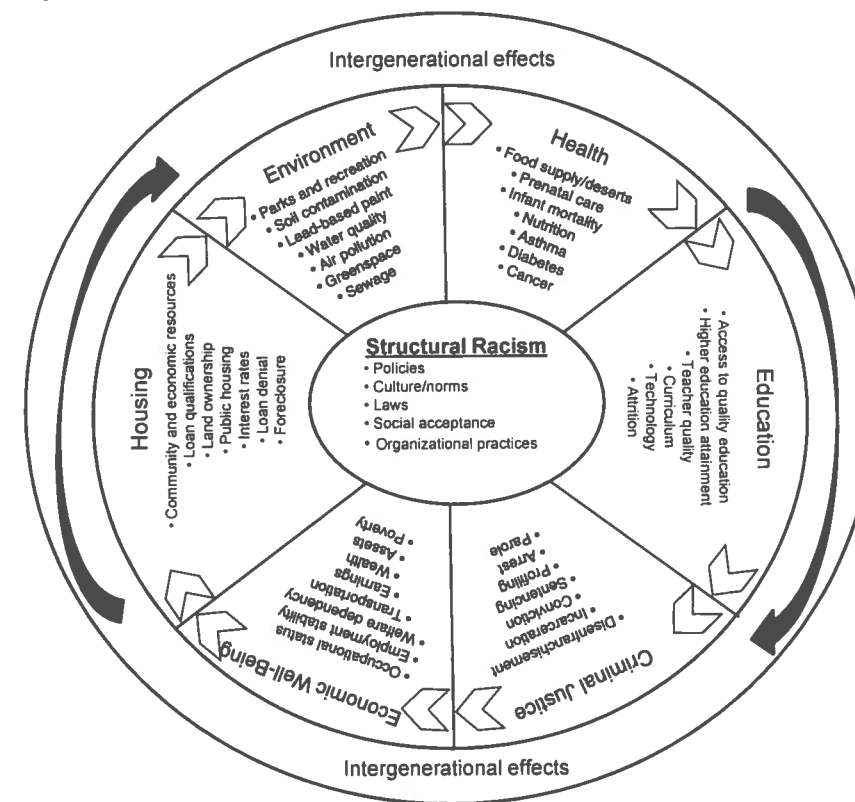
As Figure 2.1 depicts, racial inequities in the United States are saturated. This means the pattern of racial distribution is mutually compounding and permeates multiple aspects of public policies that significantly affect one’s life chances. Environmental inequities affect health inequities, which affect educational inequities, and so forth. These inequities compound in predictable patterns and are maintained from generation to generation. Although their severity may decrease over time, as overall societal conditions improve, significant racial disparities are maintained. For example, although Jim Crow laws have ended, they are replaced by covert laws and practices that maintain racial disparities. Importantly, while pockets of a racial group, such as the very wealthy, may be minimally affected by these racial inequities, the general pattern holds for the racial group at large.

This chapter highlights three of the public policy areas depicted in Figure 2.1: housing, education, and the environment. The intent is not to provide a detailed history or analysis of each of these policy areas and their racial inequities, but rather to briefly highlight examples of the structural inequities that undergird present-day development and delivery of U.S. policy in each of these contexts. While these policy areas are often considered in isolation, there are important cumulative racial-inequity effects, resulting in a saturation of racial inequities across a myriad of public policies. This saturation permeates both within and across various policy contexts, resulting in a conditional structure of racial inequities. A conditional structure is particularly disconcerting because problems are solved; conditions are tolerated. Many of the racial inequities are so widespread that their existence is paradoxically viewed as normal. Because these trends constitute conditions, rather than problems, they often blend into the fabric of everyday life. These saturation conditions become accepted by elected officials, public administrators, researchers, and the public at large as a descriptive characteristic of American life, as opposed to a legitimate societal crisis.

Housing

For most Americans, housing is an important asset. It is a key factor in the determination of wealth and overall family well-being. In addition to the benefits to housing in terms of individual assets and wealth, access to safe neighborhoods, social capital, health care, employment, public safety

Figure 2.1 Saturation of Racial Inequities



services, quality public schools, healthy foods, and transportation are all affected by the community in which one resides. Oliver and Shapiro (1995) argue that federal policies, including housing subsidy and finance programs, have promoted home ownership, land acquisition, and asset accumulation for whites but not for blacks. Other researchers have discussed racial inequities in the effects of public housing site selection and tenant selection (Bratt 1986; Keating 1994; Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993), and government home mortgage programs of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veterans Administration (Feagin 1994; Massey and Denton 1993). There is clear evidence, historically and in the research literature, that whites have been the overwhelming beneficiaries of federal housing programs compared to minorities, especially African Americans (Bonilla-Silva 1996; Galster 1999; Gotham 2000; Omi and Winant 1986; Quadagno 1994; Squires 2003; Winant 1994; Yinger 1995).

Government action in housing dates back to at least the early 1900s. With the goal of investigating and assisting in housing opportunities for the poor, by 1910 most large cities in the United States had implemented some sort of housing reform legislation (Axinn and Stern 2005). After the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal moved to preserve the concept of private property. "The one thousand homeowners threatened with foreclosure each month in 1933 were helped to refinance their mortgages through the Home Owners Loan Corporation, established in June 1933. The home construction industry, almost at a standstill in 1933, was revived through the Federal Housing Administration, which insured loans for home repairs and mortgages for new houses" (Axinn and Stern 2005, 178). The National Housing Act of 1934 authorized low down payments, set up extended loan maturities (with a maximum of 40 years), and regulated interest rates designed to ensure that working-class families could afford mortgage payments. This Act also established the Federal Housing Administration, designed to insure lending institutions against loan defaults. "The FHA was to behave like a conservative bank, only insuring mortgages that were 'economically sound.' In practice, economic soundness was translated into 'redlining': a red line was literally drawn around areas of cities considered risky for economic *or* racial reasons" (Quadagno 1994, 23, emphasis in original). FHA administrators were instructed per the agency's *Underwriting Manual* not to insure mortgages unless they were located in racially homogenous white neighborhoods (U.S. Federal Housing Administration 1936, 1938, 1946, 1952). "As late as 1977, private appraising manuals still contained listing of ethnic groups ranked in descending order from those who are most desirable to those who have the most adverse effect on property values. Whites were ranked at the top of the list while African Americans and Mexican Americans were ranked at the very bottom" (Missouri Housing Development Commission, August 1977, as cited in Gotham 2000, 19).

"Until 1949 the FHA also encouraged the use of restrictive covenants banning African Americans from given neighborhoods and refused to insure mortgages in integrated neighborhoods" (Quadagno 1994, 23–24). "Insurance is critical, or in the industry's term 'essential.' If a potential homebuyer cannot obtain a property insurance policy, no lender can provide a mortgage" (Squires 2003, 392). On the rental side, from the outset, public housing authorities located housing projects in racially segregated neighborhoods and selected tenants by race (Peel, Pickett, and Buehl 1970, 63–64). The governmentally supported housing patterns in the United States were intentionally designed to promote racial inequality. "From the New Deal to the 1960s, federal housing policy encouraged private home ownership for white families but not black families. Instead, federal policy reinforced barriers to residential choice erected

by builders, money lenders, and realtors. Housing barriers not only relegated minorities to racially segregated housing but also virtually ensured that the quality of housing open to them was inferior" (Quadagno 1994, 89).

As part of civil rights legislation, beginning with the Fair Housing Act of 1968, there has been significant and important federal legislation related to fair housing. Table 2.1 provides an overview of such policies. As Galster summarized, the core fair housing goals include "the elimination of differential treatment, which discriminates on the basis of race; the creation of stable, racially diverse neighborhoods, and the reduction of ghettos occupied by poor minority households" (1999, 123).

Yet, discrimination in housing still actively persists. This includes differential treatment, where housing agents apply a different set of rules or practices when dealing with a minority, as well as adverse impacts, where a public policy or practice is applied evenhandedly to all races but results in disproportionately unjustifiable negative consequences for minorities (Schwemm 1992; Yinger 1995, 1998). This is particularly true in the area of Section 8 housing, mortgage loans, and racial profiling in insurance or insurance redlining.

As detailed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's website, "The housing choice voucher program [Section 8] is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. The participant is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects." Beck's analysis of Section 8 housing found blatant, open discrimination revealed by landlords. "Landlords blatantly discriminate against Section 8. They told me plain and simple they don't take Section 8; that's their policy" (1996, 3). Beck concludes, "As experience with the FHA demonstrates, the reality of enforcement is often far from ideal. The source of the well-documented ineffectiveness of the FHA in alleviating housing discrimination lies in its enforcement provisions and the lack of vigilance with which those provisions have been employed, not in the classes it protects or the types of discrimination it prohibits . . . even though an estimated two million incidents of housing discrimination occur each year, only about 400 fair housing cases were decided between 1986 and 1993" (13). Ultimately, Beck concludes, "A statute that affects only selected actors cannot accomplish the 'shaping [of] collected behavior' essential to eliminating discrimination" (13). In essence, landlords continue to discriminate because they recognize there is little risk associated with doing so.

Fair Housing Laws and Presidential Executive Orders

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|---|---|
| The Fair Housing Laws Fair Housing Act | Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), as amended, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, and people securing custody of children under the age of 18), and handicap (disability). |
| Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 | Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. |
| Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 | Section 504 prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. |
| Section 109 of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 | Section 109 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or religion in programs and activities receiving financial assistance from HUD's Community Development and Block Grant Program. |
| Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 | Title II prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs, services, and activities provided or made available by public entities. HUD enforces Title II when it relates to state and local public housing, housing assistance, and housing referrals. |
| Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 | The Architectural Barriers Act requires that buildings and facilities designed, constructed, altered, or leased with certain federal funds after September 1969 must be accessible to and usable by handicapped persons. |
| Age Discrimination Act of 1975 | The Age Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. |
| Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 | Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance. |

Fair Housing-Related Presidential Executive Orders

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|-----------------------|--|
| Executive Order 11063 | Executive Order 11063 prohibits discrimination in the sale, leasing, rental, or other disposition of properties and facilities owned or operated by the federal government or provided with federal funds. |
| Executive Order 11246 | Executive Order 11246, as amended, bars discrimination in federal employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. |
| Executive Order 12892 | Executive Order 12892, as amended, requires federal agencies to affirmatively further fair housing in their programs and activities, and provides that the secretary of HUD will be responsible for coordinating the effort. The order also establishes the President's Fair Housing Council, which will be chaired by the secretary of HUD. |
| Executive Order 12898 | Executive Order 12898 requires that each federal agency conduct its program, policies, and activities that substantially affect human health or the environment in a manner that does not exclude persons based on race, color, or national origin. |
| Executive Order 13166 | Executive Order 13166 eliminates, to the extent possible, limited English proficiency as a barrier to full and meaningful participation by beneficiaries in all federally assisted and federally conducted programs and activities. |
| Executive Order 13217 | Executive Order 13217 requires federal agencies to evaluate their policies and programs to determine if any can be revised or modified to improve the availability of community-based living arrangements for persons with disabilities. |

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2012.

In regard to mortgage loans for the middle class, statistical research found that high minority denial rates across the United States persist, even when legitimate financial factors were controlled (Schafer and Ladd 1981). These findings were reaffirmed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's analysis of more than 3,000 mortgage loan underwriting decisions by 131 Boston-area banks, savings and loans, mortgage companies, and credit unions in 1991. Their analysis found that African Americans and Hispanics were 60 percent more likely to be denied, even after controlling for differences in down payments and credit histories (Munnell et al. 1996).

