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The Business Case For Equal Opportunities

Equality, Equity and Egalitarianism

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Abstract

The research project reported in this thesis concerned the business case for equal opportunity in the workplace. The project comprised three distinct but related studies:

1. Study 1 was a qualitative investigation into which variables employees perceived to be associated with equal opportunity in the workplace. The over-arching finding was that participants had a low awareness of equal opportunity and perceived general fairness (organisational egalitarianism) to be more important than equal opportunity per se. Job attitude outcome variables of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to leave and perceived performance were proposed.
2. Study 2 qualitatively explored the issues associated with the business case for equal opportunity as perceived by equality practitioners. Results detailed perceptions of equal opportunity climate, employer motivations and the problems associated with translating equal opportunity policy into practice.
3. Study 3 sought to quantitatively measure the impact of equal opportunity and organisational egalitarianism on the job attitude outcome variables identified by studies 1 and 2. A questionnaire, the Social Atmosphere at Work Survey, was constructed and piloted to measure the perceived equal opportunity climate, the outcome variables and an individual difference construct, equity sensitivity.

Results indicated that equal opportunity significantly contributed to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to leave and perceived workgroup effectiveness. Organisational egalitarianism however proved a stronger predictor of these outcome variables than perceived equal opportunity level, as suggested by the qualitative results. Equity sensitivity did not significantly moderate any of these relationships.

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Preface

The author's initial interest in the topic of the business case for equal opportunities stemmed from the personal experience of working in a number of organisations where colleagues were discriminated against. Most commonly, discrimination was evident on the basis of gender or ethnicity but, working in the field of investment banking, having the wrong background or attending the wrong university often formed the basis for unfair discrimination. The individuals affected eventually ceased being the committed employees they had been previously, which impacted on morale as well as productivity. Some took action through the employment tribunal system but ultimately most simply left the organisation, actively seeking employers who would allow progress on the basis of merit.

Many of these employees had not wanted to leave but felt they had no alternative. Had the organisation made some effort to show they valued their employee's contributions, many would have stayed a good deal longer. It seemed to the author that the organisation would only need to make very small changes that were more about management style and priorities than money. The failure to make these changes cost the organisation far more money in terms of turnover costs and reduced productivity.

These experiences convinced the researcher that there must be a business case for equality of opportunity and, on a personal level, provided the motivation to explore issues of equality in the workplace further. The business case was being widely publicised at the time through government initiatives such as Opportunity 2000 and Race for Business but it was not being widely embraced by commercial organisations. Finding an apparent paucity of empirical evidence, this anecdotal example of the business case seemed to characterise the literature. If there was a genuine business case for equality, why were wholly commercial organisations not exploiting equality as another commercial opportunity?

Chapter 1

General Introduction

The research study reported here concerned the business case for equal opportunities in commercial environments. Non-tautological definitions of equal opportunity are difficult to find (Liff, 1989; Humphries, 1995) but it may be understood as an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of policies, procedures, process, practices, philosophies or perceptions bound by an opposition to unfair discrimination. The business case for equal opportunity refers to the argument that the benefits of equal opportunity initiatives outweigh any costs associated with implementing such initiatives.

Equality of opportunity is a complex topic, which spans many disciplines. The high degree of complexity makes it a fascinating but difficult topic to research and this difficulty, combined with the inherent sensitivity of the field, has resulted in some neglect of the topic in the psychological literature.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the topic itself brings a number of difficulties to the research process. For example, a glance at the reference list illustrates how many different academic and professional fields and sources of information contain vital pieces of the equality and diversity jigsaw. Relying on the usual sources of psychological information risks overlooking major names and seminal works in the field.

It should also be recognised that equal opportunity is a rapidly developing field. The time frame of this research project has already seen dramatic changes in UK and European equality legislation, which have substantially altered the equality practices required of employers. UK practice also continues to be influenced by the growing body of research published here and in the US and it should be acknowledged that this

thesis, as with any published work, presents a snapshot at a point in time that is already historical.

Inevitably, the cost and time restrictions of applied research means that one project cannot do full justice to the wide scope and depth of complexity that surrounds equal opportunity. More realistically, this project aimed to explore common themes and patterns in the literature and in people's perceptions of equal opportunity. Pointers to further research have been included for the reader who would like to pursue particular elements of the research background.

The research project reported here had two main objectives:

1. to explore how equality issues were perceived in commercial UK organisations
2. to quantitatively assess psychological elements of the business case for equality.

1 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

A key aim of the research was to unpack the business case for equality and critically examine the contribution of the psychological elements of the business case. Accordingly, the starting point of the project was a literature review, to establish existing knowledge of equality in commercial environments and to set a context for the research. This is presented in Part I of the thesis.

To understand the complexities of the issues, two qualitative studies were conducted, firstly with a sample of employees from commercial organisations and secondly with a sample of equality practitioners. These qualitative studies are presented in Part II of the thesis.

To quantitatively assess the relative contribution of various psychological elements of the business case, a questionnaire study was conducted in two commercial organisations. This study is presented in Part III of the thesis. Finally, Part IV includes an overview of the thesis, together with conclusions and recommendations.

2 UK LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Of primary consideration in exploring equality issues in the workplace is the legislative framework in which the organisations operate. In Britain, there are a number of key pieces of anti-discrimination legislation and terminology which are summarised in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 below.

2.1 Types of Discrimination

2.1.1 Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs where on the grounds of sex, marital status or race, a person is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex, a single person, or a person not of the same racial group would be treated.

2.1.2 Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs where a requirement or condition which applies equally to everyone has an unjustifiable unequal and detrimental impact on a particular group, regardless of intention.

2.1.3 Institutionalised Discrimination

A more recent addition to the list of terminology is that of ‘institutionalised discrimination’. Primarily since the publication of Macpherson’s report on the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence murder, in which Macpherson found the police guilty of institutionalised racism, the term has become common currency. The Race Relations (Amendment) Bill 2000, described later in this chapter, was drafted in response to Macpherson’s findings. This new legislation pertains only to ‘public authority’ organisations but the high profile now afforded institutional discrimination has brought it firmly into the day-to-day concerns of commercial organisations too. The definition of institutional racism put forward by Herman Ouseley, then chairman of the CRE, in the Commission for Racial Equality’s 1998 Annual Report (page 8) was the “organisational structures, policies, processes and practices which result in ethnic

minorities being treated unfairly and less equally, often without intention or knowledge”, a definition that clearly placed it within the realms of all organisations, not just the public sector.

2.2 Equal Pay Act (EPA) 1970

Although the EPA received Royal Assent in 1970 it did not come into force until 29 December 1975, the same day as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA). It required employers to justify a pay differential by pointing to a genuine material factor other than the difference of sex in three areas:

1. equal pay for like work
2. equal pay for work rated as equivalent
3. equal pay for work of equal value.

This applied to work rated as equivalent under a job evaluation scheme or work of equal value.

2.2.1 Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983

In 1983 the Equal Pay Act (1970) was amended to confirm that equal pay applied to work of equal value as well as equal pay for like work, without the need for a job evaluation survey scheme.

2.3 The Sex Discrimination Acts (SDA) 1975, 1986

The Sex Discrimination Acts (SDA) state that it is unlawful to treat anyone less favourably than a person of the opposite sex is or would be treated in the same circumstances on the grounds of sex or marital status. This applies specifically to both direct and indirect discrimination. In 1986, the SDA was amended to ensure that discrimination in relation to retirement was covered by domestic legislation. In 1999 it was amended to include the Gender Reassignment Regulations, which provided new protection for transsexuals in employment matters. Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation continues to be legally permissible, although the influence of

European law and the Human Rights Act may see this change in the future. The Sex Discrimination Acts cover discrimination in recruitment, promotion, training, transfer or terms and conditions of employment or dismissal.

2.4 Race Relations Act (RRA) 1976

Under the Race Relations Act (RRA) it is unlawful to treat anyone less favourably than another person is or would be treated in the same circumstances because of colour, race, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins. The Race Relations Act covers discrimination in recruitment, promotion, training, transfer or terms and conditions of employment or dismissal. As with the Sex Discrimination Act, both direct and indirect discrimination are expressly covered.

2.4.1 Race Relations (Amendment) Bill 2000

The Race Relations (Amendment) Bill 2000 came into force on 2nd April 2001. The amendment extended the application of the 1976 Act to the police and other public authorities, which had previously been exempt from aspects of the RRA, and placed a positive duty to promote racial equality on public authorities.

This piece of legislation has only just come into force and the planned timetable for the future of the Act (at the time of writing) was that secondary legislation imposing specific duties on listed public bodies would appear by July 2001, with Codes of Practice being issued during the summer of 2001. If passed, specific duties to promote race equality and Codes of Practice would come into force, in November 2001. Specific duties would have to be complied with by May 2002, which sets a fast pace for change.

2.5 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) came into force on 2nd December 1996, replacing the 1944 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (DP(E)A). Under the DDA, the previous system of registering as disabled and the three percent quota requirement were abolished. It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against an employee or applicant on the grounds of disability in employment, training and related matters and

education. Employers who employ fewer than 15 employees are exempt from the DDA, a decrease from the 20 employees rule under the DP(E)A. Under the new Act, disability was defined as when a person has, or has had, a physical or mental impairment that has had a substantial and long-term impact on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

The new legislation also made it illegal for an employer to fail to make reasonable adjustment with regard to an employee's or applicant's disability. It does not differentiate between direct and indirect discrimination but works on the basis of whether or not treatment is "justified". The "reasonable adjustment" element of the Act applies also to goods and services offered which means that employers will need to address the needs of disabled people, whether they be employees, applicants or customers.

The requirement to make "reasonable adjustments" in effect means that an employer may treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person. This favourable treatment is only permitted on the basis of disability. Both the SDA and the RRA allow positive action to be taken in some instances but outlaw positive discrimination on the grounds of race or sex.

2.6 The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998

The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998 came into force on 2nd October 2000 and incorporated into UK law certain rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 14 provided that Convention rights must be protected without discrimination on any grounds such as, sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. Disability as well as sexual orientation and mental status is thought to fall under "other status". Whilst Article 14 applies only in relation to the other convention rights rather than as a stand alone Article, it is immensely important because it substantially widens the grounds on which discrimination may occur.

Case law has yet to establish the full extent of the impact of the Human Rights Act but it has undeniably placed considerable responsibilities on public authorities with regard to equality issues. Private employers are not expressly bound by the HRA however since courts and tribunals are public authorities they are required to interpret UK anti-discrimination legislation with regard to the Human Rights Act. Both public and private organisations are therefore affected by the introduction of the Human Rights Act.

2.7 European Community Law

European Community Law has applied to Britain since 1973. There are three basic sources of European Community law:

The provisions of the principal EC treaty itself (the Treaty of Rome, 1957) establishing the European Community as amended by the Single European Act (1986) and the European Union Treaty 'Maastricht' (1993). This includes Articles 48 – 50, the Free Movement of Labour, and Article 119, which sets out the principles of equal pay for equal work.

European Community Legislation, principally the EC Equal Treatment Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.

European Court of Justice (Luxembourg) decisions.

UK discrimination law has been subject to a number of changes as a direct result of the need to comply with European legislation. These have included the removal of the compensation cap for race and sex discrimination, the equalisation of retirement ages for men and women, a change to maternity rights, and the right to the same statutory protection for part-time employees as for full-time employees.

It is also possible to make a claim under European Law where domestic law would not allow a claim. For example, the detailed drafting of the SDA has been shown to contravene the more general principles of the Equal Treatment Directive, with regard to equal rights for transsexuals.

Clearly ensuring that UK anti-discrimination legislation is compliant with European and Human Rights law means that anti-discrimination law is set to become a fast-changing arena.

All of this anti-discrimination legislation however has not prevented the work force statistics revealing large discrepancies, in pay, occupation type, promotion and unemployment levels. As outlined below, there are still clear gender and ethnicity differentials in the labour force statistics. Since there is scanty labour market data on disability, mental health or sexual orientation, this research project concentrated primarily on gender and ethnicity however many of the principles will apply beyond these social groupings.

3 THE UK LABOUR MARKET

Population estimates from the Office for National Statistics indicated that in 1999, 29 percent of Britain's 57.8 million population were women of working age and 32 percent were men of working age. Overall, 69 percent of working age women and 79 percent of working age men are in employment (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000). Finding up to date, reliable and accurate information about the minority ethnic population is notoriously difficult but according to the labour force estimates for 1998, the employment rates for women and men of working age ranged from 21 and 53 percent for Pakistani/Bangladeshis to 64 percent for Black Caribbean women and 74 percent for Indian men (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000).

The most recent large scale measurement of the population, the 1991 population census provided the most complete and accurate set data regarding the minority ethnic population. At this point in time, 5.5 percent of the population classified themselves as non-white, which translated to over 3 million people (Commission for Racial Equality, 1997). Labour Force estimates for Summer 1998 to Spring 1999, minority ethnic representation in Britain had risen to 6.5 percent of the population. Figure 1 illustrates the main ethnic groups composing the 5.5 percent total minority ethnic population.

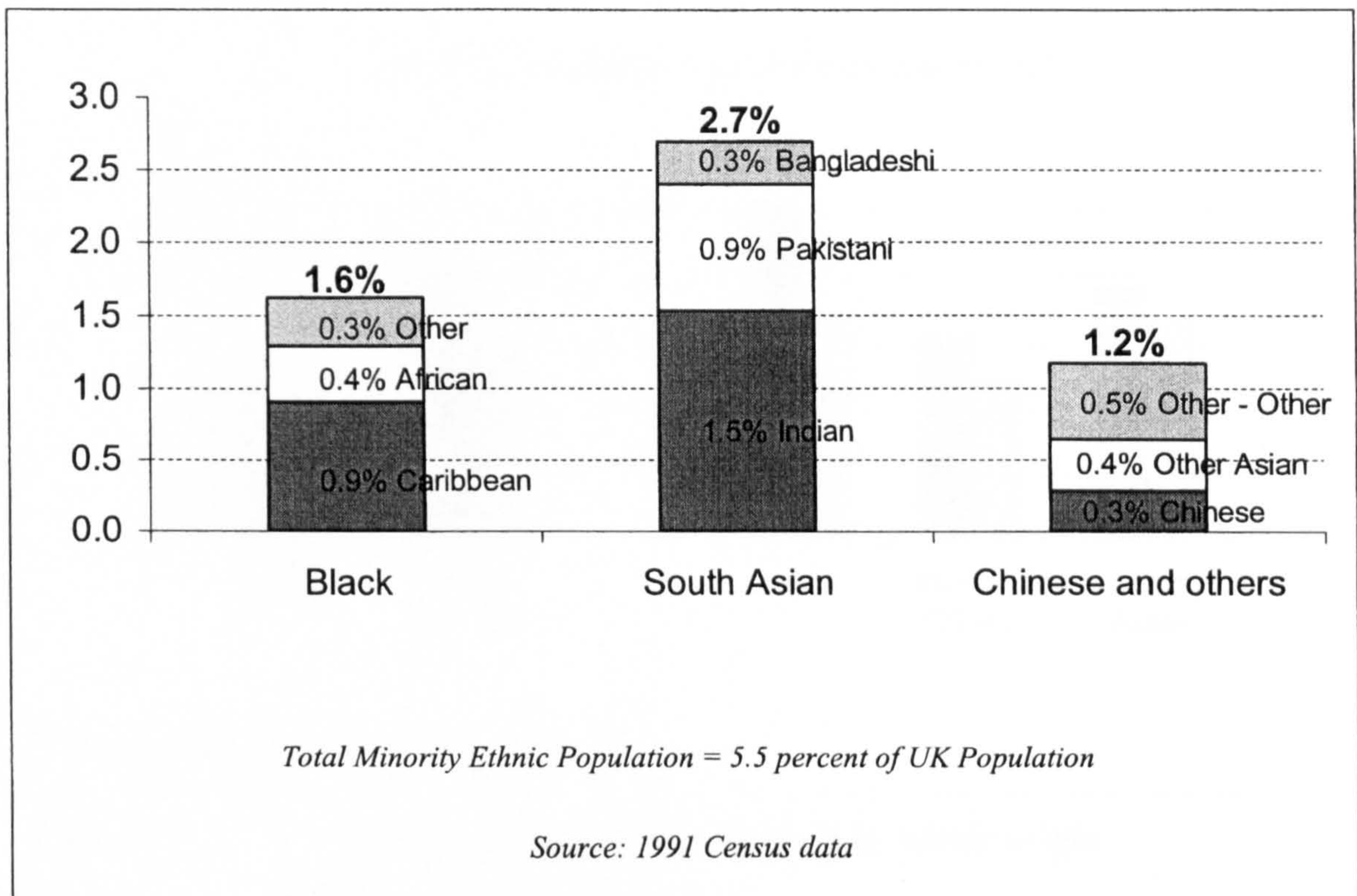


Figure 1: Minority ethnic groups in Britain

3.1 UK Labour Market Inequalities

Despite the raft of anti-discrimination legislation, inequalities in the UK labour market show persistent differentials on the grounds of gender and ethnicity.

3.1.1 Unemployment Inequalities

In terms of ethnicity, Britain's minority ethnic population have consistently shown higher levels of unemployment than the white population. For example, labour force statistics for Spring 1998 showed a ratio of 2.4:1 for black and Asian to white unemployment. Figure 2, which presents unemployment figures for 1998 / 1999 broken down by ethnicity, illustrates the over-representation of minority ethnic groups in the unemployed population.

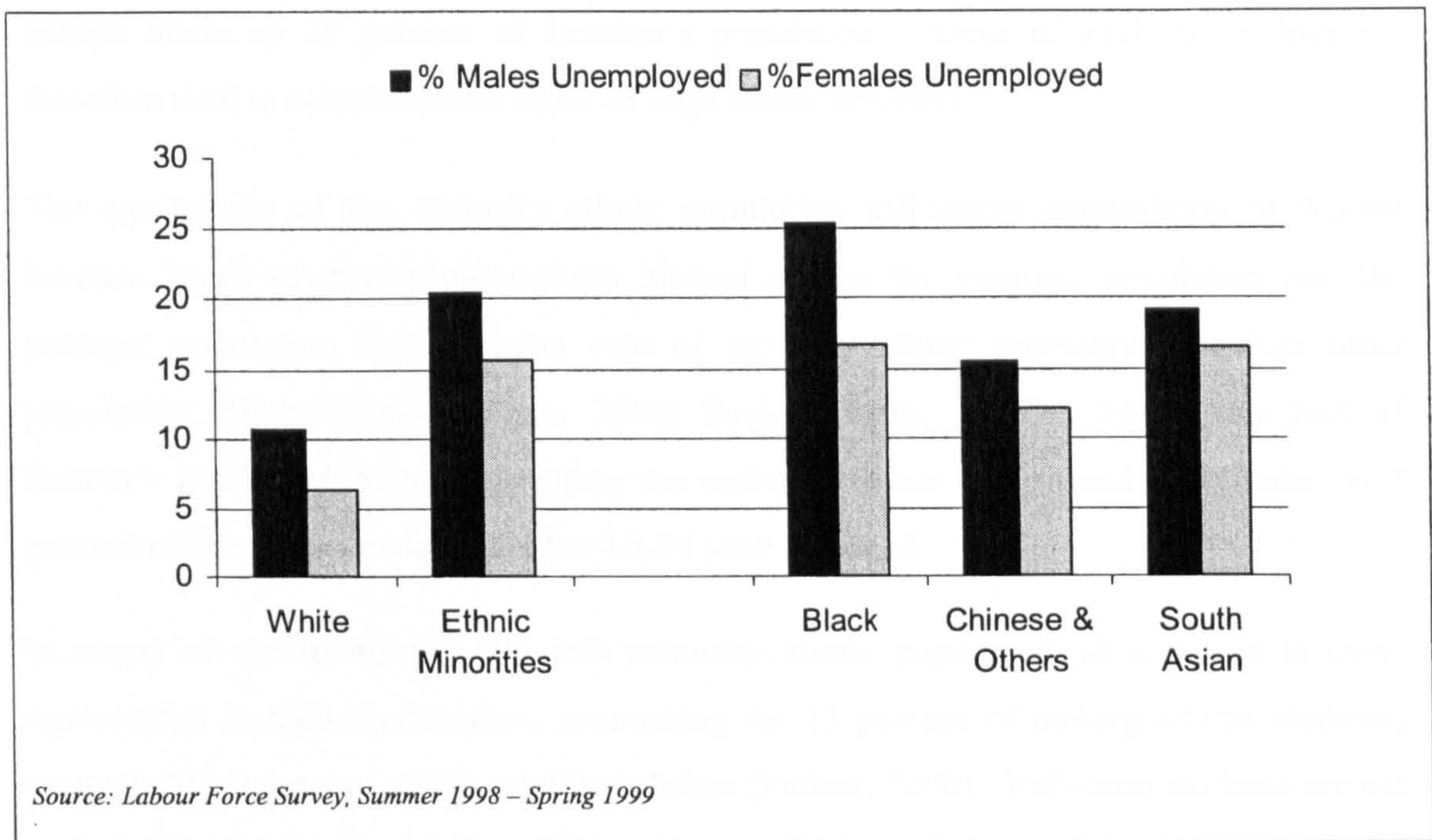


Figure 2: Unemployment levels (percent) by ethnic origin

The most recent labour force estimates (Spring 2000) indicated that unemployment rates stood at 6 percent for white people and at 13 percent for minority ethnic groups as a whole (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000). Pathak (2000) reported that unemployment rates among minority ethnic men were up to three times higher than those of white men and unemployment rates for minority ethnic women were up to four times higher than for white women. Within the minority ethnic population, rates vary greatly between the various ethnic groups. For example, the unemployment rates for Pakistani / Bangladeshi women and men were particularly high at 23 and 21 percent, compared with the Indian population with rates of 9 percent for both women and men. (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000).

These inequalities in the labour force data are not necessarily due to discrimination on the part of employers however and may be explained in part by the geographical distribution, age profile or qualification profile of the various ethnic groups.

Unemployment rates are affected by geographical location and the distribution of Britain's minority ethnic population follows very specific patterns. According to the 1991 population census, the vast majority of Britain's minority ethnic population (97 percent) lived in England, mostly in large urban centres, and non-white minority ethnic

groups made up 20 percent of London's population. Areas of high unemployment therefore tend to correlate with areas of high ethnic diversity.

The age profile of the minority ethnic population influences unemployment figures because levels of unemployment are highest among the younger population and the younger population has a higher rate of minority ethnic representation than older population (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000; Social Trends, 1997). More than half of Britain's black and Asian population are under 25 years of age and they make up 7 percent of the total population in the 16-24 year age band.

In terms of qualifications, Britain's minority ethnic population as a whole is over-represented in higher education, accounting for 13 percent of undergraduate students, compared to 7 percent of the total population (Pathak, 2000). Full-time students are not included in the economically active category of labour force statistics and so may be counted as unemployed, thus distorting the statistics. This explanation does not fully answer the question though since the statistics also show that minority ethnic graduates who are economically active still show a higher proportion of unemployment than their white counterparts, as illustrated in Figure 3, which maps the ethnic origin of graduates against unemployment rates in 1997.

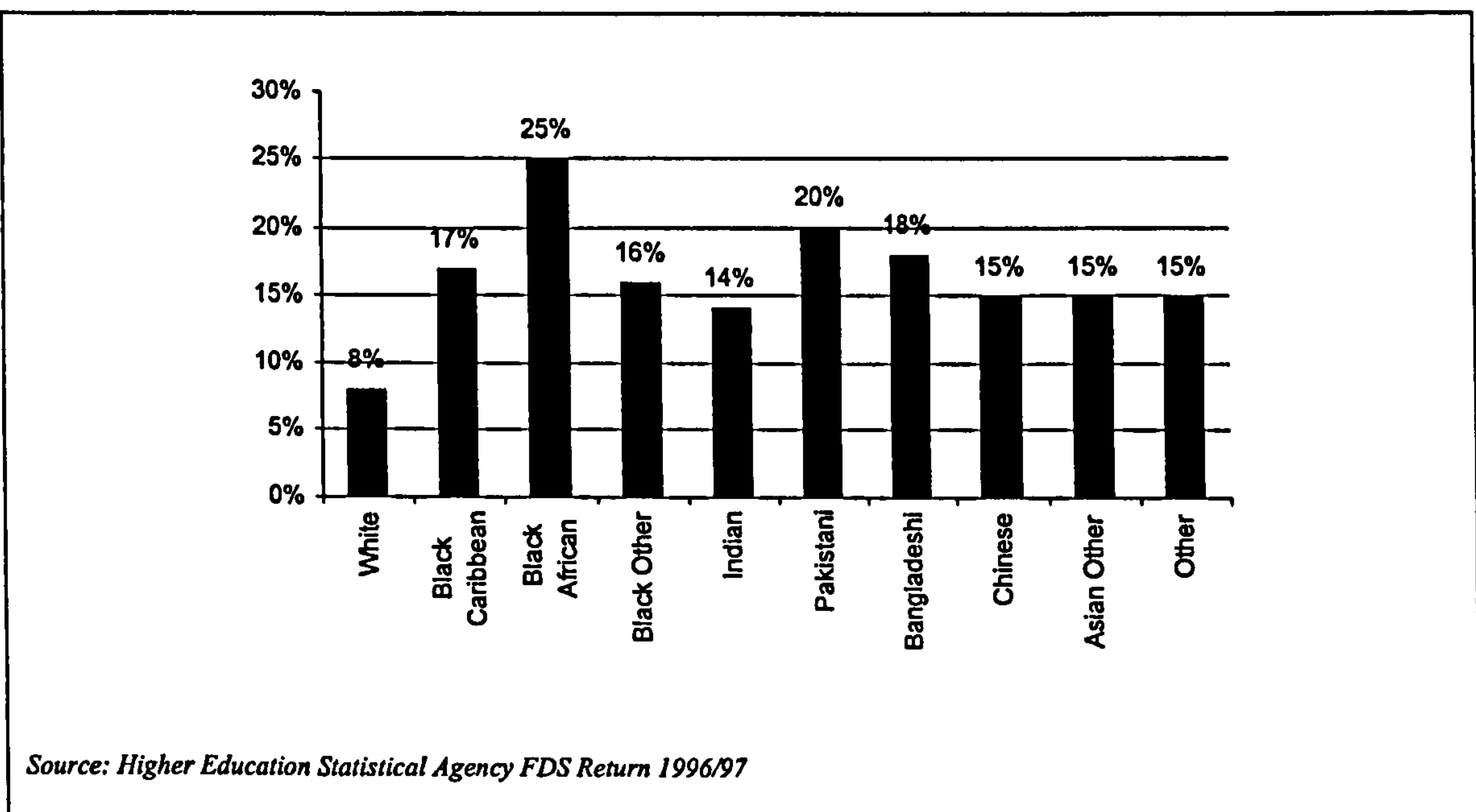


Figure 3: Graduate unemployment as percentage of economically active population 1997

Additionally, although high proportions of the younger generation of minority ethnic population are well qualified, older generations are less likely than whites of similar age to have the recognised qualifications and training, English language proficiency and work experience sought by employers. With some exceptions, the 45 – 59 age group, whether white or from a minority ethnic group, tends to be less likely to have higher qualifications than the younger generation (25 – 29). This is true for the white and minority ethnic population (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1994).

However, as the Commission for Racial Equality commented, “these factors do not tell the whole story: there appears to be an undeniable, persistent overrepresentation of certain ethnic groups” (Commission for Racial Equality, 1998: 5). Pathak came to the same conclusion as the Commission for Racial Equality, stating that “after allowing for differences in personal characteristics, large differences in employment rates between white and ethnic minority men remain. This means discrimination by employers cannot be ruled out as a key factor” (Pathak, 2000: 2).

3.1.2 Occupational Segregation

In theory, women and men have the freedom to follow any career path they choose but in practice very traditional patterns are adhered to. In reality, the 1998 labour force statistics showed that 52 percent of employed women were in occupational groups in which more than 60 percent of workers were women (clerical & secretarial, service and sales occupations). Men are similarly occupationally segregated: 54 percent of employed men were in occupational groups in which more than 60 percent of workers were men (managers & administrators, craft & related occupations and plant & machine operatives). These patterns persist today. Figure 4 shows the distinct patterns of employment for men and women in Spring 2000. Women formed 74 percent of clerical & secretarial occupations, whilst men made up 82 percent of those working as plant & machine operatives or in craft and related occupations (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000).

