

THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR: ANTECEDENT AND POSTCEDENT STIMULUS CONTROL

Richard F. Rakos¹
Cleveland State University

ABSTRACT: Academe presents the contemporary department chair with important challenges to effective functioning. Among these are (a) the ambiguous nature of the role itself, which is typically seen as part faculty and part administrator; (b) tenure and faculty governance procedures that reduce opportunities to utilize contingency management; and (c) the differing contingencies that influence the behavior of faculty compared to administrators. Under these circumstances, a chair will likely achieve more success in leading and managing the department, including fostering progressive changes that promote greater fairness, equality, and justice in academia and the community, by relying to a greater extent on antecedent stimulus control than on postcedent control.

Key words: chairperson, department head, antecedent control, behavior analysis.

Young (1997), in a book called “No Neutral Ground: Standing by the Values We Prize in Higher Education,” observes that “one maxim of behavioral psychotherapy is that action, not insight, is ultimately curative. And one aspect of values is that they are guides to action” (p. 185). In his view, the central guides for action in higher education—those “values that together constitute the heritage and hope of the democratic academy” (p.9)—include service (impure altruism), truth (usefulness of facts), freedom (choice), equality (opportunity and access), individuation (growth in human dignity), justice (fairness, concern for welfare, and redistribution of resources to reduce inequality), and community (mutual empowerment). He suggests that capitalism (materialism), spirituality (metaphysics), and aesthetics (beauty) may at times challenge these core values of the academy. For Young, neutrality in regard to these or any other values is impossible: “even if neutrality were factually verifiable, its advocates would still be preaching values as much as any other values advocates in the academy. Neutrality stands somewhere in line with other values of higher education, not above them” (p. 5). If neutrality is indeed an illusion (and many scientists contend

¹ Address correspondence to Richard F. Rakos, College of Arts and Sciences, RT 1822, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH 44115 or to r.rakos@csuohio.edu. Portions of this manuscript were presented in Rakos, R.F. (1999, May), Chairing a psychology department: Reflections of a behaviorist. In R.F. Rakos (Chair), *Examining organizational practices: Behavior analytic contributions*. Symposium conducted at the annual convention of the Association for Behavior Analysis, Chicago.

exactly that; cf., Weinberg, 2001), the chair of an academic department, as the leader of the unit, will either advance or constrain the core values of the academy, perhaps in dramatically or, more likely, in very modest ways. The chair, in other words, may seize the opportunity to promote measures of equality, fairness, and justice within the department and within the community as it interfaces with the department.

This is not an easy task under the best of circumstances, and may be improbable given the conditions under which the chair actually operates. In most colleges and universities, the chair is part faculty and part administrator, and as such, is expected to emit the usual faculty behaviors associated with scholarship and pedagogy, albeit at a lowered frequency. But much of the chair's time and energy is, of course, devoted to administering the department. Faculty have constant, usually legitimate, requests for support, guidance, or additional resources; on occasion, they need to inform the chair of personal issues affecting their work. Support staff expect rapid decisions so that paperwork can be sent on in a timely fashion. Requests for information or action stream in from assorted upper administrators. Students have questions, and often complaints, about professors, courses, schedules, or department requirements. If they don't have questions or complaints, they have problems: they may need departmental support to petition for a late course withdrawal, or they may have financial, medical, or personal crises. And there is usually something wrong with the physical facilities in some office, hallway, meeting room, or lounge that requires attention and authorization to repair.

Besides the people and information flow, the chair is responsible for the bureaucratic operation of the department, such as budget issues, course schedule construction, curriculum modification, faculty workload determinations, graduate assistantship assignments, committee designations, faculty searches, performance evaluations, program development, and democratic governance processes. Periodically, upper administrators or accrediting agencies will require status reports on such things as student learning outcome assessments, program reviews, and departmental self-studies.

Though the chair is the nexus through which the department's business flows, effective performance is often compromised by the systemic and personal aspects of the role. Institutionally, the chair is the lowest ranking administrator on campus and the only one with an explicitly temporary appointment; two thirds serve one or two terms totaling three to seven years and then return to full faculty status in their home department (Tucker, 1993). The intrinsic impermanence of the position may undermine acceptance by faculty of the chair as a leader (cf., Hecht, 2001). As Tucker (1993) observes, the chair

is first among equals, but any strong coalition of those equals can severely restrict the chairperson's ability to lead. Deans and vice-presidents look to chairpersons as those primarily responsible for shaping the department's future, yet faculty members regard themselves as the primary agents of change in department policies and procedures. The chairperson, then, is both a manager

and a faculty colleague, an advisor and an advisee, a soldier and a captain, a drudge and a boss. (Pp. 32 – 33)

Personally, the chair's status as a low-level, temporary administrator often conflicts with years of experience as a faculty member harboring a prominent distrust of and perhaps even distaste for academic administration and administrators. Nevertheless, while "department chairs may be loathe to think of themselves as administrators" (Hecht, 1999, p.5), they are attracted to some of the reinforcers associated with the position, including increased salary, escape from boredom with regular faculty duties, and social reinforcement (e.g., all other potential internal candidates are even more aversive than the designee). Happily, most chairs also evidence a genuine concern for their department, a desire to see it prosper (Levine, 1998), and a belief they are the best choice among the available options to provide effective leadership (Clements, 1998).