Gotham concludes, "the various economic and political dimensions of housing-related activities have been conducted through an organized and interconnected system of racial discrimination." He further explains, "As decades of research on housing and real estate have revealed, racial discrimination has been, and continues to be, an institutionalized and persistent feature of the housing industry that cuts across a variety of public agencies, private firms, and includes landlords, homeowners, bankers, real estate agents and government officials . . . informal patterns and institutional mechanisms of housing discrimination remain a persistent and undeniable characteristic of American society" (Gotham 2000, 17).

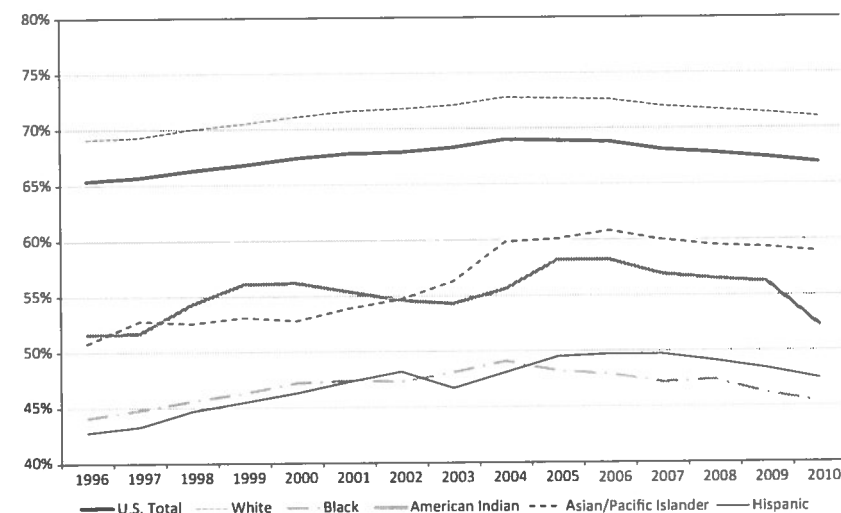
As Figure 2.2 reports, there are significant and enduring differences in home ownership rates by race and ethnicity. In 1996, 69.1 percent of whites owned a home; compared with 44.1 percent of blacks, 51.6 percent of American Indians, 50.8 percent of Asians, and 42.8 percent of Hispanics. In 2010, a similar pattern remains with 71 percent of whites owning a home, compared with 45.4 percent of blacks, 52.3 percent of American Indians, 58.9 percent of Asians, and 47.5 percent of Hispanics.

Education

Education is a very important factor in understanding social inequities. There is a consistently positive association between education and economic well-being. As Frederickson notes, "American public education has always been about educational achievement on the one hand, and educational opportunity, on the other. Educational achievement has to do with student and teacher merit, quality, grades, advancement, capability, performance, and work. Educational opportunity has to do with justice, fairness, and an equal chance for students and their families" (2010, 113).

In many ways, higher educational achievement is viewed as the most promising investment to counter racial discrimination. Much has been written about racial inequities, segregation, and resegregation in the United States. Access to education is deeply rooted in structural racial disparities created

Figure 2.2 Home Ownership Rates by Race and Ethnicity of Householder



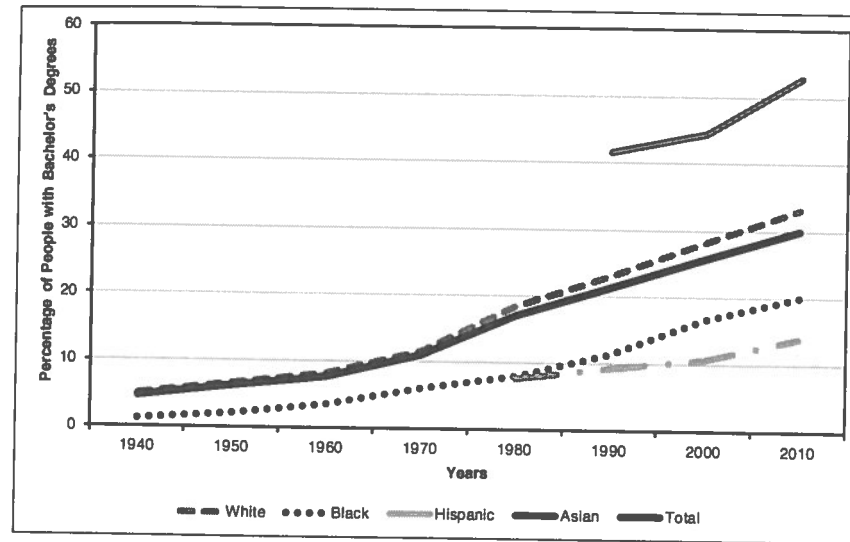
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012.

by government. For example, the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1892 was based on a government-funded system of higher education with stark differences in the allocations awarded to white colleges versus black colleges. The federal government entrusted these funding-allocation decisions to state governments, resulting in white colleges' receiving much more than half of the land-grant funding when it was divided, in addition to the state funding that already favored white colleges (Preer 1990). These allocation formulas remain important in understanding the context of performance differences in historically black and historically white land-grant colleges today.

The landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, was squarely focused on equality, ruling that the doctrine of separate but equal was both unequal and unconstitutional. Despite the *Brown* decision, racial inequities in American public education are indisputable (see, for example, Jencks and Phillips 1998; Kozol 1991). Nearly sixty years after *Brown*, the educational achievement gap between white and minority students remains large, and differences in access to quality public education are astounding.

Figure 2.3 provides data from the National Center for Educational Statistics on educational attainment by race. It shows that racial inequities in educational attainment persist over time. In 2010, 34 percent of whites and 50.8 percent of Asians ages twenty-five and above had a college degree, compared to 20.2 percent for blacks and 14.1 percent for Hispanics.

Figure 2.3 Educational Attainment by Race, 1940–2010 (ages 25 and over)



Source: U.S. Department of Education 2011.

While explanations abound that blame minority children and their families for educational inequality, such explanations are not contextualized against important realities. As Darling-Hammond articulates, “Educational outcomes for students of color are much more a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, including skilled teachers, and quality curriculum, than they are a function of race” (2007, 320). For example, a study of California high schools found many high-minority schools so severely overcrowded that they operate using a multitrack schedule offering a shortened school day and school year, lack basic textbooks and materials, do not offer the courses students need for college admission, and are routinely staffed by untrained, inexperienced, and temporary teachers (Oakes and Saunders 2004). In a study of Texas schools, Ferguson (1991) found that the single highest predictor of student achievement gaps was teacher expertise (measured by teacher performance on a state certification exam, along with teacher experience and master’s degrees). When controlling for socioeconomic status, black students’ achievement was comparable to that of whites if they had been assigned equally qualified teachers.

Even more disturbing, however, are the racial disparities in educational payoffs in the labor market. As Lang and Manove (2006) discuss, even when blacks have higher levels of educational attainment and cognitive scores than whites do, they still earn noticeably less. Importantly, some of the black-

white wage differential is not explained by pre-labor market differentials in educational quality, but by different racial treatment in the labor market (Gooden 2000).

However, much of this literature devotes very little attention to the educational experiences of American Indians. Ironically, the first Americans are often researched and discussed last (if at all) in social equity analysis. A similar pattern holds for the public administration literature more generally, with only a few public administrators articulating the need to include tribal governance in public administration studies (Aufrecht 1999; Luton 1999; Ronquillo 2011). As Lomawaima and McCarty assert, “How the U.S. government and its nontribal citizens wrestle with their relationship with tribes lies at the core of the question of whether social justice and democracy can coexist” (2002, 281).

American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are generally designated as Native Americans. An estimated 4.7 million people in the United States—or about 1.5 percent of the U.S. population—self-identify under official Census categories as American Indian or Alaska Native. Of these, 3.3 million people identify as being of single-race Native American ethnicity. Approximately 1.2 million Native Americans reside on Indian reservations (known collectively as “Indian Country”) or in Alaska Native Villages. This leaves approximately 2.1 million of those who identify themselves as single-race American Indian or Alaska Native living outside Indian Country and Alaska Native villages. (Cornell and Kalt 2010, 1)

The enduring racial inequities in the education of American Indians is staggering. American Indian and Alaska Native dropout rates are the lowest among all racial and ethnic groups. Faircloth and Tippeconnic report average graduation rates for American Indians and Alaska Natives of 46.6 percent, compared to 69.8 percent for whites, 54.7 percent for blacks, 77.9 percent for Asians, and 50.8 percent for Hispanics (2010, 12). Although the majority (approximately 92 percent) of Native students attend regular public schools, a significant number (approximately 8 percent) attend schools operated or funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) or by individual tribes (DeVoe and Darling-Churchill 2008).

Much of the history of American Indian policy, including education, involves an important battleground between federal powers and tribal sovereignty. As Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) explain,

Tribes have a singular legal status that both predates and is recognized by the U.S. Constitution. The Commerce Clause delegates the power to Con-

gress “to regulate Commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian tribes” (quoted in Pommersheim 1995, 214, note 40). The Constitution empowers the President to negotiate treaties with foreign nations (ratification requires a two-thirds vote by the Senate); and the formative United States used the treaty process—as did earlier colonial powers—to conduct diplomatic relations with Indian nations (Wilkins and Lomawaima 2001). The statements of the Constitution—coupled with subsequent federal legislation, the bureaucratic rules of the federal agencies charged with supervising Indian affairs, and judicial decisions—have shaped the contours of life in Indian country today. (Lomawaima and McCarty 2002, 284)

Specifically, a 1928 report commissioned by the U.S. secretary of the Interior, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (commonly referenced as the Meriam Report), set the stage for enduring federal government action and behavior in regard to Indian education by advocating a “civilizing” campaign designed to assimilate American Indians into white society and ameliorate American Indian language and culture or afford them with *the unprecedented possibility of maintaining a distinctively Indian life* (Lomawaima and McCarty 2002, 206 emphasis added). “What was unprecedented in their proposal was the idea that Indian people should have the power to make choices and that the federal government should support them in their choices” (Lomawaima and McCarty 2002, 287).

The level of federal government support and investment in Indian communities has been, and continues to be, woefully low. According to data from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2003), per capita federal spending on Indians and Indian Affairs averages \$3,000 per capita, compared to \$4,500 per capital for the United States at large (based on 2000 dollars).

In fact, federal U.S. budget spending on Indian affairs peaked in real dollars in the mid-1970s—approximately coincident with the advent of the major legislation in Congress that made tribal self-determination the core principle of U.S. Indian policy. By the early 2000s, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights labeled the spending levels in Indian Country a “quiet crisis.” The Commission reported that while American Indians were marked by the most severe poverty in America and had suffered treaty violations and other forms of deprivation over the centuries at the hand of the federal government, governmental spending in Indian America was dramatically and disproportionately below levels of funding provided to other groups in the United States and the general U.S. population. (Cornell and Kalt 2010, 9)

As Lomawaima and McCarty explain, “Unlike public school districts funded chiefly by property taxes, reservation schools must rely on congressional appropriations for the majority of their funding. . . . Also, unlike non-reservation public schools, community-controlled schools are independent units that must provide all the services necessary for their operation. The costs of these largely rural schools are significantly higher, yet their financial resources are more limited and volatile than those available to nonreservation public schools” (2002, 293).

Similarly, the educational standards and accountability focus of the twenty-first century is administered in a context that further promotes inequity, with standardized tests containing English-only content and depreciation of Indian culture. “A more basic injustice is a system that bestows educational resources on the privileged, rewards their cultural capital, then consecrates their ensuing advantage with standardized tests. There is nothing democratic about this process. It standardizes inequality and ensures that existing race- and class-based hierarchies are legitimized and reproduced” (Lomawaima and McCarty 2002, 298).