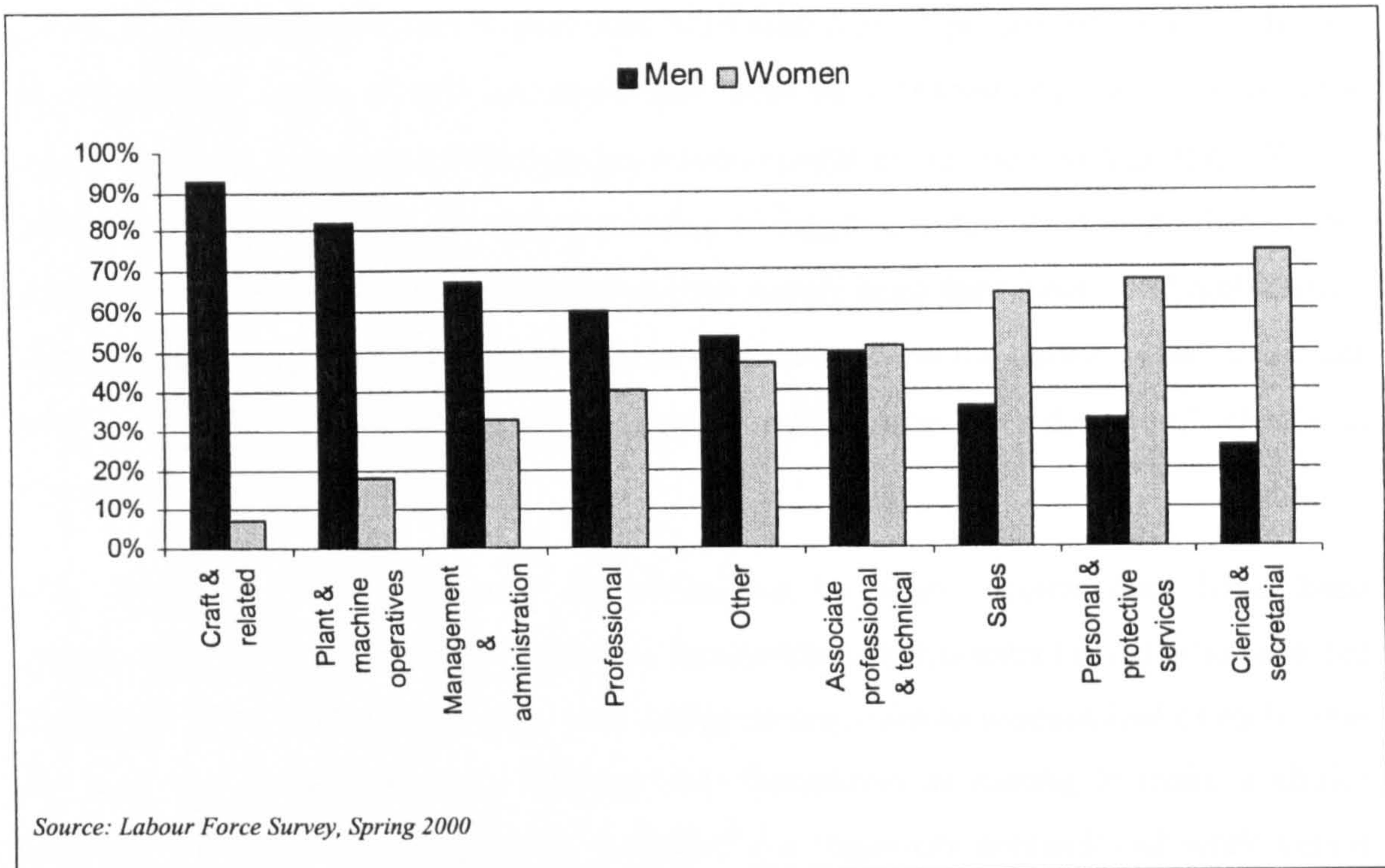


Figure 4: Gender segregation by occupational group

The reasons behind the perpetuation of occupational segregation are not universally agreed upon but include genuine individual preferences and the prevalence of discrimination and harassment faced by people working in non-traditional areas. The economist Gunderson (1989) concurred that discrimination works through segregation of occupations rather than unequal pay for the same work and that this segregation was the largest explanatory factor in the pay gap because more women than men work in the lower paid industries. Hakim reported that job segregation has occurred in most industrialised labour markets throughout the twentieth century, describing the UK and European labour markets as “highly segregated, with women concentrated in the less skilled and lowest paid jobs.” (Hakim, 1991: 102). The most common explanation for women being in lower paid, lower status jobs within the workforce refers to the trade-off between home and work responsibilities. Women continue to bear to lion’s share of domestic and caring responsibilities, regardless of their workforce status. “The ‘traditional’ family which included one wage-earner (male) and one child-home caretaker (female) is less common now, and the two wage-earner family is far more common than in previous decades. In spite of this change, women continue to retain primary responsibility for childcare” (DiBenedetto and Tittle, 1990: 48). A 1992 report

by the National Council for Women (NCW) found that 27 percent of women who are the chief wage earner in their household still focus most of their energies on their home life. The NCW concluded, "Women have been caught in the superwoman trap. We've been told the sky's the limit. But the reality of juggling home, work and all the other demands of the community mean most women simply keep their eyes – and ambitions – down and keep going. Women have been enticed to climb the career ladder and enter the world of work. But we haven't seen much traffic in the other direction." (National Council for Women, 1992: 7).

The expectation that domestic responsibilities lie with women may have been perpetuated by both men and women, as documented by Coombs (1979) who reported that both men and women viewed work and parenting roles as independent of each other for men but not for women. Women saw themselves as having to make a choice between the two roles. "Thus the "conflict" (or 'trade-off demand') of work versus parent roles "appears to reside within the domain of female roles but not male roles" (DiBenedetto and Tittle, 1990: 46).

Similar results have been found using qualitative methodologies. In a situation recorded by Wetherell, Stiven and Potter (1987: 64), "female respondents unambiguously perceived the issue of career planning and children as a problem for them personally...male respondents hadn't seriously considered it as a conflict or, if perceiving it as a problem, did not interpret it as a threat to the possibility of any career."

Disappointingly, this type of finding makes it easier to place blame on women rather than look at ways of creating work environments that complement domestic responsibilities. Other academics have researched the history of occupational segregation, examining how certain types of jobs became perceived as men's or women's jobs, for example Cockburn (1985) who framed occupational segregation in terms of power and dominance.

More recent research on the domestic / work trade-off shows that family responsibilities continues to be a moderate or high cause of unauthorised non-sickness absence (CBI, 1993), suggesting that organisations have yet to make the workplace flexible enough to

allow for the domestic responsibilities of their employees, regardless of the gender of those employees.

The well developed arguments about occupational gender segregation may also be applied to minority ethnic employment patterns of segregation. For example, from a socio-economic perspective, “the capitalist economic system needs a specially oppressed group of menial laborers to perform its most menial and low-paying tasks. Either white women or third world people (men and women) can fill these jobs.” (Szymanski, 1976: 65). Whilst this type of explanation may not be particularly palatable, “work that traces inequalities to large-scale ‘macro’ influences (market forces, industrial segmentation, class conflict, and so forth) has certainly enhanced our knowledge about reward distributions” (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994: 191).

Baron & Pfeffer concluded however that socio-economic explanations of inequalities are limited since they do not include the links between the ‘macro’ and the ‘micro’: the links between “social structures, institutions, and organizations, on the one hand, and, on the others, cognitions, perceptions, interests, and behaviors at the individual or small group level.” (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994: 191).

Other explanations for the occupational segregation of women and minority ethnic people have included the suggestion that certain groups lack the skills required by employers. For example, Moss & Tilly (1996) suggested that employers reported an increasing need for soft skills but perceived black men as having fewer of these skills and that this employer perception contributed to labour market inequalities.

Social identity theory provides a more established explanation for inequalities, with the consistent research findings that people are attracted to other people who are similar to themselves (Shellenbarger, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This contributes to occupational segregation by existing employees recruiting in their own likeness. Moss & Tilly concluded that “a taste for discrimination appears to be anchored deeply in individuals’ self-definition and attraction to others and has measurable effects in actual work settings.” (Moss & Tilly, 1996: 254).

Rubenstein (1987) alluded to there being a potential cost to employing a black person rather than a white person, or a woman instead of a man because of potential adverse reactions from customers or fellow employees. He was in effect describing a commonly observed phenomenon in social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), that people prefer people similar to themselves to those who are different to themselves: choosing homogeneity (ingroup) over heterogeneity (outgroup).

In this instance, homogeneity of groups was defined in terms of race or gender but the principles of homogeneity could be applied to diversity on any number of grounds, for example, educational background, class or age.

As far back as 1954, Allport was researching this very subject and he came up with the diagram shown in Figure 5 to represent the hypothetical lessening of in-group potency as membership becomes more inclusive, i.e. how concern for another reduces as the differences between oneself and another increases.

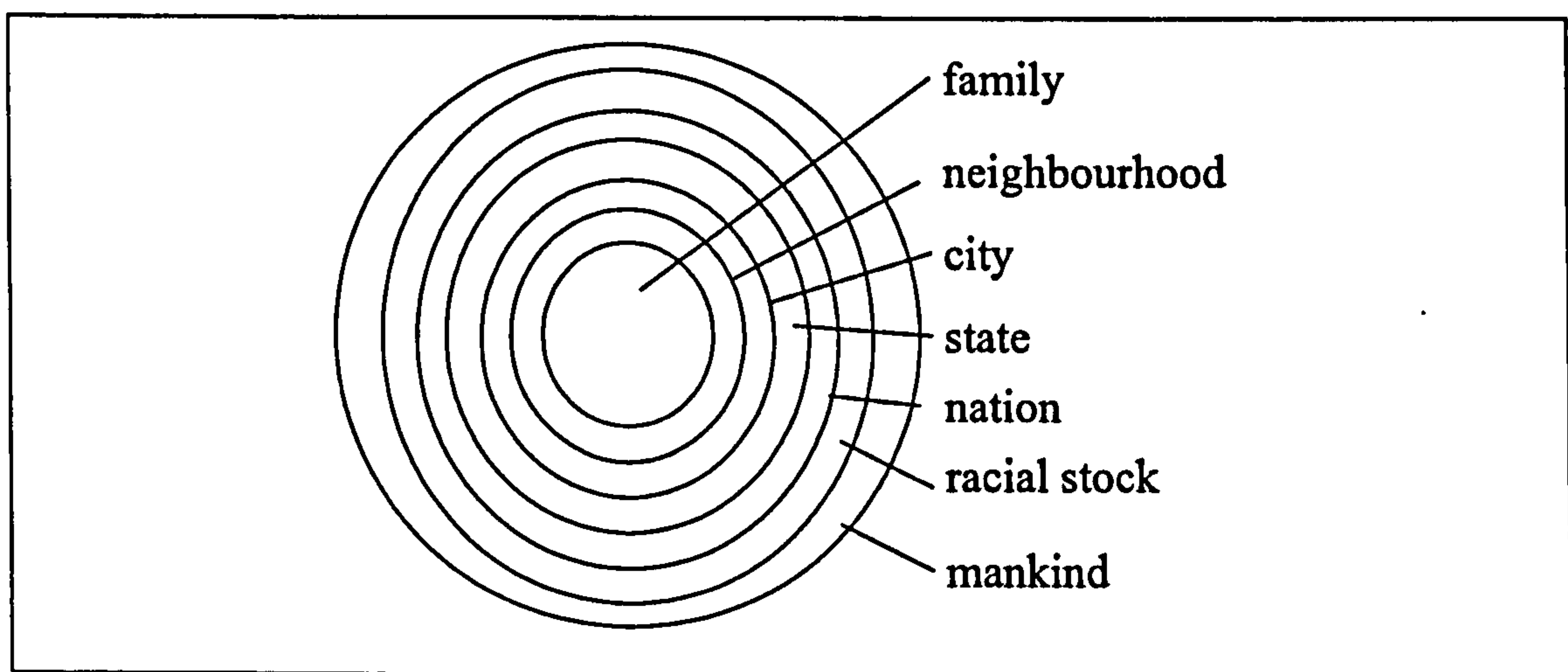


Figure 5: The nature of prejudice (Allport, 1954)

According to social psychological principles, people have a strong desire to maintain a positive identity and part of that identity is formed through group membership. Which group an individual affiliates with is therefore associated very strongly with their personal identity and esteem (Tajfel & Turner 1986, James et al., 1994).

Tajfel & Turner 1986 looked at a large body of research, much of which was Tajfel's own research, on intergroup relations and concluded that "the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups – that is, social categorization per se – is sufficient to

trigger intergroup discrimination favouring the in-group. In other words, the mere awareness of the presence of an out-group is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or discriminatory responses on the part of the in-group.” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986: 13).

Group affiliation will not always follow gendered or racial lines but may, for example, follow the lines of an organisation’s hierarchy. Research on this topic remains current. Reporting on a national survey that looked at employees’ lives and the changing workforce, conducted by the Families and Work Institute in the US, Shellenbarger (1993) explored the effects of homogeneity in terms of age, race, gender and education. Just over half of surveyed workers of all ages said they preferred working with people of the same race, sex, gender and education. This finding was consistent across all age groups but employees who had greater experience of living or working with people of other races, ethnic groups and ages showed a stronger preference for diversity the workplace. It was noted however that few employees have such experience since there was little interaction with people from different backgrounds reported outside of the workplace.

More recently, researchers (e.g. Elmes & Connelley, 1997) have argued that assumptions about prejudice based on Allport’s (1954) work are flawed because Allport proposed that increased contact with members of the outgroup would show the ingroup that their prejudice was unfounded. Elmes & Connelley contended that increased contact with outgroups may in fact reinforce prejudices or stereotypes, not reduce them.

Clearly, individuals belong to more than one group and this may create conflict, ‘social identity conflict’. Alderfer (1986) proposed two main categories of social group, ‘identity’ groups (e.g. biological, historical or experientially bound groups) and ‘organizational’ (e.g. job type or level) groups. This may be particularly pertinent for women and minority ethnic employees, whose social identity, as Elmes & Connelley (1997) suggested, may conflict with that of the organisational norms and values.

So women and minority ethnic employees appear to share a similar fate in terms of occupational segregation and discrimination. In terms of overall representation however, women are well represented in the workforce compared to minority ethnic

groups. Iles et al. (1994) reported that women composed over 40 percent of the total UK workforce. This relatively good representation of women however masks a number of gender-related inequalities.

Statutory obligations in Britain have helped progress the position of women in the workplace and there have been many positive changes since it was introduced. However the 1998 Equal Opportunities Commission Annual Report reported that women still earn less than men, still lose their jobs when they become pregnant and still experience sexual harassment. “The extent of gender inequality – differences between women and men in access to rewards, resources, positions, rights, and privileges – varies greatly from society to society, but in general men have greater access to the social perquisites than women.” (Almquist, 1991: 181).

3.1.3 Pay Gap

In 1970 when the Equal Pay Act was introduced, women’s average hourly pay was less than 75 percent of men’s average hourly pay. The largest change has been in the closing of this gap for younger workers, due in the main to the changes in education available to women. Women in their early twenties now earn 92 percent of the male wage but when all age groups are included, the figure for women’s hourly wage is still only 82 percent of the male wage. Figure 6 illustrates the decline in women’s earnings as a percentage of men’s earnings as age group increases.

According to the latest figures (Spring 2000) from the Office for National Statistics, the average gross hourly earnings of full-time women stood at 82 percent of the average earned by their male counterparts. Admittedly, this represents progress from the 75 percent figure of 1970 but a decrease of 7 percent over 30 years can only be described as slow progress. Once benefits considered as well as pay, the picture becomes even more bleak for women. Latest figures from the Department for Social Security Analytical Services Division suggested that women’s gross individual income, including income from employment, pensions, benefits, investments etc., is on average only 51 percent of men’s (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000). As Dickens suggested, “the picture relating to women’s pay and employment position in the UK is by now familiar, if only because change has been so slow that we have had a number of

years to appreciate women's relative pay position and share of jobs." (Dickens, 1994: 6).

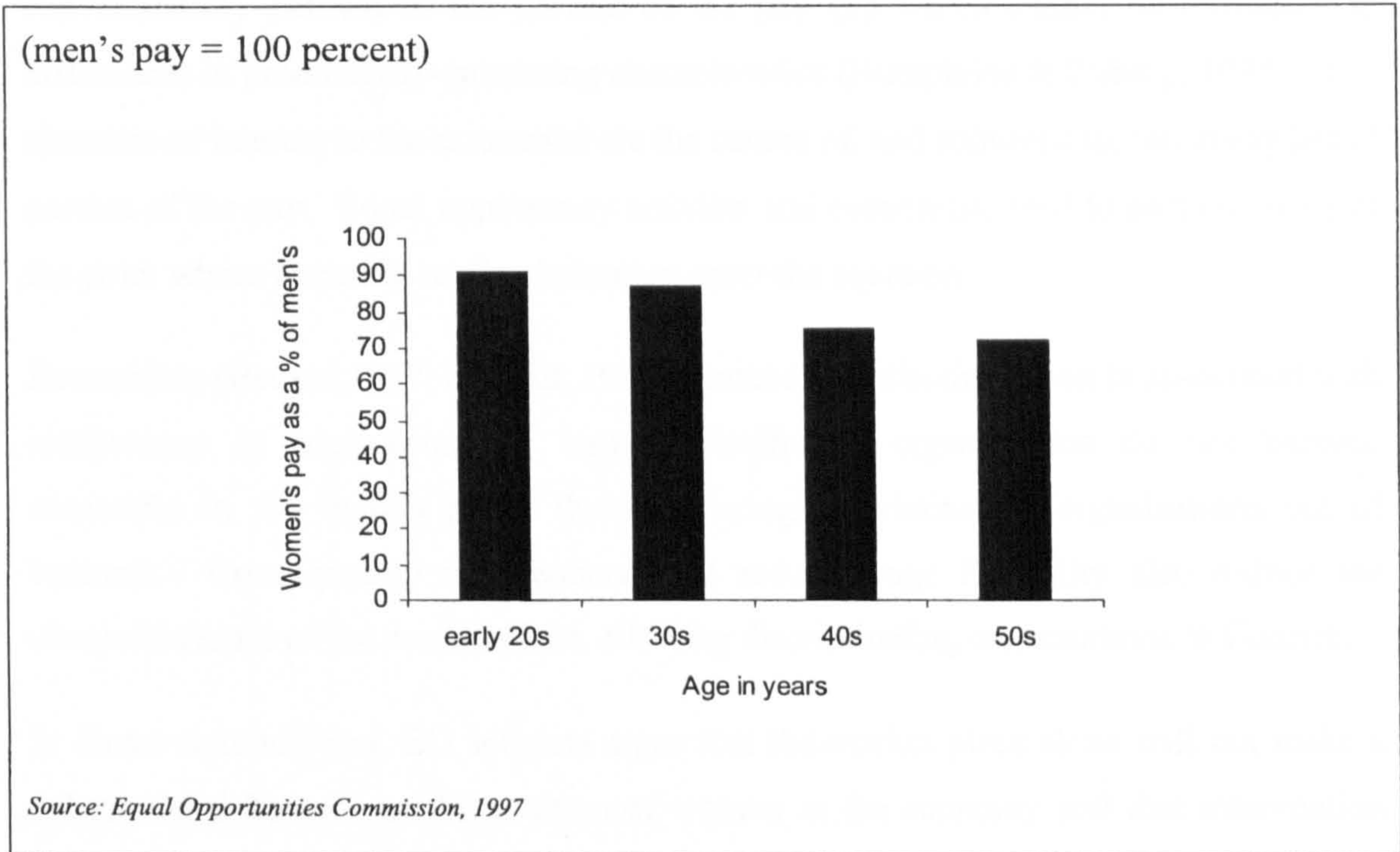


Figure 6: Pay disparity as a function of age and gender

The gender pay differential is consistent across all industries and occupations, as illustrated by Figure 7, which shows the hourly and weekly pay of women across industries, where 100 percent represents male earnings.

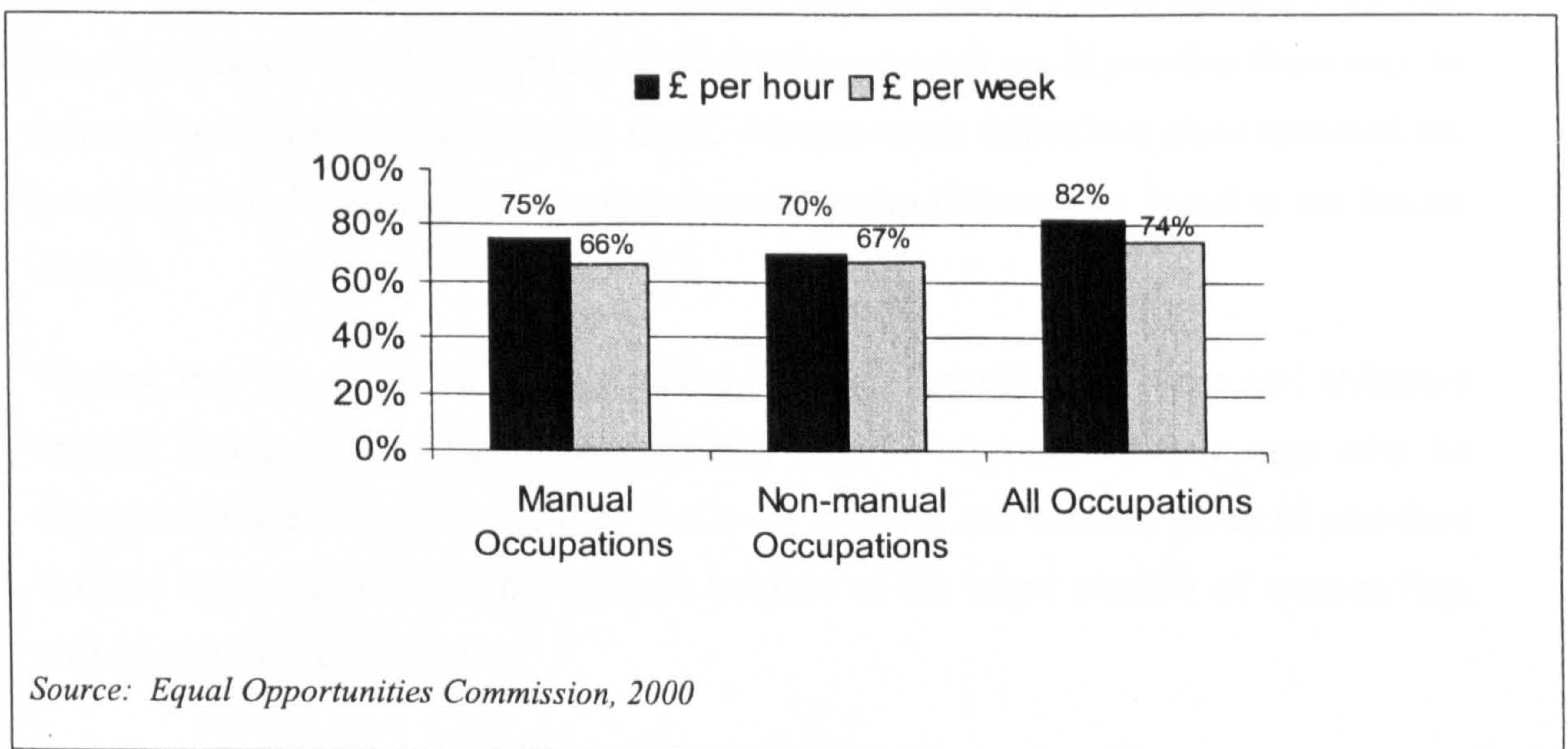


Figure 7: Gender earning differentials

Economists' interest in the labour market overlaps the domain of equal opportunities in areas such as the pay gap between men and women. Discrimination, for economists, is conventionally defined as the portion of the pay gap which cannot be attributed to differences in productivity-enhancing characteristics (Humphries & Rubery, 1995). The elements of interest to the economist are the causes of, and solutions to, the unexplained portion of the pay. Equal opportunity activists and economists tend to part company at the point where remedies to discrimination enter the equation.

Economists (Becker, 1957; Schmid, 1993) contend that discrimination is associated with inefficiency in socio-economic terms. Inefficient organisations do not become successful in the market place, thereby forcing discriminatory organisations out of business. Consequently interventions that reduce wage flexibility also reduce the competitiveness of the market place, allowing discriminating organisations to flourish.

In direct contradiction, EO activists argue that the market place alone will not make a substantial difference to the position of women in the economy and that intervention measures are absolutely necessary to address the pay gap (Humphries & Rubery, 1995; Maddock & Parkin, 1993).

Whatever the solution, the pay gap is not necessarily due to discrimination and a number of contributing factors have been proposed. For example, Millsap & Meredith (1994) suggested that some of the differential may be due to measurement difficulties, since in principle equal pay applies to work of equal merit yet in practice there may be incomplete information about equal merit. Measurement difficulties alone however are insufficient explanation of the persistent social group differentials found in the labour market.

Women may be disadvantaged by taking time out for maternity leave and childcare through losing out on performance-related pay for example. They may also be disproportionately disadvantaged by the lower benefits and bonuses given to part-time workers compared to full-time workers because of the larger number of women than men in part-time employment.

The pay gap between men and women also conceals some differences in average earnings by ethnic origin. Figure 8 summarises average earnings by gender and ethnicity. Nearly all male groups earn more than female groups but the lowest paid group of all is Pakistani/Bangladeshi men. Indian men earn the highest hourly pay overall and black women are the highest paid sub-group of women. .

	Average Hourly Pay	Indian male	White male	Mixed / other male	Mixed / other female	Black male	Black female	White female	Indian female	Pakistani / Bangladeshi	Pakistani / Bangladeshi
Pakistani / Bangladeshi male	£6.31	68%	69%	71%	76%	78%	82%	86%	95%	98%	100%
Pakistani / Bangladeshi female	£6.44	70%	71%	72%	78%	80%	83%	88%	97%	100%	
Indian female	£6.62	72%	73%	74%	80%	82%	86%	90%	100%		
White female	£7.33	80%	81%	82%	88%	91%	95%	100%			
Black female	£7.72	84%	85%	87%	93%	96%	100%				
Black male	£8.06	87%	89%	91%	97%	100%					
Mixed / other female	£8.30	90%	91%	93%	100%						
Mixed / other male	£8.89	96%	98%	100%							
White male	£9.10	99%	100%								
Indian male	£9.22	100%									
* Please note the table should be read down and across as follows: Pakistani / Bangladeshi males earn 68% of Indian average hourly pay.											
<i>As % of Base in Ethnic Group (Base = 100%)</i>											
<i>Source: Labour Force survey, Spring/Summer/Autumn 1998</i>											

Figure 8: Average pay by analysed by gender and ethnicity

As Pathak concluded, this type of evidence “reaffirms the need to understand the heterogeneity that exists within the ethnic minority population in Great Britain. People from different ethnic minority groups have quite different experiences and even within ethnic group, there are important differences in participation and achievement due to factors such as gender and age.” (Pathak, 2000: 14). Importantly Pathak noted the lack of conclusive and reliable evidence available due mainly to limited sample sizes and a lack of socio-economic data to investigate why people from certain ethnic groups are more disadvantaged than others in education and in the labour market. Additionally, many organisations do not monitor employee ethnicity, and those who do tend to be unwilling to share their information for reasons of confidentiality.

3.1.4 Part-Time Working

Women may also be disadvantaged in the workplace by working on a part-time basis. Part-time workers are often offered less by employers in terms of benefits, pay, and conditions than full time staff are offered. In 1998, 43 percent of women employees and 8 percent of men employees worked on a part-time basis (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2000). This over-representation of women has been translated by various employment tribunals into indirect discrimination against women because employers by applying conditions to part-time workers only are disadvantaging more women than men. The disparate figures do not indicate discrimination alone however. Many more women than men choose to work on a part-time basis in order to spend more time with dependent family, or to meet domestic commitments (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2001).

3.1.5 Glass Ceiling

If occupational segregation could be viewed as horizontal segregation, then vertical segregation also exists within each occupational group, with men being favoured for the higher level jobs. This employment pattern represents the “glass ceiling” phenomenon, a term used to describe institutionalised discrimination placing an invisible barrier which prevents women from reaching the top of their chosen career ladder.

Instances of this are too numerous to cite but one recent example was given by the UK-wide National Management Salary Survey (1998), who reported that women comprised 18.0 percent of all executives (i.e. managers & directors) but comprised only 3.6 percent of directors in 1998 (Source: Institute of Management and Remuneration Economics). This imbalance is also reflected in the number of high-level women managers reporting and winning sexual discrimination cases, which, according to the Equal Opportunities Commission was higher than ever before in 1999.

Historically, various situational and dispositional theories have been proposed to explain persistent gender inequalities in the labour force resulting in phenomena such as the glass ceiling. Early psychological investigations into workplace discrimination attributed a melange of intra-individual differences between men and women, falling firmly into dispositional explanations. For example McClelland et al.'s (1953) intra-individual difference, 'Need to Achieve' (nAch) showed persistent sex differences. The use of thematic apperception tests (TAT) resulted in the conceptualisation of further internal gender differences such as Horner's (1972) 'Fear of Success' in women. Fear of success was defined as a trait developed through sex-role socialisation whereby competence, independence, competition and intellectual achievement are seen as qualities basically inconsistent with femininity although positively related to masculinity. "Women, according to Horner, do not really want to be achievers, they want to be liked" (Alper 1974: 195).

Condry and Dyer (1976: 75) introduced a situational element to these dispositional explanations when they re-interpreted Horner's fear of success as "a fear of the negative consequences incumbent upon deviating from traditional sex-role standards in certain situations", implying that source of difficulty for women was not a gender based personality disposition but the situation itself. This re-interpretation was further corroborated by Weston & Mednick (1970), who included black women in their sample and found that black women showed less "motive to avoid success" than white women. The authors interpreted their results as reflecting a difference in social status for black women, rather than intrapsychic differences, suggesting that "American society has placed black women in more dominant roles than those assumed by black men or white women. Accordingly, intellectual mastery is not threatening and professional

achievement may not in fact lead to rejection by the male" (Weston & Mednick, 1970: 290).

Despite much of this body of research into gendered individual differences being rooted in feminist psychology, the logical conclusion of concepts such as fear of success was that women need to change to adapt to the situation, rather than changing the situation to adapt to women. This appears tantamount to blaming women instead of examining the larger social phenomena.

Moving towards a more situational explanation, Kahn and Robbins (1985) examined sex discrimination through Lewin's notion of psychological life space (Lewin 1935, 1948, 1951). They concluded, "National data....document the continuation of sex discrimination. Yet the literature reveals no conceptual framework to understand or alter this pervasive phenomenon" (Kahn & Robbins, 1985: 135).

Deaux reported that "sex differences ebb and flow with changes in situational factors and stereotypes, it has been shown, vary to some degree across both time and culture. The broader context in which these changes occur however has been less salient for the typical psychological investigator, despite evidence from many other social science domains that contextual factors are important" (Deaux, 1985: 69). Deaux noted that research on sex discrimination was difficult because it combined scientific methodology with ideology, which perhaps explains in part why the literature had produced no conceptual framework for sex discrimination at that point.

Firmly in the field of situational explanations, Wetherell, Steven and Potter(1987) used social construction as a conceptual framework for sex discrimination. They employed discourse analysis to examine how the discourse of '(in)egalitarianism'- the ideology surrounding the reproduction of gender inequalities- is manufactured. Their findings suggested a "conflict between their [participants'] endorsement of equal opportunities and their emphasis on the practical considerations supposedly limiting those opportunities" (Wetherell et al., 1987: 59).

It has been shown fairly categorically that women have fewer opportunities to achieve senior management positions and face more barriers to success than men throughout

their career (e.g. Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Davidson & Cooper, 1992). The power of the dominant group in the organisation has also been used to explain the lack of opportunity (e.g. Cockburn, 1991).

Literature that examines women and work inevitably focuses on the differences between men and women. Whilst it is understandable that research be approached in this manner it may result in similarities between men and women being overlooked. Davidson & Cooper (1992) reported that there were more similarities than dissimilarities between male and female managers. Ferrario (1991) showed that there were more differences within each sex than between the sexes and Cox & Cooper (1988) reported that the motivation of successful women was very similar to that of their male colleagues. Powell (1988) found that there was no sex difference in intellectual ability, leadership ability, oral communication skills or stability of performance.

Clearly internal personality traits or gendered stereotypes cannot fully explain the position of women in today's workforce as compared to men. Further, in line with the current shift from equal opportunities to valuing diversity, "characteristics attributed to women as a group can more profitably be viewed as more universal human responses to blocked opportunities" (Kanter, 1977: 159).

Many advancements have obviously been made in the opportunities available to women but there are many advancements yet to be made for equality of opportunity to be achieved. Blocked opportunities however continue to mar the progress of many people in the workplace, not just women. Discrimination does not limit itself to gender but may occur on the basis of ethnicity, colour, national or ethnic origin, class, sexuality, age or any number of differences.

The group most obviously disproportionately affected by workplace discrimination is women from a minority ethnic background who are likely to face the combined effects of sexism and racism, thus providing the analogy of the concrete ceiling (Davidson, 1997).