However, the reasons a chair may accept the role do not negate years of behaving as a faculty member. Many if not most chairs will continue to emit public statements and self-verbalizations that reflect—and maintain—their faculty identity. Thus, even chairs who actively seek the position may be reluctant to embrace their new role within the department with enthusiasm and without ambivalence. Chairs will emit positive verbalizations about their role and thereby alter their "self concepts" only when their administrative behaviors produce meaningful reinforcers. Unfortunately, the contingency arrangements under which most chair operate do not facilitate the resolution of the faculty/administrator role conflict, and in fact, may contribute to high levels of job stress (cf., Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999).

Two characteristics of the academy's contingencies are particularly problematic for chairs. First, tenure and faculty governance procedures, and in some cases collective bargaining agreements with unions, insulate faculty from a range of potentially powerful contingency reinforcement schemes. The chair rarely has direct control over critical consequences like raises, bonuses, workload, promotions, demotions, and terminations. As a result, a chair may view his or her role as one of a temporary manager and maintain an identity more with the faculty than with the administration. Further, while faculty behavior is guided to a great extent by rules and nonmaterial consequences (such as notions of academic freedom, scholarship/teaching/service expectations, etc.), administrators (as well as students) respond to contingencies that are distinctly more materialistic and market-driven (Lamal, Rakos, & Greenspoon, 2000). The chair may very well be expected to respond contingently to the demands of upper administrators yet lack the control over reinforcers that would facilitate an effective and efficient response. The stress that chairs are likely to experience from this dilemma may be relieved to some extent by resorting to a faculty identity: It is not uncommon, for example, to hear frustrated chairs denigrate their institution's upper administration.

The complexity of the chair position is detailed in excellent books by Bensimon, Ward, & Sanders, (2000), Gmelch & Miskin (1993), Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, & Tucker (1999), Higgerson (1996), Leaming (1998), and Lucas (1994,

2000). In addition, several reflections on the chair experience by current and former chairs are available (Clements, 1998; Coscina, 1998; Hayes, 1998; Hazer, Kremer, & Fetterman, 1998; Levine, 1998; Ward, 2001). These resources confirm that chairs must be skilled in communication, decision-making, time management, advocacy, conflict resolution, goal-setting, and stress management. However, the behavioral equation is even more complex. While the chair (a) wrestles with the “administrator” self-concept, and (b) responds to the market-driven contingencies of upper administrators, he or she will also (c) need to establish potent antecedent stimulus control while utilizing whatever contingent reinforcers are available. These three issues are interactive rather than independent influences on the chair, but antecedent and postcedent stimulus control encompass behaviors that the chair can emit as opposed to being parts of the environment in which the chair behaves. Therefore, the remainder of this paper will explore stimulus and reinforcer control strategies available to the department chair, bearing in mind that the nature of the academy elevates stimulus control procedures into primary strategies: they, to a much greater extent than reinforcers, are manipulatable by the chair, a situation quite different from conventional business and industrial contexts (e.g., Daniels, 1997; Daniels & Rosen, 2001).

ANTECEDENT STIMULUS CONTROL

The chair has a relatively direct and powerful influence over the department’s “ambience,” “expectations,” guidelines, and goals. Depending on the articulation, these elements can function as establishing operations (EO) or as discriminative stimuli (S^d). In the context of chair behavior, important establishing operations include instituting a “clean slate,” availability, displaying positive interpersonal assertiveness, articulating visions and missions, legitimizing faculty and student diversity, and adding prompts into the system. Potent discriminative stimuli include developing and enforcing clear rules, becoming a faculty advocate, operationalizing goals, functioning as a model of multi-role competency, and arranging for necessary environmental supports.

Establishing operations

Michael (2000) describes two interwoven impacts of an establishing operation (EO): a *reinforcer establishing effect* that changes the reinforcing effectiveness of a stimulus and an *evocative effect* that modifies the current frequency of all responses that have been reinforced by that stimulus. In the present context, then, one task of the chair is to develop the “motivations” that make at least a subset of the available environmental stimuli function as reinforcers for faculty (and to a lesser extent, for students and staff) and also change the frequency of those behaviors that are likely to acquire or avoid those reinforcers.

