

Johnson Robb, who could be counted upon to be ladylike and compliant in her dealings with the Oval Office.

So if, as Deloria says, American institutions are well defended against internal reform, then what can oppressed groups in the culture do to bring about significant change? Is anybody doing it? With what success? The goal of Women's Studies is to offer students a feminist critique of contemporary male-defined culture and an awareness of our female heritage of struggle against it. To the extent that Women's Studies classrooms are feminist in content, outlook, and methodology, then Women's Studies as a discipline is part of the solution, not part of the problem, of patriarchal society. Those who seek to change a system radically must have a clear understanding of that system's roots, a clear vision of an alternative, and a responsible strategy for moving towards that new system. Radical feminists envision a just and humane future and are currently formulating strategies for attaining it. Yet radical feminists are often separatist, thus narrowing their vision and limiting their general effectiveness. If we are to succeed, the many different groups who are oppressed by white male culture must join together, to formulate and work towards a radical re-organization of society. In the meantime, we should all individually examine whether by unwitting cooperation in institutional racism and sexism we may be delaying, rather than hastening, the day when truly revolutionary change can occur.

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\*The original title for Dr. Hickok's critique is "Racism, Sexism, and Revolution."

### Critique\*

As Deloria indicates in the opening lines of his essay, the dominant paradigm of racism in the 1960s reflected the popularly held belief that racism was an individual

phenomena. Consequently, if racist individuals were confronted and curtailed or converted, the argument concluded, then discrimination would come to an end. However, history has shown us that we can have racist institutions without having racist individuals. For instance, our education institutions perpetuate racial, as well as sex, inequality. Yet it is possible for every member of such an institution to be non-racist, as well as non-sexist.

The discussions on the nature and causes of racism involve explanations which emerge, peak, and regress as alternative theories compete for credence. Clearly there are few of us today, either as trained social scientists or as members of an educated public, who feel comfortable with an account of racism as a personal flaw. In fact, in retrospect the view appears noticeably naive. Rather we tend to focus on macro units of analysis instead of micro ones, on sociological factors instead of individual ones. The pattern of shifting from individually centered explanations to broader sociological ones is illustrated in the following examples of ballet and sports.

A *Los Angeles Times* article posed the question of why blacks continue to be underrepresented in the world of classical ballet.<sup>1</sup> In 1975, the most typical explanation from key figures in American Ballet was that the black's physique makes their presence in ballet inappropriate: "Black people didn't belong in ballet because their feet were too flat for the classic line required in ballet, that black people's bone structure was too large and their buttocks protruded too unattractively."<sup>2</sup> Presently, however, "We far more readily accept an explanation in accounting for black underrepresentation in 'high culture' that concentrates either on cultural differences between blacks and non-blacks, or one that stresses the socio-economic differences between blacks and whites."<sup>3</sup> For example, Arthur Miller, the founder of the Dance Theater of Harlem and the first black male to receive a contract in a professional Anglo company, opines that "fewer blacks study ballet not only because they are fewer in number but also because black parents have priorities other than dance lessons for their kids who first have to be fed and clothed."

Black participation in professional sports is another arena

where explanations concerning physical or biological features have preceded historical and sociological arguments. "Blacks comprise about 12 percent of the United States population, yet over 20 percent of the professional baseball players, more than 30 percent of professional football players, and almost 80 percent of professional basketball players are black."<sup>4</sup> Martin Kane attempted, in a Darwinistic tone, to explain black dominance of certain sports in terms of race-linked physical characteristics.<sup>5</sup> He based the case for black athletic superiority in part on the theory of natural selection. That is, black athletes were the descendants of Africans who were tough enough to survive slavery. But in praising the physical supremacy of blacks over Anglos there is at least the latent tendency to flip the coin and say Anglos are mentally superior to blacks. Coaches especially seem to have bought into this stereotypical attitude. There is evidence to support this notion. Jonathon Browner found that there are "constellations" or stackings of positions for Anglos and blacks in professional football, with the former getting those which require leadership or intelligence (such as quarterback and punter) and the latter being placed in those which require instinctual reactions (such as cornerback and punt returner).<sup>6</sup>

Kane's highly speculative conclusion does not hold water. Black slaves were also subject to malnourishment, poor living conditions, and inadequate medical treatment which would appear to more than compensate for any possible "survival of the fittest" advantage. Harry Edwards pointed out that historical records of life on plantations indicate that the survival of slaves was due as much to their shrewdness and their ability to think as to their physical prowess.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Edwards criticized Kane's sampling method and concluded that the domination of the black athlete is not biological. Walt Frazier, a professional basketball player, views the issue thus:

There is no physical difference between the races. If there are more blacks in sports, it's because we're hungrier than whites. Sports isn't an escape, it's a necessity for black kids. Guys from the ghetto want it more. White middleclass kids have more options. My father had no money. I had to make it.<sup>8</sup>

Besides emphasizing personal attitudes and physical characteristics, institutional perspectives stress commonalities for all people which only obscure discrimination against minorities and women. If we must assign a gender to our institutions' personalities, then, unlike Deloria who suggests that most institutions of which we are aware assume the feminine gender, I choose the masculine one (specifically Anglo masculinity) for several reasons. First, institutions are representative of an Anglo male system which believes it is all that exists. The attitude is based on the myth that Anglo males know and understand everything. The unquestionable assumptions parallel the automatic birth-right given to all Anglo males. For racial minorities and women, survival demands knowing and functioning in two separate systems: the Anglo male culture and the culture of the minority individual. On the other hand, the Anglo male culture needs only to know itself. This results in a blind spot precluding the awareness of other systems.