Equity issues in U.S. public education are important and complex. Educational opportunity raises fundamental questions about the equity of financial investments in racial groups, fairness in the allocation of resources, and access to opportunity. Within the American Indian community, the policy of self-determination “has proven to be the only policy that has worked to make significant progress in reversing otherwise distressed social, cultural, and economic conditions in Native communities” (Cornell and Kalt 2010, 5). However, self-determination policies that are embedded in larger inequities defined by inadequate federal funding and white cultural privilege operate from an important structural disadvantage.

Environment

There is a long history of environmental risks and hazards disproportionately affecting racial minorities and the poor (see, for example, Anderson et al. 1994a, 1994b; Been 1993, 1994; Been and Gupta 1997; Bullard 1993; Bullard 1994; Daniels and Friedman 1999; Downey 1998; Faber and Krieg 2001; Krieg 1995; Logan and Molotch 1987; Mohai and Bryant 1992; United Church of Christ 1987; U.S. GAO 1983). During the 1980s, protests from grassroots communities led by people of color and the poor over these blatant environmental racial disparities, coupled with inattention from the mainstream environmental groups in addressing such concerns, resulted in the emergence of an environmental justice movement (Bullard 1994; Cable, Hastings, and Mix 2002). It was founded directly on democratic principles, noting environmental quality as a basic right of all individuals (Bullard 1994).

As Exhibit 2.1 summarizes, there has been significant federal legislation designed to address environmental racism. Despite the passage of significant federal legislation, racial minorities continue to be denied this right due to racism, discrimination, and prejudice, as well as differences in political and influential power among white communities and communities of color. As Krieg explains,

The struggle for control over environmental regulations stems from capital's need to shift costs, negative externalities (resource depletions, pollution) onto third parties. Maximizing cost externalization enables producers of waste to minimize "unproductive" expenses such as waste handling, purchasing environmentally "friendly" technologies, and cleaning up waste sites. In this way, capital's treatment of nature as "tap and sink" is dependent upon social conditions that minimize the monetary risks associated with environmental destruction (the dumping of toxic wastes). It is likely that poor communities and communities of color lacking control capacity provide the social conditions that are conducive to cost externalization. Capital's exploitation of these conditions is made possible by the imbalance of power between communities, a condition that opens the door to social and environmental injustices. (Krieg 1998, 5)

The end result is environmental racism, defined by Fisher as "any policy, practice, or directive that intentionally or unintentionally, differentially impacts or disadvantages individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color; as well as the exclusionary and restrictive practices that limit participation by people of color in decision-making boards, commissions, and staffs" (1995, 290).

Governmental agencies have also contributed to these racial inequities through the location of public facilities, such as sewage facilities and hazardous waste facilities (Greenberg and Cidon 1997; Norton et al. 2007). Also, government agencies have been criticized for their slow response to contaminated communities of color and levying lower fines on businesses that pollute in black communities (Head 1995; Lavelle and Coyle 1992). For example, Lavelle and Coyle (1992) found that penalties issued pursuant to hazardous waste laws at sites having the greatest white population were about 500 percent higher than penalties at sites with the greatest minority population.

Environmental justice scholars call attention to the broad structures that enable racial disparities to persist. Such factors include, for example, the relatively low level of political and economic power among minorities and the poor; the focus on race-blind processes that create and sustain environmental inequities and fail to differentiate real differences confronting minority communities relative to whites; and the employment, housing, and

Exhibit 2.1

Environmental Justice Legislation

Nondiscrimination

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Environmental Justice

It has been the longstanding policy of the Federal Highway Administrations (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to actively ensure nondiscrimination under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in federally funded activities. Under Title VI and related statutes, each federal agency is required to ensure that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, or religion. The Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 clarified the intent of Title VI to include all program and activities of federal-aid recipients, subrecipients, and contractors whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) stressed the importance of providing for "all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically pleasing surroundings" and provided a requirement for taking a "systematic, interdisciplinary approach" to aid in considering environmental and community factors in decision making.

This approach was further emphasized in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970: 23 United States Code 109(h) established further basis for equitable treatment of communities being affected by transportation projects. It requires consideration of the anticipated effects of proposed transportation projects upon residences, businesses, farms, accessibility of public facilities, tax base, and other community resources.

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (PDF, 20KB). The executive order requires that each federal agency shall, to the greatest extent allowed by law, administer and implement its programs, policies, and activities that affect human health or the environment so as to identify and avoid "disproportionately high and adverse" effects on minority and low-income populations.

In April 1997, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued the DOT Order on Environmental Justice to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (DOT Order 5610.2) to summarize and expand upon the requirements of Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. The order generally describes the process for incorporating environmental justice principles into all DOT existing programs, policies, and activities.

In December 1998, the FHWA issued FHWA Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (DOT Order 6640.23) that requires the FHWA to implement the principles of the DOT Order 5610.2 and E.O. 12898 by incorporating environmental justice principles in all FHWA programs, policies and activities.

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation 2013.

community segregation that enables environmental burdens to be inequitably distributed in the first place (Higgins 1993, 287). Mohai and Bryant (1992) identify twelve studies that document both race and income as significant factors in the inequitable distribution of pollution. Ten of the twelve studies assessed the relative importance of race and income, and seven found race to be more important. As Krieg explains, "Associations of minority populations with environmental hazards are not spurious; structural forces bring environmental hazards into contact with working-class and people of color" (1998, 4).

As Exhibit 2.2 conveys environmental racial disparities are well documented. A series of studies by Bullard (1983, 1990; Bullard and Wright 1986) found a pattern of locating urban landfills, incinerators, and polluting industries in minority and low-income neighborhoods. A nationwide study by the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice (1987) found race to be the most significant variable associated with the location of hazardous waste facilities. The U.S. South, which has the highest percentage of African Americans, also has nine of the twelve states with the worst environmental records (Hall and Kerr 1991). Similarly, American Indian communities have been impacted significantly by ongoing poorly regulated uranium mining (Angel 1991). Lopez found that "in every large U.S. metropolitan area of over one million people, Blacks are more likely than Whites to be living in census tracts with higher estimated total air toxic levels" (2002, 289). He further concludes that three factors explain more than half of the variation in the net difference for exposure to air toxics. These factors are black/white poverty levels, percentage employed in manufacturing, and degree of segregation (Lopez 2002, 293).

Minority workers are disproportionately represented in industries with high levels of occupational health risks (Davis and Rowland 1983; Wright 1992). Such industries involve increased exposure to pesticides, cleaning chemicals, exposure to carcinogens, and hepatitis risk in hospital environments, and high exposure to agrichemicals as farm workers. Exposure to environmental risks is particularly strong among Hispanics. "Ambient air pollution, worker exposure to chemicals, indoor air pollution, and drinking water quality are among the top four threats to human health and are all areas in which indicators point to elevated risk in Hispanic populations" (Metzger, Delgado, and Herrell 1995, 25). Wernette and Nieves (1992) found that 80 percent of Hispanics live in an area failing to meet Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality standards, compared to 65 percent of blacks and 57 percent of whites. The proportion of Hispanics who are migrant workers is 95 percent (U.S. Department of Labor 1994). Agricultural workers are particularly at risk for exposure to pesticides, especially workers who mix,

Exhibit 2.2

Environmental Racial Disparities

Facts on Environmental Racism Handout

- I. Excerpts from Robert Bullard, "Environmental Justice for All," *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice & Communities of Color* (Sierra Club Books, 1994).
 - A. The Commission for Racial Justice's landmark study, *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, found race to be the single most important factor (i.e., more important than income, home ownership rate, and property values) in the location of abandoned toxic waste sites. The study also found that:
 1. three out of five African Americans live in communities with abandoned toxic waste sites;
 2. three of the five largest commercial hazardous waste landfills are located in predominantly African American or Latino American communities and account for 40 percent of the nation's total estimated landfill capacity; and
 3. African Americans are heavily overrepresented in the populations of cities with the largest number of abandoned toxic waste sites (pp. 17-18).
 - B. Millions of Americans live in housing and physical environments that are overburdened with environmental problems, including older housing with lead-based paint, congested freeways that crisscross neighborhoods, industries that emit dangerous pollutants into the area, and abandoned toxic waste sites.

Virtually all of the studies of exposure to outdoor air pollution have found significant differences in exposure by income and race. African Americans and Latino Americans are more likely than whites to live in areas with reduced air quality (p. 12).
 - C. A 1992 study by staff writers from the *National Law Journal* uncovered glaring inequities in the way the federal EPA enforces its laws. The authors write:

There is a racial divide in the way the U.S. government cleans up toxic waste sites and punishes polluters. White communities see faster action, better results and stiffer penalties than communities where blacks, Hispanics and other minorities live. This unequal protection often occurs whether the community is wealthy or poor (p. 9).
 - D. After examining census data, civil court dockets, and the EPA's own record of performance at 1,177 Superfund toxic waste sites, the *National Law Journal* report revealed the following:

1. Penalties under hazardous waste laws at sites having the greatest white population were 500 percent higher than penalties with the greatest minority population, averaging \$335,566 for white areas compared to \$55,318 for minority areas.
2. The disparity under the toxic waste law occurs by race alone, not income. The average penalty in areas with lowest income is \$113,491, which is 3 percent more than the average penalty in areas with the highest median incomes.
3. For all the federal environmental laws aimed at protecting citizens from air, water, and wasted pollution, penalties in white communities were 46 percent higher than in minority communities.
4. Under the giant Superfund cleanup program, abandoned hazardous waste sites in minority areas take 20 percent longer to be placed on the national priority list than those in white areas.

II. Vital Statistics from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

1. African American children are five times more likely to suffer from lead poisoning than white children, and 22 percent of African American children living in older housing are lead poisoned.
2. An estimated 50 percent of African Americans and 60 percent of Hispanics live in a county in which levels of two or more air pollutants exceed governmental standards.
3. Communities with the greatest number of commercial hazardous waste facilities have some of the highest proportions of minority residents.
4. Half of all Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indians live in communities with uncontrolled toxic waste sites.
5. Communities with existing incinerators have 89 percent more minorities than the national average.
6. African Americans are heavily overrepresented in cities with the largest number of abandoned toxic waste sites, such as Memphis, St. Louis, Houston, Cleveland, Chicago, and Atlanta.

Source: Race: The Power of Illusion. www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-teachers-02.htm.

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load, and apply such chemicals (Moses 1993). Exposure to lead, linked to a host of health concerns in children including learning disabilities, central nervous system damage, and functioning of blood cells, is more pronounced in Hispanic communities that are more likely to rent older homes or apartments that may contain antiquated lead plumbing (Olson 1993).

Higgins (1993) summarizes the cumulative institutional effect of environmental exposures on racial minorities:

In sum, the total environmental impact on the life chances of a low income person of color might be expressed thusly; as a child, one faces elevated risks of lead poisoning and chemical or radiation exposure in the home, risks that reflect in part the working environments of one's parents; at home and in the community, this growing child faces a disproportionate risk of exposure to pollutants from solid and toxic waste generators, landfills, incinerators, and illegal dumps. Having located work in a situation of high minority unemployment, the young adult may spend a lifetime segregated into jobs and industries with high levels of occupational health risks. The health impacts of these conditions in turn are magnified by lower likelihood of adequate health care throughout one's life and by other stresses of limited income security. (Higgins 1993, 284–85)

Conclusion

Racial inequities in the United States are largely saturated because they are cumulative and reinforcing. Racial outcomes in health, education, employment, environmental risk, occupational status, and crime are not randomly assigned. They are embedded in a historical structure where racial minorities chronically experience pervasive negative differences. These differences compound exponentially to generate a cycle of racial saturation that continues generation after generation. While there are definite pockets of exceptions within and among racial groups, the general trends are still dominant.