In the context of an academic department, EOs make dramatic contributions to faculty “morale.” Most departments have faculty who exhibit uneven, low, or no scholarly productivity, frequently express cynicism and perhaps even bitterness

over past wrongs, encourage fractionation, avoid collegial responsibilities such as advising or committee work, or emit uncooperative and selfish behaviors that have been shaped over many years in the institution. Morale will be a problem if these individuals constitute a sizable portion of the department's faculty. And because contingency management is relatively weak in the academy, the chair is likely to find that EOs offer an appealing and relatively potent mechanism to redress undesired faculty behaviors and encourage productivity and collegiality.

Establishment of a "clean slate." Even a small department has one or more members whose behavior has been problematic in some manner to a departing chair. Common issues include combativeness, interpersonal conflict, excessive private practice consulting, insufficient time on campus, disinterest and lack of motivation, non-cooperativeness, and excessive rule-breaking. Typically, an errant faculty member has well-established and perhaps well-deserved notoriety in the department and is caught in a deep hole from which behavioral escape is impossible; one consequence of this entrapment may be a decrease in or even elimination of appropriate or desired behaviors, perhaps in a manner analogous to learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975). The incoming chair has the opportunity to establish a new learning history with these faculty members by disavowing the relevance of the past issues and introducing new, achievable expectations (see discussion below on shaping). The "clean slate," in effect, immediately lets the deviating faculty member get out of the deep hole and in a position to acquire meaningful reinforcement again.

Predictable Availability. The chair's availability can range from "barely around" to "virtually omnipresent." The chair whose availability is consistent and generous will experience frequent, and probably increasing, faculty interaction—assuming the chair's responses to such contacts are inviting and embracing (see "positive interpersonal assertiveness" below). Many chairs deliberately retain their "old" faculty office so they can periodically reclude themselves to "write" (e.g. Clements, 1998), but this multiple schedule strategy has costs: faculty motivations can be fickle, opportunities for relationship-building are missed, and frustrations aroused by lack of reinforcement may elicit negative emotional responses. Of course, the chair cannot be on call 24/7, or even 9/5 – but ubiquitous availability is not necessary for faculty to learn that contact can be made predictably and needed information acquired in a timely manner. Today, e-mail makes extended availability even easier to accomplish.

But can the chair's scholarly or administrative work be accomplished with constant interruptions? There is no doubt that generous "open door" and "rapid e-mail reply" policies result in a reduced output of administrivia and scholarly writing, as the chair is essentially responding on a concurrent schedule of reinforcement. However, as the chair gradually acquires the skill of "response alternation," including the essential behavior of clicking on the "save" icon before turning away from the computer, the emission of brief "non-chair" responses is likely to maximize his or her overall reinforcement (cf., Baum & Aparicio, 1999; MacDonall, 1999; Rachlin, Green, Kagel, & Battalio, 1976). In the best scenario, the chair will complete some scholarly writing and will also facilitate the smooth

functioning of the department by making needed support, problem-solving resources, and information sharing readily available to faculty, students, staff, deans, and other administrators. Generous availability predicts for others immediate and consistent reinforcement – sometimes intermediate, as when the chair can only promise to investigate potential solutions to a problem, gather necessary information, or agree to communicate soon with another person or office on campus. Naturally, there will be many circumstances in which the chair will be unable to cease an ongoing activity and focus immediately on a “drop in;” nevertheless, the chair can still communicate to the individual that her or his issue is important – most persuasively by immediately arranging an alternative mutually convenient time in the near future to address the issue. The key element here is that the chair’s response provides reinforcement to the requester, whether directly resolving the issue at hand or providing information, direction, or offers of help that will facilitate a timely resolution.

Positive Interpersonal Assertiveness. The benefits of a generous availability policy can only be realized if it is enacted through chair behaviors that characterize interpersonal warmth, acceptance, and valuing. These responses will include a) nonverbal components such as eye contact, smiling, open gestures, and relaxed body, b) paralinguistic features like appropriate inflection and duration, measured (not pressured) rate of speech, and moderate latency, and c) welcoming words that are inviting and warm yet fit the interpersonal “style” of the chair. In addition, two “content” responses that contribute mightily to a Chair’s positive stimulus value are (a) honest communications even when the situation involves unpleasant or conflictual elements (Logue, 1998) and (b) the judicious use of humor to defuse, appreciate, or contextualize common issues (Foot, 1997). Faculty, staff, and others should *want* to talk with the chair.

Identification of a global vision. Ideally, the chair will assume the role of leader as well as manager by helping the department articulate an overarching set of ideals that are consistent with institutional and departmental missions and address social or community needs. These might propose a contemporary updated curriculum, new certificate and/or degree programs, an expanded conceptualization of scholarship (Boyer, 1990), a department-affiliated center that generates income, or positioning the department as a community resource. Properly formulated and articulated “visions” will function as EOs, and thereby motivate faculty to emit behaviors that would not otherwise come under control of the extant contingencies, such as the development of new courses, increased participation on committees, submission of grants, collaboration with others on interdisciplinary research, or involvement with community partners. Staff and upper administrators might also respond to visionary EOs. For example, secretaries might identify ways to improve department operations or the dean may offer expanded resources or invite the department to participate in initiatives that he or she is championing.