3.1.6 Concrete Ceiling

Individuals who happen to be both from a minority ethnic group and female may face a double dose of discrimination and Davidson (1997) upgraded the glass ceiling analogy to that of a concrete ceiling to reflect the institutional barriers faced by black women in the workplace. This phenomenon has also been termed the 'cement roof' or the glass ceiling/sticky floor by various authors but the sentiment remains the same. Labour force statistics show categorically that occupational segregation occurs on both gendered and racial lines thereby disadvantaging women from a minority ethnic background more than white women (Bhavnani, 1994).

Astonishingly little research concerning discrimination has also dealt with racial discrimination or the "double discrimination" faced by minority ethnic women. In America, "previous research (e.g. Gurin et al., 1980) suggests that group consciousness along racial rather than sexual lines is much more likely to affect attitudes" (Smith & Kluegel, 1984: 82). Their paper considered and compared the American public's perception of structural limits to women's opportunities to blacks opportunities but neglected to mention the perceived opportunities for those people who are both black and female.

Very specific research concerning minority ethnic women in the workplace has been available for some time, for example Naidoo (1985) and Naidoo and Davis (1988) reported that South Canadian Asian women show a duality of attitude: acculturated in education, work and opportunity but traditional regarding family, religion, marriage and gender roles. More generic research concerning the discrimination faced by minority ethnic women in the workplace has been lacking, a situation commented on by Nkomo (1988) with particular regard to the invisibility of black women managers in the American women managers literature. Nkomo's comments concerned the state of American literature but applied equally to British literature.

More recently researchers such as Gilkes (1990), Mirza (1992), Bhavnani (1994) and Davidson (1997) have conducted research focusing particularly on the experiences of minority ethnic women and the previous imbalance in the literature is starting to be redressed.

This is not to suggest that discrimination only occurs on the basis of gender or ethnicity but these were the categories of individual difference expressly covered by UK employment law at the time of this research project, under the Sex Discrimination Acts (1975) and the Race Relations Act (1976). This legislation required employers to ensure neither they nor their employees discriminated on the basis of their gender or ethnicity. Discrimination on the basis of an individual's age or sexual orientation for example may be undesirable but it is not illegal. One element of the business case for equal opportunities is the avoidance of costs associated with employment tribunal, i.e. limited to gender and ethnicity, so these variables provided the emphasis for the research.

With regard to disability legislation, the first tranche of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 came into force in December 1996 and introduced a wide range of employer responsibilities but the research design was decided prior to this legislation becoming practice. Previously disability was covered by the Disabled Persons Employment Act 1944 which was fundamentally different from the Sex Discrimination Acts and the Race Relations Act because it set a numerical target (3%) for the employment of disabled people. Participant disability status was therefore not specifically included in the research.

3.2 Labour Market Summary

In summary, the labour market figures continue to evidence real inequalities on racial and gendered lines. As outlined above, many possible explanations of these inequalities have been suggested and the same is true of suggested solutions to inequalities. The main approaches are summarised below.

4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Liff (1997) described two contrasting routes, split into four approaches, to achieve social group equality, which, broadly speaking, represent the spectrum of approaches to achieving social group equality:

1. 'dissolving differences' approaches, that stress individualism and ignore any or all social group membership;
2. 'valuing differences' approaches, that acknowledge and value social group differences and include measures such as positive action,
3. 'accommodating differences' approaches, where the element of positive action is translated into evaluation of processes that ensure or inhibit progress of particular social groups; and
4. 'utilizing differences' approaches, where differences on social group lines are acknowledged and accommodated, i.e. requiring special rather than equal treatment, which is in essence another type of positive action approach.

There have been many individual approaches to equality over the years, which have attracted a wide variety of names over the years. Whilst there is generally a great deal of overlap between the approaches, it is helpful to understand how approaches may differ in terms of how social group differences are treated.

Figure 9 illustrates the four basic approaches in terms of high or low commitment to social groups equality and high or low relevance of social group membership.

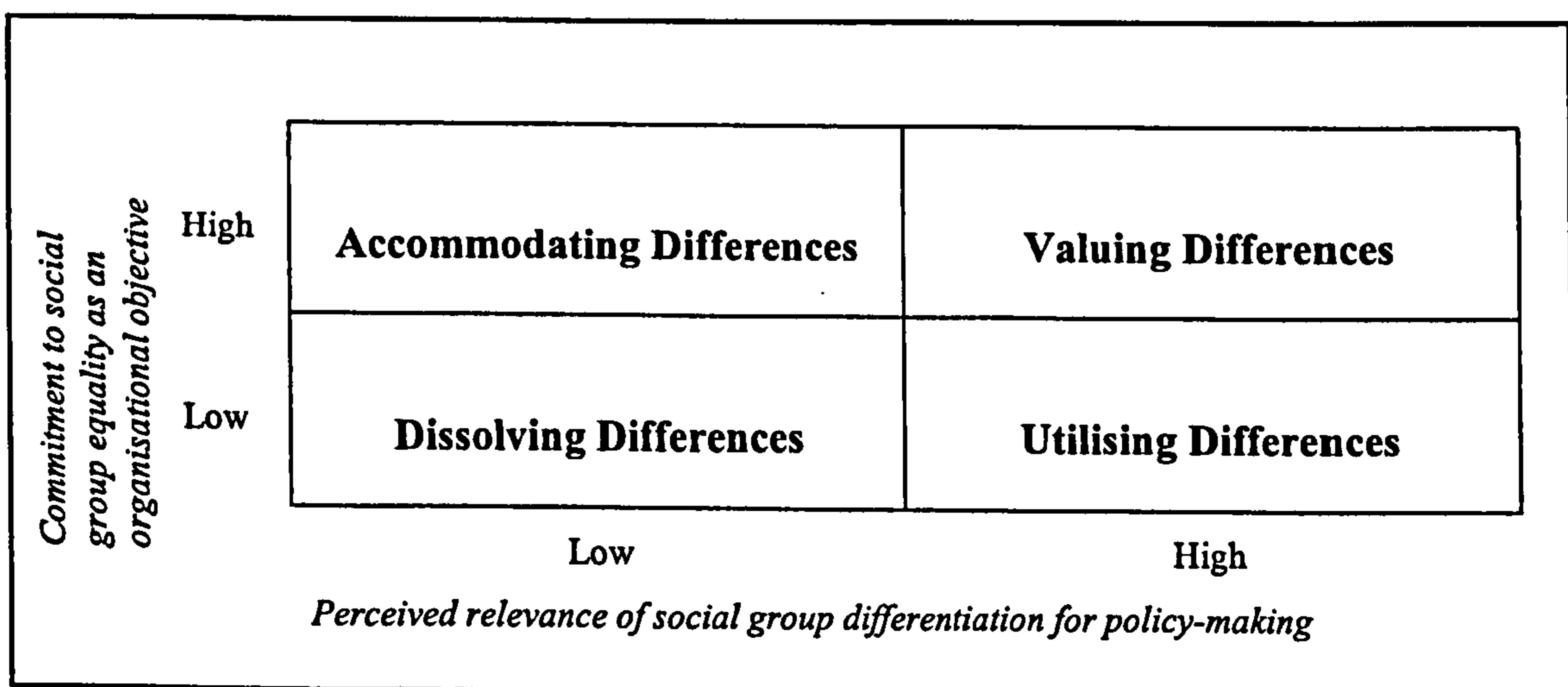


Figure 9: Managing diversity approaches (Liff, 1997)

The two contrasting routes from which these four approaches spring are described here as:

- 1 Legal Compliance
- 2 Managing Diversity

Liff (1997) characterised the extremes of these approaches as 'dissolving differences', where multiple sources of difference, i.e. more than gender and ethnicity, are acknowledged (as in managing diversity) and 'valuing differences' where social group based similarities are acknowledged (as in traditional equal opportunity).

Equal opportunity in the UK has traditionally been approached from a base of anti-discrimination legislation, a 'legal compliance' approach.

4.1 Legal Compliance Route

Anti-discrimination legislation was intended to facilitate equal opportunity by ensuring that free competition occurred rather than resource distribution on the basis of social group membership. Discrimination then, in theory, may be eradicated by judging individuals on ability rather than social group membership, a process which is supported by fair, meritocratic and rational procedures (e.g. Liff & Aitkenhead, 1992).

The logical tool for facilitating this process at an organisational level is the equal opportunity policy. Equal opportunity policies tend to form the organisational end of the legal compliance approach, providing a formalisation and standardisation of practice and procedures to ensure compliance with the legislation and they have been prevalent in UK organisations for many years. For example, a 1984 UK survey of personnel practice indicated that 60 percent of organizations had a policy for equal opportunity (Mackay & Torrington, 1986). It continues to be a popular tool today.

Evidence of continuing labour market inequalities have been sufficient however to convince most people that the legal compliance approach has not been entirely successful in understanding or eradicating inequities in the UK labour force. Dickens (1994) described the limitations of the legal compliance approach in terms of the 'stick

and carrot' approach, with the stick representing the UK legal system requiring compliance from organisations and the carrot representing the business case for equality. Dickens argued that legislation would not substantially progress equality within organisations because legislation does not require employers to actively promote equality, only to cease existing discrimination. Further she argued that even if equal opportunity policies did produce fair and consistent procedures, this in itself did not guarantee equal outcomes in terms of distributive justice. The labour market statistics appear to support Dickens. The picture of the UK workforce today is one where equal opportunity policies are as commonplace as the inequalities in the labour market. As Liff described it, "The widespread adoption of equality policies seems to coexist with continuing evidence of differential labour market experience by members of different social groups." (Liff, 1999: 65).

Since organisations have adopted policies for many years without an accompanying substantial reduction in the labour market inequalities, it would appear that the legal compliance approach is unlikely to prevent future labour market inequalities occurring. Borrowing Dickens' analogy, the stick has not worked.

4.1.1 Equal Treatment (Liberal) Approach

The equal treatment approach to equal opportunities stemmed from the legislative approach. As the name suggests, the basic premise of the equal treatment approach is that all individuals should be treated the same. As with the legal compliance approach, discrimination is seen to occur when social group characteristics that are not relevant to the job are taken into consideration. Equal treatment approaches therefore focus on standardising and formalising organisational procedures and processes so that only job relevant criteria are considered. This type of approach, where meritocratic principles inform organisational decisions, may also be referred to as the 'liberal' approach.

Perhaps surprisingly, positive action initiatives are not viewed as conflicting with the equal treatment principle, since "the intention is to provide support for individuals to compete on equal terms (e.g. via the provision of childcare support or remedial training) rather than to treat people differently on the basis of their group membership." (Liff, 1999: 66). In this light, an equal treatment approach could be viewed as an

‘accommodating difference’ approach because it recognises social group differences and takes positive action, from a moral obligation stance, to level the playing field.

The equal treatment approach may be criticised because at its heart is a comparison of others against a norm of the average white man, thereby instantly creating disadvantage for those outside the norm. Equal treatment approaches also focus on changing and monitoring behaviour without, necessarily, any accompanying attitude change which considerably limits the scope of any equality / diversity initiative. Despite such criticisms, the equal treatment approach forms the basis of much of the UK organisational equality practice.

Equal treatment approaches supported by equal opportunity policies have raised the understanding of managers of equality issues because the policies and procedures translate into management practice. Increased awareness of equality issues does not necessarily translate into action however and “we know that such policies and procedures are not always followed in practice” (Liff, 1999: 65).

4.1.2 Formal & Informal Equality

Equality writers have also framed equality practice in terms of formal and informal equality (Liff, 1999; Jewson & Mason 1986a & 1986b, Jewson et al., 1995).

Formal equality is associated with the legal compliance approach, where the existence of a policy and or set of procedures constitute formal equal opportunity but which may be supported or undermined by the culture or climate of an organisation, described as informal. For example, “reports of industrial tribunal cases continue to provide evidence of managers making clear that they consider certain jobs to be unsuitable for women, and of employees ostracising fellow workers on the basis of different ethnicity. These things happen in organisations which appear at a formal level to have exemplary policies. Indeed studies have shown that such occurrences are not due simply to misunderstandings or limitations of the policies but also to deliberate avoidance or distortion by managers (Jewson & Mason, 1986a; Liff & Dale, 1994).” (Liff, 1999: 65).

The formal approach to equality has clearly been an insufficient mechanism for ensuring equality in the workplace. Liff & Aitkenhead summarised Cockburn’s (1989)

argument with the following, “Managers need to be aware that the barriers to equal opportunity cannot be overcome by policies based purely on liberal strategies of meritocracy and on formalization of suitability criteria to ensure fairness. Trade unions need to be aware of how the social psychological processes that are engaged in by their members may undermine attempts to change distributions.” (Liff & Aitkenhead, 1992: 281).

4.1.3 Equal Outcome (Radical) Approach

In contrast to the equal treatment (liberal) approach is the equal outcome approach. Equal outcomes are viewed as the natural result of successful equal treatment approaches, i.e. it represents a state of equality. The equal outcome approach may also be termed the ‘radical’ approach. Its starting point is that discrimination refers to unequal outcomes, in terms of the representation of various social groups. Equal outcome or radical approaches are concerned with seeing a change in the distribution of under-represented groups, for example, an increase in the number of women managers.

A change in the distribution means that the dominant power of organisations changes and that there are role models for minority ethnic and women employees within the organisation which in turn create an organisational environment where employees perceive there is equality.

However it is not universally accepted that outcomes should be equal, or that equal outcomes are even desirable. It could be argued (see Hakim, 1996 for a fuller picture of the debate) that people simply make different choices throughout their career and educational path and that people, as individuals, should not be expected to achieve equal outcome. Whilst looking at the issue from an individualistic perspective this argument seems entirely plausible however it does appear to play down the persistent and irrefutable social group differences in labour market inequalities.

4.1.4 Sameness & Difference Approaches

Liff & Wajcman (1996) examined the essentially political arguments around ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ approaches to equal opportunities. ‘Sameness’ is the argument for equal treatment, ignoring differences and treating everybody exactly the same. It has

been criticised precisely because it ignores differences that others argue should be valued. In this way, the sameness/difference arguments mirror those of the equal opportunity/diversity management contrast in approach. The sameness/difference polemic seems to have focused primarily on gender and issues of whether women want their gender in the work place to be neutral (sameness) or celebrated (difference) but could be effectively extended to encompass differences in ethnicity for example. The argument has been heated enough to split feminist opinion but in the context of today's legislative framework it appears rather stale. As Liff & Wajcman noted, UK legislation has provided for positive action for many years, which is clearly not an equal treatment approach. More recently, with the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, different treatment in the form of 'reasonable adjustment' is absolutely required. Discussing the merits of 'sameness' versus 'difference' can be a useful aid in helping employees understand the need for a positive action approach and the history of equal opportunities but in practice, the requirement for differential treatment is already there and the focus for equality initiatives should be how to manage that differential treatment appropriately.

Sameness and difference are not really clear cut categories of approach, any more than managing diversity and equal opportunities are entirely separate concepts. Casting 'difference' models as mirrors of the diversity approach hides the fact that valuing difference means valuing everybody's difference, i.e. without regard to their social group differences, i.e. a sameness approach. Liff & Wajcman (1996) suggested that the degree of overlap meant it was possible that both approaches had something to offer.

To summarise, the conventional legal compliance type approaches to equality focus on measuring individuals against criteria, without reference to social group membership, unless taking positive action as allowed by the legislation. The primary weakness of this approach to equality is that it assumes the organisational criteria against which individuals are measured are neutral, where in fact, organisational criteria are likely to represent a dominant group norm and therefore a powerful source of institutional discrimination (e.g. Cockburn, 1991). This argument is not limited to equal opportunity approaches. Liff (1999) argued that for diversity to live up to its claims, organisations would need to change their structures, values and culture to cope with employee

differences rather than employees being expected to slot into a pre-existing culture that, as noted earlier, may be based on a dominant group norm and a source of institutional discrimination.

It is important to emphasise that most equality approaches (as opposed to diversity management) have at their heart a social-group based approach. Managing diversity takes a more individualistic stance.

4.2 Managing Diversity Route

Moving on from the equal opportunities approaches based on legal compliance, managing diversity claimed to be able to move away from comparing individuals against a standardised organisational norm to a genuine valuing of individual differences and contributions (Thomas, 1990; Liff, 1999).

“Management of diversity” is an American phrase used to describe a particular type of organisational equality practice which looks at valuing the diversity of each individual employee as opposed to focusing on groups of minority ethnic, women or disabled employees. Managing diversity grew out of the need to manage a workforce that had become increasingly diverse as a result of affirmative action in US organisations. Managing diversity could take the form of a ‘valuing difference’ approach if the organisation is prepared to treat men and women and people from various ethnic groups differently because they value their differences, or a ‘dissolving difference’ approach because the organisation is open to all, regardless of any differences.

Equal opportunity may be marginalised from the core activity of an organisation whereas diversity management presents itself as a strategic management tool. In reality, equal opportunity impinges on the majority of organisational processes and procedures, as recognised by the ‘mainstreaming’ approach however employee and management perception is often that equal opportunities are only for women and minority ethnic groups and this may lead to resentment that disadvantaged groups are receiving preferential treatment, or reverse discrimination (Liff & Aitkenhead, 1992).

The phrase was coined by Thomas (1990), who used analogy to describe and define the process: “Think of corporate management for a moment as an engine burning pure

gasoline. What's now going into the tank is no longer just gas, it has an increasing percentage of, let's say, methanol. In the beginning, the engine will still work pretty well, but by and by it will start to sputter, and eventually it will stall. Unless we rebuild the engine, it will no longer burn the fuel we're feeding it. As the work force grows more and more diverse at the intake level, the talent pool we have to draw on for supervision and management will also grow increasingly diverse. So the question is: Can we burn this fuel? Can we get maximum corporate power from the diverse work force we're now drawing into the system?

Affirmative action gets blamed for failing to do things it never could. Affirmative action gets the new fuel into the tank, the new people through the front door. Something else will have to get them into the driver's seat. That something else consists of enabling people, in this case minorities and women, to perform to their potential. This is what we now call managing diversity. Not appreciating or leveraging diversity, not even necessarily understanding it. Just managing diversity in such a way as to get from a heterogeneous workforce the same productivity, commitment, quality, and profit that we got from the old homogeneous workforce." (Thomas, 1990: 109).

Further, Thomas stated the aim of managing diversity was not to "assimilate minorities and women into a dominant white male culture but to create a dominant heterogeneous culture." (Thomas, 1990: 114).

Thomas may have coined the phrase but the concept was not entirely new. The 'difference' approach of the sameness/difference argument for equal opportunity closely mirrored that of managing diversity. Copeland (1988a & 1988b) predated Thomas by two years, writing about 'valuing diversity'.

New trends such as managing diversity are often received with scepticism and managing diversity was no exception even among its supporters. Lynch (1994) described it as "the arrival of a new future-oriented proportionalism", stating it was "more than a fad, yet less than an established field" (Lynch, 1994: 32).

Is management of diversity anything other than good management practice? Thomas specifically distanced diversity management from the human rights aspect of equal

opportunities in his definition, “managing diversity is not primarily about ethics or social responsibility or ‘doing the right thing’. It’s about human performance. It’s about making a profit. It’s about remaining competitive. The ‘managing’ is more important than the ‘diversity’ because if managers are really managing, diversity will take care of itself.” (Thomas, cited by Gordon, 1992: 25).

Inadvertently perhaps, Liff suggested the same thing as Thomas, without ever mentioning diversity management, before Thomas had coined the phrase and in a UK context - a simple but powerful observation that clearly illustrated the division between managing diversity and equal opportunities: “Equal opportunities is supposed to be achieved primarily by basing practice on necessary and relevant criteria rather than subjective judgement. Put in this form, the objectives of an Equal Opportunities Policy seem very similar to those of any other area of personnel practice, since it is accepted good practice to ensure that individuals and job requirements are assessed accurately and procedures are consistent. While a particular form of deviance from the ideal is being highlighted, the implication is that the solution can be generalised under normal good practice” (Liff, 1989: 28). If fair and objective criteria are enough to ensure equal opportunity, then it is no more than good management practice. If management of diversity is nothing more than successful management of an already diverse group, then it is nothing more than good management.

Having started on this path, Liff moved on to discuss how equal opportunity therefore falls under the remit of Codes of Practice if the definition is legislatively bound, i.e. avoiding discrimination. She defined discrimination in terms of justifiable discrimination, termed suitability, and unjustifiable discrimination, termed acceptability, making the point that certain groups will have certain requirements, for example women wanting to spend time with their young children, or minority ethnic employees requiring time off for religious holidays different to the organisation’s norms, i.e. accepting there are differences. Again, perhaps unknowingly, she was in essence describing the argument of difference versus sameness – the equal treatment versus equal outcome – the individual versus group arguments that surround equality of opportunity versus management of diversity. Cockburn (1985) was also writing about equality requiring recognition from managers that achieving equality requires a massive organisational

transformation, which was essentially what Thomas was presenting as a new argument with his managing diversity approach.

Whether management of diversity is a genuinely fresh approach or old ideas dressed up as new, the fact remains that managing diversity has achieved a great deal more publicity than equality approaches such as the liberal versus radical approaches proposed by Jewson & Mason (1986b), even though they may ultimately have proposed very similar models for achieving organisational equality.

It appears that diversity management has not been universally accepted. Thomas' definition of managing diversity tightly defined his vision and meaning of the term but there has been disagreement about what 'managing diversity' means in the UK and the USA (e.g. Prasad et al., 1997; Liff, 1999). There has been little academic interest in understanding what it actually offers over and above equality approaches or its impact on organisational change (Comer & Soliman, 1994; Prasad & Mills, 1997). This situation has improved with time and a few authors have started to use various theoretical frameworks to examine the process of diversity management, including including inter-group relations theory, cultural history, feminism, Jungian psychology, post-colonial theory and class analysis (Prasad et al., 1997; Cox, 1993; Jackson, 1992).

Clearly managing diversity is not a simple solution to the shortcomings of equal opportunities and consensus among the experts is hard to find. It should be no surprise therefore that the associated organisational practices may be slightly confused or contradictory. "Workplace diversity remains....a significantly underresearched and undertheorized phenomenon in the management literature" (Prasad & Mills, 1997: 5).

4.2.1 Equal Opportunity Versus Managing Diversity

Equal opportunities, drawn from a range of UK and EU legislation, was designed to compel employers to eradicate discrimination and discriminatory practices. Managing diversity proposed that a diverse workforce offered diverse approaches to achieving success. There are three broad arguments describing the relationship between managing diversity and equal opportunities. The first contends that the approaches are directly opposed, the second that managing diversity may flourish once a base of equal

opportunities has been established and the third that equal opportunity cannot flourish until a base of effective diversity management is established.

Briefly, the first argument runs that diversity management ignores social group differences where equal opportunities acknowledges them, that managing diversity is voluntaristic (Prasad & Mills, 1997) and that equal opportunity is attached to a legislative framework, so the two approaches can be viewed as entirely distinct. The second runs that once an organisation has fair and consistent procedures and practices in place (equal opportunities) then the niceties of diversity management can come into play. The third argument runs that if the organisational culture is built around dominant group norms, then an inclusive organisation culture must be achieved (diversity management) before fair and consistent procedures (equal opportunity) can function.

The arguments are a little stale since if the culture of an organisation is built around a dominant norm, then operating fair and consistent procedures may still contribute to institutional discrimination, whether or not social group characteristics are referred to, since the supposed neutrality of the norm has not been examined.

Attempts to move this debate forward have included theorists such as Cockburn (1991) suggesting that it is about choosing the appropriate strategy, rather than equality building on diversity or diversity building on equality because sometimes it is appropriate to ignore differences and sometimes it is not. The obvious question then, of course, is how do you decide when differences are relevant? There is no analytic basis for deciding and “the issue is less that sometimes differences are relevant and sometimes not, but rather about what inferences are drawn from those differences.” (Liff, 1999: 72). It also relies on managers and organisations being skilled and motivated enough to actually make the decisions appropriately, consistently and fairly. Organisations in general have been seemingly unable to follow prescriptive legislation and codes of practice so it seems unlikely they would be able to manage this type of approach successfully.

“Compared with over twenty years of ‘equal opportunities’ initiatives, ‘managing diversity’ strategies are still in their infancy and it is not always easy to tell the reality from the rhetoric.” Liff & Wajcman (1996). Certainly the relationship between equal

opportunity and managing diversity appears to be the source of some uncertainty among UK equality practitioners. For example, UK diversity practitioners, Kandola & Fullerton (1994) produced a list of differences, detailed in Table 1, between the two approaches that seem, at best, overly-simplistic and, at worst, untrue. Of course their target audience may have been potential clients and this may have fuelled the exaggeration of differences between the two approaches in order to present diversity as something new and distinct from equal opportunities thereby helping to create a profitable niche in the market.

Table 1: The differences between managing diversity and equal opportunity (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994)

Managing Diversity (MD)	Equal Opportunity (EO)
Ensures all employees maximize their potential and their contribution to the organisation	Concentrates on discrimination
Embraces a broad range of people; no one is excluded	Is perceived as an issue for women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities
Concentrates on movement within an organisation, the culture of the organisation and the meeting of business objectives	Concentrates on the numbers of groups employed.
Is the concern of all employees, especially managers	Is seen as an issue to do with personnel and human resource practitioners
Does not rely on positive action/affirmative action	Relies on positive action

Presumably the list shown at Table 1 was compiled with the aim of emphasising the differences rather than the similarities between managing diversity equal opportunity. Short cuts in the translation from the US to the UK context were also obviously made. There is, for example, considerable difference between affirmative action in the US and positive action in the UK yet they are presented as interchangeable terms by Kandola & Fullerton (1994). The UK by law cannot set numerical quotas to achieve a demographically representative workforce. By law, US organisations must do just that. Positive action may encourage under-represented groups to apply for jobs, promotion or vocational training but stops at the point of selection. Affirmative action is the continuation of that encouragement process into selection decisions precisely to meet

numerical quotas. Banding positive and affirmative action together in this manner is distinctly misleading.

Similarly, claiming that equal opportunity 'concentrates on the numbers of groups employed' in a way that management of diversity does not, may be misleading by stressing a difference that may not exist. Both equal opportunity and managing diversity as organisational processes will require a degree of monitoring of numbers to check that the process is working, that diversity is being achieved, that minority ethnic employees are being promoted, or that women are not leaving the organisation in disproportionate numbers etc. Declaring that managing diversity is not concerned with numbers at all seems unrealistic and inappropriate. For example, an organisation where all the employees are white males may be diverse in terms of age, background and religion but clearly has some issues concerning gender and ethnicity representation. Managing diversity could then be acting as a smokescreen, covering the hard issues of discrimination against disadvantaged groups.

Furthermore, presenting equal opportunities as reliant on positive action is deceptive. Not every equal opportunities approach may include the use of positive action and not every managing diversity approach automatically excludes the use of some form of positive action. Managing the perceptions of employees and getting all employees to recognise their personal responsibilities and realise their full potential is as much a part of successful management of equal opportunity as it is of successful management of diversity.

Outside of the world of consultancy, the mood tends more towards diversity and equal opportunity programmes co-existing in some fashion. Guidance from the Institute for Personnel and Development in a 1996 position paper, for example, stressed that managing diversity did not mean a rejection of equal opportunities. Liff (1997) argued for a third approach to progress the dichotomous debate of equal opportunity versus managing diversity, namely running the two approaches side by side. She argued that positive action had its place alongside measures that challenged the structural and cultural elements of discrimination.

It appeared that managing diversity in the UK is still in its infancy and the extent to which it can be successfully applied to the UK workforce remains to be seen. Even Thomas recognised that there is no set formula for success, saying, “there is no single tried and tested “solution” to diversity and no fixed right way to manage it” (Thomas, 1990: 116).

4.2.2 Cultural Pluralism

The approach to managing diversity is also varies according to country, bringing another set of terminology with it. In Canada, for example, the principles of pluralism (a philosophical perspective from which ultimate reality consists of more than one form of basic substance or principle), have been applied to the diversity of culture in humans and this prescriptive usage has been termed “cultural pluralism”. Cultural pluralism may be defined as “a social-philosophical perspective that maintains that the diverse cultural characteristics of minority groups are important aspects of a whole society and that they should be encouraged by the more powerful majority.” (Reber, 1985: 554). Canada have adopted a cultural pluralism model of diversity management, viewing diversity through a mosaic approach as opposed to America’s cultural melting pot which aims more to assimilate differences (Prasad & Mills, 1997).

Whatever the approach and whatever degree of success an equality or diversity programme may have, the benefits and costs to the organisation of any type of programme are still less clearly defined than some of the theoretical or political arguments surrounding equality issues.

5 THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The business case for equality attempted to move away from the punitive style of a legislative approach to a more positive approach that encouraged organisations to adopt equal opportunity/diversity practices because of the business benefits to be gained by adopting these practices. Liff (1999) described the business case for equality as a trade-off: supporting equality measures because they bring organisational rewards.

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence that a business case exists, with a plethora of variables proposed as positive outcomes resulting directly from investing in equality of opportunity.

So what is the business case for equality and diversity? The business case is well illustrated by the equality agencies. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) set out its case in their 1995 publication, “Racial Equality Means Business”, which built on the benefits touted by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in 1986 in their “Guidelines for Equal Opportunities Employers”.

Equal Opportunities Commission’s Guidelines for Equal Opportunities Employers

The Equal Opportunities Commission asserted that business would be enhanced in the following manner:

- “Making full use of the talents of all members of the workforce. This helps to ensure the best return on what is often a costly investment in recruitment and training.
- An improvement in motivation and performance which, in turn, can reduce turnover levels.
- A broadening of the “talent base” which develops people’s abilities faster and further and opens up the potential for new and flexible approaches.
- Better two-way communications.
- An improvement in the external view of the organisation, so that talented people outside will want to join it.
- Employers have also found that, by focusing attention on the treatment of all staff at work, the implementation of equal opportunities policies stimulates a healthy and more productive atmosphere and creates a better quality of working life.

Management and employee relationships have improved and industrial relations have been enhanced. All employees, men as well as women, can benefit from an Equal Opportunities Policy. For all these reasons, it is no longer sensible to regard equal opportunities as being a luxury.

- Discrimination is bad for business, whilst equal opportunities are cost-effective and should be integrated into all management, personnel and employment practices.”

(Equal Opportunities Commission, 1986: 2)

Commission for Racial Equality's 'Racial Equality Means Business'

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) set out its vision of the business case thus:

- “Using people’s talents to the full.
- Efficient selection decisions and policies.
- Becoming an “employer of choice”.
- Getting closer to customers and understanding their needs.
- Operating internationally with success.
- Sustaining a healthy society.
- Making the company more attractive to investors.
- Making the company more attractive to customers and clients.
- Avoiding the costs of discrimination.”

(Commission for Racial Equality, 1995: 19).

The business case was intended to persuade employers that discrimination, not equal opportunity, costs businesses money. There have also been good practice guides issued for employers to help them achieve equality in terms of gender, race, disability and, more recently, age, through the Employers Forum on Age, who boldly claimed that age discrimination in the UK costs £26 billion each year.

present work

According to these government publications, the competitive advantage to be made by adopting good equality practices is enormous and convincing. Evidence of exactly how this competitive advantage is achieved is less obvious and less convincing.

use

This research project aimed to examine the reported business case variables and critically assess the evidence for a business case.