Although laws are vital in promoting racial equity, the persistence of racial inequities is not solely a legal question. Full implementation of both the intention and the spirit of these laws requires robust policies, norms, and cultures at the agency level. The successful implementation of racial equity in American society requires attentive public administrators who determinedly monitor, assess, and eradicate the permeation of racial inequities that are advanced through structural racism. Given the saturation of racial inequities in the United States, eliminating these inequities requires direct discussions about race. As public administrators, we cannot have discussions about fiscal resources without discussing budgets. Neither can we have a discussion about personnel without discussing positions, units, and people. Similarly, we cannot have a discussion about inequities in the provision of public services without talking about race. Nor, as public administrators, can we turn a blind eye to our contributions to and responsibilities for reversing these inequities. Like it or not, comfortably or not, race and social equity—a nervous area of government—is a clear reality in the windshield of public administration that compels our attention.

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3 NERVOUSNESS WITHIN INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS

Race is arguably the most difficult issue for people to discuss.
—The American Assembly (2001)

At the individual level, race and social equity, a "nervous area of government," shares certain attributes with emotional labor. It often necessitates an intentional management of one's professional self, even if it is artificial. It can involve pretending to feel a particular way or hiding emotions or feelings that may be viewed as inappropriate, especially in a professional or group setting. Puligesi and Shook (1997) examined how a group of employees managed their emotions at work. They considered the extent to which people had to mask their feelings to appear pleasant, were required to convey a friendly demeanor, and were able to express their true feelings to their colleagues. Building upon this work, Gibson (1997) examined the type and intensity of emotional experiences, and whether the emotions were displayed to others. The likelihood that an emotion would be expressed depended largely upon the specific type.

Emotions are central states of the brain (LeDoux 1996). The array of emotions includes joy, happiness, love, anger, fear, and grief. Generally researchers agree that emotions have the following parts: subjective feelings, body responses, and expressive behavior. Subjective feelings include the way individuals experience feelings, and this component is the most difficult to describe or measure. Subjective feelings cannot be observed; instead the person experiencing the emotion must describe it to others (Advameg 2012). "Each person's description and interpretation of a feeling may be different. For example, two people falling in love will not experience or describe their feeling in exactly the same ways" (Advameg 2012).

Nervousness is commonly associated with fear. Although the experience of nervousness can be conscious, the brain mechanics generating fear and the appraisal of stimuli as fearful are unconscious and automatic, similar to any other body organ (LeDoux 1996). As explained by Bindra (1978) and Bolles and Fanselow (1980), fear is a perceptual, behavioral, and motivational

state. The perception of danger motivates defensive behavior. Environmental stimuli that are perceived as potentially dangerous cause the body to initiate defensive behaviors (Rosen and Schulkin 1998).

While nervousness is an individual emotion, it is shaped by interpersonal relationships and environmental context. Nervousness can act as a language of performance or a dramatized commentary on collectively shared hardships or oppression (Davis and Whitten 1988; Low 1989; Sluka 1989), or what Finkler (1994) has called life's lesions. As Davis and Joakimsen remark, nervousness can operate as "lived experience as it affects and is affected by interpersonal relations and social action" (1997, 372).

Within the workplace, Hochschild defines emotional labor as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (1983, 7). Many researchers have examined the conditions under which individuals perform emotional labor and the extent to which such performance influences psychological well-being (see, for example, Bulan, Erickson, and Wharton 1997; Erickson and Wharton 1997; Leidner 1993; Pierce 1995; Pugliesi and Shook 1997; Wharton and Erickson 1995).

Specific to public administration, in their seminal book, *Emotional Labor: Putting the Service in Public Service*, Guy, Newman, and Mastracci (2008) describe emotional labor as "the component of the dynamic relationship between two people: worker and citizen or worker and worker" (5). As they further explain, emotional labor is not explicitly stated in job descriptions but rather understood and implied for many public service positions, such as social workers, 911 call operators, and police officers. "Emotional work exists on a continuum . . . with the range being from superficial expressions of friendliness to true expression or suppression of deeply felt emotions. Jobs that are most like retail sales encounters involve the left side of the continuum while jobs that involve protective services, human tragedy, and emergencies involve the right side" (Guy, Newman, and Mastracci 2008, 66). The costs and benefits of emotional labor are complex. Some of the common costs include worker fatigue, burnout, cynicism, and emotional exhaustion. Benefits include increased job satisfaction, empowerment, psychological well-being, and an increased sense of community and inclusion (Guy, Newman, and Mastracci 2008).

However, race and social equity is also quite distinct at both the individual and organizational levels (see chapter 4 for a discussion of the latter). Generally speaking, emotional labor is more occupation specific. Gender is also an important factor, with more women than men engaged in emotional labor (Erickson and Ritter 2001). By comparison, within the nervous area of government, the extent to which individual public administrators engage the issue of race at work is more directly linked to organizational leadership and culture

and, outside the agency, to external events forcing the issue onto the public agency's agenda. The common link across individuals within public agencies is individual levels of fear—fear of saying the wrong thing about race, fear of being misunderstood, fear of what will be said next, fear of speaking up, fear of not participating in the discussion, fear of interacting with colleagues after the discussion, fear of being labeled a racist, fear of being labeled a race-baiter, fear of being isolated at work.

Race Talk at Work

A core defining characteristic of individual nervousness and race is fear regarding *oral communication about race at work*. Table 3.1 offers a useful list of indicators related to individual nervousness and race. These indicators can be used to self-assess oral and written communication apprehension related to engaging race at work. While specific organizational culture and context influence individual responses, Table 3.1 is designed to provide indicators of individual predisposition toward engaging in oral and written communication about race at work.

Apprehension affects skills attainment and performance (Bennett and Rhodes 1988; Bourhis and Allen 1992; Daly 1978). Individual public administrators enter their respective public agency every day with a baseline level of comfort or discomfort in engaging in communication about race. Shaped by a complex array of factors—including, for example, individual preferences, family background and attitudes, historical influences, cultural and societal influences, geographical norms, workplace culture, previous work experiences in communicating about race, security in communication expression, and general topical interest—individual public administrators daily bring to public service a level of comfort or apprehension in communicating about race, which forms the basis of their individual nervousness at work.

This individual baseline level of nervousness has very practical implications. It influences the degree to which a public administrator is likely to raise, promote, engage, and assess or evaluate racial equity in the administration of public services within their agency. Absent other motivators, such as compliance-related reporting, legal activity or queries, political or grassroots influences, the individual baseline level of nervousness provides an indicator of how likely or unlikely a public administrator is to independently promote racial equity in the provision of government services at work. It also provides some indication of an individual's predisposition to ignore or actively address racial inequities in the provision of public services. One of the most common ways for individuals to manage nervousness is to avoid situations that make them nervous. For example, those who get nervous engaging in public speaking try to minimize or avoid doing so. Similarly, individuals who get nervous communicating about

Table 3.1

Individual Oral and Written Communication Race-at-Work Nervousness Indicators

| | Response Scale (Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Strongly Agree (SA) = 5) | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|----|
| Oral Communication | | | | | |
| 1. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions about race at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 2. I am afraid to express myself about race in meetings at work. (R) | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 3. Communicating about race in meetings at work usually makes me feel uncomfortable. (R) | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 4. In presenting data about race at work, I forget facts I really know. (R) | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 5. I like to get involved in group discussions about race at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 6. I am very calm when called upon to express an opinion about race at a meeting at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 7. I am very relaxed when answering questions about race at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 8. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while talking about race at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 9. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I talk about race at work. (R) | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 10. I have no fear of engaging in conversations about race at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| Written Communication | | | | | |
| 11. It makes me nervous to write about race in a work-related report. (R) | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 12. It's easy for me to write about race in a work-related report. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 13. I look forward to working on projects about race at work. | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 14. I avoid writing about race in reports for work. (R) | SD | D | N | A | SA |
| 15. I am afraid of writing reports about race at work. (R) | SD | D | N | A | SA |

Source: Adapted from Bline et al. (2003).

Note: (R) indicates reverse coding. In administering this questionnaire, higher scores (ex., SA=5) denote less nervousness. For the items with an (R), the coding is reversed meaning lower scores (ex., SD= 1) denote less nervousness.

race at work will minimize or avoid raising race-related topics, such as service inequities by race, agency financial and resource allocation differentials by race, or differences in public agency personnel support by race.

Consider a scenario in which a public agency is making decisions about where to invest economic development resources. The historical pattern of the agency is to disproportionately invest agency resources in white communities.

An individual public administrator who is nervous communicating about race at work is less likely to call attention to these agency-based racial inequities, even if he or she recognizes them. The thought may remain in the back of his or her mind, rather than actively communicated within the public agency. The individual level of nervousness also affects the strength and the magnitude of this type of communication. Will the individual express the concern at all? Raise the issue once in an agency meeting? Request a racial equity analysis of the provision of previous resources before proceeding with the current allocation? Or work to institutionalize racial equity analysis as standard for all agency allocations? The level of individual public administrators' nervousness has a direct influence on the degree to which racial equity analysis becomes part of the status quo in the delivery of public services.

For many individuals, talking about race in groups is not easy. Individuals who find it difficult to talk about race cite the risk of being misunderstood or experiencing social sanction. While engaging in race talk at work can be challenging for individuals of all racial and ethnic groups, it is particularly true for whites. "Whites, while socialized in a racially constructed world, are taught not to be aware of themselves in racial terms" (Carter 1997, 199). Research shows that many whites are anxious during interracial contact and are hesitant to engage in it, even when it is relevant and reasonable to do so (see, for example, Blascovich et al. 2001; Ickes 1984; Norton et al. 2006; Pollock 2004; Shelton and Richeson 2006; Stephan and Stephan 2001).

Individual engagement in race talk facilitates intergroup dialogue that can promote racial equity in the administration of public services. Such conversational engagement challenges misconceptions and stereotypes (Geranios 1997; Zúñiga and Sevig 1997); develops increased personal awareness and understanding of social group membership (Nagda et al. 1999; Zúñiga et al. 1996); develops more complex ways of thinking (Gurin et al. 1999; Lopez, Gurin, and Nagda 1998); builds skills for communicating and working through differences; and identifies ways of taking actions to promote social equity (Gooden 2011).

Vocabulary is not just a list, but is a system of words and expressions that indicate differences of kind and degree among the emotions. Discursively articulated emotions such as irritation . . . are not only acts in themselves, but often they may initiate further acts in the form of verbal or physical signs. Even mild displays appear to signal that if one does not take note of this now there may be trouble ahead. (Mangham 1998, 57)

When faced with the opportunity to talk about race at work, nervousness may ensue and individuals may rely upon an array of common strategies to assist them in navigating the conversation. Table 3.2 provides a continuum of some of the more common strategies individuals use when discussing race.