There is no *a priori* reason why any particular chair “vision” should function as an EO for, say, all or even some faculty. The way the chair frames and promotes the vision will determine its stimulus value. For example, even within the context of an institutional mission statement that promotes the university as a resource for

social problem solving, a traditional basic researcher may remain unimpressed by chair proposals that advocate increased community involvement, service learning, or professional programs; this same scholar, however, may respond more enthusiastically to a perspective that argues for what could be called “selective opportunism” in which the department seizes fortuitous occasions to improve its status in the university, academy, and regional community—with “improved status” the key to increased options and resources in the future for both traditional and nontraditional endeavors. Scholars who are hesitant to stray from classical notions of the ivory tower are likely to be more willing to experiment with innovation that promises to pay off for them materially in the future.

The articulation of global visions may give the chair a relatively direct opportunity to promote progressive values. For instance, upper administrators in many types of colleges and universities now champion an expanded conceptualization of scholarship that goes beyond traditional notions of discovery to include integration, application, and teaching (Boyer, 1990) and now even encompasses community service (Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Lynton, 1995). This broad perspective has achieved widespread acceptance in many of the arts and sciences (Diamond & Adam, 1995), including psychology (Halpern et al, 1998; Halpern & Reich, 1999). The reconsideration of what constitutes acceptable, legitimate, rigorous scholarship may advance progressive goals by being more friendly and accessible to minority scholars, by encouraging research into the teaching and learning process, and by promoting the transfer and then evaluation of laboratory-generated findings into the less controlled natural environment.

Legitimizing faculty diversity. Chairs today face internal and external challenges to enhance their unit’s diversity in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and physical capacity. The opportunities to enact a proactive stance will occur frequently through tenure track faculty searches, tenure and promotion actions, part time faculty utilization, mentoring of faculty and students, modification of curricular requirements, and implementation of new courses and certificate and degree programs. Unfortunately, diversity issues still elicit discomfort in the academy (Lewis, 2000); resistance may be couched within philosophical objections to affirmative action per se or, more insidiously, through an unquestioned insistence on rigid adherence to traditional academic criteria that fails to acknowledge that those standards are narrowly defined, historically implanted, value-laden, and white-male centered. Thus, when debates arise over graduate student admissions and evaluations, program formats that are tailored to nontraditional students, collaborations with nonacademic partners, and faculty searches and performance reviews, the chair needs to articulate the functional relationships that characterize – and hinder – the academic life of students and faculty who are female, nonwhite, or otherwise recognized as non-majority persons. For example, it is clear that even today bias still exists; a recent study found that both male and female academic psychologists (a) were more likely to vote to hire a male job applicant than a female job applicant with an identical record and (b) judged the male applicant’s teaching, research, and service to be superior to the female applicant’s (Steinpreis, Anders, & Ritzke, 1999).

A detailed exposition of the difficulties faced by non-majority faculty in academe is beyond the scope of this paper, but has been examined at length elsewhere (Alexander-Snow & Johnson, 1999; Pellet & Nelson, 1997; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). A cursory list of potential issues includes (a) the absence of appropriate mentors; (b) research that may be “different” (e.g., more qualitative compared to a discipline’s quantitative emphasis); (c) publication outlets that have less visibility, status, or presumed rigor (e.g., relatively high acceptance rates); (d) inordinate requests to serve as minority group representative (e.g., search committees, task forces, roundtables, social events); (e) chilly departmental climate (e.g., other faculty rarely give social invitations to or even show interest in getting to know the minority member); and (f) family background variables (e.g., less sophisticated education) or current family responsibilities (e.g., elder care) that impede progress. Further, faculty of color, having attained a prestigious position, may now be enmeshed in numerous community leadership roles that drain their time and energy. On a personal level, the learning history of many non-majority faculty members may lead them to react more quickly and strongly to perceived racism or sexism, a response likely to be viewed negatively by mainstream faculty. Some women will embrace excessive service opportunities as part of a class of generalized nurturing responses. Finally, women still tend to be the primary caretaker of children and elderly parents, necessitating that work duties be scheduled around these responsibilities. Because emergencies and illness of those under care will occur, control of time and flexibility may assume more importance than ambitious career desires in making decisions about such matters as teaching schedules, travel to professional meetings, committee work, and research agendas. In many circumstances, a delay in the tenure clock will be appropriate. Of course, data are needed to confirm that major interruptions in research programs cost the person only the actual time off rather than a significantly longer period to restart the endeavor.