↓
Is this what you want to do?

5.1 Evidence for the Business Case

Prasad & Mills (1997) suggested that the elements of the business case for diversity fell into one of three stands of economic defence:

- 1 attract and retain qualified and skilled employees
- 2 enhanced organisational performance
- 3 competitive advantage.

The first category, attracting and retaining qualified and skilled employees, refers to the argument that market forces mean organisations need to effectively manage diversity to attract and retain qualified and skilled employees (e.g. Foster et al., 1988; Fyock, 1990; Johnston & Packer, 1987). Johnston & Packer (1987) provided the seminal work detailing the increased diversity of the American workforce that sparked the growth of diversity management in the USA. Managing diversity is thus “a valuable option because of the market forces behind it” (Prasad & Mills, 1997: 9).

In the second category, enhanced organisational performance is seen as resulting from having a more diverse workforce. For example, diverse groups are likely to outperform homogeneous groups, being more creative and solving problems better (e.g. Kirchmeyer & McLellan, 1991; Loden & Rosener, 1991; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Jackson, May & Whitney, 1995). In this manner, diversity is framed as a “corporate asset” (Prasad & Mills, 1997: 10), contributing to organisational performance. Research evidence for this strand of the business case is however inconclusive. Other studies have shown that diverse groups are more difficult to manage, and take longer to act as a cohesive unit for example (e.g. Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992; Maznevski, 1994; Watson et al., 1993).

The third strand, competitive advantage, really follows on from the first two points. ^{phrase} Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce means that workforce diversity matches an increasingly diverse customer base. Multi-cultural groups may generate a greater understanding of the customer base and therefore meet their needs better (e.g. Fernandez, 1991; Thomas, 1992; Lynch, 1994).

These three strands of business case benefit all refer to the making the most of your human resource in some manner but there is a further element of the business case, that of avoiding the costs associated with discrimination. Prejudice or discrimination from managers and colleagues on the grounds of ethnicity has often been proposed to lead to conflict, poor performance, increased turnover, increased lawsuits and even poor physical health (James et al., 1994; Alderfer & Thomas, 1988; Arvey, 1979; Erlich & Larcom, 1992; Fernandez, 1991; Kasschau, 1977; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987).

It appeared from the literature that many benefits and costs had been proposed and some research had investigated the variables involved on a case study or interview basis but that very little empirical research had been carried out on the business case (Alderfer & Thomas, 1988; Cox & Nkomo, 1990; James et al., 1994).

As always there are exceptions to the rule and there was a small body of research concerned directly with evidence for the business case for equal opportunities. For example, Wright et al. (1995) produced some evidence suggesting that organisations publicly involved in good practice equality programmes may see an increase in their share prices on the stock market. Pfeffer (1994) wrote eloquently about how the only business resource that has not yet been fully exploited is the human one, citing cases where an organisation's success was attributable to their change of people management techniques. The level of diversity of the workforce to be successfully managed was given very little mention however and the possible role of equal opportunity in using the untapped potential received no comment at all. Without specific reference, the role of equal opportunity can only be surmised.

Herriot & Pemberton (1994) looked at the competitive advantage to be gained through diversity from an organisation learning perspective. Diversity in this instance was used to describe the successful management of heterogeneous groups of individuals working together. Their focus was managing employee development and team processes to gain competitive advantage rather than equal opportunity per se and, again, the was how to cope with already diverse groups rather than why heterogeneity might be preferable to homogeneity of group. Herriot & Pemberton contributed to the business case by suggesting that teams of diverse individuals will bring a range of views and approaches

to problem solving but unfortunately, stopped at the point of giving corroborating evidence of this business benefit.

This is not to say that there has been some research which could point to the benefits outweighing the costs but they are not easily generalisable. For example the savings in turnover costs can outweigh the cost of providing a nursery at work to help employees who are parents of young children (Sheffield Hallam University, 1989). Family-friendly working practices (flexi-time, job-sharing and part-time working) can be cost-effective and provide benefits to employers that outweigh the costs (Hillage & Simkin, 1992; Incomes Data Services 1993b and 1994a). The extent to which these policies actually alter turnover and absence levels however is not proven and even if it were, the costs within a specific study can vary widely according to the number of individual employees affected, their job level, their type of occupation etc. making it extremely difficult to give categorical assurances that a particular equality measure is cost-effective. Holtermann (1995) reported that it was not possible to give accurate estimates of the costs and benefits to employers of equality measures on a nation-wide basis.

The organisational psychology consultancy firm, Pearn Kandola, produced a book in 1994 devoted to the organisational impact of equality measures. Their focus was the organisational costs and benefits, the business case, associated with equality measures and they comprehensively reviewed the literature specific to this area. Their literature review broke down the list of benefits proposed to be associated with equality and, as noted already, found that very little empirical evidence was given to support the propositions.

To add clarity, they classified all the proposed benefits into three groups:

- 1 **proven benefits**, which concern the organisational savings associated with lower recruitment and training costs of reduced attrition, wider pool of candidates and increased organisational flexibility.

- 2 **debatable benefits**, which are based largely on ambiguous research on team effectiveness and inconclusive data on improved quality and customer service.
- 3 **indirect benefits**, which are described as difficult, if not impossible, to prove.

Proven benefits were subsumed under the heading “Access to talent” on the premise that recruiting from a wider range of talented candidates, retaining this talent and the associated savings from lower turnover and absenteeism were “an unavoidable consequence of becoming a diversity-oriented employer” and were “essentially proven” (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994: 36).

Debatable benefits were listed as:

Teams:

- Promoting team creativity and innovation
- Improving problem solving
- Better decision making
- Customers:
 - Improving customer service
 - Increasing sales to members to minority culture groups

Quality:

- Improving quality

Indirect Benefits, which were “described as difficult, if not impossible to prove” (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994: 36), are listed as:

- Satisfying work environments
- Improving morale and job satisfaction

- Improving relations between different groups of workers
- Greater productivity
- Competitive edge
- Better public image.

It is worth noting that many of the benefits cited by the equality agencies are to be found on the impossible to prove list.

Kandola & Fullerton (1994) provided a very useful starting point for this research project. They listed the existing literature concerned with the benefits of equality in the workplace. However the literature in that review is almost exclusively American. How generalisable the research was to a UK audience was not discussed. Managing diversity is a relatively new approach in the UK and this renders some of the research reviewed inappropriate for a UK organisation interested in equal opportunity.

It is also important to note that a whole book devoted purely to the business case cannot honestly conclude that there is evidence for a business case. The book was written by practitioners at a firm of occupational psychologists who make their living by persuading organisations that it makes good business sense yet even they can point more clearly to the limitations than the benefits. They concluded by stating that their examination of the benefits claimed to be a result of effectively managing diversity highlighted the inconclusiveness of the data. The evidence was very sketchy in some cases and non-existent in others and the need for further research into substantiating the claims was stated.

The proven benefits cited by Kandola & Fullerton were based on individual case studies. Even amongst the relative plethora of US managing diversity literature, it appeared that the same case studies were quoted over and over (e.g. Hall & Parker, 1993, Kandola & Fullerton, 1994, Dobbs, 1996 & Robinson & Dechant, 1997 all cite the case of Corning Inc. reducing their turnover and associated costs through investing in a managing diversity initiative). Xerox is another oft-cited success story for diversity. This suggests there is a lack of empirical evidence supporting the business case.

5.1.1 Evidence Against the Business Case

If the evidence for the business case was weak, the next question was ‘why is the evidence weak?’. It could be that researchers had not previously been interested in the topic, or that the multi-disciplinary nature of the subject makes it difficult to investigate thoroughly. Prasad & Mills (1997) for example, described diversity’s desired outcomes **as “neither concrete nor easily measurable”* (Prasad & Mills, 1997: 8), illustrating how difficult it is to conduct empirical research on this topic. Alternatively, the lack of hard evidence may suggest simply that there is no business case.

The business case has been vociferously argued against as well as for. Rubenstein (1987) wrote a convincing article damning the claim that equal opportunities make good business sense. Rubenstein stated that it is false because it assumes that employers discriminating on the grounds of race or sex are not maximising the full potential of the human resources available to them and therefore discrimination is irrational. Underlying this assumption is the economic argument mentioned earlier, that discrimination is inefficient and inefficient organisations do not survive the competition of an open market place. Rubenstein stated simply that if all this were that profit-maximising employers would have adopted it years ago. His explanation is that discrimination against women and minority ethnic people makes economic sense. It makes sense because, on average, women have shorter length of service, higher turnover and higher absence rates than men, due to childbearing and family responsibilities. Employing a person from a minority ethnic group may “impose a cost on an employer in terms of adverse reactions from customers or fellow employees” (Rubenstein, 1987: 48). Whilst this will not apply in every instance, most employers do not have the resource or inclination to find out which of their applicants it might apply to and so they discriminate on the grounds of statistical likelihood.

On this basis, Rubenstein believes that pursuing the business case for equal opportunities wastes resources and effort that would be more effectively used pressing for greater legislative powers so that the economic situation reverses and discrimination becomes more costly than not discriminating. He concluded that “equal opportunities is morally right, socially right and politically right. But most employers will continue to

discriminate until it costs them more to discriminate than not to discriminate.” (Rubenstein, 1987: 48).

Dickens (1994) was similarly sceptical about the business case. Returning to her stick and carrot analogy, she argued that neither the carrot nor stick approach would be fully successful, on the grounds that the business case encouraged organisations to cherry pick the aspects of equal opportunity practice that would see the best economic return for them.

Another cost that may be associated with good equal opportunity practice is that increased workforce diversity may increase workplace conflict, as managers may not be equipped with the skills necessary to successfully manage heterogeneous employees. Cox (1993) proposed that the perception of organisational support of equality impacts on employee’s work attitudes, which in turn impact on factors such as motivation, group cohesion and organisational effectiveness. The flip side of this is that perceived support for equality initiatives may “foster feelings of resentment and increase conflict” (Parker et al. 1997: 376) in some employees. Fernandez (1991) argued that such conflict “creates an atmosphere that has led to the inefficient utilisation of large numbers of employees, especially those who are different in terms of race, gender, age, religion, and life-style, and therefore to the inefficient functioning of the corporation, with a resulting negative impact on the corporate bottom line.” (Fernandez, 1991: 32). Fernandez however offered this opinion in support of increasing diversity, arguing that women and other employees with different family structures and caring responsibilities are an increasing large element of the labour pool and workforce that companies must address the issues of family care and discrimination in order to attract and retain them. In this manner, organisations not prepared to make adjustments to value diversity will lose out to competitor organisations who do, since employees will gravitate towards the good employers and the discriminating organisations will not be able to attract enough employees to meet their needs. Participating organisations will, according to Fernandez (1991: 1), “reap rewards in dollars-and-cents terms because they will fully utilize their most valuable resource: people”. Cox & Smolinski (1994) support this type of argument, reporting that “organizations which excel at leveraging diversity...will

experience better financial performance in the long run than organizations which are not effective in managing diversity” (Cox & Smolinski, 1994: 1).

This type of rhetoric seemed characterise the literature. Managing diversity was framed as a central business concern, e.g. Ross & Schneider (1992) but grand claims were made without any supporting evidence and this seems to be increasingly recognised even among supporters of the business case. For example, Cox & Smolinski (1994: 2) recommended that future research include “how to avoid the potential performance losses related to diversity such as reduced communication, higher conflict, lower attraction to group membership, and higher turnover.” Thomas (1992: 60) used another analogy, this time comparing managing diversity to a drug to describe its shortcomings, “its capabilities and benefits are highly touted but its inescapable side-effects are hidden in the small print of a cumbersome text – if they are known at all.”

In summarising the quantitative evidence on the private costs and benefits to British employers of implementing equal opportunity Holtermann (1995: 152) concluded the costs-benefit accounts were “incomplete in their coverage and inaccurate in their accounting.” She recommended that each employer do their own cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis to assess the economic impact of particular equality measures in their organisation. As Dickens (1994) and Rubenstein (1987) suggested, this paves the way for employers to only put into place measures which will bring them organisational gain. This does not satisfy the moral or legal hurdles of not discriminating.

The business rhetoric around equal opportunity is a familiar currency. The subject is an emotive one and comments are easy to make. Producing academically rigorous evidence for such comments is not so easy (Humphries & Rubery, 1995; Kandola, Fullerton & Ahmed, 1995). This particular area of organisational psychology is obviously lacking conclusive data and highlights the need for further research. It is sensible to understand what the benefits and costs are and to assess their impact before hailing equal opportunities as crucial to business success. Such problems as highlighted above only serve to emphasise the necessity of a proper understanding of equality of opportunity and management of diversity in commercial organisations.

As Hicks-Clarke & Iles (2000: 324) noted, “evidence for these propositions is rather thin and often generalises illegitimately from research on personality, role or preference difference in small teams. It neglects the obstacles and difficulties in the path of realising this situation and does not fully consider if “managing diversity” is a feasible option in the UK.”

Proven benefits illustrated so far have rested on case study evidence where, most commonly, the cost of turnover has been reduced as a result of investing in an equality/diversity programme. There has been little emphasis on individual, psychological variables being related in a more general sense to the perceived equality environment. The research project reported here aimed to examine this question and explore the individual variables associated with the business case for equality and diversity.

5.2 Psychological Elements of the Business Case

Outside of debates concerning diverse groups meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse customer base, there appeared to be a psychological foundation of the business case. Although not explicitly stated, the relationship hypothesised by the business case was that equal opportunity affects individual variables and job attitudes, primarily job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which in turn affected organisational performance. For example, the business case talked of equal opportunity increasing job satisfaction and the increased job satisfaction creating lower turnover levels, increased organisational commitment and increased productivity.

For this sequence to work, it is essential to first establish a causal relationship between an individual’s working environment and their job attitudes. Although it is generally accepted that job satisfaction is an important element of organisational performance, meta-analyses of the literature (e.g. Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; McEvoy & Cascio, 1987) and organisation-level analyses (e.g. Ostroff, 1992; Leung, 1997) concerning job satisfaction, productivity and turnover revealed disappointingly low correlation coefficients. For example, Ostroff (1992: 963), reported that “the bulk of evidence shows the correlation between satisfaction and performance to be relatively low” and McEvoy & Cascio (1987) reported a mean correlation of -0.28 between performance and

turnover. These meta-analyses offered no explanations of causality but suggested that the poor results reflected other influencing factors at work, blurring the conclusiveness of the results.

If the central premise of the business case for equal opportunity is that perceived equal opportunity creates changes in job attitudes such as increased job satisfaction which bring organisational gain, then of particular relevance is how individual differences contribute to the perception of equal opportunity in a workplace environment. This argument relies on job satisfaction being a result of the perceived environment but there is a counter-argument which suggests that the individual reaction element of the equation is something that occurs without reference to the environment of the work situation. Under this paradigm, work attitudes are viewed as largely the result of the manner in which an individual affectively responds to their work environment. These contrasting views represent the situational versus dispositional paradox.)) build this

5.2.1 Dispositional Affectivity

Dispositional affectivity refers to stable personality constructs which affect various job attitudes and work outcomes, including job satisfaction. A major name in situational vs. dispositional affectivity research is Staw (1985, 1986) who proposed that looking at the happiness and satisfaction of workers to predict productivity was not helpful. He was not alone in this view (see Argyle, 1989, for a review of the happiness/productivity literature). Staw suggested instead that measuring “dispositional affect” would be a better predictor of both job satisfaction and productivity measures.

Importantly, Arvey (1979) and others found evidence of a genetic base to this personality construct through conducting job satisfaction research with twins. This would suggest that job satisfaction has little to do with the working environment and everything to do with personality disposition. Further evidence for this opinion comes from Pulakos & Schmitt (1983) who suggested that people with a predisposition for job satisfaction could be predicted.

Cropanzo et al. (1993) explored particular personality traits that may underlie work attitude predisposition. They came up with two traits, trait-positive affect (PA) and

trait-negative affect (NA) and concluded that these traits may impact a variety of job attitudes and other work outcomes, such as organisational commitment, turnover intentions, global job satisfaction and performance. Although negative and positive affect (NA and PA) are different constructs, rather than opposites on a polar scale, their impact on job attitudes is often polar. For example, negative affectivity is associated with low job satisfaction and positive affectivity is associated with high job satisfaction. Their results were fairly poor however and it is not clear whether the poor results were due to methodological intricacies or the lack of relationship between dispositional affectivity and organisational variables.

If personality is not a stable predictor of organisational dependent variables, then it is increasingly likely that situational variables will act as independent variables and allows the possibility of a business case for equal opportunity to exist. If, on the other hand, job satisfaction and organisational commitment may be predicted by individual difference, without regard to the level of perceived equal opportunity in the workplace, there is little gain to be made by improving the organisational environment.

5.2.2 *Situational Affectivity*

The counter argument to dispositional affectivity is that people respond in predictable ways to their environment. “Recently, the argument has been made that self-reports of negative organizational experiences and outcomes, such as high levels of job stress and job dissatisfaction, may be due to general dispositional negative affectivity rather than genuine experiences or true domain-specific reactions (Watson, Pennebaker & Folger, 1986). That is, it is claimed that some individuals are simply predisposed to unhappiness and complains about whatever organizational elements they are asked about” (James et al., 1994: 1579).

This argument dates back at least as far as equity theory (Adams 1963, 1965) which predicted individuals experiencing a situation of under-reward or over-reward would suffer distress, termed ‘tension’, as a result of the inequity. In organisational psychology terms, equity theory has been applied to the relationship between the perception of equity in the workplace (level of reward) and job satisfaction (level of tension), positing that both over-reward and under-reward result in distress (tension).

As illustrated in Figure 10, the theory ran that the optimal level of job satisfaction was reached in a situation of equitable reward. Both under-reward and over-reward were thought to result in reduced job satisfaction.

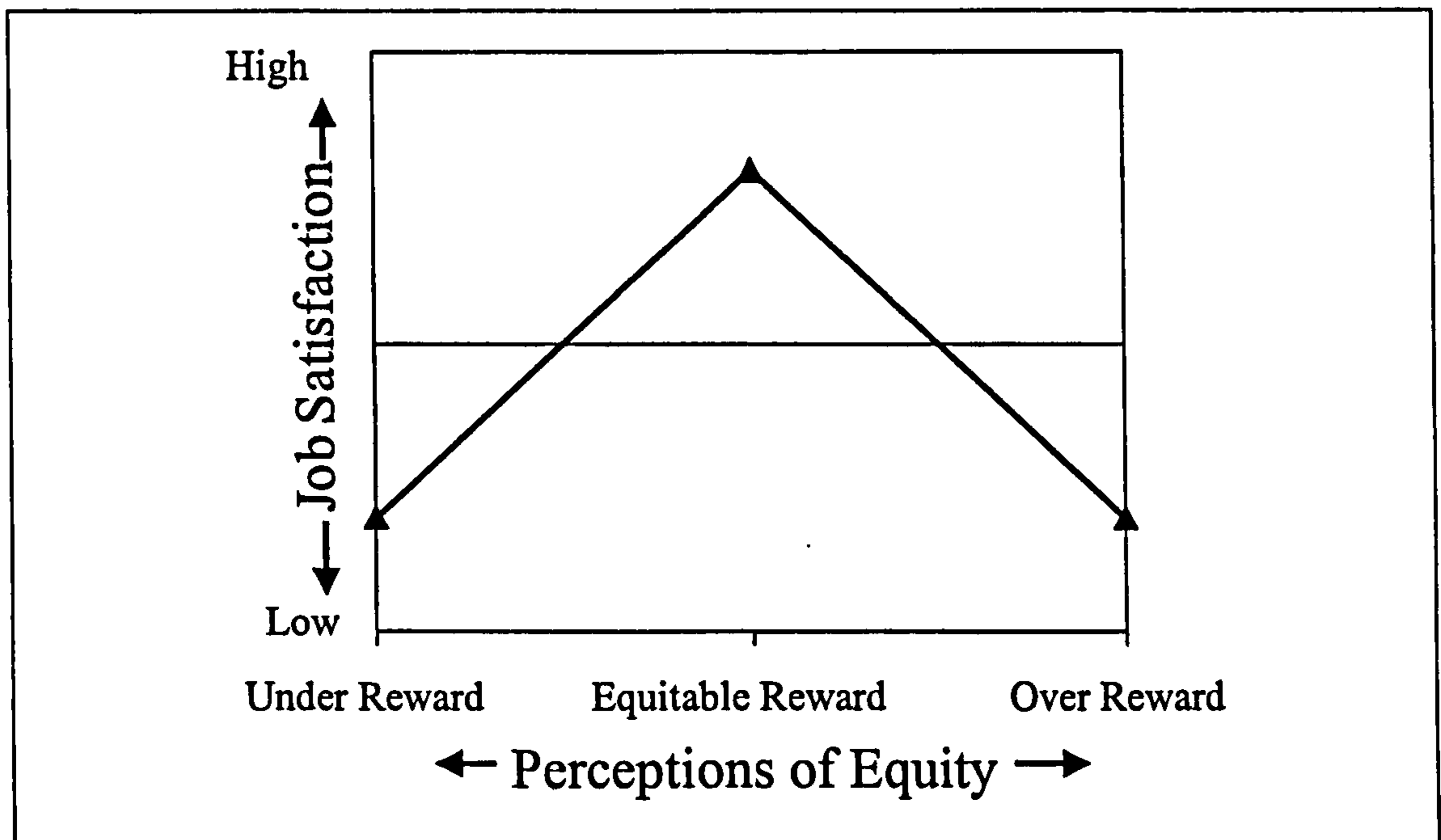


Figure 10: Predictions of job satisfaction under equity theory

Under equity theory, job satisfaction was framed as a dispositional affect, a personality trait making the actual work environment inconsequential to levels of job satisfaction and the associated organisational benefits. Equity theory, though very useful, was oversimplistic in its 'one size fits all' approach and results prediction lacked specificity. What equity theory did was lay a foundation on which more sophisticated models were constructed. Referent Cognitions Theory (RCT) (Folger, 1986a, 1986b), for example, built a procedural justice element into the framework of equity theory. Within equity theory, perceived (in)equity is based on a social comparison between an individual and another person. Within the RCT framework, injustice is conceptualised as a result of a hypothetical comparison process between a state of reality and a state of imaginable referent (i.e., a referent cognition or "what might have been instead") (Singer, 1993: 33).

The ability to predict outcomes using equity theory was substantially improved by adding a personality trait, called equity sensitivity to the formula (Huseman et al. 1985). The theory ran that individuals belonged to one of three categories, 'benevolent',

'equity sensitive' or 'entitled'. Knowing which group a person belonged to significantly improved job satisfaction prediction in work situations of under-reward and over-reward, as illustrated in the Figure 11.

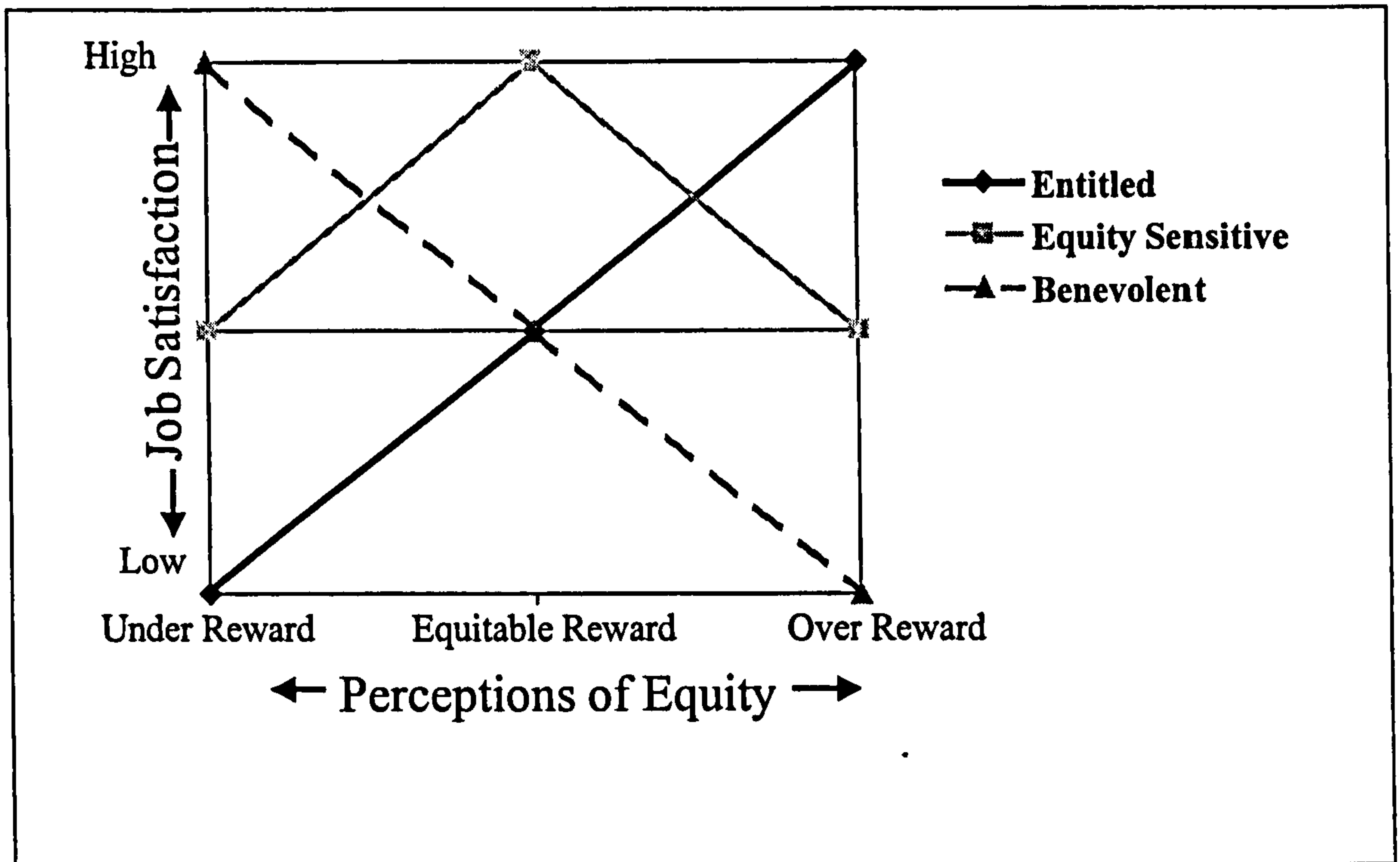


Figure 11: Predictions of job satisfaction for conditions of sensitivity to equity

Equity sensitivity added another dimension to the situational versus dispositional debate by suggesting that over or under-reward situations in the workplace may be intrinsically pleasing to individuals, according to their equity sensitivity levels. As illustrated in Figure 11, equity sensitive individuals follow the path predicted by equity theory, i.e. equitable reward results in optimal job satisfaction. Entitled individuals experience highest job satisfaction in a situation of over-reward and benevolent individuals experience high job satisfaction in a situation of under-reward.

Equity sensitivity theory predicted that an “entitled” person would show a positive linear relationship of low satisfaction resulting from under reward and high satisfaction resulting from over reward. This equity sensitivity response is the exact pattern predicted years before by expectancy theory (Porter & Lawler 1968). As with equity theory, expectancy theory runs on a ‘one size fits all’ model but, unlike equity theory

and equity sensitivity theory, predicted a direct linear relationship for every individual, as illustrated in Figure 12. Following expectancy theory, each individual experiences high job satisfaction in a situation of over-reward in terms of perceived equity and low satisfaction in situations of under-reward.

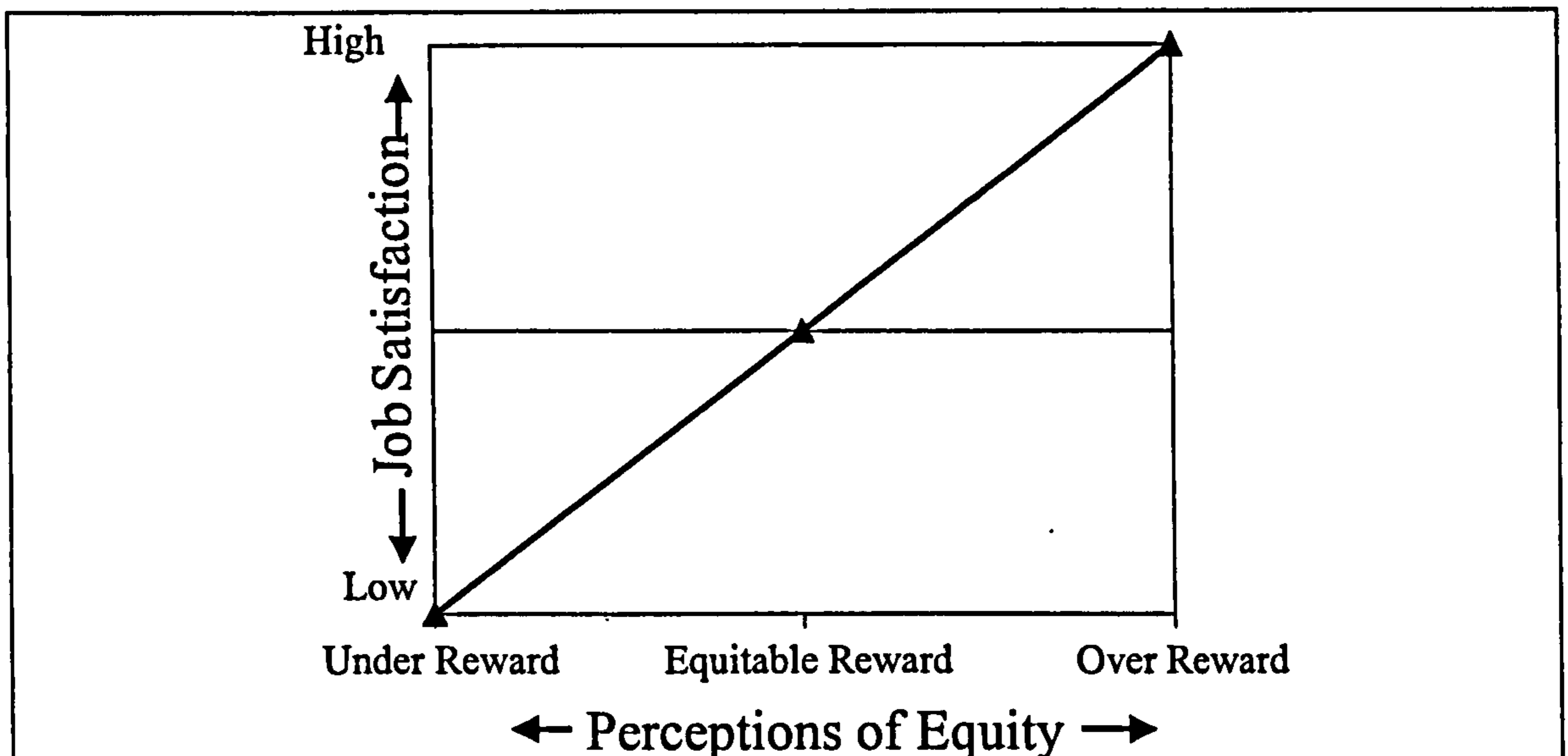


Figure 12: Expectancy theory prediction of job satisfaction

It would appear however that both the situational and the dispositional paradigms are fundamentally flawed because they take a two-dimensional approach to a three-dimensional problem. Both approaches assumed a particular causal relationship between the individual and the situation. It is more likely that a set of complex inter-relationships between three elements; the person, the behaviour and the situation exist.