Table 3.2

Race Talk Strategies

| Strategy | Description | Example |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Conversation avoidance | Race is not discussed; race is viewed as a divisive subject that is best not discussed | "Let's not focus on race. Rather, let's focus on ..." |
| Strategic colorblindness | Individual does not "see" or acknowledge race differences | "Race is not a factor here. I do not even see race." "People are people, I don't see color." |
| Assimilation | Individual seeks to identify a homogenous culture; typically often based upon dominant or majority culture | "We have to keep in mind that most of our clients ..." |
| Conversational variability | Individual strategically shifts comments to align with perceived social acceptability | "I'm not prejudiced but ..." "Well, yes and no ..." |
| Personal experience | Experiences reported by individual public administrator become representative of general client experiences of particular group; anecdotes operate as reliable data | "In my neighborhood ..." "The experience of my children is ..." |
| Cultural pluralism | Racial and ethnic differences recognized and appreciated; practical approaches to serving multiple publics is minimized or ignored | "Cost and time are not a factor. We must ..." |
| Multicultural mosaic | Racial and ethnic differences understood within a broad institutional, structural, and societal context; need to effectively work across differences is recognized and valued | "The racial differences we see in our program outcomes today are the result of many important historical and institutional factors. ..." |

Ineffective



Ineffective

Conversational Avoidance

Conversations about race can be uncomfortable. Rather than run the risk of offending another person or saying the wrong thing, some individual public administrators may avoid talking about race and ethnicity altogether. In difficult conversations, individuals can feel alienated, misunderstood, attacked, and even victimized (Stone, Patton, and Heen 1999).

When a conversation that involves an aspect of a person's social identity and group allegiance is between people with varied social identities, the potential for misunderstanding increases. Differences in social identity do not involve "difference," but also represent societal inequities of power, privilege and oppression. (Miller, Donner, and Fraser 2004, 377)

So, if talking about race is difficult for public administrators, why should we do it? Discomfort, nervousness, and even pain are elements of racial dialogues. However, there are important individual and public sector consequences for avoiding race talk. Individuals who continuously avoid such conversations remain developmentally immature. Similar to the individual who avoids technology, society continues to move forward. The social knowledge gap continues to increase, and individuals who avoid race talk will not miraculously one day find themselves able to comfortably engage in conversations about race. As others become more comfortable, those who avoid such conversations fall even further behind.

As public administrators in a democracy, avoiding race talk conversations specific to the administration of public services contravenes our professional values. "People who serve the public in government and nonprofit organizations have a special responsibility to make certain that there is 'justice for all'" (Johnson and Svava 2011, 4). Promoting justice for all requires active engagement in conversations about race by public administrators in their respective agencies. This strategy is most ineffective because it eliminates race as a discussion topic.

Strategic Colorblindness

One approach many whites adopt is strategic colorblindness—lack of acknowledgment of any racial difference—in an effort to avoid the appearance of bias (Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton 2008). While race is among the first, quickest, and most automatic dimensions people use to categorize others (Ito and Urland 2003; Montepare and Opeyo 2002), whites, in particular, frequently claim an inability to do so (Norton et al. 2006). Individuals who

utilize strategic colorblindness are especially concerned with how others would react to the appearance of prejudice (Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton 2008). Interestingly, their findings also suggest that whites' intention of using colorblind behavior to prevent the appearance of prejudice—and, more generally, to promote positive interracial interaction—often backfires. In fact, it leads to negative interpersonal perceptions on the part of blacks and is generally indicative of greater racial prejudice (929). “One practical implication of these findings for intergroup relations is straightforward: in situations where race is potentially relevant, Whites who think that avoiding race altogether will shield them from being perceived as biased should think again” (93). This behavior yields an important discrepancy between the perception of race and the acknowledgment of racial differences in a social or professional context.

Use of strategic colorblindness by public administrators facilitates the unspoken implication that because individuals do not “see” race, it is not a viable factor to consider in the administration of public services. Within this strategy, the larger context of racism and discrimination is external and largely irrelevant to providing specific public services. It permits engagement of others in abstract, general discussions about public services to all rather than to explore the effects of power, privilege, and racism in the current provision of public services. Strategic colorblindness denies that the construction of race has any meaning in people's lives and the public services they receive.

Public administrators who employ this strategy use the “anything but race” explanation in their conversations. For example, employees within a state department of education are discussing local school systems that are virtually all white, all Latino, or all black. These discussions occur in a colorblind context with differences attributed only to differences in economic context, without any acknowledgement of race or ethnicity.

Assimilation

Individuals who engage in race talk by using an assimilationist or melting pot strategy approach the discussion by seeking to identify a single ideal, homogeneous culture. For example, they may utilize this assimilationist language to focus the discussion on “societal expectations” regarding individual performance and merit. They fail to assess the personal, institutional, or cultural impact of assimilation for those who are “different” (Young 1990). By failing to recognize their own distinctiveness, majority group members regard their values as the universal reality (Nagda and Zúñiga 2003).

Public administrators who are guided by melting pot strategies approach their conversations, analysis, and recommendations through the lens of one

public rather than multiple publics. For example, when discussing Web-based services offered to public agency clients, individuals engaging the discussion using an assimilation strategy may remark, “The vast majority of the people we serve have Internet access.” While this statement may be factually true, it casually minimizes the agency's public service obligations to clients who do not have such access and the racial patterns within this minority group of clients. When these same patterns occur over time, with similar patterns, there is a cumulative racial bias in the public services provided.

Conversational Variability

Conversational variability permits individuals to strategically shift their verbal expressions based on context. “Interaction in conversation is fluid, variable, and uncertain because once dialogue is initiated, each interlocutor speaks into spaces created by the other and the final outcome of the conversation can never be known in advance” (Barnes, Palmary, and Durrheim 2001, 324). This means an individual can shift his or her opinion to maintain the impression of being antiracist, resulting in variability in the expression of opinions (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Conversational variability permits the speaker to negotiate conversational space about race, based on perceived receptivity of the group. Van Dijk (1984) further claims that when individuals talk about sensitive topics such as race, the use of rhetorical devices is unavoidable because a core challenge is to manage potentially racist comments while distancing the speaker from inferences of racism.

Conversational variability facilitates individual public administrator elusiveness. It permits individuals to act as a chameleon, expressing shifting messages regarding racial equity in their agency depending upon the setting and audience. An individual public administrator may verbally express one set of statements to senior management, another set to colleagues or line staff, and yet a third to citizens and residents.

Personal Experience

Individuals may share personal experiences about race, racism, or racial groups that cannot be externally verified. By drawing upon personal experience, the speaker positions himself or herself as an observer and subsequent reporter of facts and events. Such facts are based on justifiable anecdotes that may or may not reinforce stereotypes. Utilizing this strategy, the role of the audience is to accept these facts' value as true. In practice, however, these personal anecdotes operate as generalizations. The behavior of some individuals is directed toward and becomes representative of the larger group to which those individuals belong (van Dijk 1987).

Individual public administrator use of personal experience can inappropriately influence the direction of the organization. This is particularly true when personal experience operates as an acceptable substitute for decision-making based upon agency data. Consider a situation in which a local governmental agency is examining its record in providing prompt snow removal services. One colleague raises this as a potential issue for the agency to examine, expressing concerns that minority neighborhoods may receive snow removal services inferior to those of white neighborhoods. As the conversation ensues, both white and minority public administrators who work in the agency exchange personal experiences about their snow removal. At the end of their exchange, they conclude that, based on their experiences (based largely on the location of their individual homes), there is no discernible racial pattern in the snow removal services provided by their agency. By the end of the meeting, the agency director concludes there is no need to explore agency performance in this area any further. The personal experience data shifts this item off the agency work list. The problem in this scenario is that rather than provide a racial analysis of the agency's snow removal performance using empirical data, reported personal experiences operate, in effect, as factual truths.

Cultural Pluralism

Within cultural pluralism, diverse groups maintain their distinctiveness while living in a multicultural/ethnic society. Individuals who employ cultural pluralism in their race talk acknowledge that increased knowledge about other racial groups, cultures, and traditions can reduce prejudice and stereotype. Cultural pluralism is beneficial in that those who take this approach to race talk value racial and ethnic differences, rather than seeing them as a distraction, threatening, or divisive. An important concern with cultural pluralism, however, is that it does not offer a practical approach for engaging racial/ethnic groups in mutual coexistence (Nagda and Zúñiga 2003).

Additionally, cultural pluralism can lose its effectiveness when the discussion replaces important discussions of racial disparities with a more comfortable discussion on class, urban, or inner city factors. This shift in language avoids a discussion of race and replaces it with a less nervous area of discussion, such as class.

Ultimately, public administrators are responsible for providing equitable services to the clients they serve. At any given time, multiple publics are being served, and these publics coexist. The delivery of public services is made with consideration of staffing capacity, fiscal constraints, and political realities. Approaches designed to promote social equity will have to consider the complexities of these factors while continuously making significant progress.

Multicultural Mosaic

With an explicit recognition that oppression exists and is carried out through structural, institutional, and social arrangements, the multicultural mosaic strategy "emphasizes the interweaving nature of human relationships where both cultural distinctiveness and the need to work across differences" is important (Nagda and Zúñiga 2003, 112). Public administrators who utilize this strategy explicitly research and acknowledge the institutional factors that influence current-day public service patterns that differ by race.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the concept of nervousness in individual public administrators. Many aspects of public service have an important emotional context. A key component of examining issues relative to race within public administration is the need to have effective race talk at the individual level within public sector organizations. Too often, these conversations do not occur because there is an overarching context of discomfort, apprehension, and fear—all attributes of nervousness. This context of fear is ineffective in that it thwarts essential discussions needed to advance social equity in the administration of public services. Rather than discussing race, individuals develop and employ multiple strategies to explicitly avoid discussing race, in an attempt to shift the conversation to more comfortable ground. However, if race is not discussed by individual public administrators within an agency, analyzing and improving racial equity in the delivery of public services is unlikely to occur.

Conversations operate as connectors. At the individual level, conversations among public administrators connect them with each other and to the diverse public they serve. "Individuals expect their verbal interactions to accomplish conversational goals, and pursue linguistic strategies which vary as a function of the situation, the other participants, and social relations among participants" (Woodilla 1998, 36). Engaging in conversations about race at work can be uncomfortable and challenging. Such conversations are a core challenge for a nervous area of government. With the aforementioned difficulties in engaging in discussions about race, "productive interracial communication is rendered difficult, if not impossible, at times" (Rich 1974). In particular, the first three strategies in Table 3.2 are particularly problematic because they allow individuals to avoid discussion of the inequitable distribution of power and privilege that undergirds the administration and distribution of public services. Instead, it keeps the conversation on "nonracial" ground that may be more comfortable for individual conversation participants. So, why should public administrators even engage in conversations about race, given this difficulty?

Conversations, dialogues, and meetings about race, racism, and the administration of public services offer individuals an opportunity to have an increased understanding of the role social identity and group membership plays in the provision, administration, and delivery of public services. “Emotions are crucial in making us aware of the ‘peculiarly human reality’ of a specific situation” (Vetlesen 1994, 190). Such conversations form the basis of “democratic conversations”—interactions that invite multiple perspectives while acknowledging the institutional and structural context in which they are based (Schultz, Buck, and Niesz 2000). From such conversations and meetings, learning can occur that results in a better understanding of and appreciation for the differing historical and social circumstances that directly impact (both positively and negatively) present-day public services. Ultimately, the aggregate effect of improved individual-level understanding of the role of race in the administration of public services should lead to intentional, specific organizational actions that will eliminate racial inequities in the administration of public services.

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4 NERVOUSNESS IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS

Race is the great taboo in our society. We are afraid to talk about it. White folks fear their unspoken views will be deemed racist. People of color are filled with sorrow and rage at unrighted wrongs. Drowning in silence, we are brothers and sisters drowning each other. Once we decide to transform ourselves from fearful caterpillars into courageous butterflies, we will be able to bridge the racial gulf and move forward together towards a bright and colorful future.