Second, institutional images are supported by the scientific approach to life. This approach is based on such masculine characteristics as logical, objective, controlling, rational, and measurable. Like Anglo males, institutional strategies reflect *allocentrism*, an analytical cognitive style in which one detaches oneself from the problem under consideration. The process facilitates abstract, goal-oriented thinking. Conversely, minorities and women depict *autocentrism*, a personalized cognitive style in which the individual remains centrally immersed in the problem; this leads to personal and emotional problem-solving rather than to an analytic mode of thought.

Finally, institutional personalities are portrayed by an absolute rather than a negotiable system. This seems to be more masculine than feminine, because it is rooted on hierarchical codification vis-à-vis an open system. For example, institutional regulations are rigidly linear instead of flexible and multivariate.

In sum, institutional personalities and the Anglo male system both emphasize commonalities, e.g., we are all human beings, we all need love, we are all equals, we all need laws and regulations to "maintain" equal treatment. The danger of this view is that it enhances racial and sexual

inequality and ignores the unique experiences of ethnic minorities and women. A parallel example of this in academia can be found in Lawrence Kohlberg's six-stage model of moral development.<sup>9</sup>

Kohlberg maintains that in every cultural setting all children can be expected to display the same fixed order of moral stages as they grow older. As the individual moves from the lower stages to the higher ones, the criteria for making moral judgments shifts from rules to principles and from a concrete base to an increasingly abstract one. The assumption that a principle-oriented morality is higher than a law or utilitarian morality is laden with value judgments, and for this reason Kohlberg has received his share of criticism.

Carol Gilligan raises the issue that some people, particularly women (although equivalently applicable to ethnic minorities), do not define morality in terms of justice, universality, fairness or logical comprehensiveness as in the works of Kant, Rawls, and Kohlberg.<sup>10</sup> Rather, she posits, moral reasoning includes a dimension often overlooked by standard form interview scoring procedures. Such protocols tend to reflect the areas of responsibility, concern for others, practicality and are based on the correct assumption that moral judgments do not occur in a temporary or social void. Rather, moral inferences and choices are made in the context of everyday life circumstances which confront an individual. While the principled orientation of stage six reasoning is objective, responsibility perspectives are action oriented and subjective. That is, Kohlberg's highest and most adequate stage centers on logical comprehensiveness which promotes autonomy and sets up moral problems as a mathematical equation. Conversely, Gilligan maintains that such logic is not relevant to the individual in real life dilemmas. Instead, moral solutions emphasize the interdependence of people's lives.

In conclusion, institutional racism lies behind the guise of equality, consistency and especially logic. But equality rests on rhetoric and not in application. Concerning consistent treatment of dissident subgroupings and culturally or economically distinct classes within its own relatively homogeneous body, there are only two things wrong with the western attitude: its face. Finally, logic, that non-

negotiable virtue of the Anglo male system, is tautological. As a closed system, it does not refer to anything in the real world. Yet, as Deloria reveals, racial minorities in the face of irrational practices and attitudes, are expected to counter with logically valid arguments and conclusive "objectified" data to establish their rights as humans. The function of the human rights movement is not only to hasten the demise of institutional racism but also to develop a political consciousness that ensures movement in a progressive revolutionary direction rather than a fascist counterrevolutionary one.

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### Notes

\*The original title for Dr. Cortese's critique is "Racism: A Concept of Alternating Paradigms."

<sup>1</sup>Jack Slater. "Where Are the Blacks in Ballet?" *Los Angeles Times*. (June 8, 1980).

<sup>2</sup>Jack Slater. "They Told Us Our Bodies Were Wrong for Ballet?" *New York Times*. (April 22, 1975).

<sup>3</sup>Jeffrey Prager. "American Racial Ideology as Collective Representation." Paper presented at the Society for the Study of Social Problems Meetings. (Toronto, 1981).

<sup>4</sup>Donald Sabo and Ross Runfola. *Jock*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980) 81.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Kane. "An Assessment of Black Is Best." *Sports Illustrated*. Vol. 34, No. 3 (1971) 72-83.

<sup>6</sup>Jonathon J. Browner. "The Racial Basis of the Division of Labor Among Players in the National Football League as a Function of Racial Stereotypes." Paper presented at the Pacific Sociological Meetings. (Portland, Oregon, 1972).

<sup>7</sup>Harry Edwards. *Sociology of Sports*. (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1973) 193-202.

<sup>8</sup>Sabo and Runfola, 81-82.

<sup>9</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg. "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization." *Handbook of Socialization*. D. Goslin, ed. (New York: Rand McNally, 1969) 347-580.

<sup>10</sup>Carol Gilligan. *In a Different Voice: Essays on Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,).