Today many departments demonstrate a token diversity, with one member of a non-majority group providing evidence that the unit is open to all. But a true diversity, in which multiple members of non-majority groups are represented, dares the department to change itself by accommodating to new world views that, in fact, may challenge the status quo. One lonely nonwhite may be a department’s badge of honor; but a cadre of, say, white and nonwhite women who achieve tenure together will alter the balance of power in a department, introduce new perspectives, criteria, and values, and possibly stimulate conflict with the entrenched white male traditionalists. Consequently, some departments will hire and mentor non-majority faculty only if the chair can introduce one or more EOs that make such actions seem worthwhile to most faculty. Examples of such pragmatic EOs might be promises by the dean of enhanced resources, removal of the department from the affirmative action office’s list of “noncomplying” units, or relieving mainstream faculty of the task of advising and mentoring minority students. The pragmatic EO is essential if the threat “diversity” poses to some in the academy is to be overcome.

Adding prompts into the system. The chair can provide verbal prompts designed to initiate performance of the early steps of a behavior chain. Colloquially, this is akin to “planting an idea in someone’s mind.” The thought that is prompted was not under the control of existing environmental stimuli, and the thought itself is only an intermediate response in the chain. And while it may be a crucial step that eventually leads to the terminal behavior and ultimate reinforcer, stimuli that might set the occasion for such responses are not introduced at this time. The goal of the prompt is to establish the early responses in the behavior chain and then let “natural” functional relationships guide performance. Examples of prompts might be: “I’m trying to enliven the curriculum. I’m wondering if you’re ready to develop a new course;” “I need a volunteer for the dean’s grants advisory committee; You might think whether it makes sense for you to be on it.” “I’d like you to consider teaching graduate stats next year.”

Discriminative Stimuli

While establishing operations can be thought of as providing the “motivation” for behavior, discriminative stimuli offer the actor the cues and guidelines needed to successfully address the motivational issues.

Establishing clear rules to guide behavior. Faculty are like most people: they are more apt to perform desired behaviors if they understand what behaviors are expected of them in specific situations. The chair (and, as appropriate, one or more faculty committees) must develop and implement a range of equitable rules that promote unambiguous expectations. Probably the most important set of rules will be the department’s guidelines for promotion and tenure; Diamond (1999) emphasizes the centrality of this document to the functioning of faculty:

Specific clear departmental statements about promotion and tenure procedures and criteria are essential to a successful faculty rewards system. The departmental document should identify departmental priorities and demonstrate how they are aligned with the faculty reward system, spell out procedures in detail, articulate unique characteristics of each discipline, and describe how scholarship is defined in the field. It can provide new faculty with an understanding of what is important and how the priorities of the department support the mission of the institution. It is also this document that should provide clear and essential guidelines to those who serve on the departmental promotion and tenure committee and to faculty who are preparing for promotion and tenure review. In addition, it is this statement that is the basis upon which other committees, deans, provosts, and administrators must rely as they review the recommendations that are being made.” (P. 95)

In addition to the promotion and tenure guidelines, general rules applicable to all departmental members include policies related to use of photocopy equipment, long distance telephoning, travel reimbursement, secretarial staff, etc. A set of rules is likely to exist for course instruction, including those related to text selection, syllabi, office hours, student advising, class cancellations, and grading. Other rules will need to be tailored to individual faculty, in the context of their past

performance and future goals. Faculty also need to understand what the chair expects of them in the coming academic year in terms of a) scholarship and grant writing; b) departmental, university, and professional service; c) teaching load and nontraditional instruction (e.g., off campus, distance learning, video, web-based, weekend, evening, etc.); and d) private practice and consulting activities. Ideally, all rules – general and individual – will specify consequences that are reasonable, realistic, and manipulatable. Moreover, the individualized rules that are intended to prompt faculty behavior should incorporate shaping principles (see discussion below).

Chair as faculty advocate. A chair will acquire a powerful positive stimulus value if faculty perceive that he or she is their advocate in conflict situations. Naturally, the chair cannot blindly support all faculty in every contentious circumstance—a reputation as oppositional to the dean or unfriendly to student concerns will not serve him or her well either. Nevertheless, layers of gray often emerge upon investigation from what is presented as a black-and-white situation; the chair who is known to empathize with and promote the faculty’s perspectives and interests as part of the conflict resolution process will develop a positive and highly useful reputation.

Operationalizing goals. The chair must operationalize the specific goals that the department is expected to meet. Typically, some of these will be externally imposed. In all but the most discouraging financial situations, goals will almost certainly include the (a) maximization of research and grant productivity, (b) improvement in teaching effectiveness, (c) expansion of service contributions, (d) optimization of student credit hour production, (e) enhancement of collegiality and morale, and (f) promotion of growth in faculty lines, academic programs, disciplinary visibility and status, community influence, and development funds. Some chairs will have additional specific goals related to increased social responsibility, community service, and student and faculty diversity. Departmental goals are likely to be long term, but can often be broken down into subgoals that retain potent discriminative qualities.