—Eva Paterson, president and founder of the Equal Justice Society

Engaging in conversations about race at an individual level is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to addressing racial inequities in the services provided by public sector organizations. Nervousness at the organizational level must be understood and addressed as well. This chapter expands the concept of individual nervousness to public sector organizations. Organizations have powerful cultures that define, shape, steer, and direct the work they perform. Organizational culture particularly influences the agency's willingness to perform racial-equity analysis of the services it provides. Within that culture, nervousness in public sector organizations exists throughout five key areas: organizational values and goals; organizational socialization; organizational leadership and change; organizational discourse; and organizational learning and performance. After a brief discussion of organizational culture, this chapter considers each of these areas in turn.

Organizational Culture

There are several definitions of organizational culture. Goffman (1959, 1967) and Van Maanen (1979) define it as observed behavioral regularities when people interact, such as the language used and the rituals around deference and demeanor. Deal and Kennedy (1982) conceptualize it as the dominant values espoused by an organization. Schein (1968, 1978), Van Maanen (1976, 1979),

and Ritti and Funkhouser (1982) define culture as the rules of the game for getting along in an organization; and Tagiuri and Litwin (1968) define it as the feeling or climate that is conveyed in an organization by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with outsiders. According to Schein (1985), culture is a body of solutions to problems that have worked consistently and are transmitted to new members as the correct way to perceive, think about, and feel in relation to those problems. These shared assumptions and norms bind an organization together. Marcoulides and Heck contend that "an organization's collective culture influences both the attitudes and subsequent behaviors of its employees, as well as the level of performance the organization achieves" (1993, 211).

Schein (1985) distinguishes various levels of culture. Artifacts are the most visible level. Included in this level are written and spoken language, constructed physical and social environment, and art. The next level, values, includes a sense of what ought to be in an organization. They reflect social consensus. The final level includes underlying assumptions—the taken-for-granted, invisible norms of behavior. "In fact, if a basic assumption is strongly held in a group, members would find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable" (Schein 1985, 17).

An organization's culture is a force that strongly influences organizational behavior, but it also provides an important cultural framework for individuals (Chao and Moon 2005).

From the organizational culture perspective, the personal preferences of organizational members are not restrained by systems of formal rules, authority, and by norms of rational behavior. Instead they are controlled by cultural norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions. In order to understand or predict how an organization will behave under varying circumstances, one must know and understand the organization's patterns of basic assumptions—its organizational culture. (Shafritz and Ott 1992, 482)

Public sector organizations transmit messages regarding appropriate or inappropriate norms and behaviors related to race and social equity. Cultural norms within the agency affect discussions about and analysis of racial equity. They determine, for example, the extent to which race is examined directly or indirectly. Indirect examinations include broader categorical analysis that provides racial substitutes, such as use of the terms "urban," "disadvantaged populations," or "underserved populations." Cultural norms that promote direct examination of race support an atmosphere of more specificity—examining, for example, experiences by specific racial or ethnic groups, offering a more complex and nuanced examination of public sector outcomes.

In order to understand the nervous area of government within a particular agency, it is important to develop a baseline of the organization's orientation regarding race and social equity by performing a cultural audit. A cultural audit can offer an important assessment of the agency's core assumptions and current cultural state. The agency director is in the best position to make the cultural audit a clear priority. Claver et al. (1999) include the following eight factors in providing this diagnosis: (1) making a diagnosis of the present culture; (2) explaining the need for modifications; (3) defining the values desired; (4) involving management; (5) making collaborators aware of this new need; (6) changing the symbols; (7) changing training programs to incorporate the new values; and (8) periodically revising the values. The primary goals of a cultural audit are to examine cultural artifacts and determine their consistency with espoused values and assumptions; to identify conflicts in espoused and actual beliefs and values; to re-examine deeply held assumptions and identify their validity; and to develop an action plan for addressing inconsistencies in any of the cultural levels (Testa and Sipe 2011, 6).

Performing a cultural audit requires an organization to identify its vision, mission, values, and strategic goals; provide a description of the desired culture; select an audit team; collect data; interpret and report the findings. A cultural audit is most appropriately viewed as a tool to provide a gap analysis between the desired organizational culture and the actual organizational culture. Table 4.1 provides an example of a cultural audit summary sheet. The results of a cultural audit should lead to specific modifications in standards, principles or values, and observable behaviors that promote racial equity.

Organizational Values and Goals

Nearly all conceptualizations of culture embody a values component. While organizational values can differ, certain values are central to public administration, such as efficiency and effectiveness. Similarly, all public sector organizations share a value commitment to justice. "Justice matters when actions or decisions by people within organizations potentially benefit or harm the interests of some individuals or groups in a differential manner (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton, 1992, ix). This is particularly important for public organizations that are entrusted to serve "the people" in totality.

Justice is guided by two core principles: balance and correctness. The principle of balance requires a judgment that compares a given action against similar actions in similar situations. Correctness is the quality that makes the decision seem "right." This determination includes consistency, accuracy, clarity, and procedural thoroughness (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton 1992). Decisions that unduly benefit or harm some individuals or groups at the expense of others

Table 4.1

Race and Social Equity Cultural Audit Summary Sheet Example

| Culture Category | What to Look for | Example Gaps |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Physical characteristics and general environment What do the physical components of the department say about its racial equity? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wall hangings • Symbols and logos • Program website • Brochures • Agency reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website contains racially diverse photos, but very limited mention of racial equity goals or outcomes in agency reports. |
| <i>Specific actions to be taken (specify time frame; e.g., next month, six months, year)</i> | | |
| 2. Policies, procedures, and structures What do the agency's policies, procedures, and structures say about the importance of racial equity? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission statement • Units within the agency where racial equity work occurs • Linkage of these units to agency at large • Routinization of racial impact analysis of agency procedures and policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units within the agency where racial equity work occurs are marginalized within the agency. • The same units receive limited financial resources. • Racial impact analysis of agency procedures does not formally occur. |
| <i>Specific actions to be taken (specify time frame)</i> | | |
| 3. Socialization • What regular behaviors and expectations are in place that affect the culture relative to racial equity? • What impact do these have on the clients the agency serves? • Is consideration of racial equity a norm or priority within the agency? • How are employees socialized to think (or not think) about the racial impact of public services provided? <i>Specific actions to be taken (specify time frame)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of racial equity data by program area • Presentation of racial equity client data through statistics, audit studies, mapping, and interviews/focus groups • Clear relationship between racial equity data and agency action • Formal and informal agency rules and norms that foster racial equity analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited presentation of racial equity data. • Racial equity analysis not required by agency. • Results from racial equity analysis do not impact actions and practices of agency—data is informational only. |

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

| Culture Category | What to Look for | Example Gaps |
|---|---|--|
| <p>4. Leadership Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What level of priority do agency leaders give to racial equity? • How does this impact culture? • Are senior leaders who value racial equity respected? <p><i>Actions to be taken (specify time frame)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation of organizational justice values • Allocation of personnel and budgetary resources to racial equity work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority of racial equity work within agency is sporadic and varies by leader. • No sustained racial equity initiatives over time. • No positions or units expressly dedicated to equity/justice work. |
| <p>5. Rewards and Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are reductions in racial inequities acknowledged and rewarded? • How does this impact culture? • Are racial equity champions recognized and respected? • What are the typical circumstances under which racial equity champions exit the organization, and how are they treated when they leave? <p><i>Actions to be taken (specify time frame)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrator and employee performance reviews • Types and quantity of rewards offered • Types of formal and informal recognition within the agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal or informal recognition of racial equity–related work. • Employees engaging in racial equity work typically become “casualties.” • Such employees are either forced out or burn out. • Limited or no mention/recognition by organization of racial equity work when racial equity champions leave the organization. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>6. Discourse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are messages regarding racial equity formally and informally communicated? • How is the agency's history relative to racial equity understood and communicated? • Do employees speak up on the importance of racial equity? <p><i>Actions to be taken (specify time frame)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations about racial equity in the provision of public services commonly occur within the organization • Organization's history and commitment to racial equity are displayed prominently on the agency website • Racial equity analysis is a routine component of program evaluation and assessment • Conversations about racial equity are progressive in nature; employees can articulate racial equity work with analytical depth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations about racial equity in the provision of public services are sporadic. • Employees are reluctant to discuss areas of racial inequity. • Employees who do discuss areas of racial inequity are not generally respected or are viewed as “troublemakers.” • Agency's historical and current record in terms of racial equity is largely unknown and not discussed. |
| <p>7. Learning and performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the agency's reputation regarding racial equity? • Does the organization demonstrate innovation in racial equity approach? • How does the organization's performance of racial equity work compare to leading governmental organizations that are engaged in this work? <p><i>Actions to be taken (specify time frame)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization supports and encourages racial equity analysis • Employees are encouraged to seek out and adopt “best practices” in racial equity work • Organization routinely receives requests from other agencies about its racial equity work • Organization's racial equity work receives external recognition from peers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency not viewed as a leader in racial equity work among peers. • Agency's racial equity performance is not routinely assessed, evaluated, or reported. |

Source: Inspired by Testa and Sipe 2011.

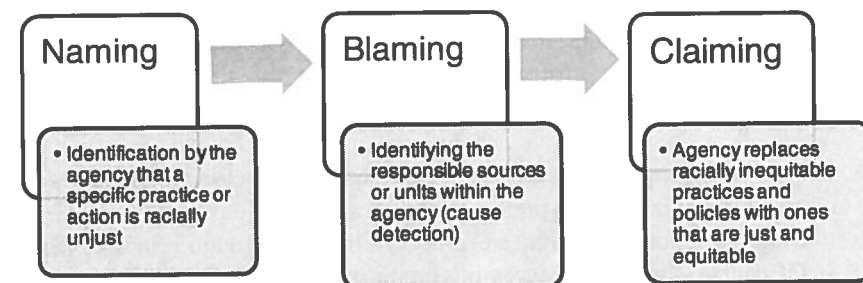
are unfair. For fairness to exist, public agency practice must pass tests at three levels: “the level of the outcome itself, the procedure that generated and implemented the outcome, and the system within which the outcome and procedure was embedded” (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton 1992, 14).

Consider an example in which a workforce development agency is responsible for providing skills training to individuals through Workforce Investment Agencies (WIAs) located throughout the state. However, there are important structural inequities across specific WIAs. WIAs located in disproportionately white populations have higher-performing staff, more financial resources, and stronger public-private partnerships with potential employers. Their classes offer lower teacher-student ratios, and they offer strong skill-building training. In comparison, WIAs located among disproportionately African American populations have lower-performing staff, fewer financial resources, and weaker public-private partnerships with potential employers. Their classes have higher teacher-student ratios, and they offer very limited skill-building training that translates well in the labor market. The public sector value of organizational justice is clearly violated in terms of both balance and correctness. From a balance perspective, similar clients are not receiving similar treatments from their public sector WIA, yet all clients are being assessed on similar programmatic outcomes (e.g., receipt of employment, earnings, and job tenure). Clients are receiving varying levels of public sector investment but are expected to achieve similar levels of outcomes. From a correctness perspective, the reality of servicing similarly situated clients is not “right.”

Similarly, public sector organizations seek to claim “objectivity” by shifting the problem beyond the parameters of a particular agency. For example, agency officials want to hire more people of color, but there are not enough qualified minority applicants, which they claim is a problem of colleges and universities. Colleges and universities shift the blame downward to K–12, which likewise shifts the blame to early childhood education, lack of quality prenatal health care, and so forth. The public organization simultaneously acknowledges the disparity problem while absolving itself of any specific responsibility to treat it.