The move from simple causal explanations to an acceptance of the inter-relationships involved in a process is a familiar step in the history of psychology. Over-simplistic explanations rarely endure the test of time but may form the base from which further theories can be developed. A relevant example might be Bandura's extension of simplistic behaviourist theories of learning to include cognitive, social and environmental factors, in social learning theory (1977). Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism acknowledged that in addition to the environment causing behaviour, behaviour caused environment. He later further increased the complexity of his theory to include the interaction of personality among the environment, behaviour and the individual's psychological processes. Reciprocal determinism therefore draws on the

continuous reciprocal interaction among the cognitive person, the person's behaviour and the external environment, as illustrated in Figure 13.

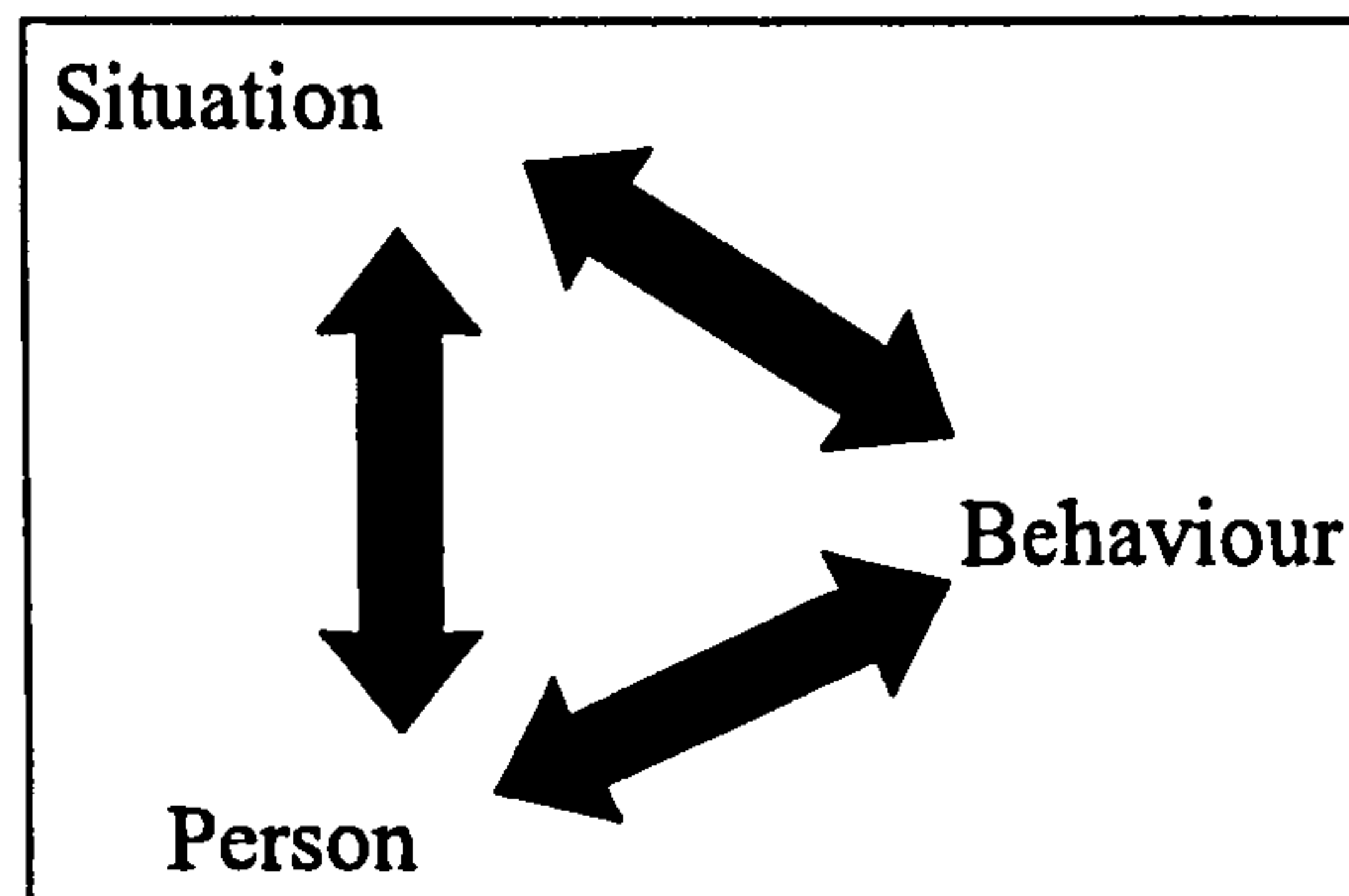


Figure 13: Bandura's 'reciprocal determinism'

With reference to the business case for equal opportunities, the interaction of the three elements of situation, person and behaviour must be the source of any organisational advantage. The complexity of interactions unfortunately draws a veil of ambiguity over organisational benefits as well as costs and it follows that exploring the impact of the workplace environment on the individual and organisation is a complex task.

In summary, the study of personality has provided a number of trait and factor theories which may contribute to understanding of the equal opportunity in the workplace however these theories are necessarily very person-based and as such difficult to apply to organisational contexts. There is also a lack of substantial work emphasising situational factors, possibly because it is so difficult methodologically. Whatever the reasons, the result is that the influence of personality on the perception of equal opportunity climate and work attitudes and behaviour remains under-researched.

5.3 Problems with the Business Case

There is a growing body of research which moves past the stating there is a business case to look at the difficulties involved in physically managing a diverse workforce (e.g. Joplin & Daus, 1997; Prasad et al., 1997). Organisational change is notoriously difficult and introducing any new diversity management, or equality programme for that matter, is not immune from those difficulties. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that managing change in diverse organisations is more difficult than with a relatively

homogeneous workforce. For example, where staff do not share a common understanding of equal opportunities, or have different expectations of equal opportunity policies, problems are likely to arise. Jewson & Mason (1986b) reported the incidence of racial discrimination allegations increasing after an equal opportunities policy was introduced, for example.

The social psychology of groups is very relevant to the claims of business advantage through equal opportunities in the workplace, not least because individuals are operating in a group setting but also because this group is likely to become more diverse as a result of good equal opportunity good practice. If the business case is to carry any weight with profit-conscious employers, it is imperative that the likely consequences increased diversity are known and understood. If people genuinely do not like working with people different from themselves then there may be an inherent disadvantage to diversity. The claims that equal opportunity increases job satisfaction and organisational commitment may not just be unsupported but may be absolutely false.

This example of how an employee may affiliate themselves to any number of groups within the workplace illustrates the problems of generalising in this field of research. The business case is based on the impact equal opportunity may have on a number of variables that are highly individualistic in nature. The role of an individual's personality in the equation cannot be ignored.

6 BUSINESS CASE VARIABLES

What are the measurable psychological elements of the business case? Commonly the business case cites increased organisational performance or effectiveness resulting from the perception of equal opportunity impacting on job attitudes.

6.1 Organisational Effectiveness

The implicit promise of the business case for equal opportunity is that organisational performance will be enhanced by the implementation of good equal opportunity practice. For this promise to become reality it should be clear that this involves at least

a two-step process whereby increased organisational performance results from an intermediary variable rather than directly, as illustrated by the flow-chart in Figure 14.

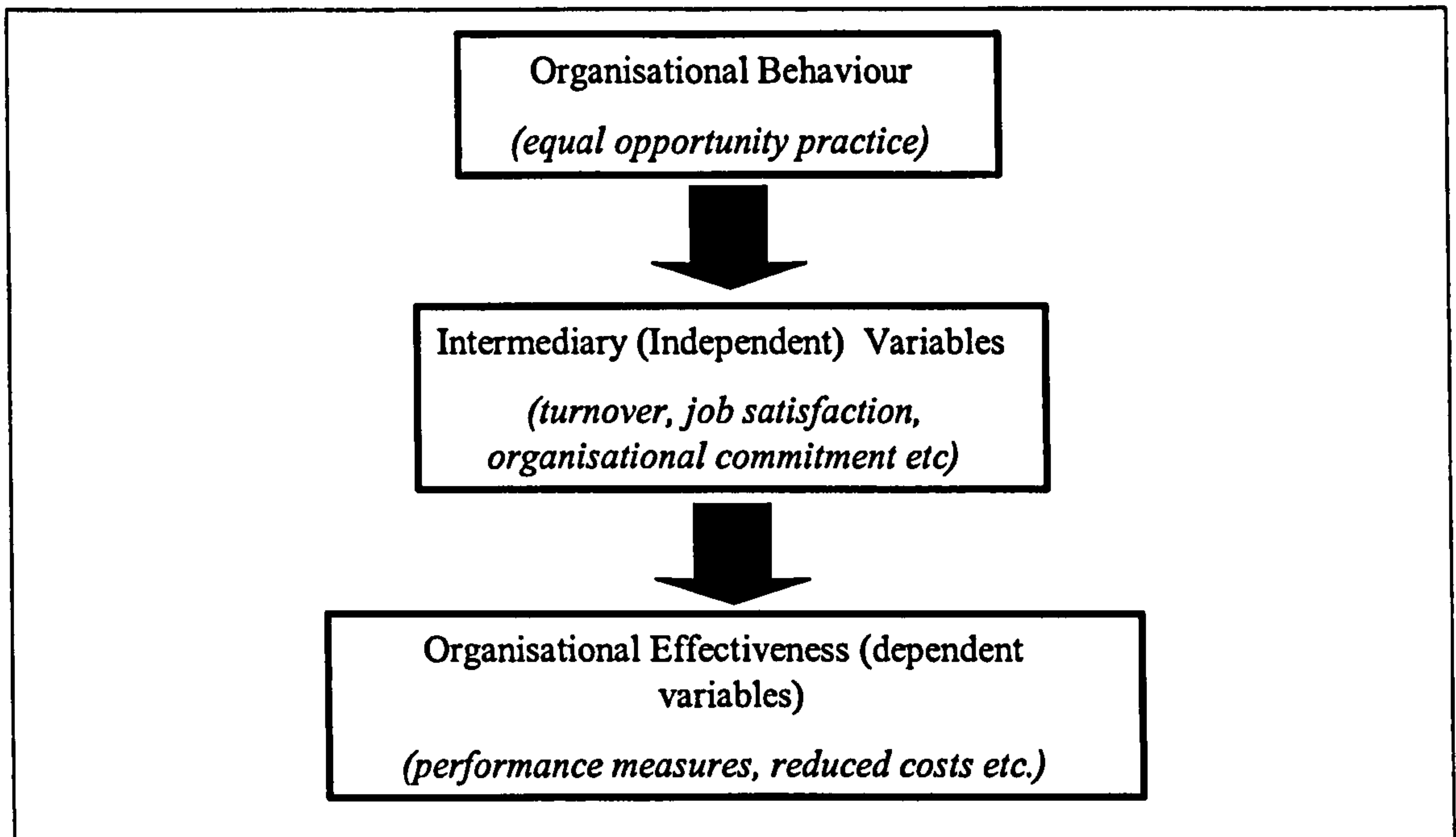


Figure 14: Organisational effectiveness

Equity, equity sensitivity and expectancy theory concerned the prediction of responses to the perception of equity. The role that equality may play in the perception of equity has not been researched within those theoretical frameworks. However, it is clearly possible that equity perception is a key element of the business case, even if it has not been expressly stated as such previously.

Models of based on equity theory have shown perceived inequity to have a personality element that will influence the impact on job satisfaction levels. Employees' perception of inequity is also a recognised predictor variable of employee turnover and absenteeism, which has been shown to be related to both intentions to withdraw (sickness & turnover) and to actual absence behaviour (Van Yperen et al., 1996; Mowday, 1991; Berg, 1991). Berg (1991) used equity perception and job satisfaction to predict employee intent to stay at TV stations and produced a flowchart of influences on that decision, presented in Figure 15.

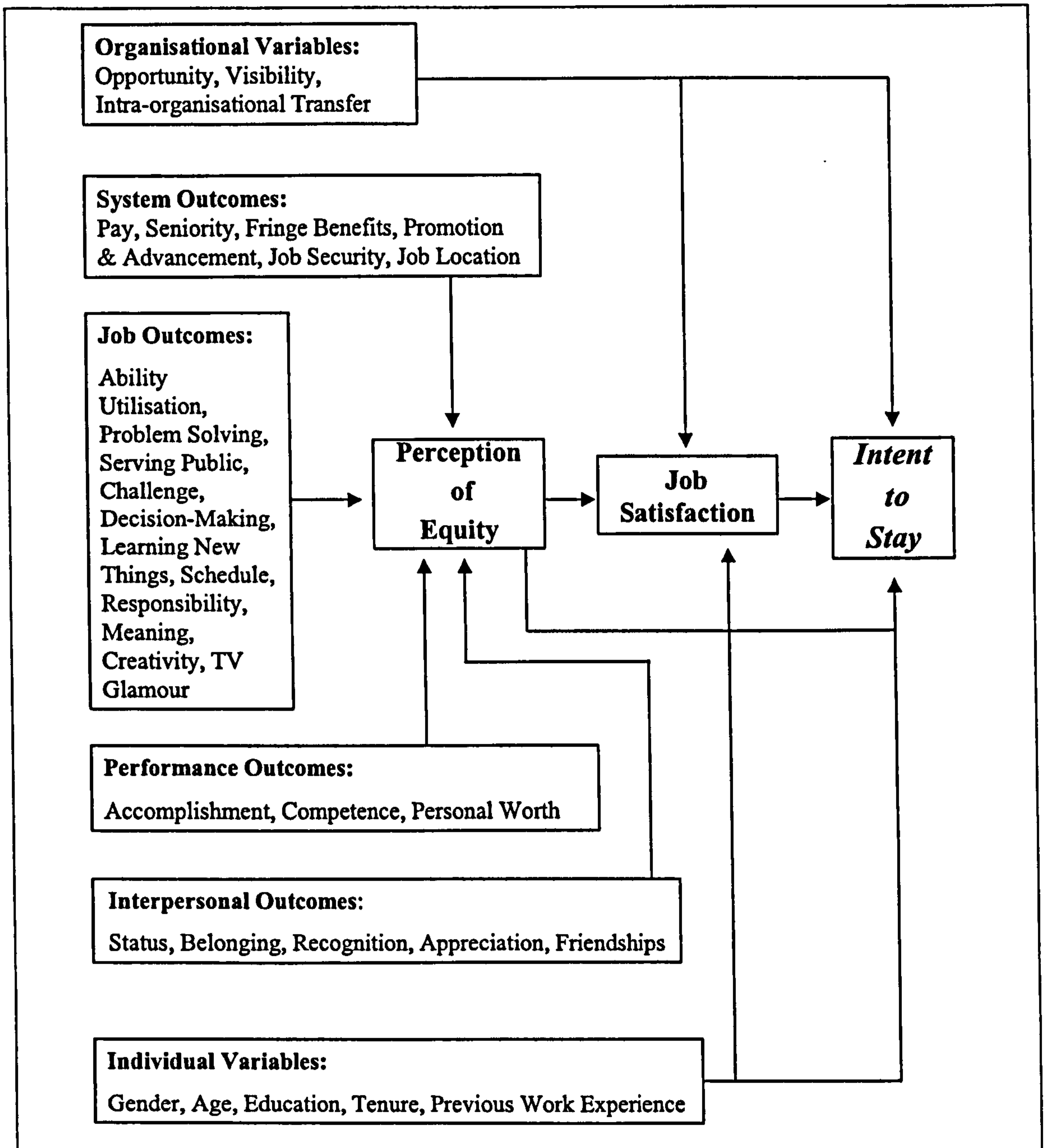


Figure 15: Model of employee turnover (Berg, 1991)

In this model, equality of opportunity could be deduced to be included in “opportunity” in the organisational variables box. There were no links drawn however between the organisational variables and perception of equity, suggesting that if equality of opportunity were to be considered an organisational variable then it would have no influence on the perception of equity and therefore equity-based theories would not apply.

This narrowness of definition has not gone unnoticed. Occupational, demographic and satisfaction variables all add demonstrably to the prediction of turnover (Mangione 1973). Turnover researchers (Somers, 1996; Morita et al., 1993 & Mobley, 1982) expressed concern that work-related variables in the turnover equation have been over-emphasised thereby neglecting variables which affect work-family issues, variables that are likely to play a very important role in turnover. It is precisely at this point that equality of opportunity intuitively fits. Unfortunately the business case relies solely on intuitive inferences and, again, it has not been established that equal opportunity plays any part in the turnover process. Further research into the perceptions of equity is required to understand where in this complex process equality of opportunity may fit in.

Perception of inequity has been defined only in terms of the employer-employee exchange being equitable. Whether this concept could be usefully extended to encompass equal opportunity remains to be seen. It may be that a failure to provide an equal opportunity climate could be perceived as an inequitable exchange between employer and employee.

6.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the classic variable used in organisational psychology and has been extensively researched. The role of personality in job satisfaction has been described above and the association implicit in that research is that organisational effectiveness will be improved by raising individual's job satisfaction. This description suggests a sequence whereby raising job satisfaction results in increased productivity, or increased organisational commitment, or decreased turnover levels, all and any of which will result in increased organisational effectiveness and therefore form a crucial element of the business case.

Although this relationship is somewhat convoluted, there is some evidence to suggest that job satisfaction is predictive of turnover (Somers 1996). "The relationship between job satisfaction and turnover, although not particularly strong, is consistent. Dissatisfied employees are more likely to leave than satisfied ones..."and in time-honoured fashion, a call for further research to better understand the inter-relationships with other concepts..."The fact that the relationship is not stronger does not suggest that

satisfaction should not be measured. It does suggest that measures of satisfaction must be combined with other measures to effectively predict and understand turnover.” (Mobley, 1982: 45). Many researchers have examined job satisfaction, for example, Porter et al. (1974) found a positive link between satisfaction and performance and Hicks-Clarke & Iles (2000) suggested that job satisfaction may be linked to absenteeism and turnover rates. Miller et al. (1993) went further to suggest that job satisfaction may be a consequence of having equal employment opportunity although their results were not conclusive.

6.3 Turnover

Turnover is intrinsically linked with equity theories because voluntary employee turnover and absenteeism can be construed as reactions to the distress caused by the perception of inequity in the employer-employee relationship. As an organisational variable, it is often included in definitions of organisational effectiveness (Steers 1977) and as such forms an essential element of the business case. Attrition levels normally hover around the 15 percent mark, for public and private organisations (source: Personnel Today, 1998) and managing turnover in work organisations remains an expensive and difficult problem for many firms (Somers 1996).

The business case makes two major assumptions: first, that low turnover relates to high organisational effectiveness and second that the perception of equal opportunity relates to low turnover. In this manner, equal opportunity may indirectly increase organisational effectiveness.

Firstly, if reducing turnover is to be a major factor of the business case for equal opportunity then it must be established whether reduced turnover is desirable. It may be that turnover plays an essential role in business, ridding an organisation of dead wood, or increasing creativity by bringing in people with new ideas. Porter & Steers (1973) emphasised this need to distinguish between effective and ineffective leavers and Mobley (1982) made a plea (which has gone largely unheeded) for turnover data to include a measure of performance so that the relationship could be evaluated. This is obviously of absolute relevance to an organisation’s bottom line profits.

Secondly, the proposed relationship between perception of equal opportunity and low turnover has rarely been researched let alone proven. Mobley (1982) came the closest by giving brief mention to Equal Employment Opportunities (the requirement on US organisations to have a proportionally representative workforce) but only to say that turnover may adversely affect affirmative action goals and contribute to apparent under-utilisation in various job categories (for example where there is a labour shortage of women engineers). The only other type of research that has dealt with equal opportunities and turnover has been research set in very specific circumstances concerned with the provision of equality measures such as a workplace crèche. It has been possible to show that the costs of replacing the women who said they would leave if the crèche were closed was greater than the cost of maintaining the crèche facility (Sheffield Hallam University, 1989).

It should also be remembered that turnover is not the only way of dealing with the distress postulated to result from perceived inequity. Steers & Mowday (1983) noted that employees who perceive inequity in their workplace but who are unable to leave will eventually discover some way to make their situation more palatable. Again, whether this type of finding will stand true for perception of equality is not known.

Of course it must be recognised that a multitude of variables will play their own part in an individual's decision to leave an organisation, including the perceptions of the availability of attractive alternative jobs, relative importance of non-work values and career expectations. Possibly equal opportunity could be added to this list of contributing factors. "The personal and organizational influences of equal opportunity climate (EOC) remain largely unexplored. Furthermore, little is known about the relationship between EOC and other organizational variables, such as satisfaction, commitment, and effectiveness." (Dansby & Landis, 1991: 389).

6.4 Summary of Business Case

The starting point for this research project was legislation has not been a wholly effective mechanism to prevent inequalities in the labour force. It has been assumed here that organisations are already aware of their legal obligations to ensure they do not discriminate directly or indirectly. This research may be challenged on the basis of

use))

these assumptions being incorrect but the focus here is not on those assumptions but on how to progress the argument.

In essence, if equality of opportunity is achievable by following certain prescribed pathways, of which there are many suggestions and case study evidence, then why has it not been achieved and embraced so far? Do people (the defacto white man) maintain the unequal status quo for their own gain, as suggested by Cockburn (1991) for example, or does equality still mean a choice between ethics and business? Does it cost more to run a business ethically than not in terms of equality? The business case contends that it is cost effective to invest in equality of opportunity yet labour market inequities continue to flourish.

7 LITERATURE SUMMARY

much is prescriptive, no models, equo - take eye of what needs to be done (Partha's reference)
what to do, but not how to do it
A general criticism of the literature in this field is that much of it is American, as noted by Hicks-Clarke & Iles (2000) and much of it focuses on the how to effectively manage an already diverse workforce (e.g. Thiederman, 1994; Myers, 1995). It is difficult to compare the picture in the UK with that in the USA and no comparative analysis of the equality situation in each country has yet been carried out to decide on the best way forward (see Small, 1991 for an extended discussion on this point). One obvious difference in that much of the American literature focuses on affirmative action (e.g. Parker et al., 1997) and this does not translate to the UK legislative framework.

Even the UK literature on equal opportunities, whilst acknowledging its value and contribution to the field, does not usually concentrate on the business case for equality or diversity. Of course there are a few exceptions, for example Hicks-Iles & Clarke (2000) but the addition of this type of research is very recent and often lacks substantive evidence. The literature most often concentrates on case study evidence of how an equality or diversity programme was implemented and the difficulties experienced during the process. The number of case studies on which this knowledge is based may be very small. Many sources cite the same organisations over and over again, which could raise a question of validity in the general sense. There is also the danger that

“once a certain approach to a problem becomes established, the success of policies is evaluated in terms of the scale and integrity of their adoption rather than in terms of their ability to achieve a particular outcome. This general problem is exacerbated in the case of equal opportunities policies since it is by no means clear precisely what the provision of “equal opportunities” is expected to achieve” (Liff, 1989: 27).

both lack 'how to'
↳ "why to"

on how to have resilience
benefits of resilience

This lack of clarity regarding the expected achievement of equal opportunities may help to explain why so much of the literature in this field focuses on ‘how to’ rather than ‘why to’. Of course it is necessary to understand how to effectively manage diversity but it does not answer the question of ‘why bother’ which the person holding the purse strings may be apt to ask.. For equality programmes to be embraced and to go beyond a paper policy, the business case for equality needs to be commercially sound. Finally, Liff’s quote also raised the question of how the success of a programme is measured.

→ next phase is measurement
↓

This in itself provides a starting point for this study and leads straight into one of the major problems with equal opportunities today, namely the supposed split in approach between the more traditional equal opportunities and the more modern approach of managing diversity. Managing diversity exponents would claim that equal opportunity approaches base success on the numbers of women and minority ethnic employees in each hierarchical level of an organisation, whereas diversity management is not about numbers but about the whole approach to valuing individuals, most commonly measured by questionnaires and surveys designed to measure employee perception by dedicated consultants. Of course it could also be argued that the dichotomy is false but, moving back to the original point, there is a lack of clarity about definition of equal opportunities which is surprising considering the length of time that anti-discrimination legislation has been in force in the UK. Already by making this statement, it has been presumed that equal opportunity is about anti-discrimination but there is little literature to suggest that this is how it is perceived, defined and understood by employees.

how to measure
↓
* using SLO framework
* other ?!
framework

7.1 Research Emphasis

lit review

The emphasis of this research study was the psychological aspects of the business case for equality. It focused on whether an individual’s perception of the equality climate would affect job attitude outcome variables such as job satisfaction, and further whether

individual differences influenced any of the relationships between individual perception and outcome variables. This is not to say that other disciplines have nothing to offer the study of equal opportunity. There are many valuable contributions to the study of equal opportunities from other disciplines and where relevant they have been included in this research project.

This research also adopted an approach that may be described as generic equal opportunities. It is not a study of gender discrimination, racial discrimination or discrimination on the grounds of disability or age alone but looks instead at the equality issues that apply equally to any form of unfair discrimination in the workplace. There was however an emphasis on gender and race discrimination because of the UK legislative framework outlined earlier in this chapter.

By looking specifically at the business case for equal opportunity, the research interest is on those variables included in the business case that can be measured from an individual or psychology source, for example, job satisfaction and intention to leave.

8 RESEARCH AIMS & OBJECTIVES

This research project commenced by searching through the literature for hard evidence to support or refute the evidence presented for a business case for equal opportunities in the workplace. What became evident was that there was so very little of this evidence, particularly when the search was limited to research specific to the UK workforce (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000).

In the UK, Noel (1994) called for an examination of the conceptualisation of equal opportunities, stating that the meaning and application of equal opportunity needs to be explored more deeply if it is to have any meaningful impact on organisations in the future. The call for a better understanding is mirrored in the management of diversity literature: “Unfortunately, because little time has been devoted to understanding diversity per se (independent of workforce issues), the ongoing discussions have positioned diversity as akin to affirmative action and have caused a substantial amount of confusion.” (Thomas, 1995: 245).

There is quite a substantial body of literature around the practice of managing diversity in the US. US organisations however are legally required to have a diverse workforce, therefore effective management of that mix of people is essential. In the UK, there remains the need to give good reason why an employer should want such a mix in the first place, particularly knowing that it will be more difficult to manage than a homogeneous workforce. Only if that good reason can be established is it sensible for a cost conscious employer to make any steps towards achieving equality of opportunity in the workplace.

The objective of the research project was simply to better understand how people perceive equal opportunity in order that equal opportunity may be progressed more effectively in the future. The primary goal of commercial organisations is not to achieve equality so organisations need to see how equality can help them achieve their primary goals, which is the premise of the business case for equality. Evidence for the business case remains weak however so this research project was designed to explore the psychological elements of the business case for equality.

Study 1 aimed to explore the perceptions of UK employees with regards to the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace.

Study 2 aimed to explore the perceptions of equality practitioners with regards to the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace.

Study 3 aimed to measure the strength of relationships between equal opportunity and outcome variables.

Chapter 2

Study One Introduction

As the literature was examined, it became evident that there was a lack of conclusive research regarding equal opportunity. There was no general consensus regarding exactly what was meant or understood by equal opportunity or managing diversity. Research in the field tended to focus on case study examples of how to successfully manage an already diverse workforce (e.g. Greenslade, 1991; Dobbs, 1996), or theoretical and philosophical debate about the relevance and treatment of social group differences in an organisational context (e.g. Cockburn, 1991, Dickens, 1994; Liff, 1997).

Psychological aspects of the business case, such as employees' attitudinal reactions to the perception of an equal opportunity environment, had been largely neglected. If however "employees' work attitudes help determine whether efforts to increase workplace diversity lead to increased motivation, group cohesion, and organizational effectiveness or instead foster feeling of resentment and increase conflict" (Parker et al., 1997: 376), then employee reactions may be a crucial element of the business case for equality and diversity, as suggested by Barnes-Nacoste (1994) and Cox (1993).

Outcome variables such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to leave have the potential to be influenced by equal opportunity provision yet it is possible that individual dispositional or genetic influences are stronger than situational effects on these outcome variables. That individual differences should play a prominent role in the study of equal opportunity is understandable but equal opportunity is intrinsically a group activity and this social context brings about many complex inter-relationships between group and individual variables and these interactive elements should not be neglected. It is very difficult however to untangle the role of employee perceptions in workplace equal opportunity from the other complex processes at play and consequently they were largely neglected in existing research.

The research project reported here started by looking for evidence of the business case. In Chapter 1, an introduction to the issues surrounding equality and diversity in organisational settings was presented, ending with an identification of the variables cited by the business case literature as being the outcome of implementing effective equal opportunity practices.

The second stage of the research project, reported in this chapter, investigated whether the business case variables would be associated with employee perceptions of equality in the workplace.

The underlying premise of the business case for equal opportunities appeared to be that provision of equal opportunity will increase job satisfaction and that increased job satisfaction impacts on productivity and organisational effectiveness measures, thereby creating organisational gain.

As described in Chapter 1, job satisfaction has been shown to be a factor in turnover prediction, organisational commitment and productivity (e.g. Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; McEvoy & Cascio, 1987; Ostroff, 1992; Somers, 1996; Leung, 1997) but the business case literature has tended to assume the link between perceived equal opportunity and job satisfaction. In order for job satisfaction to have that knock-on effect however it is necessary to establish first that equal opportunity does actually influence on job satisfaction. The perception of equal opportunity was not explicitly stated as a component of job satisfaction in the academic literature. The perception of equity had been related to job satisfaction in the literature (e.g. Berg, 1991) but the contribution of perceived equal opportunity to the perception of equity, or to job satisfaction was largely neglected.

How equal opportunity is perceived and by whom has simply never been examined in this light. It is not definitively known whether “equal opportunities” means the same thing to different types of people, i.e. sharing a common perception of its meaning. It is perfectly plausible that perceptions differ by gender, race, age, job level, educational background, or any number of other factors.

1 STUDY ONE AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Study one aimed to identify the breadth and depth of the issues associated with equal opportunities in a commercial context. The objective was to ascertain whether employees consciously associated the perception of equal opportunity with the business case variables identified in the literature.