Chair as model of multi-role competency. The chair, as the most visible member of the department, will inevitably be a model for other faculty, prompting or inhibiting actions in relation to the reinforcement achieved by the chair. While no chair is likely to enact all roles well, he or she can strive to model as many as feasible: conscientious and effective instructor, willing contributor to departmental and university citizenship, generous research and/or clinical supervisor, active grant seeker, visible member of the discipline and/or profession, thoughtful supporter of technologically delivered or enhanced instruction, efficacious administrator, and committed scholar despite enormous time pressures and task demands.

It is particularly important that the chair continue to produce some scholarship, even if the previous level of output cannot be maintained (cf., Gmelch & Miskin, 1993; Hecht, 2001). Because many faculty deride administrators as paper-pushers who lack intellectual legitimacy, the maintenance of visible scholarship is likely to increase the chair’s credibility, particularly with the very

traditional faculty. This will then smooth the way for the chair to respond positively to the needs of the less conventional department members.

Implementing appropriate general environmental supports. While each department has a unique milieu, all need proper facilities and modest amenities to function efficiently or even properly. Faculty expect the chair to provide—or fight for—the space, staff, and resources that will make the work environment pleasant and productive. Basics include contemporary personal computers, comfortable offices, well-equipped labs and research rooms, and sufficient storage space. Environmental supports such as properly configured seminar tables, comfortable chairs, in-house media equipment (e.g., VCR set-up, laptop computers for classroom use), and a state-of-the-art, multi-function, high-speed photocopier will enhance faculty morale and productivity. In addition, the adequacy of the departmental staffing, including administrative assistance, secretarial support, and student help will contribute strongly to the setting events that influence faculty behavior. Finally, the department's spatial configuration—central offices, mailboxes, faculty lounges, student areas, full time and part time faculty offices, seminar rooms, conference rooms, and libraries—is likely to affect a range of faculty behaviors, including use of equipment, socialization, and student interaction.

REINFORCEMENT (POSTCEDENT) CONTROL

As has been noted earlier, the chair's arsenal of carrots and sticks is limited by the academic culture. The typical department has more tenured than untenured faculty. It probably has 85% or more of its budget allocated to salaries, leaving very little for operating expenses and even less for discretionary disbursement. Faculty governance controls academic decision making. There may be a union-management collective bargaining agreement that establishes faculty workload, pay scales, raises, rights and responsibilities, and many other aspects of professional life. If the faculty is not unionized, then the chair's power is limited to recommendations that must be approved by the dean and/or provost. Under these circumstances, utilizing contingency management effectively is a genuine challenge.

Nevertheless, a creative chair can still employ reinforcement principles to help faculty achieve individual and department goals. Among the basic issues to consider are (a) establishing behavioral criteria and using shaping; (b) utilizing rules flexibly and facilitating self-control; and (c) developing a range of individualized and group reinforcers.

Behavioral criteria and shaping

As in all instances informed by the behavioral perspective, one cannot simply demand behavioral performance that achieves a specific criterion, even if that criterion is reasonably nonarbitrary. A chair cannot expect a dramatic behavior change that achieves an idealized standard from the faculty member who has

withdrawn from the department, who has drifted into excessive and time-consuming off campus consulting activities that pay big bucks, or who has ceased scholarly productivity for a decade or more. Rather, the chair must work patiently with such faculty to gradually increase involvement in the department, time on campus, or scholarly output. Further, the chair must communicate to his or her dean that gradual change in the faculty member's behavior is the *only* reasonable goal, given that a faculty member (like any organism) is always behaving as he or she "should," even if that behavior is judged to be insufficient, unacceptable, or undesirable.

When shaping is used by the chair, the initial criterion response of a faculty member (and also of an administrator) is likely to be a verbal one that essentially says "maybe" or "I'll think about it." Other responses along a frequency continuum might be drafting sketchy program ideas or memos of inquiry, producing rough drafts of manuscripts, organizing or attending meetings, or agreeing to teach a new course in the future. Duration might be shaped when a faculty member spends more time advising students, visiting field sites, or being present for official office hours. Intensity might be shaped when program proposals are fleshed out in increasingly greater detail through successive iterations.

The limited contingency arrangements that can be manipulated in academia increase the challenge when using shaping. Nevertheless, individually tailored reinforcers do exist; as with all shaping scenarios, an emphasis on positive over negative reinforcers will make the change process smoother and more rewarding, though, the use of the latter should be considered under appropriate circumstances (see below).