The extent to which an agency is willing to acknowledge, examine, and address structural inequities along these dimensions falls within the nervous area of government. Overcoming this nervousness is dependent upon the organization’s willingness to name, blame, and claim the injustice (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton 1992). As Figure 4.1 displays, the naming process occurs through the initial identification of a public agency practice that is harmful. “Naming” entails recognizing that a public sector policy or practice is racially unjust. “The naming of an event is critical, because how we define the nature of harm affects or ‘transforms’ the evolution of all subsequent beliefs, feelings,

Figure 4.1 Naming, Blaming, and Claiming



and actions (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton 1992, 47). The next step, blaming, involves finding out the cause of the injustice. It identifies who or what is responsible. In the Workforce Investment Agency above example, blaming involves identifying who determines agency budgets or assigns agency personnel. Blaming is important because until the source(s) of the injustice can be identified, solutions may be inappropriately targeted. Nervousness becomes particularly high around issues of blaming because being labeled as an agent of racial injustice is not desirable and evokes strong emotional reactions. Individuals or units who are blamed may not hear that they are responsible for promoting racial injustice. Rather, they may inappropriately translate this into “I am being called a racist.” It is important to distinguish individual motives and prejudices (being a racist, which includes intentionality) from actions that result in important racial equity consequences. Such consequences may not have been previously known or analyzed. While systems can be blamed, it is important to distill where the responsibility within a system lies for the implementation of specific agency policy or practice. “Claiming” involves the agency’s changing its racially inequitable practices and policies to ones that are just and equitable. It also involves continued monitoring of agency practices using a racial-equity lens.

Put simply, justice matters, especially in public sector organizations. Public administrators have a responsibility for ensuring that clients are treated fairly and for accounting for, acting upon, and remedying situations in which clients served by their agencies are systematically treated unfairly (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton 1992). Organizational justice is a core value of public administration. Organizational value systems have a direct impact on individual behavior (Beyer 1981; Hochschild 1983; Sutton 1991). Thus, organizational values perform two important functions in providing direction for organization members (James, James, and Ashe 1990) and as a social tool that informally approves, constrains, or prohibits behaviors (O’Reilly 1989).

Organizational Socialization

As Schein (1970) discusses, the psychological contract between an organization and an individual is informally negotiated over time through the organizational socialization process. Carroll and Tosi (1977) agree:

New members learn performance expectations of their superiors, as well as the organizationally-preferred values and ways of doing things. . . . Most behaviors, however, are probably learned through reinforcement. Of course, the consequences of certain responses are mixed—approval for some, disapproval for others—but the individual’s future behavior is going to be influenced importantly by reinforcements from his dominant reference group. (Carroll and Tosi 1977, 96)

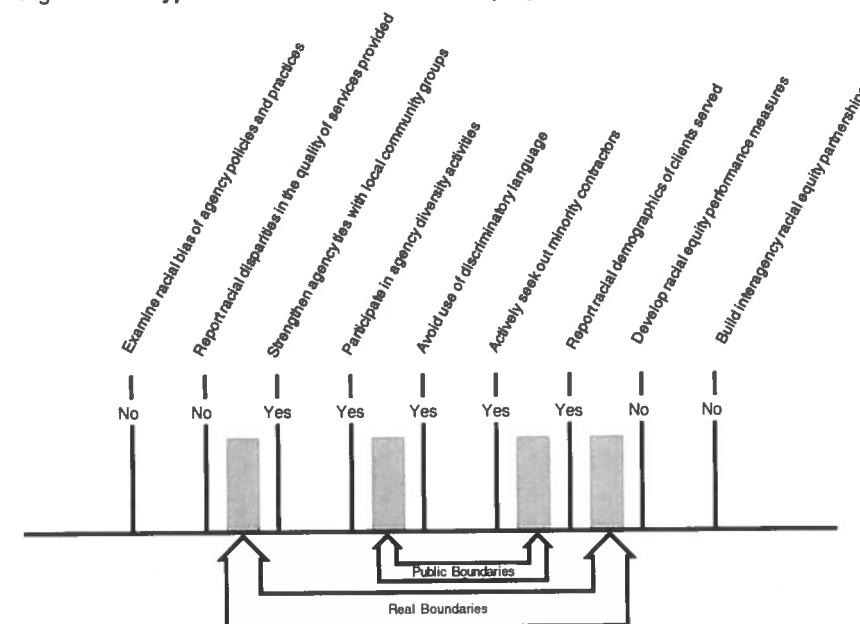
The process of organizational socialization begins when an employee first joins an organization, and if she or he terminates employment with this organization, she or he is resocialized when joining a different organization. Leaders, peers, and subordinates all play a vital role in the organization socialization process. They communicate messages, both directly and indirectly, about “how things are done here.”

The culture of public sector organizations transmits important messages about the socialization contract as it relates to expectations regarding racial equity. The socialization contract contains two dimensions: public boundaries and real boundaries. As Carroll and Tosi (1977) explain, the public boundaries are generally agreed-upon work activities, but they do not represent an employee’s real boundaries, which are much broader. Although an employee will do more than is represented in the public zone, “the real boundaries do, however, define the limits beyond which he will not go” (213) if he wants to remain in compliance with the organizational socialization contract.

Figure 4.2 provides a hypothetical race and social equity socialization contract in a public agency. The public boundaries encompass the employee’s normal call of duty. She is clearly expected to avoid using racist or discriminatory language when interacting with clients or other agency employees. This may be explicitly stated in agency policy that governs the work of all employees. Similarly, she may be required to seek out minority contractors for agency work.

Agency culture may communicate a limited approach, such as a requirement for open and competitive bidding during procurement, or a more aggressive approach of developing effective relationships with minority contractors. By comparison, items in the real boundaries are actions an employee will engage in that communicate she has gone “above and beyond” specific

Figure 4.2 Hypothetical Race and Social Equity Socialization Contract

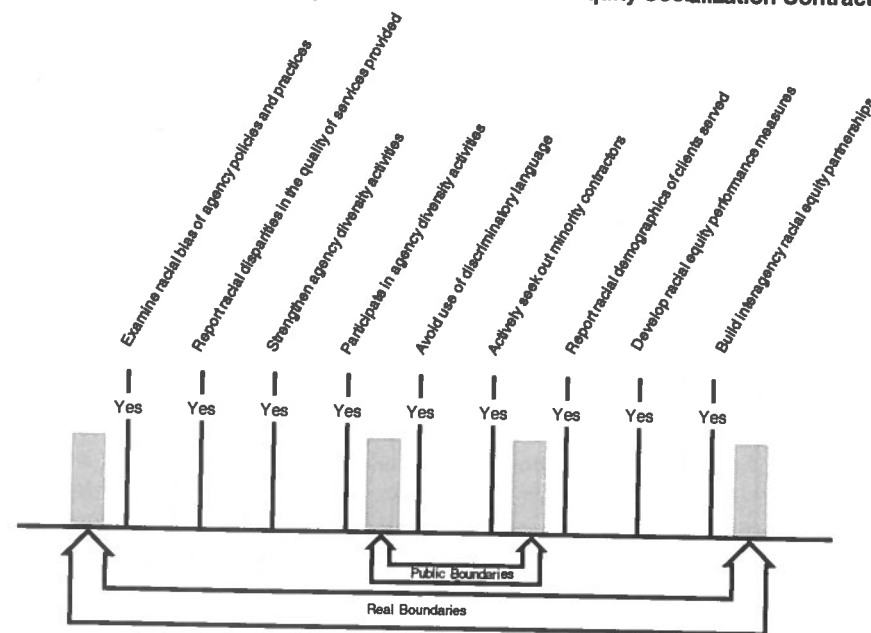


Source: Adapted from Carroll and Tosi 1977, 213.

agency expectations in promoting racial equity. For example, the employee has distinguished herself in the area of racial equity by strengthening ties with community organizations or adding racial demographic data when reporting on the clients served in his particular unit. While these activities are not required, they are *permissible* within the real race and social-equity boundaries of the agency. The items on the far ends (e.g., examining racial biases of agency policies and practices) are activities that fall outside of the real boundaries of the agency. Engaging in such practices will produce clear responses of disapproval, either formally or informally, from superiors and/or peers. When an employee engages in these activities, she is operating within the agency’s nervous area of government.

The organizational challenge here is to expand the socialized boundaries as captured in Figure 4.3. Specifically, the externalities of the “real” boundaries need to be expanded to include activities that currently reside in the “nervous” area. For example, “examining racial biases of agency policies and practices” and “developing racial equity performance measures” should be included within the real boundaries of permissible activities. This culturally redefines these behaviors as acceptable. Current and future employees can then engage in racial equity work with less fear, and the expanded socializa-

Figure 4.3 Hypothetical Expanded Race and Social Equity Socialization Contract



Source: Carroll and Tosi 1977, 213.

tion boundaries of the organization now recognize such work as legitimate activities. The boundary expansion work is most effective when promoted by organizational leaders.

Organizational Leadership and Change

Organizational leadership is a critically important factor in the nervous area of government. It is the process of influencing others to act in a particular manner. Leaders within organizations, by virtue of their position, formal authority, perceived and real power, and influence, routinely articulate strong messages to organizational members about what is important, what is unimportant, and what resides in the zone of indifference. Larger values of an agency, such as a commitment to organizational justice, are largely affirmed or moderated by leadership action and behavior. The assessment of these values at a leadership level includes an examination of how leaders spend their time (and steer the time of others) and how they allocate their resources, especially discretionary resources.

According to Schein (1970), individuals in any situation, including work, will do many things because they feel they should. *How should an employee feel about analyzing and promoting racial equity within an organization? The*

answer to this question is largely influenced by the employee's perception of how others in the organization, especially leaders, feel about the value of organizational justice in general and racial equity in particular. Agency leaders personify the organization and its motives (Avery, et al. 2007). As discussed in chapter 5, the success of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative was largely influenced by actions among public sector leaders and their unwavering commitment to social justice. Leaders can affect individual behavior in at least three important ways. They can affect expectations; they can set organizational goals; and they can clarify how to achieve goals (Carroll and Tosi 1977).

Organizational goals are "desired and intended ends to be achieved" (Etzioni 1964, 6). All activities performed by a public sector organization have as their ultimate purpose some end state of client benefit (Neugeboren 1991). Organizational goals have three primary functions: they guide activity by determining the tasks that need to be performed and the associated division of labor; they provide a standard for evaluating organizational performance; and they legitimize the functions of the agency. This legitimization clearly connects public sector organizations as a larger part of the society in which they operate (Neugeboren 1991).

The role of leaders in overcoming the nervous area of government is particularly significant. Promoting racial equity within many public sector agencies will involve cultural change, which begins with an overall strategy aligned with the desired future. This future needs to be clear and compelling but also adaptable, so that the organization can allow space to learn and make necessary adjustments along the way. Organizational change of any nature is subject to resistance. This is particularly true for promoting racial equity because it involves deeper changes. "Old habits and automatic responses are hard to recognize and change. The deeper the changes, the more likely they will enter realms of life invisible to employees" (Deetz, Tracy, and Simpson 2000, 40).

As Carroll and Tosi (1977) discuss, certain conditions must be present before change can occur.