2 PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

It was considered that this type of research question would be most appropriately approached using a qualitative research technique to allow for probing of participant responses to achieve the depth of data necessary and better understand how perceptions of equal opportunity may be formed. Qualitative methods are generally considered useful tools for revealing complexity and setting a context for data. Cassell & Symon (1994) described qualitative methods as being appropriate to asking questions about individual and group experiences of organisational processes and outcomes at work, which fit the purpose of study one. Similarly, Van Manen (1977) described qualitative data as an appropriate tool for examining the meaning people place on physical events, their attitudes and perceptions. Qualitative data “have been advocated as the best strategy for discovery, exploring a new area, *developing hypotheses*.....[and] seeing whether specific predictions hold up.” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 10).

Qualitative research is now a well-established field in its own right and is “accepted as more than a mere precursor to the ‘proper’ quantitative research that is generally conducted after the initial qualitative study.” (Russell & Gregory, 1993: 1806). It stems from a phenomenological epistemology. Epistemology refers to the ‘branch of philosophy that is concerned with the origins, nature, methods and limits of human knowledge’ (Reber, 1985: 245). Phenomenology, the science of phenomena, views the scientific study of immediate experience as the basis of psychology and focuses on how events and occurrences are perceived and experienced. There is no attempt to deny the objective reality of events, rather, the basic issue is to examine how physical events are perceived and experienced. Often constructivist in approach, real meaning is to be

derived by examining the individual's relationship with and reactions to these real world events, rather than claiming a "clear cut reality of objectivity" (Cassell & Symon, 1994: 2). Further, Miles & Huberman (1994) suggested that, for some phenomenological researchers, an unambiguous social reality does not exist.

In terms of methodology, with a phenomenological approach, theory is deduced from data collected. Thus phenomenology is epistemologically opposed to positivism, which is a form of empiricism that states that objective truth exists and can be revealed through science. With positivism, experimental investigation and observation are the only sources of substantial knowledge, deducing theory by testing hypotheses. Although epistemologically opposed, qualitative and quantitative research can be viewed as sharing equal status and each style complementing each other (e.g. Firestone, 1987). Some researchers (e.g. Hartley, 1994) have argued that methodological techniques are not in themselves phenomenological or positivist but how they are used that defines the epistemology underlying the research but it is generally considered that the research question suggests the most appropriate methodology (e.g. Tesch, 1990, Hartley, 1994). In this instance, studies one and two asked the question '*what is going on here?*' and adopted a qualitative approach, whilst study three, detailed in later chapters, asked '*do these findings generalise to a wider population?*' and adopted a quantitative approach.

Inevitably there may be elements of the thesis that do not appeal to those who are comfortable using the opposing philosophical stance. 'Opposing philosophical stance' may be slightly misleading however. It has been suggested (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994) that most researchers operate in some kind of middle ground rather than at philosophical extremes and the lines between epistemologies may not be so clear cut.

Using both qualitative and quantitative techniques in one research project may still be slightly controversial and certainly has not always been well-received in the realms of academic psychology but it has increased in prevalence over recent years, particularly with larger projects and, as Miles & Huberman (1994) suggested, there may be fewer differences in practice than the opposing philosophical frameworks suggest. Adopting this strategy was felt to be appropriate to the nature of this research project as a whole.

Chapter 3

Study One Methodology

The choice of a qualitative approach to study one (and later study two) allowed the research method to be flexible and the analysis to be data-driven. It enabled the researcher to analyse the layers of meaning embedded in the data which was essential with such a complex inter-weaving of organisational and individual variables.

1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Equal opportunity is a group activity. The absence of equal opportunity equates to the existence of unfair discrimination and discrimination can only occur when more than one person is present. The group nature has often been neglected in the research and “the complex interweaving of individual or interpersonal behavior with the contextual social processes of intergroup conflict and their psychological effects has not been in the focus of the social psychologist’s preoccupations” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986: 7). The research was designed to elicit data from participants about their perceptions of equality in the workplace, to better understand which aspects of their working life and job attitudes were associated with equality. The methodology therefore needed to facilitate an exploration into aspects of formal and informal organisational climates and cultures (e.g. Liff, 1999). An equality culture, as described in the introduction, may be supported formally by an equal opportunity policy or organisational procedure but hindered by the informal culture. Accordingly, the research design needed to provide a method for facilitating in-depth discussions and issues deeply embedded in societal beliefs as well as organisational culture. The first step in this research process was an exploration of the group dynamics and social attitudes surrounding equal opportunity.

1.1 Initial Research Design

1.1.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups were considered an appropriate methodology for facilitating the exploration of social attitudes, public thought and group dynamics. Additionally, their use enabled a wide range of responses to be attained relatively inexpensively and quickly.

A series of focus groups were planned. Each focus group would be composed of four or five employees from the same organisation and one external facilitator. Participants and facilitators were categorised by their gender and ethnicity and a matrix of groups (detailed at Appendix 1) was designed to ensure every combination of those two variables was represented and then repeated, giving a total of thirty-two focus groups.

An interview guide was to be used by each facilitator to ensure that certain key topics were broached and each facilitator would use the same facilitation techniques across each group. The reasoning behind the ethnicity and gender categorisation of focus groups was explicitly that it may enable some comparison between groups on the basis of their demographic composition. In addition to how equal opportunity is perceived in general, this structure was designed to allow the researcher to explore whether group membership, along racial or gender lines for example, may be affecting individual perceptions of the same working environment.

There was some concern that participants may not volunteer truthful opinions in a group situation because of the sensitive nature of the topic. It was judged however that this would not detract from the substance of the research because the aim was to explore how the participants perceived equal opportunity in the work place, i.e. a public setting. There was no intention to change or challenge private attitudes or beliefs on the part of the researcher.

In line with the qualitative approach to the research, the facilitators would not be asked to follow any set path of discussion, thereby allowing a great deal of flexibility and a data-driven approach to the research. Although a qualitative data collection was

employed, it was intended to use a quasi-statistical technique, content-analysis (e.g. Weber, 1990; Kassarian, 1977), to analyse the results. Content analysis has been described as a technique for dealing quantitatively with qualitative material (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This type of analysis was planned because it enabled a fairly structured analysis of qualitative data to be undertaken which was thought appropriate since part of the research objective was to establish if there were any social group lines apparent in the perceptions of equality. To further ease the comparative exercise, a facilitation technique known as 'issue analysis' (RANA Process Technologies Ltd, 1995) was planned. The issue analysis process is outlined below:

1. state the issue
2. separate the issue
3. synthesise into main themes
4. focus themes
5. prioritise
6. identify next steps for each theme

Two issues were stated (stage 1 of the issue analysis process) by the researcher:

1. costs and benefits of equal opportunity
2. equal opportunity good practice

Participants would then be asked to separate the issue into key parts of the issue, producing main themes, clarifying them, in the form of 'tag statements' and then prioritising the tag statements. Stage 6, 'next steps' acts as the prompt to return to the start of the process, if a number of issues had been stated.

'Tag statements' are a statement of opinion on the focus of the themes of the stated issue (stage 4 in the above process). Groups are asked to reach a consensus and formulate a response within the framework of set 'tag statements'.

- “I wish”
- “I believe”
- “I like”
- “I don’t like”
- “Best practice”
- “Some people may.”

Tag statements may be used as a tool for keeping the discussion of four individuals centred on issues of equality in the work place and for the generation of comparable data between focus groups.

Participants would then be asked to decide as a group how important each tag statement was and to assign a priority label to each statement (stage 5 in the process listed above) as follows:

- A1 essential
- A important
- B of concern
- C unimportant

In conjunction with the analysis of the tag statements, it was anticipated that the group discussions resulting from the process of reaching a group consensus for the tag statements and prioritisation would provide a rich source of qualitative data concerning how equal opportunity issues are perceived. In addition to producing written lists of prioritised tag statements therefore, each focus group session was fully tape-recorded and later transcribed to provide detailed qualitative data from each focus group session for further analysis.

1.2 Research Design Shift

“No study conforms exactly to a standard methodology; each one calls for the researcher to bend the methodology to the peculiarities of the setting.” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 5).

The above represents the intended design for each of the focus groups in the matrix. It became obvious after running two focus groups however that this format was

problematic. Tape recordings of the conversations were of extremely poor quality due to the number of voices and the frequency of interruptions. There was little incentive for employers to allow their personnel to participate, particularly during working hours. Willing volunteers were difficult to find and arranging access near impossible without the prior involvement of a company. Volunteers realistically became restricted to organisations that were 'post-graduate study friendly' and inevitably this limited the potential sample to a very skewed population in terms of education and background, which significantly reduced the range of responses.

These problems of access and recording quality may have been overcome with but these were not the only problems. During the course of the sessions it became obvious that participants were struggling to fit their opinions into neat tag statements and were unable to agree on priorities. Further a large degree of detail and spontaneity was being lost in the process of fitting statements onto tag statements and by half-way through the second focus group, the tag statement system of issue analysis was abandoned in favour of a standard group discussion.

Perhaps the most serious problem encountered with the focus group format concerned permissibility. On a number of occasions, participants, particularly women, started to say something but then apparently remembered who they were with and stopped speaking. Clearly participants were reluctant to speak freely and consequently the desired level of detail in the discussion was not being reached. Guarantees of total confidentiality and anonymity were given by the facilitator but the impact of giving personal opinions in front of colleagues, often their managers, could not be controlled. Although the initial research design was designed to facilitate in-depth discussions at the group level, it did not allow for the highly personal nature of equality.

For these reasons it was considered that continuing with the focus groups was not a viable option and that potential participants should be asked to take part in individual interviews. Following advice from both the researcher's supervisor and the second year review panel, the research design was revised and the focus group format was replaced by individual in-depth interviews. It was intended that individual in-depth interviews would increase the permissibility factor, increase the level of detail in the data and ease the problems with access encountered with focus groups.

Whilst this change of procedure may be unusual in positivist approaches to research, it should be understood in the context of applied organisational research as an illustration of the power and flexibility qualitative research. This flexibility means that methods of data collection can be varied as a study proceeds (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

2 STUDY ONE METHOD

2.1 Sampling

For the focus groups, it was intended to purposively sample employees from the same commercial organisation for each group, according to the gender and ethnicity criteria outlined in the focus group matrix. Within the gender and ethnicity categories, it was hoped to include participants diverse in terms of age, disability status and job complexity, to gain the widest range of employee opinion possible. Sampling participants from the same organisation for each focus group enabled a discussion about the same equal opportunity environment from different individual perspectives, thereby facilitating any later comparative analysis on social group differences in perception.

Potential participating organisations were identified through a combination of cold-calling and letter-writing to various organisations who might be interested in taking part, for example local councils, equality agencies and large commercial organisations who were publicly committed to equal opportunity were approached. This approach produced a spectacularly poor response, with organisations not seeing any obvious gain by allowing their staff to participate. Most organisations approached were generous enough to say that the research project sounded interesting but that they received so many requests from students that they simply could not accommodate every request. This type of response was exacerbated by the focus group format, since gaining access to four members of staff at the same time was problematic for many organisations. Even though the focus groups would only take one hour of time, if the researcher provided the venue, then additional travel time and inconvenience was an issue for employers. If the organisation were to offer a venue, it reduced the amount of time required for the four participants of the focus group but obviously required the

participating organisation to commit even more resources to a project in which they had no stake.

Organisations where the researcher had personal contacts yielded a much better response rate and two organisations, one a manufacturing and design engineering company, the second an information technology manufacturing company, agreed to allow their employees to take part in focus groups and provided a venue.

With regard to sampling for individual participants, following the success with personal contacts, the researcher contacted a number of ex-colleagues in the investment banking field and asked if they would participate or suggest somebody else who may be willing to take part in an interview. It was explained to the initial contacts that the researcher was particularly keen on talking to minority ethnic and white, male and female, disabled and non-disabled, young and old and junior and senior-level employees within the same organisation where possible. This sampling strategy yielded a good response rate and the researcher's contacts provided plenty of further contacts, a technique known as snowballing (Burgess, 1982). Many more participants could have been conscripted but the process was halted when analysis of the interview transcripts reached a 'saturation point' where additional analysis and data collection ceased to contribute anything new.

Whilst this type of non-probability sampling strategy is generally not well-received by positivist researchers because it precludes generalisability to a wider population, generalisability tends not to be the aim of qualitative research. In this instance, generalisability was not the aim.

2.2 Participants

The sample size included participants from a wide range of commercial organisations. There was also a good mix of participant gender, ethnicity and age represented within the sample, which, it was hoped, added to the breadth of issues identified by the participants as being associated with equal opportunity in the workplace. A total of twenty volunteers participated in either a focus group discussion or an individual interview. All participants volunteered their time freely.

Participants were asked to classify their gender and ethnicity with the rationale that participant experience of discrimination at work may differ on the basis of their gender or ethnicity and that the business case includes reference to the costs of avoiding litigation, which, at the time the research was conducted essentially precluded social group factors to those covered by the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act.

2.2.1 Focus Group Participants

The two focus groups consisted of four participants and one facilitator, the composition of which is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Focus group participants

Focus Group Number	Participant Number	Gender	Ethnicity	Age (in years)	Organisation Type
1	1	Male	White	28	Manufacturing & design engineering
	2	Female	White	31	
	3	Female	White	49	
	4	Male	White	41	
2	5	Male	White	37	Information technology manufacturer
	6	Female	White	29	
	7	Female	White	60+	
	8	Male	White	29	

2.2.2 In-Depth Interview Participants

Five of the twelve individual interview participants worked in the field of investment banking, either for the same organisation or a client company. One participant had recently moved job from investment banking to real estate. In the interests of maintaining a broad range of opinions, the remaining six individual interviews were conducted with people from a combination of industries and professions. Participant details are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Individual interview participants

Participant number	Gender	Ethnicity	Age (in years)	Organisation type
9	Male	Minority ethnic	25	Telecomms
10	Male	White	29	Stockbrokers
11	Female	White	30	Investment Bank
12	Female	White	25	Investment Bank
13	Male	White	32	Investment Bank
14	Female	White	26	Estate Agent
15	Female	White	23	Health Insurers
16	Male	Minority ethnic	64	Inner City Council
17	Female	White	25	Publishers
18	Female	Minority ethnic	31	Courts of Justice
19	Male	Minority ethnic	34	Town Planners
20	Male	Minority ethnic	37	Investment Bank

2.3 Researcher

One recurrent feature of various qualitative research approaches is that it considers the role of the researcher an integrative part of the research process. For example, Miles & Huberman (1994) described the researcher as the main measurement device in a research project and King (1994) emphasised that the researcher's chosen philosophy underpins the degree of structure imposed on the research method.

The researcher in this instance was a white woman in her late twenties. A white woman asking minority ethnic participants to disclose information about racial discrimination did raise a few eyebrows and perhaps some participants may have been more comfortable with an interviewer from a minority ethnic background. The choice of a white female interviewer was a practical one borne of cost and time restrictions but research has suggested that a difference in ethnic background between interviewer and interviewee encourages participants to tell a fuller story because participants would expect someone from the same ethnic background to know certain things and therefore not elucidate so fully (Davidson, 1997).

2.4 Procedure

Once participants had been identified they were contacted by telephone to agree a convenient venue and time. This was confirmed by letter where a brief outline of the research study and reassurances of confidentiality and anonymity were also given.

In the case of the focus groups, a time restriction of one hour was placed on the duration of each focus group. Focus groups were held during participants' lunchtime in a conference room that was very kindly provided free of charge by the participating organisations.

In the case of the in-depth interviews, the most common venue was a meeting room at the participants' organisation, again very kindly provided and arranged free of charge by the participating organisation. As with the focus groups, a one hour time limit was set and many of the interviews took place in participant's lunch hour or straight after work. Two interviews took place at the researcher's college and two interviews were conducted in restaurants during the participant's lunch hour.

2.4.1 General Procedure

At the start of each focus group and interview session, all participants were thanked profusely for volunteering their time and for providing a venue, where appropriate. The facilitator then briefly introduced the research topic to participants. Participants were asked if they had any questions in this regard. Permission was then sought to tape-record the interview, with the researcher outlining the reasons for this. For example, it was explained that accurate transcripts would facilitate the type of analysis planned. In addition, interviewees were assured that any quotations used in the study would be anonymous. The assurances of confidentiality, which had been given in the introductory letter, were reiterated.

It was also explained that there were no right or wrong answers and that their participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were informed that they need not answer anything they were uncomfortable with and were free to leave at any point.

Finally, the format of the session was discussed with participants. It was explained that the facilitator would be using an discussion guide to provide some consistency across groups (detailed in Table 4) but that participants were free to raise issues not introduced by the facilitator.

The discussions commenced with the facilitator clarifying the research objectives, namely that the point of interest was what participants thought the costs and benefits of equal opportunities in the workplace to individuals and organisations were likely to be. It was re-emphasised that there were no right or wrong answers, that the aim was only to gather different opinions on the topic, and the discussions commenced.

2.4.2 Focus Group Procedure

In addition to the general introduction outlined above, the issue analysis process, described in Section 1.1 of this chapter, was fully explained to focus group participants.

As tag statements were formulated and prioritised, the facilitator wrote them onto a flipchart sheets and posted around the room, so that the participants could clearly see each statement and priority as the discussion ensued.

All interviews and focus groups were concluded with the researcher expressing gratitude for their time and a formal handshake. Some participants expressed an interest in the results of the study and these were duly noted after the interview.

2.4.3 Focus Group / Interview Discussion Guide

The same discussion guide, detailed in Table 4, was used for each focus group and interview to ensure some core discussion points were raised. The discussion guide may appear rather structured when presented as a list however it was used purely as a prompt by the researcher. The list items were topics lifted from the literature but participants were not expected to rigidly adhere to any structure and it must be stressed that once participants started talking, many topics were covered quite naturally, without the researcher having to laboriously read off each statement/question.

Table 4: Discussion guide for focus groups & interviews

- EO definitions.
- EO's general workplace perceptions.
- Level of general workplace discrimination.
- Discrimination industry specific?
- Discrimination hierarchy specific?
- Personal experience of discrimination.
- Disadvantaged groups – who and why?
- Adequacy of EO policy level.
- Policy's influence on behaviour.
- Desirability of diverse/representative workforce.
- Personal benefits & costs of EO.
- Organisational benefits & costs of EO.
- Individual differences – valued or irrelevant?
- Positive discrimination.
- Monitoring practices.
- Social-group based differences in perception of EO.

This flexible approach was particularly relevant to Study One participants because quite often they had not considered equal opportunity in any depth prior to participating in the research. Participants were encouraged to talk about issues that they perceived as important aspects of their working environment, which sometimes were not directly related to equal opportunity but nevertheless provided an essential insight into how equal opportunities were perceived by employees.

3 TREATMENT OF DATA

The collection of tag statements was abandoned early in the research process and the few tag statements collected from the initial focus group were not included in the analysis. Every focus group and in-depth interview was fully transcribed. These

transcripts are presented in Volume 2 of this thesis. Additional remarks, comments or observations made by the researcher during or immediately after the focus group/interview were written up and kept as a recording the overall impression of each interview. These notes and transcripts together provided a very large and rich set of qualitative data.

It has been suggested that a recurrent feature of qualitative research is the need for the researcher to be familiar with the data (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994, Cassell & Symon, 1994, King, 1994). It is often recommended that transcripts are read and re-read and that tape recordings of interviews listened to more than once. The physical process of transcribing provided the opportunity to achieve a very high degree of familiarity with the data which further facilitated the analysis process. King (1994) described a phenomenological analytic process known as 'immersion' or 'crystallization' where the researcher immerses themselves in the research subject over a period of time, crystallising meaning through analytical reflection (e.g. Cassell & Walsh, 1997). Certainly this type of analysis did occur alongside the transcription process. Theories were formed, tested and rejected or accepted as the volume of data was built and the familiarity with the data increased.

3.1 Transcription Convention

Interviews were transcribed in full, to include every word, utterance and pause in the conversation. In the interview extracts reproduced here (..) is used to indicate a pause in the participant's speech,indicates omission of the material and (inaud) indicates that the tape-recording was inaudible at that point, following the style of Wetherell et al.. (1987). 'P' was used as an abbreviation of Participant and 'INT' was used as an abbreviation of Interviewer.

3.2 Qualitative Data Management

After each focus group and interview tape recording had been fully transcribed, the transcriptions were loaded into a qualitative data software package, QSR Nud.IST®. Textual qualitative data has been described as cumbersome and bulky (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The sheer volume of data does make it difficult to manage

physically as well as analytically. The problems associated with manual analysis are well recognised in the field and it has become common practice to use a software package to help manage the data.

The data were initially analysed using QSR Nud.IST® 3.0, a software package designed to assist qualitative analysis. “There is, unfortunately, no magic formula for hastening the conceptual tasks associated with qualitative analysis, yet effective qualitative data management systems (QDMS) expedite the mechanical tasks, those tasks associated with storing and retrieving qualitative data.” (Russell & Gregory, 1993: 1806). QSR Nud.IST® works by storing qualitative data in a hierarchical fashion.

QSR Nud.IST® 3.0 stored each transcript on a line by line basis, assigning each line of text a unique number (text unit). QSR Nud.IST® 3.0 allows a hierarchical tree of ‘nodes’ (headings) to be built as the analytic framework. Nodes can be introduced before the data (top down technique) to cover existing theories around the topic, for example, or new nodes can be introduced as new themes or theories are generated by the data (bottom up technique). A combination of top down and bottom up techniques can be employed, as it was here. Data can be attached to one or more nodes and the software allows easy cross-referencing and movement between nodes. Text can be searched for specific words or phrases across all documents entered. QSR Nud.IST® 3.0 does not actually analyse qualitative data but it is an extremely helpful tool in managing the sheer volume of data that qualitative research inevitably produces.

For example, each line of each transcript is carefully examined. One particular line of transcript text (text unit) may be considered relevant to four possible analysis themes and so the text unit is stored under those four nodes. A large volume of data soon builds up under each node. No analysis has been conducted but every piece of text concerning, for example, ‘discrimination’, is stored together. Participants’ names and demographic details and the notes detailing the overall impression of the interviews were also entered into the software package, to keep all the data together in one place.

One of the finest elements of qualitative analysis is its ability to take an holistic approach. A major limitation of QSR Nud.IST® is that it is not capable of displaying the whole framework of nodes which became frustrating when trying to gain an

overview of the data and to examine possible links between the themes. In time-honoured fashion, this limitation was overcome by writing the node headings onto sticky notes and plastering the notes over the wall of the researchers study. This allowed the researcher to 'live' with the data and to play with ideas, patterns and concepts by arranging and re-arranging the stickers. As Miles & Huberman advocated, "work with all of the data on a single page, even if that page covers a wall" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 131). This process clarified where themes and units of evidence best fitted into the whole picture. Once the sticky notes had been structured to the researcher's satisfaction, the structure of the stickers was transferred back into the nodes of QSR Nud.IST® 3.0 where the micro level analysis was continued.

3.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

Study one was concerned with the discerning of meaning and a phenomenological approach to the analysis was adopted. This meant that the analysis process was flexible, data-driven and open. There are no stringent rules for the analysis of qualitative data (e.g. Hyncer, 1985, King, 1994) but there are features that recur in most qualitative analysis techniques. Miles & Huberman (1994: 9) described a sequential set of analytic steps, detailed below that are common across many types of qualitative research analysis techniques.

- Affixing codes to a set of field notes drawn from observation or interviews
- Sorting and sifting through these materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences
- Isolating these patterns and processes, commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection
- Gradually elaborating a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database
- Confronting those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories"

After the initial immersion type process as the interviews were transcribed, the analytic procedure adopted closely followed the coding and clustering techniques advocated by Miles & Huberman (1994).

3.3.1 Analytic Procedure

Coding and clustering are analytic techniques, still within the realm of phenomenology but more deductive, more structured techniques, than approaches like immersion or crystallisation, where meaning is reached intangible analytic activities such as ‘deep understanding’ or ‘analytical reflection’. In part, this decision was made so that audit trail requirements of a thesis could be met. The major reason for choosing slightly structured techniques was that although the philosophical underpinning of a phenomenological approach was appealing to the researcher, the sheer volume of data generated by the research project meant that it was not physically possible to keep all the potential and final ideas and themes and patterns and links in abstract format. The researcher preferred to physically reduce the data into smaller, more meaningful chunks in a software package that allowed thought patterns to be transferred onto screen or paper for later reflection. This process included ‘memoing’ (Glaser, 1978): written notes (memos) about possible links or themes, or ideas that occurred as the analysis process was underway.

3.3.2 Coding

Analysis commenced with an initial coding of transcript data. Transcript data were coded and stored in the QSR Nud.IST® software. ‘Codes’ are efficient data-labelling and retrieval devices, used to assign meaning to units of data, for example a line or paragraph of text. The creation of codes in itself is part of the analysis process. The choice of which pieces of information to store and which to discard is analytical.

The beginnings of an hierarchical tree were formed by the creation of a priori codes that related to equality issues, as defined by the literature and initial impressions gained from the interview and transcription process, a start-list of codes. Each text unit was coded and a node created for each code in the hierarchical tree structure of the software package. The data started to build a picture of themes and issues that were common

across each of the interviews. Where an appropriate a priori code existed, the text unit was attached to it. For example, costs and benefits of equal opportunity provided two a priori codes. Text units referring to the costs or benefits of equal opportunity were attached to those codes (a 'top down' analysis). Where analysis revealed themes or patterns which did not fit any of the a priori codes, new codes were created, thereby expanding the hierarchical tree of nodes.

Having an initial set of codes served as a reminder of the research question but were not strictly adhered to. The analysis was data-driven and where codes became too broad, too full, or too empty, for example, they were redefined or discarded.

The next stage considered the emergent themes within those categories. Essentially, links are hypothesised between the data codes. Often codes start in isolation but inter-relate to such an extent with other codes that together they built up into a key issue (a "bottom up" analysis). Some of the codes already represented overarching key issues, and where they encompassed a number of more specific themes or patterns they were broken down into sub-codes nestling under the key issue in the hierarchical tree (a "top down" approach). Miles & Huberman referred to 'larger' codes being conceptually inclusive and 'smaller' codes typically being more differentiated instances, producing a "conceptual web, including larger meaning and their constitutive characteristics" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 62).

In this manner, every text unit was analysed and a hierarchical tree of nodes was created.

Although there was plenty of overlap, the end result was an hierarchical tree composed of:

- key issues, which represented the overarching issues,
- themes, which represented recurring themes under the key issues and
- patterns, which represented the patterns in the chunks of textual data supporting the themes and key issues.

Figure 15 diagrammatically illustrates the hierarchical structure of analysis enhanced by the use of QSR Nud.IST® 3.0 and the mixture of top down and bottom up approaches to analysis that was utilised in this instance.

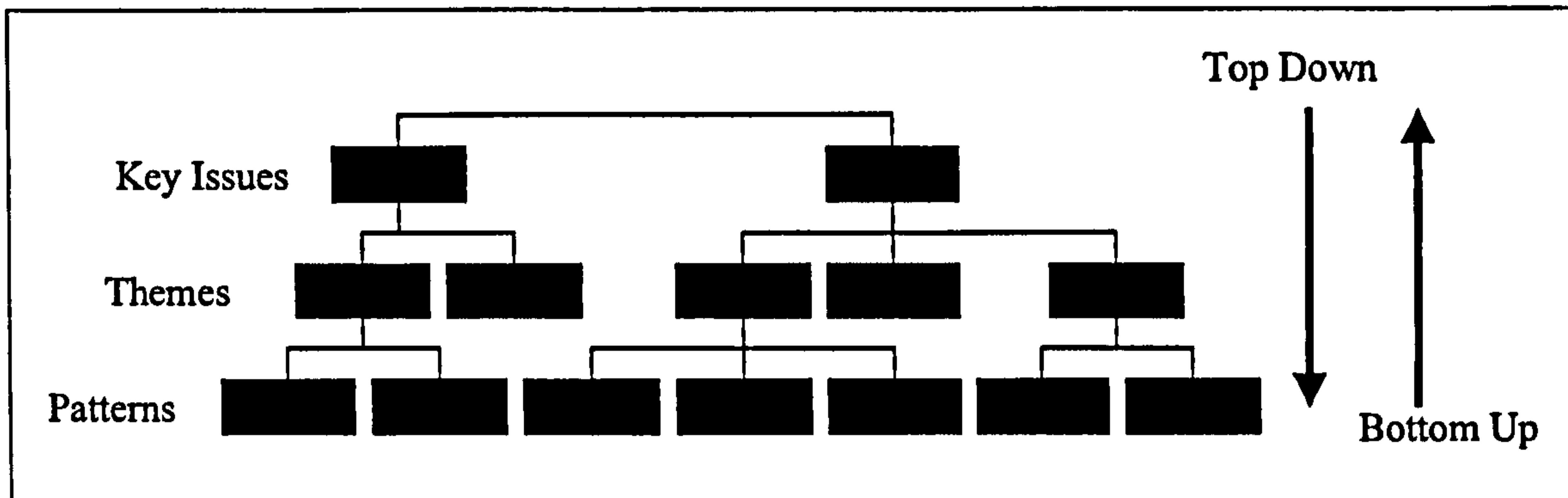


Figure 16: Qualitative analysis in diagrammatic form

To increase rigour in the coding process, the researcher discussed the strategy for coding the data into themes and categories with the PhD supervisor and another doctoral student, to check that other researchers would reach similar decisions in the categorisation of data and to check that the decisions made were defensible.

3.3.3 Clustering

Clustering describes the process for organising the codes into a meaningful system. Units of data that relate to a particular theme or issue are clustered together. It is an analytic technique for “*grouping* and then *conceptualizing* objects that have similar patterns of characteristics” to better understand phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 249).

Clustering (e.g. Hycner, 1985) normally involves collapsing a large number of lower-order codes into a smaller number of higher order codes, producing a two-tier analysis. A three tier analysis was adopted for this data analysis process (key issues, themes and patterns), because two tiers did not seem to provide enough scope for analysing the complexity of the subject matter. The principle of reducing many lower order codes to fewer higher level codes however was still applied.

The three levels of data clusters used here may be viewed as a three tier translation of the two tier ‘pattern codes’ and ‘first-level codes’ suggested by Miles & Huberman

(1994), who described clustering as the qualitative researcher's equivalent of cluster-analytic and factor-analytic statistical analysis. Clustering was used here primarily as a tool for drawing and verifying conclusions.

4 RIGOUR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

4.1 Researcher's Role

The researcher's role is acknowledged. No claims of scientific objectivity or generalisability have been made. Unlike positivist research, subjectivity is accepted as an inherent element of qualitative research (Bryman, 1988; Cassell & Symon, 1994, Miles & Huberman, 1994). Researchers are an integral part of the research and bring their own experiences, thoughts and ideas to the process. Objectivity is not a requirement or an aim because "the interviewer's sensitivity to 'subjective' aspects of his or her relationship with the interviewee is an essential part of the research process" (King, 1994: 31).