Contingency-shaped versus rule-governed behavior

The chair must balance actions dictated by rules such as department and college by-laws and collective bargaining agreements with the unique needs presented by each circumstance. Rules have distinct advantages as behavioral guides, but they can promote rigid responding that is insensitive to changed contingencies (Hayes, Brownstein, Haas, & Greenway, 1986; Hayes, Brownstein, Zettle, Rosenfarb, & Korn, 1986). Thus, the astute administrator will learn to discriminate when formal and informal rules possess the flexibility to permit the introduction of contingencies. For example, an informal rule may be that "all graduate program directors receive one course release during the academic year and an administrative stipend in the summer." But changed circumstances may require breaking the rule. The director of a program that is no longer central to the institutional mission and whose enrollment has withered may now receive the course release only in alternate years and/or have the summer stipend discontinued. The director of a flourishing program with increasing time demands might earn extra travel or graduate assistant support.

Finally, some rule-governed behaviors in academia are naturally sensitive to contingencies, particularly those attendant to prudent fiscal management and delay

of reinforcement. Unfortunately, due to the way scarce reinforcers are dispensed in academia, many experienced administrators routinely select small immediate reinforcers for their units instead of waiting for larger reinforcers promised in the future (Logue & Anderson, 2001). The primacy of contingency-shaped behavior over self-control rule governed behavior in these situations is probably adaptive in the short run but can have significant costs to the department and institution in the longer term.

Reinforcing stimuli

The faculty are a diverse group, bound together by a historical discipline more than by current compatibilities. In the past, the scope of a discipline's subject matter was relatively limited and noncontentious. Today, a discipline encompasses many subspecialties; faculty will react by disparaging some as illegitimate and by embracing others as exciting frontiers for interdisciplinary inquiry. Historically, publically-acknowledged diversity was limited to age and rank, while now gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical challenge are important contributors to the make-up of a heterogeneous faculty. This intellectual and demographic heterogeneity of the contemporary department challenges the chair's creativity in identifying, acquiring, manipulating, and dispensing reinforcers to the faculty. Nevertheless, it is fairly easy to develop a set of generalized potential positive reinforcers that the chair can utilize:

- Direct and immediate social reinforcers (e.g., praise – for good student evaluations of instruction, submission of a new grant proposal, acceptance of a manuscript, development of a collaborative program, campus prominence with election to a committee)
- Indirect and delayed social reinforcement (communications to the dean of accomplishments by faculty, copied to the relevant faculty members, and hopefully subsequent acknowledgment by the dean to the faculty members)
- Professional leaves of absence (sabbaticals)
- Money (for travel, professional development, summer stipend)
- Material goods (equipment, office space)
- Student assistants (graduate, undergraduate, work-study)
- High probability behaviors (e.g., teach a desired course the term after teaching an undesired course; also particularly useful for staff, e.g., leave work a few minutes early; comp time)
- Course schedules (choice of course and/or time slot; opportunity to teach new specialty course/seminar)
- Course releases (for administrative work such as program director, committee leadership, special projects)
- Support letters (for promotion, interim reviews, sabbatical, internal and external funding proposals, internal positions, etc.)
- Merit raise/bonus recommendations
- Reduction in committee assignments or other administrative work

- Public recognition (notices in campus publications and on department web site, presentation of awards, nominations for awards)
- Accommodations or considerations for personal problems and individualized needs

In addition to the individual reinforcers, the chair may be able to acquire group reinforcers from the upper administration that presumably strengthen the behavior of all the department's members. These could include new or replacement faculty lines, support for new degree programs, additional staff or resources, new furniture or office equipment, upgraded teaching and lab equipment.

The chair may at times utilize negative reinforcers, though these should be employed with great restraint (Logue, 1998). These stimuli most commonly include blunt (perhaps harsh) criticism of performance, increased teaching load, withdrawal of individualized special considerations (e.g., resumption of night or weekend course assignments), or removing "protective" actions that leave the faculty member more exposed to natural contingencies (such as the ire of other faculty, staff, or administrators). For example, a chair who has successfully negotiated with the dean to keep a nonproductive faculty member's teaching load at "normal" levels – by emphasizing very strongly that much "work is in progress" – can describe in a distinctly less favorable manner what turns out to be minimal and nonincreasing efforts.

It is important to recognize that functional relations in the natural environment frequently embody delayed and correlational reinforcement rather than immediate and contingent reinforcement. Many departmental goals, for instance, are complex and only attainable through cumulative efforts over time, such as the final approval of a new degree program or the hiring of additional faculty to relieve overworked current faculty. The chair must identify intermediate reinforcers to bridge the delay until the terminal reinforcer is attained. In addition, while *quid pro quo* arrangements can sometimes be established, the more common mechanism will be to provide the faculty member with a reinforcing "payback" at a time after he or she has emitted the desired actions. The chair must clearly label the delayed contingency so that the faculty learn a prioritized and generalized departmental rule: Good work will eventually pay off in a personally meaningful way.

Finally, the chair must use contingency management strategies in such a manner that all department members receive fair and equitable treatment; perceptions of favoritism in the deployment of scarce reinforcers quickly will undermine the chair's credibility. Further, it is obvious that postcedent control ultimately relies on a strong and collaborative relationship between the chair and the dean (Zedeck, 1998), who ultimately controls many of the reinforcers that the chair needs.