First, the causes of the present unsatisfactory state of knowledge, behavior, or attitudes must be understood. . . . Second, the obstacles standing in the way of change must not be insurmountable. . . . A third prerequisite of change is motivation to change. An individual—or group—must be motivated to change an existing level of knowledge, behavior patterns, or attitudes, or the influence programs will fail. Fourth, defensiveness must be minimized. Since most individuals have a favorable self-image, they are not inclined to accept information about themselves which is at variance with this favorable self-image. (486)

As discussed in chapter 2, racial inequity in public sector organizations is often viewed as a condition rather than a problem. The role of leadership in redefining racial inequity as a problem is an important step. It moves racial inequity in the distribution of government services from a status quo condition to a solvable problem. In understanding the current unsatisfactory state, data on the causes of current racial inequities must be examined. All public policies in the United States exist within a historical context—one that was shaped by and influenced by racism that was once legal. For example, understanding the determination of present-day local property assessment values begins with an understanding of the once-legal discriminatory practice of redlining. Undertaking such an analysis often illuminates the clear influences of historical racism that still impacts the allocation, structure, and implementation of current public sector services.

The perception of insurmountability is an important factor. Even those who are most motivated toward racial equity work do not want to participate in a losing cause. Once the nature of the current racial inequity problem is understood, a road to realizing necessary changes needs to be articulated and shared. Performing a process analysis to determine what specific procedures and practices within the agency work to maintain existing racial inequities is important. This procedure identifies core areas of current public administration that need to change in order to realize racial equity in the provision of public services. Leaders set the tone for committing the agency to do this important work.

Public sector leaders can perform a vitally important role in motivating change among employees throughout the agency. Amount of buy-in among managers and supervisors will consist of a mixture of early adopters, those who are indifferent, and active resisters. Linking racial equity analysis to performance evaluations, internal reward and incentive systems, and internal communication venues can motivate and influence behavior that is more aligned with realizing organizational justice.

Leaders can minimize defensiveness by focusing on the institutional and structural inequities within the agency that need to change. Earlier in this chapter, the concept of “blame” was discussed as a particularly emotional aspect of organizational justice work. Assuming that there are only a very few public administrators who are intentionally racist, leaders need to strongly communicate that unintentional behaviors and status quo norms and practices can maintain the existence of racial inequity. In order to promote racial equity within public organizations, public administrators have an obligation to examine systematic behaviors, practices, and norms within all agency units. In many cases, this simply involves adding a racial analysis lens to functions that are already routinely examined. So, the current agency question “How user friendly is our agency website for the public we serve?” employs an expanding operational definition of public by directly linking the provision-of-services

language to the specific populations served. Answering such questions from a racial-equity perspective requires organizational discourse.

Organizational Discourse

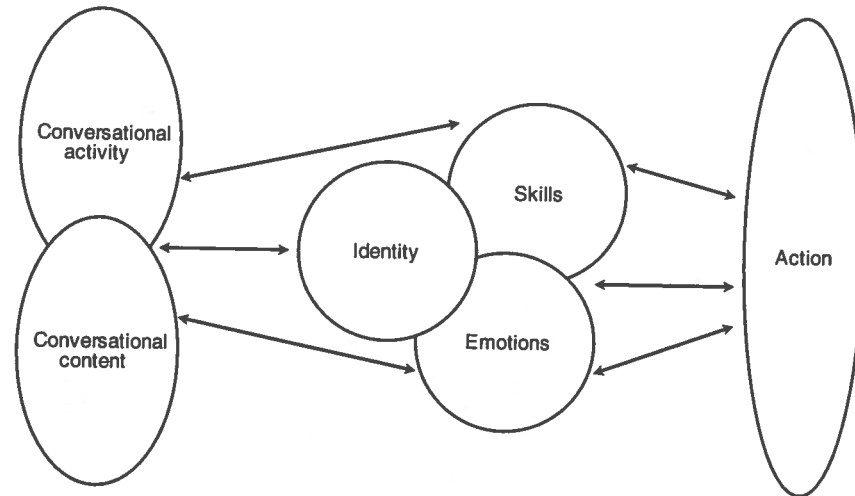
Chapter 3 examined conversations about race and nervousness at the individual level. It is also important to consider the importance of conversations about race at the organizational level, as this is an equally important factor in the nervous area of government. Racial dialogues occur in a larger institutional context that has unequal power and differential racial identity development (Schwartz 1971). For example, the consideration of the following questions is important to structuring organizational conversations about race: Who participates in the dialogue? Where is the conversation held? Is the conversation a single event or an ongoing subject of focus? How is the conversation facilitated? What is the mix or structure and spontaneity within the conversation? And, what is the organizational goal of the conversation? (Miller and Donner 2000).

As discussed by Hardy, Lawrence, and Phillips (1998), there is an important link between talk and action. As summarized in Figure 4.4,

Certain individual and collective identities react to particular information and events; frame issues in distinctive ways; and are predisposed to certain kinds of actions which reinforce identities that are experienced as negative. Skills accord us both the right and the ability to take particular actions. Emotions generate the energy to act or not to act. These are not neatly self-contained categories. . . . The interplay of these factors leads to actions and, while complex, it is possible to conceptualize the conversational foundations of action in this way. (Hardy, Lawrence, and Phillips 1998, 73)

Race talk and organizational action are inextricably linked. Talk and action are not separate entities, nor do they form a linear sequence. “Through conversation, relationships between individuals are established, shared meanings are developed, and contested meanings are made visible” (Woodilla 1998, 31). As Hardy, Lawrence, and Phillips (1998) explain, “Not only are individual identities created, so, too, are collective identities” (69). The agency’s collective identity shapes the racial equity actions the organization is subsequently willing to take. Dialogue among individuals within an organization often forms the basis for the creation of new ideas and innovative approaches that lead to important institutional knowledge discovery and organizational change. “Talk is integral to action at several levels. It is itself a form of action. It can facilitate subsequent forms of action through establishing common understandings as to what is required, by whom, and under a specified timeframe. It facilitates future

Figure 4.4 The Links Between Organizational Talk and Organizational Action



Source: Hardy, Lawrence, and Phillips 1998, 73.

action through its contribution to relationship-forming among organizational members. And, talk is essential to establishing meanings of terms and characteristics of success” (Dunford and Palmer 1998). Organizational discourse is most effective when it is purposively intended to promote constructive agency action based on data-driven evidence. Examining client service data by race identifies specific opportunities for organizational learning to occur.

Organizational Learning and High Performance

Organizational learning is most appropriately viewed as a method by which organizations can effect organizational change and continual self-improvement. It provides a model of agency self-correction in implementing organizational values and goals.

Organizational learning is a collection of processes by which organizations improve their ability to accomplish their objectives by analyzing their past efforts. Learning organizations scrutinize unsatisfactory results to discover the reasons behind them and make cause-effect inferences about how to alter their outcomes. . . . In a learning organization, problems are openly acknowledged, causes are intensively investigated, and procedures are corrected. New techniques are searched out, all in order to bring results more closely in line with agency expectations, external mandates, and professional or personal values. (Mahler 2009, 18)

In order to advance racial equity within public sector organizations, the organization must be willing to openly examine its past and current performance in its distribution of public service and in its implementation of public policy. A learning cycle begins with the realization among at least some organization members that there is an important disconnect between organizational results and organizational mission (Mahler 2009). As partners with elected officials in a democratic society, public sector organizations share an important responsibility to make sure there is “justice for all.” “Individual administrators and the public administration community must recognize that social equity problems persist and that public administrators should take action to alleviate and correct these problems as they develop, analyze, manage and deliver public programs” (Johnson and Svara 2011, 4). A core part of this action involves an unwavering willingness of public administrators to engage in critically examining their current practices, procedures, and outcomes through a racial-equity lens. Public administrators will experience nervousness as they work through these organizational analyses. However, the knowledge base that is acquired by directly examining racial inequities provides a data-driven foundation to guide future change.

Organizational learning offers significant rewards in the area of knowledge acquisition and work. However, organizational culture can seriously impede knowledge management (KM).

Thus, “good” cultural values such as sharing, openness, and trust will lead to positive KM behaviors, (e.g., knowledge contribution and sharing), whereas “bad” values will lead to dysfunctional KM behaviors (e.g., information hoarding) and, hence, undesirable outcomes. . . . (Alavi, Kayworth, and Leidner 2006, 197)

Creation of organizational knowledge regarding racial equity requires the ability to share information, examine organizational processes, and examine this knowledge with the goal of making existing knowledge useful to advancing racial equity in the administration of public series. The public sector agency can then develop application-based processes oriented toward specific knowledge use (Alvai, Kayworth, and Leidner 2006).

Learning takes practice, and structural changes in the public sector are realized over time. Organizational learning will also involve missteps and bumps along the way. Changing agency routine is not always smooth or error-free. As Mahler states, “The eventual test of learning, and its value to any organization, is that it improves performance and that those improvements, the lessons learned, are dependably practiced throughout the organization” (Mahler 2009, 211). Ideally, public sector organizations can become high-performing organizations in the area of racial equity. The organization will begin to hold

itself accountable to high standards for promoting racial equity, and this expectation will permeate the organization, becoming a core component of the public service culture. Team building often fosters adoption of a high level of performance as a “norm.” “The idea is that groups with a high standard of performance will pressure individual members to perform at a high level” (Carroll and Tosi 1977, 146). Entrepreneurial in approach, high-performing organizations are not limited by nervousness but rather foster innovation, creativity, and risk-taking. “This is what it means in the end to institutionalize new inferences and solutions to problems” (Mahler 2009, 211).

Conclusion

This chapter examined several factors within organizations that can inhibit or enhance an organization’s ability to navigate the nervous area of government. The delivery of public administration occurs in an important organizational context. The culture of the organization, as well as its implementation of organizational values and goals, socialization, leadership, change, and discourse, as well as its commitment to organizational learning and high performance outcomes, are complex factors that impact racial equity in the provision of public services. As discussed at the individual level, confronting issues of racial equity at the organizational level embodies emotion and nervousness as well. The promotion of common public sector equity values (particularly by leaders in public administration), articulation of specific goals, understanding of discourse language, and a commitment to direct examination of agency practices, procedures, and outcomes and how they explicitly affect the diverse publics served are all critical in achieving racial equity and a commitment from public administrators to provide justice for all. While navigating the nervous area of government may seem daunting for many organizations, some public sector organizations at the federal, state, and local level are doing so. The next three chapters provide case studies of governmental organizations undertaking this critical work.

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5 SEATTLE'S RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Lots of people told me not to do this—it will only make people angry. But, I thought we had a responsibility to do it.

—Greg Nickels (2012), former mayor of Seattle

This chapter offers an empirical, applied examination of the preceding conceptual discussions by examining the City of Seattle's pioneering journey in navigating a nervous area of government—race and social justice. It captures the City's mission to prioritize justice in the services it provides. Through the City's ongoing efforts to analyze the treatment and experiences of the public they serve, their dominant concern is to develop and deliver governmental services in a manner that prioritizes racial justice.

As prominently stated on the City's website, "The Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) is a citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities in City government. RSJI builds on the work of the civil rights movement and the ongoing efforts of individuals and groups in Seattle to confront racism. The Initiative's long term goal is to change the underlying system that creates race-based disparities in our community and to achieve racial equity" (Seattle Office for Civil Rights 2012a).

There are at least three important aspects of the RSJI. First, it is an initiative designed by local government to eliminate institutional racism in the provision of local government services. Seattle officials and administrators have acknowledged that institutional racism exists in the services provided to citizens, and they are committed to its elimination. Second, the RSJI has been actively sustained since its inception in 2004, despite leadership changes at the highest levels of local government. And, third, the RSJI is having a significant impact, both within the City of Seattle and among local governments throughout the United States.

Data to examine each of these areas are primarily based on twenty-three individual or small group interviews conducted during July 2012 with current and former City of Seattle employees. Additional data were derived from publicly available electronic and print documents. Together, these data offer a