This is not to say that qualitative research lacks rigour. One of the major concerns of qualitative researchers has to be one of reliability and validity. For example, how can the researcher be sure that the research question has indeed been addressed (i.e. internal validity). A constant agony for the researcher has been the dilemma of "am I scratching where it isn't itching?" (Wolcott, 1990: 61).

4.2 Validity

A valid qualitative study, as with quantitative, examines the topic it claims to examine. In qualitative research, the question is normally about the validity of the analysis – the researcher's interpretations of data. One of the recommended solutions is to check the reported findings with participants (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994), which was done informally with two participants, who concurred with the author's conclusions.

4.2.1 Feedback from Participants

Gaining feedback from participants may be seen as a source of phenomenological validity' (Bronfenbrenner, 1976) or a method for assuring the 'confirmability' of findings (Guba, 1981). It is also good practice in terms of ethical research. Participants have the right to know how their input was used. Some participants did request further information on how their interview was used and this was duly done.

Verbal feedback was sought and received from two participants during the data collection process. Although initial impressions of the data were discussed, the feedback mainly concerned the process and experience of the focus groups and interviews rather than the confirmability of the findings.

Another means of checking the validity of the research findings was more extensively employed, that of 'triangulation'. Triangulation is a process whereby other disinterested parties are given the data to see whether or not they agree with the data categorisation and conclusions of the researcher. Research findings and the analytic process were checked and discussed with the PhD supervisor and another doctoral student engaged in a qualitative research project. The underlying logic of such a procedure is that the research findings of the potentially biased researcher are given added weight by an outsider's opinion. Both supervisor and outsider endorsed the researcher's findings.

Analytic conclusions were also checked against the overall impressions of meaning gained during the initial immersion in the transcripts, to ensure that meaning had not been lost during the coding and clustering processes. Some of the a priori codes were drawn from the literature and these provided a further point of reference. The qualitative results were later used to inform the structure and content of a follow-on quantitative study (Study Three) which yielded similar results to those suggested by Study One, thereby providing some additional support for the findings.

4.2.2 Reliability

In terms of reliability, the question posed is whether another researcher would reach the same conclusions. It is entirely possible that another researcher may reach different conclusions from the same data. Qualitative data are vast, rich and complex. Analysis

acts as a distillation process which leaves only the main themes and units of interest as chosen by the researcher and the whole process must depend on the integrity of the researcher. Interview transcripts are therefore submitted as Volume 2 of this thesis, so that another researcher could conduct their own analysis.

It should be remembered however that the transcripts represent only the words of the conversations held between participants and the researcher. They cannot faithfully replicate the nuance of each interview, the non-verbal elements that the author was privy to. The objective reader will always be denied the personal experience of the live interview. Reading an interview script brings the whole encounter back to life for the researcher; the energy, the nuances, the postures – the rapport. It is impossible to convey the mood of every interview in a write-up.

4.2.3 Outliers

The author runs the risk of ‘spoon-feeding’ the reader, in terms of deciding what s/he needs to know (e.g. Wolcott, 1990). The author has attempted to overcome this by including those participants’ views which run counter to the majority.

Particularly with a small sample size, one participant introducing a theme may have tapped into something far more prevalent than one small sample could reveal. Examining and including the exceptions to the norm, the ‘outliers’ may test and strengthen the basic finding (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994). The social world is not always logical but an analytic process tends to seek logic. The inclusion of outliers helps prevent researchers applying logic inappropriately.

“The analytic challenge is to find coherent descriptions and explanations that still include all of the gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions inherent in personal and social life.” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 15).

4.3 Researcher Effect

Other techniques for increasing rigour include reducing the researcher effect during the data collection phase. Miles & Huberman (1994) suggested a number of ways in which the bias associated with the researcher effect on participants could be reduced, including

the suggestion to conduct some of the interviews in a 'congenial social environment (café, restaurant, informant's home), to reduce the 'threat quotient' and 'exoticism' of the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 266).

This particular suggestion was in fact taken up by the researcher and several interviews were conducted in cafes and restaurants. The reality of interviewing in 'congenial social environments' however was that they were noisy, hindering the quality of the tape-recording, there were interruptions, including the arrival of food and drinks, other diners asking for a light for their cigarettes from the participant and friends and colleagues of the participant turning up at same place and stopping to chat, making it difficult to keep the thread of the discussion running.

The preferred venue soon became a quiet office at the participant's place of work. This facilitated an interview with a minimum of interruptions and noise disturbances yet reduced the 'threat quotient' of the researcher, as described by Miles & Huberman (1994). Many participants offered to book a meeting room at their place of work, an offer that was gratefully accepted by the researcher. The only apparent disadvantage of this strategy was that some participants seemed concerned that work colleagues in the next meeting room may be able to overhear our discussions. Certainly in the case of one participant this was a real concern and it may have inhibited the discussion process slightly. In comparison to the noise and interruptions the more social setting however, this concern paled into insignificance.

4.4 Presentation of Results

It should also be remembered that the choice of qualitative methodology brings a particular style of presentation. Following this tradition, the write-up of this research includes details of the paths that were travelled, regardless of the degree of 'success' obtained by taking that route, in the interest of research rigour.

The use of qualitative methods in organisational settings is increasing but Cassell & Symon (1994) suggested that it may be under-reported. Possible reasons for under-reporting must surely include that the reality of applied research means academic demands often conflict with those of the participating organisations. In being honest in

our reporting we may open ourselves up to criticisms of academic rigour from those unfamiliar with applied qualitative research in organisational settings however where problems associated with the real world of applied research were encountered, it has been openly reported in this thesis.

Results are discussed in one section, as is customary with qualitative research, rather than separate results and discussion chapters. There are no numerical results displayed for Studies One or Two since the focus of the research is the meaning and context of the data, not the quantity. Results are presented in terms of the overarching key issues, themes and patterns falling under those key issues, illustrated by transcript data where appropriate. A diagrammatic summary of the results is also given at the start of each section. The diagrams present the results in hierarchical fashion, illustrating the key issues, themes and patterns and provide a succinct summary of the analysis.

It was hoped that presenting the results in this fashion would facilitate the reading of the results and help outline how the analytic conclusions were arrived at.

Chapter 4

Study One Results Discussed

1 FOCUS GROUPS

1.1 Group 1

Focus group 1 participants had not really thought about equal opportunity before the discussion and they required a lot of encouragement from the researcher to voice their opinions. To facilitate this process participants were asked to brainstorm possible costs and benefits associated with equal opportunity in the workplace. This process provoked a good response and the resulting ideas and suggestions were written onto flipcharts. The resulting list is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Costs and benefits of EO proposed by Study One, group 1 participants

Benefits	Costs
Increased awareness of issues	Decreased morale
Organisation seen as adopting good practice	Decreased flexibility for the organisation
Increased employee morale	Recruitment becomes more difficult
Improved corporate image	High cost of adverts
Company needs a mix of people	Evaluation costs money
Wider pool of applicants	Increased time required is expensive
	Overall recruitment costs will be raised

The suggestions listed looked very similar to those listed in the business case. They were also similarly vague and the researcher prompted for further explanation of the costs and benefits listed. For example, the group thought having a mix of people to work with was important. When asked why this was important, improved team working, increased number of ideas and workers being representative of local

population were cited. Their responses mirrored the business case arguments for increased diversity although none of the participants seemed aware of this, illustrated by the absence of jargon in the transcripts.

Focus group participants were also asked to prioritise aspects of equal opportunity, as described in the Method section. Applying this process to what a successful equal opportunity policy needs yielded the set of priorities listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Good EO practice priorities proposed by Study One, group 1 participants

Aspect of good equal opportunity practice	Priority
A champion of the cause	A1
A detailed company policy	A1 / A
Legal compliance	A1
Mission statement	A1 / B / C
Evaluation of current policy	A
Training, including selection and recruitment procedures	A1 / A
Commitment of management	A1
Forum for discussion	A1
Follow-up procedures	A1

As the participants relaxed into the discussion and the prioritising process they became more emotionally involved. Equal opportunity is an emotive subject and participants became increasingly vociferous in their opinion, to the point that they often found it impossible to reach a group agreement about the priority given to each element. This was evidenced by the proliferation of 'A1' categories in the list and the range of priorities being given to the same policy element.

Internal politics are also an intrinsic element of group dynamics, particularly when the participants work together on a daily basis and proved to be slightly problematic. Participants were reluctant to give personal opinions and examples in front of their colleagues for fear of incriminating either themselves or other members of their organisation. One of the participants was the manager of the other three participants. The manager frequently dominated the discussion and was not challenged by the other

participants in the same way that they challenged each other. Although this effect diminished as the discussion progressed and group cohesiveness increased, the hierarchical difference between focus group members did appear to restrict the flow of conversation at times.

1.2 Group 2

Focus group 2 participants had a lot to say. They functioned as a cohesive group immediately and the conversation ran freely. The researcher had a discussion guide but this was rarely used as the participants raised issues unprompted. The researcher simply encouraged the participants to follow up on the topics raised, rather than impose a pre-determined structure.

Equal opportunity was perceived in very personal terms and participants had lots of examples of discrimination that they wished to recount. The researcher had to emphasise repeatedly that participants could suggest opinions that weren't backed up by personal experience in order to widen the range of the discussion.

As with focus group 1, possible costs and benefits were listed onto flipcharts and the required elements of a successful equal opportunity policy were discussed. Results are summarised in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Costs & benefits of EO proposed by Study One, group 2 participants

Benefits	Costs
increased appreciation of others	increased cost
increased familiarity with difference	increased resources to recruitment
lower racial tensions	
improved language (less bad language)	
wider pool of applicants to choose from	

Participants felt that good equal opportunity practice required:

- Selection on merit (possibly ensured by blind applications masking name and gender)

- A team of people making decisions rather than one individual, to reduce bias
- Assessment / monitoring / training / appraisal.

It should be noted that less emphasis was placed on the flipchart and prioritising process for group 2 than with group 1. This was in direct response to the sheer amount they had to say on the topic. The time allowed for the focus group was limited to an absolute maximum of one hour in this instance and the researcher felt it was more appropriate to allow the process to be participant driven rather than rigidly direct participants to the topics on the discussion guide.

Both focus groups were tape-recorded and these recordings were fully transcribed and added to the individual interview transcripts for analysis. It should be noted that the quality of the tape-recordings was very poor and much of the conversation was inaudible on playback, as indicated in the transcripts.

The analysis of the transcripts followed the process described in Section 3.3 above. To provide an audit trail and an example of the rationale behind the coding and clustering elements of the analytic process, Figure 17 provides an example of initial codes that the data were categorised into as they were coded into the software package, QSR Nud.IST® and how the software presents nodes under which the coded data are stored. The blank lines falling down from the first level nodes represent other nodes that were formed under the first level.

Figure 18 provides an example of the 'equal opportunity' branch of the hierarchical tree which housed the majority of the a priori codes, for example the costs and benefits of equality for organisations. Figure 19 illustrates how a topic which was not an a priori code, 'discrimination', but was referred to extensively by the participants. Therefore a branch was set up in the data management software, which grew more nodes as the data was entered, coded, clustered and sub-clustered.

These diagrams represent the initial nodes resulting from the first coding of the transcripts. From these, the analysis progressed. Data were clustered and subclustered and the final results are as presented in Section 2 below.

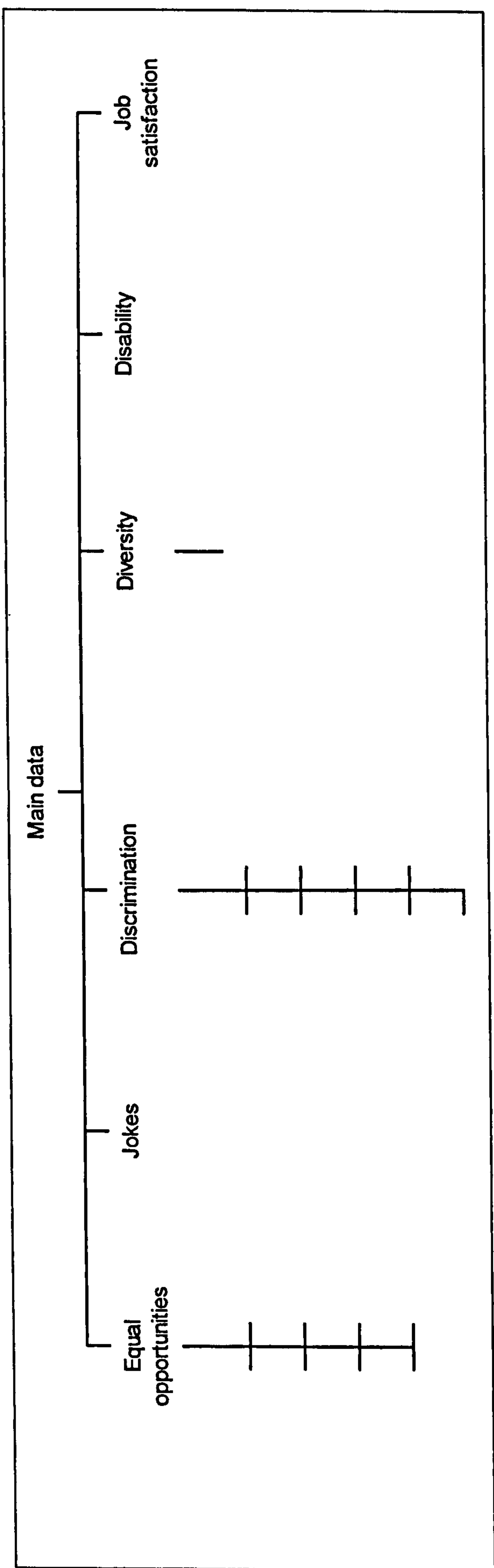


Figure 17: Study One results initial data clusters

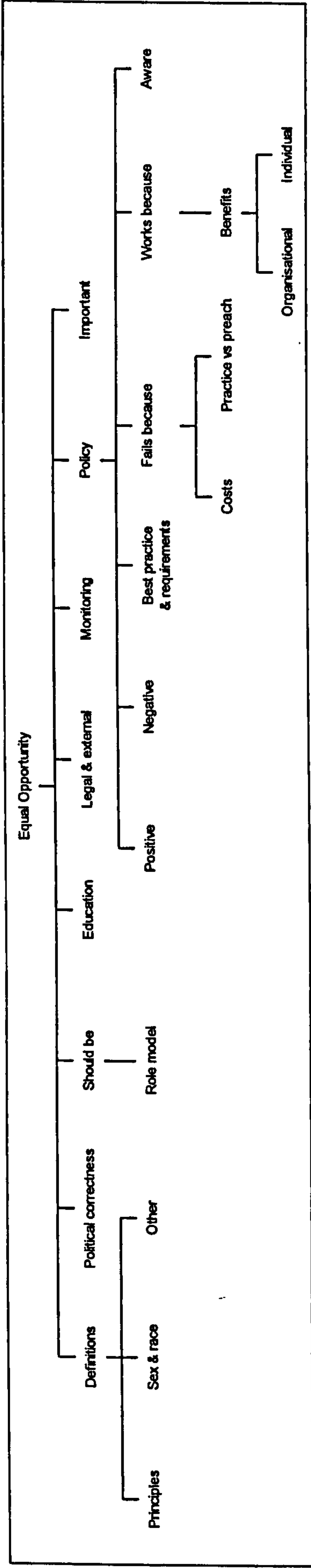


Figure 18: Study One results example initial data sub-clusters (equal opportunity cluster)

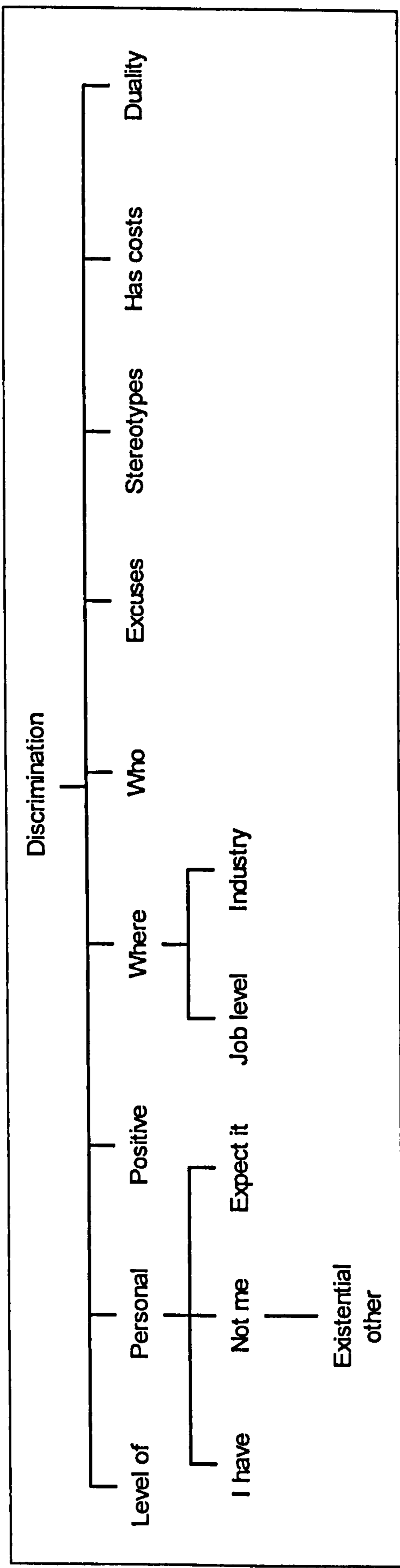


Figure 19: Study One results example initial data sub-clusters (discrimination cluster)

Diagrams such as these represent the 'conceptual web' (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994) of qualitative analysis referred to earlier in Section 3.3. Links between the nodes were hypothesised, tested and refined as the process progressed before any conclusions were drawn.

For example, there were some jokey references made to equal opportunity in the focus groups:

P1: People with one leg preferred...

P8: Yeah, it's a quick of doing it for them. They haven't got to meet you in the Interview and say, right, he's a one-legged lesbian or something that we're employing and that would be a few ticks then!

These text units illustrate the analysis process quite well. On initial coding of the transcripts, a code of 'jokes' was created to provide a category for jokey and humorous references to equal opportunity. It was thought that a possible theme may be that equal opportunity was seen as more of a joke than a serious issue in some work places and the code was created so that any text units relevant to this potential theme could be categorised under that node. As the analysis got underway however, this path did not prove to be fruitful. There were very few jokey references to equal opportunity and once the context of the jokes had been analysed it was considered that they were not really jokes at all, despite being spoken in a humorous tone or accompanied by a laugh.

In the example given here, the first text unit ("*People with one leg preferred.*") concerned positive action in recruitment and reflected the, by now familiar, theme of equal opportunity not being personally relevant, of it applying to someone else, some other 'disadvantaged' person, so the data was recoded under the 'positive discrimination' and 'owning equal opportunity' codes.

The second text unit ("*Yeah, it's a quick of doing it for them. They haven't got to meet you in the Interview and say, right, he's a one-legged lesbian or something that we're employing and that would be a few ticks then!*") was not so much a joke as an opinion on the practice of EO monitoring and 'tick-box' approaches and the data and was recoded under the 'monitoring' code.

This illustrates the process of analysis well because many avenues of enquiry in qualitative research prove to be less than productive, but the researcher must be free to follow the data, spend time with it, immerse oneself in it, and then take a step back and reassess the analysis completed so far, preferably with an independent person. Other avenues were very productive, with so much data being allocated to the same codes that sub-codes had to be created (sub-clustering). Other times, codes were clustered together to form higher-order codes. The final results for Study One data are detailed in the following section.

2 AWARENESS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The results presented in this section represent the final clusters and sub-clusters resulting from the qualitative analysis.

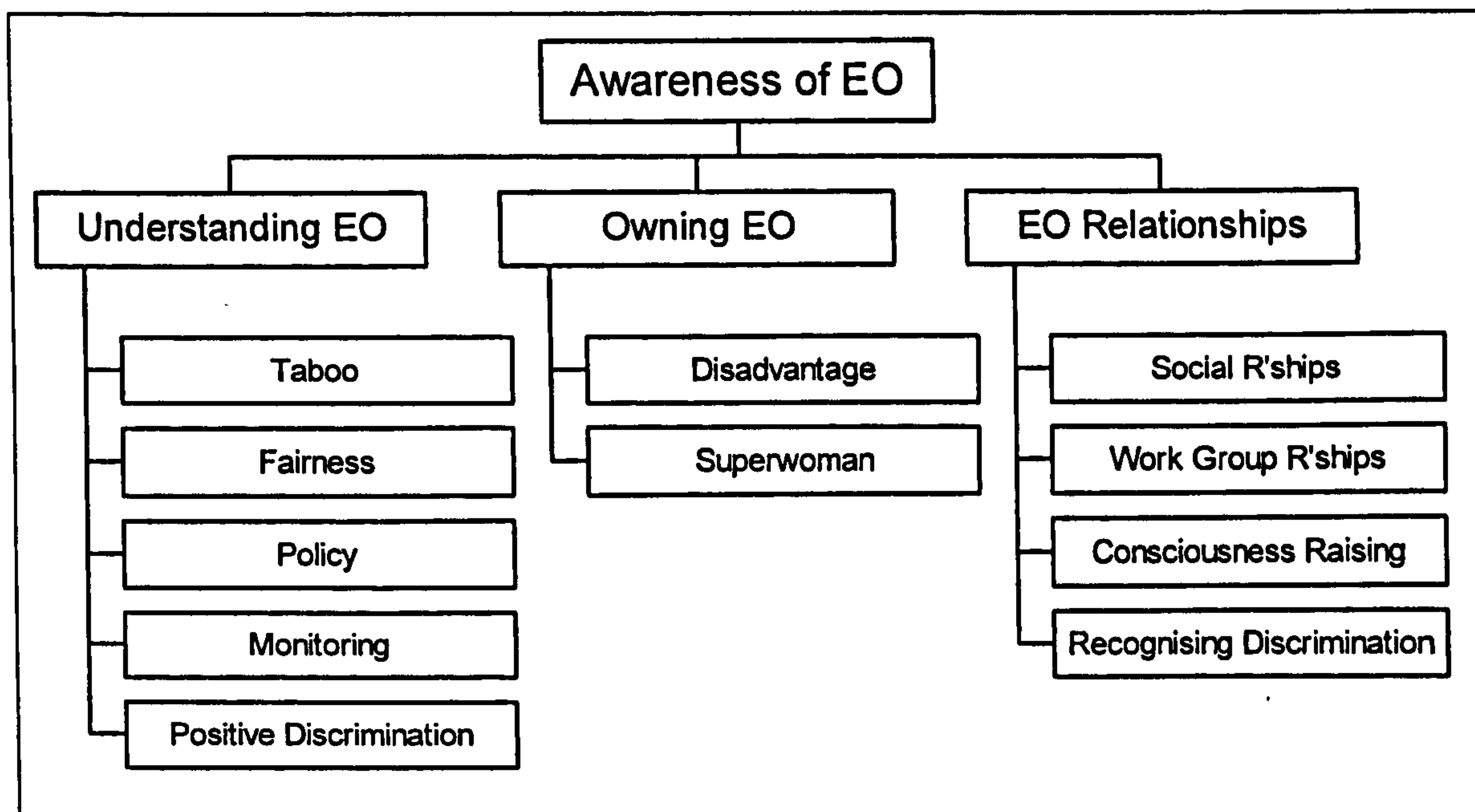


Figure 20: Diagrammatic overview of Study One results

The first key issue and the most striking finding from Study One was just how little emphasis people placed on equality at work. For this reason, as illustrated by Figure 20 above, an over-arching theme of 'equal opportunity awareness' was proposed, since the level of awareness and knowledge of participants heavily influenced the key issues and thematic patterns that resulted from the analysis of the data.

Participant 16 had worked in the equal opportunity field for more than twenty years but the majority of the participants had not given equal opportunity much thought prior to participating in their interview or focus group and the interviews were obviously tapping into the initial considerations of participants regarding equal opportunity. This may not be immediately apparent from the transcripts because it was difficult to convey on paper just how long participants had to think about a question before giving the answer that appeared in the printed transcript. Perhaps the main indicator of this key issue was that participants often required a great deal of prompting by the interviewer, which is evidenced by the transcripts.

One example of the low awareness of equal opportunity in the workplace was that participants did not know if their current organisation had an equal opportunity policy in place or not.

P1: What do you mean by company policy then? Do you mean like...the booklet?

[INT: DO YOU HAVE A POLICY?]

P10: Umm. No I haven't seen anything and I haven't umm I haven't come across one in this company which is very strange because there must be somewhere in the region of in this building alone four hundred people.

[INT: DO YOU HAVE A POLICY?]

P11: I don't know. I expect so.

P12: We haven't, they haven't got a handbook have they?

P11: We, uhh, yeah we have. Well a bit of paper. It is a bit of paper!

Compelling evidence for this theme shone through in the perception that, despite equal opportunity policies and legislation being in place for more than twenty-five years, equal opportunity was a 'new thing'.

P4: the problem with equal opportunity policy is when you bring them in fresh. And that's part of the problem we have these days. It's a new, it's still a fairly new concept.

This said, once the participants had started to think about equal opportunity in the workplace, they had plenty to say on the subject. The depth of understanding about the

issues associated with equal opportunity was not always apparent but the strength of opinion was ever present. Interviews were often quite difficult to conclude, even when a strict time limit had been set at the outset of the interview by the participant, because they had a lot to say about equal opportunity.

Participant interest and feeling increased considerably when the discussion turned to personal experiences of discrimination in the workplace and accordingly the level of emotion involved in the discussions was often quite high.

2.1 Lack of Awareness

The overwhelming result was the lack of awareness. Have we got a policy? Umm, I don't know kind of thing. The academic literature in workplaces such as these are absolutely academic. The policy makers may be interested in the type of approach that they take in writing and implementing their policies but how many of the employees notice or care?

It is not the first time that academic research has shown a lack of awareness. Aitkenhead (1988) for example interviewed managers with some responsibility for equal opportunities and found that they had a very limited understanding of the issues. If staff with responsibility for equality have low awareness, it should come as no surprise that the general workforce, i.e. those without specific equality responsibilities, also show a low awareness.

This situation appears to have improved over time. Liff reported in 1999 that, "equal treatment principles enshrined in anti-discrimination laws have been supported at the organisational level by formal equal opportunities policies which detail procedural approaches intended to translate equality objectives into management practices. As a result there is now a much greater understanding by managers of equality issues and how discrimination occurs and should be prevented." (Liff, 1999: 65). So it appears that managers awareness at least has improved, so the argument can move to how to effectively filter the message through the organisation.

2.2 Failure to Provide Equal Opportunity

The failure to provide equal opportunity within their working environment had far greater salience for participants than the provision of equal opportunity. Where organisations had failed to provide equal opportunity, participants felt that employers had not met their expectations by allowing unfair discrimination to occur. This applied whether the participant's experience of discrimination was personal or that of a friend, a colleague or family member.

This finding can be understood in terms of the psychological contract. For example, Robinson & Rousseau (1994) found that the violation of expectations was a primary influencing factor in the psychological contract between an individual and an organisation. Where participants had worked in organisations that had made a public declaration of commitment to equal opportunity but had experienced discrimination, they felt particularly let down by their employers. Participants had expected to be treated fairly but had witnessed evidence of their colleagues being treated unfairly. Again this could be interpreted in terms of psychological contract, Robinson & Rousseau (1994) also reported that broken promises were more important than unmet expectations. The failure of an organisation to not discriminate against their employees could be viewed as a broken promise and would undoubtedly affect the psychological contract between an individual and an organisation. Indeed this sentiment was expressed by participant 9, a minority ethnic male, who relayed a tale of seeing a black manager being demoted for a misdemeanour that he and his colleagues considered a white manager would not have been disciplined for. The result of witnessing this incident was that participant 9 and his colleagues had no desire to work for that organisation on anything other than a temporary basis. Motivation and commitment were tangibly decreased and the intention to leave was significantly increased for a large number of that organisation's staff, particularly those from a minority ethnic group.

INT: DO [COMPANY NAME]... HAVE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY?

P9 : Oh they do yeah. I've seen it on, stuff on the canteen wall and they always talk to us and say, yeah, you know. My, my manager always tried to get more for myself and other black people who worked part-time and were studying. He said, oh when you finish up, what are you going to do here?

Take on the training programme? Yeah, I mean, there's a good chance you can go up to them, and they're all, you know what I mean, sensible people, you could go far up. He didn't really see enough of it to really (..) really see, to push ourselves to give us a a (..) a better impression of the company. It's not that we saw maybe quite a few black managers to actually say oh yeah. We saw one and we saw what happened to him so it's it's a negative incidence, so.

2.3 Understanding Equal Opportunity

2.3.1 Taboo

Participants found equal opportunity a very sensitive subject to discuss. In the focus groups, general comments were often taken very personally which created a high level of tension. For example, when discussing whether women had to be better than men to get equivalent jobs, focus group 2 nearly broke into an out and out row:

P7: (female) People crawl quite often to get the jobs.

P6: (female) So I crawled to get this job then did I?

The suggestion that a participant did not have their job on merit alone was very offensive and did generate high levels of emotion.

Additionally, for the majority of participants, this was their first conversation purely about equal opportunity and they were often uncomfortable with the language such a conversation required, particularly surrounding racial issues. There was an unspoken taboo attached to the subject, perhaps due to a fear of saying the wrong thing, or using offensive language, which made it a difficult subject to discuss openly. This difficulty was commented on by some of the participants later in the discussion.

P8: I think you are bound to be more at ease initially with someone of the same peer group, whatever you want to describe it socially or whatever, because it takes a whole area of conversation, a politically sensitive area of conversation out of the equation. You haven't got to worry about anything... I think obviously, I think race would have, would be the biggest flag.

It is worth noting that the interviewer was often the first person to say words such as 'race', 'sex', 'black', 'white', 'gender', 'discrimination' or 'ethnic minority' out loud. It was as if participants were happy to proceed only once the taboo had been broken by the interviewer.

Definitions of equal opportunity varied widely from the very short, simplistic definitions

P15: that everybody has the same chance of getting a job, the same chance of getting anything.

to the very explicit definition, detailing a number of variables and situation where a person might face discrimination.

P18: ...to me personally it basically means (..) that everyone in the workforce regardless of their race, gender umm, sexual orientation, class, religion or age, is given a fair opportunity within that particular work environment. Whether it's regarding discipline, promotion, umm redundancy, umm, basically it's everyone must have a fair opportunity.

It was common for participants to define equal opportunity in terms of how it applied to them personally rather than in generic terms. For example, some white female participants immediately defined equal opportunity as equality between men and women before considering the wider picture; a black male participant defined equal opportunity in terms of ethnicity and not gender and the only disabled participant included physical ability in his definition.

P12: I think that the first thing that occurred to me was men / women.

P11: Yeah, that's the first thing that comes to mind, is men and women, rather than race.

P14: What's really awful is I immediately think men / women, rather than any other, disabilities, like race, or (..) ability or disablement or whatever, (..) which I know I shouldn't but that's what it means to me, when someone says equal opportunities.