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis suggests that the chair of an academic department is in a unique—perhaps uniquely weak—position as a leader. The nature of academia, particularly tenure and faculty governance, insulates faculty from many

direct contingencies; consequently, the chair, to a much greater extent than the head of a department in a traditional business, must rely on antecedent stimulus control to induce faculty to behave in the interests of the commonweal first and the self second. The academic department, in other words, has much more of a socialist than capitalist flavor to it. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, today's students and upper administrators are increasingly responsive to market pressures (cf. Lamal, et al, 2000). This places the chair in the unenviable position of meeting contingencies imposed by a materialistic value system through leadership that relies disproportionately on moral persuasion. This internally inconsistent position is then weakened even further by the widespread perception (and self-perception) of the chair as "part faculty – part administrator."

A behavior analytic understanding of the chair's role can aid the Dean and other upper administrators nurture more effective departmental leadership. Upper administrators can encourage chairs to accept the notion that they are *administrators who have reduced teaching responsibilities*, as opposed to faculty who are doing extensive administrative work or faculty-administrators in a dual and sometimes conflicting role. This can be accomplished by employing consistent verbal descriptors in both oral speech and written materials. Chairs should be designated on organizational charts as part of the administration and listed on documents and web sites under administrative headings. Deans and upper administrators should reinforce chair verbalizations that are consistent with the "administrator" self concept and mildly punish those that reflect role confusion. Chairs who consistently verbalize an "administrator" self-concept are predicted to function as more effective members of the administrative team and to experience less stress and tension while fulfilling the role. In addition, upper administrators can recognize and appreciate the extant contingencies under which chairs exert leadership. They can offer support, encouragement, and understanding, in line with antecedent environmental manipulations, but they – to a much greater extent than chairs – can manipulate contingent positive reinforcers and thereby directly encourage desired chair behaviors.

The chair's relatively weak contingency management options means the that antecedent stimulus control assumes great importance in managing and leading the department. This approach has proven powerful in working in developmental disabilities contexts, particularly in settings where 'client rights' constrain the use of contingent positive and negative reinforcers (cf., Jackson & Panyan, 2001; Koegel, Koegel, & Dunlap, 1996; Luiselli & Cameron, 1998). The alteration of the antecedent environment can change a problematic departmental "culture" fairly rapidly as new EOs provide motivation and new S^ds offer guidance for attaining reinforcement. The chair can capitalize on improved faculty morale and increased activity to advance a range of department goals, from conventional academic ones to those that embody more controversial academic and social values (Young, 1997).

Of course, not everyone will be pleased with the way the department is run or the manner in which the chair carries out his or her functions. Even chairs who rely on encouragement and positive reinforcement inevitably will face unpleasant

conflicts that require tact, assertive skills, and a relatively thick skin (Rakos, 1997). One predictable situation with the potential to produce significant discord occurs when the chair must make an unfavorable decision regarding promotion and/or tenure of a faculty member. This conflict is likely to assume emotional overtones and spread beyond the affected individual to his or her friends or supporters on the faculty. Unfortunately, the chair who routinely fails to make the hard decisions on personnel will soon fall into disfavor with his or her dean – and then the entire department may suffer. Logue (1998) conceptualizes this dilemma within the construct of self control, in which the chair must choose between experiencing an immediate noxious stimulus (the fallout from not supporting the candidate's tenure bid) versus undergoing a larger though delayed aversive outcome (the permanent presence of a weak or problematic faculty member and the personal and departmental loss of credibility with upper administrators).

A second potentially controversial circumstance is when the chair advocates for highly innovative programs with which faculty are unfamiliar and uncomfortable. The format as well as the content may arouse suspicions in some of the very traditional faculty. The chair who supports novel approaches to achieving the institutional mission may find himself or herself in opposition to a politically active segment of the faculty. In some cases, faculty governance and control over the curriculum may be inconsistent with a rapid response to the needs expressed by students and/or community and business leaders. In fact, because market factors are now commonly part of the contingencies for students and administrators but *not* for faculty (Lamal, et al, 2000), the ability to provide leadership for, and management of, creative change may prove to be the contemporary chair's greatest challenge (Lucas, 2000).

A behavior analysis of the academic chair role does not produce pat advice for the novice chair, nor does it offer great comfort to faculty who might entertain running for the position as part of a career trajectory. The behavioral perspective does, however, suggest that a successful chair is more likely to depend on modifying the antecedent environment relative to relying on postcedent control. The analysis also highlights the importance of reducing or even eliminating the role ambiguity inherent in the position; the adoption of verbal labels that identify the status as administrative is likely to maximize the chair's impact within the department and with upper administrators. Chairs who are comfortable functioning as administrators, and who understand antecedent stimulus control, will increase the probability of enacting positive and progressive change within their departments and perhaps even institutions.

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