P20: To me, it means that everyone (..) irrespective of creed, colour or race, has the opportunity to fulfil a place in the workforce, IF they have the qualifications to do so. That's what it means to me.

P13: (..) It's the employment of somebody regardless of age, sex, colour (..) or physical (..) abilities.

Participants defined equal opportunity predominantly in terms of gender and ethnicity. Age, sexual orientation, disability and religion all got a mention but were not common features.

2.3.2 Fairness

One theme that arose out of the definitions of equality was that equal opportunity was commonly wanted to perceive equality as meaning treating all people fairly in general

rather than in terms specific to equal opportunity. This type of definition runs along the lines of egalitarianism, the principle of equal rights for all persons.

P4: I'd like to see equal opportunities going down not just raw groups like that but just in the general uhh interaction with people, just being polite and being sensitive to people's needs and wants.

P9: I've heard cases and even in working environments where I've worked, I've seen that somebody else is, work colleagues, where they haven't been treated fairly, equal opportunities just hasn't been brought in

P18: it should be fair right across the board. It shouldn't be, no person, or no group should be singled out basically. That to me, that is what equal opportunities is about.

Participants stated that if their organisation made an effort to treat them fairly they would, as employees, reward their employers by putting more effort into their work and be more likely to stay longer with that organisation. A crucial element of this decision was that participants saw their company putting policy into action and the need for equal opportunity to be more than a paper policy.

Despite the apparent desire to define equality in terms of general fairness, participants associated equal opportunity practice with negative connotations of policy, monitoring practices and positive action.

Low Expectations

One pattern coded under the fairness theme was that participants had very low expectations of their employers. Take the case of participant 13 who said that he was very grateful that his company had treated him fairly since he had become disabled. He had not expected that they would. Participant 18 listed some very simple things that would improve her working environment, for example, sending flowers if someone had been unwell for a length of time, or to send a wreath or a note if an employee had suffered a bereavement, the implication being that none of those things were being done ordinarily.

P18: just to say we're thinking of them. You know, that's nice, it's a gesture, it's the thought that counts... it is important that you know that you show a little bit of compassion ...[and] if you've made an astronomical profit, it's basically nice (..) you know just to say to all my staff, thank you for your hard work and your co-operation.

If this finding is at all generalisable, it seems that employees expect to be treated badly and are very pleasantly surprised by the most basic niceties or decency by their employers.

In terms of the business case for equality, Bennett et al. (1993) reported that firms offering better benefits packages to employees experienced less attrition. This may be more common sense than equality theory but being appreciated and treated fairly could be extremely cost effective ways of improving the bottom line.

It starts to tap into equality theories at the point where the authors find that even after controlling for economic sector and structural differences, “firms with higher percentages of Blacks and women experience greater rates of turnover.” (Bennett et al., 1993: 495). Higher attrition levels may well result from the lack of opportunity offered to minority ethnic and women employees, in which case offering the same opportunity would add to the business case. Alternatively, these results could be construed as countering the business case if higher turnover was intrinsically associated with minority ethnic and female employees, i.e. hiring individuals from these social groups will cost organisations more because they do not stay at the same company as long as white or male employees.

This could be framed in terms of classic organisational theory whereby employers and employees are in an exchange relationship, for example, Eisenberger et al. (1986), reported that employees’ commitment to the organisation was strongly influenced by their perception of the organisation’s commitment to them. It may be that equal opportunity was considered a part of the organisation’s commitment to the employee, and only when it was markedly absent was employee commitment reduced or withdrawn.

Extending this theme, participant 9 indicated that he expected to be discriminated against and that he felt fortunate that it had only happened a couple of times.

P9: Speaking from personal experience, inside jobs, maybe I've been fortunate. Only one or two occasions have I felt that I haven't been treated fairly when it comes to equal opportunities.

Participant 10 expected that prejudice would exist in all organisations.

P10: ...You're going to have (..) prejudice wherever you go. It's going to be about age, it's going to be about sex, it's going to be about colour (..) creed, whatever else

In commercial terms, it could be viewed as a good thing that employees expect so little. Low expectation is problematic for organisations because the moment an equality programme is publicised or implemented, employee expectations are raised, and satisfaction levels will decrease as people expect more. Even if the decreased satisfaction is temporary, it may scupper new programmes in their infancy.

This may mean that the way employers treat employees has to be quite bad before employees would consciously perceive the equal opportunity in their organisation being poor.

2.3.3 Equal Opportunity Policy and Practice

Participants were asked what might constitute a good equal opportunity environment. The researcher had expected the discussions to generate concrete suggestions like flexible working, childcare provision, mentoring programmes or transparent recruitment procedures, the type of elements cited by equal opportunity agency literature. In fact, suggestions ranged from paid paternity leave (participants 12 and 20) to making employees feel valued (participant 18) but no specific activities or programmes that organisations might provide were raised. The most common response to this question was to state what a bad equal opportunity environment constituted. Thematic patterns centred around equal opportunity policy not being practised.

It was clear that an organisation merely having a policy would not create a perception of an environment of equal opportunity or prevent workplace discrimination from occurring.

[INT: HOW MUCH DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IF THEY'VE GOT A WRITTEN POLICY...?]

P9: None..... It wouldn't make things any worse but I think in a work environment, I think people are going to be noticed: actions rather than just words on a piece of paper I think. ... if I saw more (..) black managers at [Company name] then that would encourage me more to believe that yeah they are enforcing it rather than (..) they go over it as many times as you like but if you're not going to see any evidence of it in action then you don't take no notice of what they've written.

Employers must be aware that employees are sophisticated enough to want to see real action on equal opportunity if they have a policy in place. Employees will not be appeased by a piece of paper if it is not backed up by practice. Jewson et al. (1995) case study of seven UK organisations emphasised importance of putting a policy into practice. They described the situation where an organisation has a formal written equal opportunity policy which is not systematically implemented as 'dissociation'.

The problem of a policy not being implemented may be understood in terms of organisational culture theories. For example, Cassell & Walsh (1997) framed Schein's (1991) three-tier organisational culture theory (artefacts, values and underlying assumptions) in terms of equal opportunity. They suggested that an organisation may have a formal commitment to equality, perhaps through a written equal opportunity statement (an artefact) but that if the values held and the assumptions made by the powerful group within the organisation devalue women, then equal opportunity policy will not produce organisational change.

This framework is not limited to policy failure in terms of gender. Wherever there groups devalued or excluded by a more powerful majority group, for example minority ethnic employees, equal opportunity policy alone will not create or support organisational change. Certainly the employees in this sample were not convinced by an equal opportunities policy alone and previous research (e.g. Liff, 1999) has established that formal equality policies are not always followed in practice.

Evidence of policy being put into practice is also required to create the perception of an equal opportunity climate. Pearn Kandola, a UK firm of occupational psychologists preach the 'three P's', Policy, Practice and Perception. Similarly, Jewson et al. (1995) talked about policy, practice and outcomes. Pearn Kandola's diversity approach may be opposed to Jewson et al.'s outcome approach but policy in practice is clearly an essential element of organisational change.

2.3.4 Monitoring Practices

The concept of monitoring gender and ethnicity was generally familiar concept to participants but it was widely perceived as being abused. Participants had no

confidence that information attached to their application form would only be used for monitoring purposes. Rather monitoring was perceived as a covert selection procedure.

P15: In in in some application forms, at the back it says (laughs) are you British, African, what colour are you...

INT: OH, THE MONITORING FORMS?

P15: Yeah, I I sometimes I know it's only for their statistics but people tend to wonder don't they. I mean I'd wonder. I mean, why do they want that for? It just, it says everywhere. I mean I can understand if you if you've got a dodgy, and old buildings, no wheelchair access, fair enough, you can't have anyone on more or less, on umm on any other floor than the ground floor (..) working in a wheelchair, if they've got a wheelchair.

P18: The monitoring forms. They say, and we would like to believe, that it is to monitor. And it is, it is to monitor. But I think at the same time it's also there to, sort of as an indirect quota system. Maybe it's my suspicious mind! But it's yeah, it could be indirectly, yeah, it's being misused as well, in, in uhh, ulterior motives. You know, we'll have a certain number of people in (..) of this race, of this race, of this sex.

P18: Umm some people take it seriously but I believe that some employers use it as a screening method..... If you, someone like me with an African name, they know I'm black, they know I'm African, so therefore they can throw my interview paper away. Umm, if I was called Michael Price, for instance, (..) if they didn't have what gender or race you are, they would automatically assume that, oh, they're probably whites

2.3.5 Positive Discrimination

Participants wanted equal opportunity to be defined in terms of people being treated fairly and equally by their employers, managers and colleagues. It was universally agreed that the only basis for selection should be merit in an ideal world.

P14: equal opportunities just means that it doesn't give a damn whether you're black, white, red, blue, male, female, you've got two arms or three arms, if you can do the job, or you can do whatever you're required to do (..) in an equal manner, then you should be given an equal chance.

This finding is supported by the literature. For example, Singer (1993) reported that people firmly supported merit over preferential treatment in gender-based employment selection.

In direct contradiction to the desire for equal opportunity to mean fair treatment was a strong theme that equal opportunity in the real world included a distinct element of positive discrimination. For example when participant 18 was asked what people

thought of equal opportunity in general, she responded that it meant nothing to people from a minority ethnic background because they didn't see the evidence of equality around them but that it meant preferential treatment to the white population.

P18: To (..) I think (..) to black and Asians or say Africans, no, or people of African origin and Asian, it doesn't mean anything..... it really doesn't. And to non-black and Asians, it could mean umm (..) how can I say this, preference.

Participants were not generally familiar with equal opportunity terminology and confused positive action with positive discrimination. Once the terms had been differentiated, the majority of participants were in favour of positive action but not positive discrimination. Participants were not in total agreement on the topic of positive action however. Participant 10 thought that no additional help should be given to specific groups of people.

P10: I don't agree with giving anyone any slack. I don't agree with people having certain privileges because of their [sex or race]

Positive discrimination was universally unpopular with the participants because preferential treatment being given on the basis of a person's ethnicity or gender was considered to be as unfair as discrimination against people on the basis of their ethnicity or gender. Positive discrimination meant not treating people fairly and equally. Consequently equal opportunity, through its perceived association with positive discrimination, was something that participants wished to distance themselves from in case it be suggested that they held their employment position only because of their gender or ethnicity. This finding was supported by the literature, for example, Liff & Aitkenhead (1992) suggested that the perception that equal opportunity initiatives are only for women and minority ethnic employees may lead an assumption of preferential treatment and cause resentment.

Judging by the comments made by participant 15, it appeared that the perception of people assuming women or minority ethnic employees had received preferential treatment to gain their position rather than achieving in on merit was not a theoretical construct but an accurate perception of reality.

P15: If people aren't employing equally at the moment they're either umm discriminating totally, or you've got people being employed just because they are of a particular group that the company is lacking at the time.

INT: YEAH? AND WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?

P15: I think it's disgusting, 'cos I worked at (Company Name) and they kept employing women, and Asian women, and (..) people who couldn't quite walk straight and things like that, and not necessarily because they could do the job. It was because they filled the quota. And that's not the right, not the right way of going about it.

INT: WERE THEY THE BEST PEOPLE FOR THE JOBS OR NOT?

P15: I don't know because you only see them when they're in the job. I mean the (..) one accountant was an Asian and she was a woman and she was excellent but my particular boss was a woman and she wasn't very good at her job. She wasn't a good man manager.

As these comments illustrated, the mere presence of a minority ethnic or female employee suggested to some people that positive discrimination has occurred, the implication being that a minority ethnic or woman employee could not have gained that position on merit. The assumption of positive discrimination does not appear to be limited to white males, as 'backlash' theories (e.g. Mobley & Payne, 1992; Karp & Sutton, 1993; Lynch, 1994) would suggest however. In this example, the assumption was made by a female participant, despite not knowing who had applied for the position or their suitability for that position. No irony was intended by the participant when she said her manager "wasn't a good man manager" and the author gained the impression from the overall interview with participant 15 that despite knowing that women are part of the workforce, her language use seemed to reflect a less contemporary situation where the label 'manager' was synonymous with 'man' managing other men.

This excerpt also illustrated how discrimination in the workplace may be perpetuated by the expectation that women and minority ethnic employees should be exemplars representing their social group. Where failure occurs, it may be attributed to gender or ethnicity (e.g. Crosby and Clayton, 1990).

If this example is representative in any way of how the workforce functions, the outlook for women and people from a minority ethnic background is pretty pessimistic. They are likely to be discriminated against at the selection level and, once inside the workforce, they may be treated as token representatives of that group, or be

subject to assumptions that they did not achieve their position on merit, or have their performance scrutinised and need to prove their ability in a way that would not be expected of a majority employee. Women and minority ethnic employees are expected to over-perform.

P10: I work in a team of (..) ten. There's one girl.

INT: WHY'S THAT?

P10: Token woman. I don't know.

And later on in the interview,

P10: Women have got to be a lot more determined than men. Men can fall into it and women have to struggle with it, climbing up the ladder.

Kanter (1977) argued that the term 'tokenism' could be applied to women when they represented less than fifteen percent of an organisational category of worker, that is to say that they are viewed as representatives of their social group rather than as individuals. The problem of tokenism is particularly severe for minority ethnic women who may face disadvantage including being highly visible, working under performance pressure, i.e. having to 'overfunction', having a lack of role models and support from others and being viewed as a 'test case' for future black women (Davidson, 1997).

According to social learning theory, employees who are in the minority (outgroup) due to their ethnicity or gender in their workplace are likely to be viewed as 'tokens', i.e. holding their position because of positive discrimination, by the homogeneous ingroup. "Categorization of someone as a token tends to lead to an assumption that he or she is incompetent (Fernandez, 1991; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987). Tokens thus have the additional stigma of being categorized as incompetent." (James et al., 1994: 1578).

Looking at the UK labour force statistics, it is a feature of the UK labour market that people from minority ethnic groups become increasingly under-represented in the workforce as the job level increases (e.g. Bhavnani, 1994; Pathak, 2000).

P9: So when, when he became the first black manager, OK that's a that's probably a step forward but also we're going to be looking at it as (..) umm 'cos I was looking at it as though is that just a token gesture, just to say, we aren't a racist company, we are equal opportunities. Also, I'm not just about black manager, women as well. Women managers are very very rare in [Supermarket name] as well. And apart from the till operators they never got further.

This does lead to the problem of tokenism and because of this some participants, minority ethnic participants in particular, thought that positive discrimination was a powerful tool that should be used to help disadvantaged groups in to the labour market to increase the minority ethnic representation in the workforce. This was not considered an ideal scenario, rather a reaction to the lack of meritocracy perceived to exist in the UK labour force.

This sentiment was also expressed by participant 13, who disliked the feeling that he was contributing to his organisation's quota for disabled people.

P13: Sometimes I feel a bit, I have felt quite cynical about the whole thing because umm (..) sure I'm, I have a disability that might, might be permanent (..) but there's a chance that with the help of the specialists, I might get my left arm working again. But umm (..) of course (..) there are legal obligations for helping to employ quotas (..) of disabled people, black people. (..) I must admit I don't really like to be (..) part of a company that is satisfying quota regulations but umm, fortunately, I like the job anyway, so (..) so that's the trade-off.

The thematic pattern around positive discrimination was illustrated well by participant 9.

INT: POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION IS ILLEGAL IN THE UK BUT DO YOU THINK SOMETHING LIKE THAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING?

P9: Yes. Yes and no. I think it should be happening, not to, but umm, I think it would, I would prefer it if it was just, you hired somebody (..) you know what I mean, it's not that, whether this will actually take place, or not is another thing but the type of person that's going to do the job, rather than having a selective like quota system or having selected female or, OK well we've got to hire a woman for this job because necessarily you might not be hiring the best person for the job.

But umm, what I'm saying though, if it's going to help the organisation and the outlook on how people view the company because they are going to see women managers and more black faces, then yes, to an extent but I wouldn't like it to overtake (..) the fact that umm (..) because I think that people start to get blinded by it and they forget the equal opportunities and say forget the, we'll just hire a woman for two jobs and a black man for one job and that's OK so it can confuse things because I think it's two different things. If you're actually asking me I wouldn't actually hire someone (inaud) say I'm going to hire this black man, it would be like a token. Just to hire a black man or a woman to make it SEEM like you're enforcing equal opportunities but you're not really....

SO IT SHOULD BE ON MERIT THEN?

P9: Exactly. It should be done on merit but I mean that's, that's if it's a perfect world and being as it's not it's it's a start. I think yes, it's a start.

On a personal basis however, the same participants who thought it could be used effectively did not want to be the recipient of a positive discrimination programme personally.

P19: I think it would depend on, certainly in my, on my level, I wouldn't want a quota system. But perhaps if you go down the scale.

Participants concerns that being the recipient of positive action programmes is understandable. Research from the US (e.g. Heilman, 1994) suggested that affirmative action, the US equivalent of positive discrimination, did not help the intended groups because people who had received jobs under such programmes were perceived as being incompetent (Heilman, 1994). Some previous research (e.g. Tougas & Beaton, 1993) has suggested that men and women have polarised views of positive action strategies offering preferential treatment on the basis of group membership but the findings here did not reflect this. Both men and women participants thought preferential treatment undermined the principle of merit and therefore devalued those perceived to be in their post because of preferential treatment. For this very reason, Kandola & Fullerton (1994) argued against using both positive action and targets in organisations.

This type of response led to another of the major thematic pattern in the research, that equal opportunity applies to other people. Nobody wanted to identify themselves as someone who needed help to achieve equality in the workplace. Whilst all acknowledged that discrimination did exist, they personally had found coping strategies to overcome any difficulties they may face.

P17: I've never really even thought about for myself because I just assume that I'm going to go out there and get a job, you know what I mean?

This indicated a number of contradictions:

- that equal opportunity meant equal and fair treatment for all groups and individuals but that equal opportunity also meant positive discrimination, i.e. unequal treatment;

- that positive discrimination was a bad thing but it could be a good thing for someone other than themselves;
- that unfair discrimination does exist in the workforce but that individually and personally were not affected by it.

2.4 Ownership of Equal Opportunity

2.4.1 Disadvantage

Equal opportunity programmes, particularly positive action were favourably received in principle. If that principle was applied to other people, the perceptions remained favourable. If the principle was applied to participants personally, it was not favourably received. Participants placed a strong emphasis on them personally not needing any help to succeed that it appeared as if people perceived themselves to be such unique individuals that they had no membership of any societal structures or groups. This is essentially what existentialism is about. Reber (1985: 256) defined existentialism as “an important 20th century philosophical movement which carved out a domain for itself between rationalistic idealism and totally objective materialism...Existentialism emphasizes subjectivity, free will and individuality and has acted as a philosophical counterbalance to theories that stress the role of society and social groups.” This prizing of individuality above group membership struck a chord with the data.

Why might people be reluctant to associate themselves with a particular group or programme? Participant 19 articulated his reasons for not wanting to be associated with equal opportunity in terms of disadvantage.

P19: if you're still thinking of your your colour being a hindrance or being an obstacle (..) in the labour market, then you know, where are you drifting? I mean where do you stand? You're making yourself, you're disadvantaging yourself. And we all know that, you know we are disadvantaged but there's no point in, in carrying it every time in your head that you are disadvantaged because it, it is psychological in a way as well."..." I mean, to actually think psychologically that you are disadvantaged because you are black I think it's even the worse one.

Yet for equal opportunity to work, it must be seen to apply to all disadvantaged groups as emphasised by participant 16.

P16: What I think is the concrete position here is that equal opportunities must be SEEN to apply to all the disadvantaged.

The problem with equal opportunities it seems is its association with the language of victimisation. This runs along the line of problems associated with affirmative action as suggested by Eisenman (1996). Eisenman reported that by adopting an affirmative action approach, the American equivalent of positive discrimination, the emphasis is placed on the person seeing themselves as a victim and this tends to lead to a “focus on how bad things are, an irrational belief for failure. This belief tends to think ‘I can’t be successful because of all the barriers and discrimination.’” (Eisenman, 1996: 1353).

An alternative explanation for participants not wanting to be identified in any way with a disadvantaged group is simply that they did not belong to a disadvantaged group. The sample was heavily biased towards highly educated people in professional – level jobs. Perhaps if the sample had included people on low incomes, people with little or no education, or people working at the lowest levels within an organisation’s hierarchy different results would have been produced. Would there have been the same reluctance to place themselves within a disadvantaged group? The answer has to be: possibly not but the problem of women or minority ethnic employees not wanting to be associated with any overt equality activity is an old one. For example Holland (1988) reported that a “source of resistance which takes many people by surprise is the successful member of the under-represented group. The woman who is adamant that there is no problem. She made it to positions of responsibility so why should others need help? The black employee with a concern that even to talk about a programme is counterproductive and could raise difficulties and cause people to discriminate. [Their] view is as much based in the current power structure as anybody else who has succeeded under the existing gameplan. She has a vested interest in the status quo.” (Holland, 1988: 18). This type of response was a regular theme in the data and was named ‘superwoman’.

2.4.2 Superwoman

Examples of sex or race discrimination were freely quoted when the participant was referring to an incident that had happened to someone they knew but when the discriminatory experience referred to themselves personally, the examples were not so forthcoming. There was very much a feeling portrayed that it wouldn’t happen to them.

Women participants really did seem to think that issues of discrimination had not affected themselves personally, that they were strong enough to overcome any possible barriers.

The same appeared to be true for the minority ethnic participants in this sample. They were very aware that discrimination existed and could quote many examples of others suffering because of their race or colour but had found adequate personal coping mechanisms personally to prevent personal disadvantage.

Acknowledging that discrimination had affected participants personally appeared to be associated again with weakness. Participants 11 and 12 exemplified this by giving a whole account of how they have suffered as women at work under their (male) boss only to complete their story by saying that their boss wouldn't get away with anything with them personally!

P12: And umm and we took two of the men out for a business meeting. And so, they were saying, oh where should you go, and Derek said oh, go to the City Circle. So we went on to the City Circle. I walked in there and I was the only woman in there. It was all men, and the uhh theme for that is that the waitresses come in little short skirts, they bend over in your face, do you know what I mean? And I was like sat there and I so insulted, really was and I didn't like say anything, but (..) you know that kind of thing immediately excludes women. And he also did it again because we had umm we had, we got a new contract with a company and as celebration he took them out to a topless joint, the Capricorn Club. So, say that I then become their account manager (..) do you know? You're already like I...

P11: That's how they'd expect you to continue your umm entertainment...

P12: Well, you could never take them there. I wouldn't ever take them there. And I think that that belittles women.

P11: He's a disgusting dirty old pervert!

P11: He is. He said to one of the guys in the office once; this was the guy that they'd just sold the system to, he said, oh I don't know how you can work with all these gorgeous women around you, you know he was really like (makes a vomiting noise). But then you're talking about getting them laid (..) as well.

P12: Whenever you're walking around the office (..) Oh yeah, it was the full works.

P11: And that's on company.

P12: Oh yeah, company expenses. But also, when you're walking around the office, he's like, you know, he's looking at your boobs, looking at your arse. I was saying the other day, he was watching

me walk around and like I couldn't, but the time I'd finished, I just couldn't get my legs to move! (laughs). You know when you're so conscious that someone's actually watching you walk! (laughs)

P11: Oh yeah, you don't want any one to (inaud) (laughs).

INT: DOES ANYONE EVER SAY ANYTHING TO HIM?

P12: Yeah. I've had a go at him.

P11: Oh yeah. Yeah, I have.

INT: WHAT DID YOU SAY?

P12: I said that I thought his reputation, like from that, his reputation has been (..) completely (..) Nobody really respects him.

P11: No no no no no. Oh yeah, because that's what he says to you. He goes, 'oh no no no no no. Oh no, I'm not like that.' Bollocks, you are mate!

INT: DOES HE BELITTLE YOU WITH IT?

P11: He tries to...

P12: He tries to, he tries to...

P11: He tries to but he doesn't get away with it. Not with us two.

Each of these women, on an individual basis may have admitted to being vulnerable to discrimination but when talking in a group context, they switched to 'bravado dialogue', to downplay the seriousness of the issue and demonstrate to each other that they were strong enough to cope with the demands of their job.

P12: As individuals I think you can say that we're both quite strong characters and we wouldn't put up with (..) that sort of shit really

Variations on this theme may be found in women's literature under the title of the "superwoman" phenomenon. This describes how women expect to compete with men in the business world, unfazed by any discrimination they may face. This type of woman becomes super because she also continues to carry the majority of the domestic responsibility. This burden on women has been researched by psychologists in terms of role conflict and trade-off because of the choices that working women inevitably have to make (King et al., 1997; DiBenedetto & Tittle, 1990; Lundy & Younger, 1994).

P17: Well the women directors that we have are very ambitious women. They are excellent at their jobs, umm you know, they're not married. They they strive for (..) for succeeding at work. That's their interest, that's what they do. Umm where as you know, when when you've got a family and children and a husband I mean you just perhaps don't have the time to dash off to wherever one day and sort of leave the kids behind, you know, whatever. You know, so there is that kind of, you've got

to think of your personal life as well, you know, whatever. Some people can (..) umm have both. But I think to a certain extent then they are sacrificing one or the other, you know. It's a very sort of umm clever woman, almost wonder woman who CAN devote both equal time to work and family. I don't know anybody who does it successfully.

Perhaps the superwoman is a façade. The National Council of Women Survey (1992: 8) documented how “the reality of juggling home, work and all the other demands of the community mean most women simply keep their eyes - and ambitions - down and keep going.” Another example came from participants 11 and 12, who were interviewed together although participant 12 left the interview before participant 11. Once on her own with the researcher, participant 11 informed the researcher that she was currently being harassed by her (male) manager. She had not wanted to say this in front of her colleague. The use of this bravado dialogue was not limited to groups but appeared to be more prevalent in a group situation than when speaking on a one to one basis.

The refusal to acknowledge the relevance of social group membership in a work situation may just be a question of personal choice or a deliberate strategy. Cockburn (1991) described a situation where women presume that drawing attention to their difference from men lays them open to the charge of having received preferential treatment because of their difference. Cockburn used difference versus sameness theories to explain women's reluctance to rock the boat and the same argument may be applied to minority ethnic employees. As she explained, “the dominant group know you are different and continue to treat you as different, but if you yourself specify your difference your claim to equality will be null” (Cockburn, 1991: 219). The sameness principle means that everybody had exactly the same opportunity and that supposed inequalities reflect no more than personal choice. Proposed solutions include recognising that some groups have been disadvantaged and may require help to level the playing field but that this is not the case every time, i.e. requiring situationally specific solutions (e.g. Baachi, 1990, Cassell & Walsh, 1997). How different are situationally specific solutions from good management? Could anything other than ‘at your manager's discretion’ guide the decision of when a situation merits preferential treatment and when it does not?. The sameness and differences theories also raise issues about how difference is constructed. Banding all women together, as Cockburn appeared to do, is surely assuming a homogeneity with groups that cannot exist. The

same argument obviously applies to minority ethnic employees. A culturally diverse society by definition does not have a homogeneous group called 'minority ethnic'.

Building on Cockburn's assertion that women create risk by drawing attention to their difference from the dominant male, the superwoman theme could be understood in terms of gender management strategies (GMS) originally proposed by Sheppard (1989). Gender management strategies are deliberate mechanisms employed by women to help them fit in with the prevailing culture. The sample here was not exclusively management but the participants most vocal in the superwoman theme were working in male-dominated industries. Cassell & Walsh (1997) found a number of new gender management strategies building on Sheppard's original two in an interview study with service sector organisations. For example, women seem to feel that they need to work harder than their male counterparts, a phenomenon described as an 'overfunctioning' gender management strategy by Cassell & Walsh (1997). Along with women and minority ethnic employees feeling that they were expected to over-perform to avoid accusations or perceptions of preferential treatment, it appeared they themselves felt the need to over-perform, perhaps contributing further to the perpetuation of discrimination.

This finding was interesting because under the superwoman theme two patterns, which on the surface appeared to be contrasting, firstly, that women as individuals were too strong to be affected by discrimination, the feeling that it couldn't happen to them, and, secondly, that women overfunctioned to compensate for being a woman. The superficial contradiction however may be understood if framed in terms of women overperforming to make ensure that they are not discriminated against. Again where such a phenomena exists for white women it is likely to be intensified for minority ethnic women who face the double negatives of being minority ethnic and female (e.g. Davidson, 1997).

Perhaps the most interesting conclusion was that the superwoman theme, however it is framed and understood, is in essence a coping strategy, which highlights a reality that women and minority ethnic employees still face a situation where they perceive the need for a coping strategy simply to do their job. In turn, this suggests support for organisational cultures where a formal policy may exist but the dominant power structures are not genuinely supportive of diversity as the policy may suggest.

2.5 Equal Opportunity & Interpersonal Relationships

2.5.1 Social Relationships at Work

People like to work with people who are similar to them, as predicted by the social psychological theories of group behaviour. Similarity may be defined by gender or ethnicity but usually the process is far more complex and subtle and is likely to include, for example, the perception of similar attitudes, character, age, background, or education experience. Work is an important social arena and the relationships formed at work cannot normally be governed by equal opportunity policy or legislation. It is possible that having a widely diverse group of people working together is courting disaster by maximising the chances of putting employees together who do not get on well socially (e.g. Elmes & Connelley, 1997).

P18: I mean if you've got a workforce of a hundred umm and you're a white person, I'm sure you don't want a workforce where seventy percent are black. Umm, it's nothing, it's not that umm it's not really, I don't really, race, it's natural human instinct that you're going to pick that are familiar to you. Umm it's right across, it's a social thing I mean, you're going to obviously hang around, even from school you're going to have friends that are similar to you. You're, throughout your whole life and even in a business environment, you'll want to work with people that have similar umm ideas to you, similar attributes, similar ambitions, aspirations to you. And if you're going to pick a group of people whose culture is totally different from yours umm, it is very difficult then to adapt. You know and when you're running a business, you're not really thinking about adaptability, you're more thinking about profits. So obviously you're going to pick people that are going to (..) not so much look similar but have the same outlook on life as you.

"The workplace is the main social arena for racial and ethnic interaction" was the finding of Shellenbarger (1993: B1) from a US survey of employees however it would seem that it is also true of the UK. It may be inevitable that people do not form immediate social relationships with colleagues who are different from them particularly if it is their first experience of a different culture or ethnic background. For example, Watson et al. (1993) reported that culturally diverse groups take longer to function effectively than homogeneous groups.

Participant 16 explained that his organisation had introduced equal opportunity targets many years ago and the workforce was now representative of the wider community, with approximately 40% being from an minority ethnic background. Increasing the

representation of minority ethnic employees had however also increased the fear of saying or doing the wrong thing and of being accused of being racist or sexist. Initially this manifested itself in the social aspect of working relationships and the jokes and banter that one would expect in the workplace ceased for fear of offending people.

P16: I think that, what what has happened here is that people may even ADD to the things that they can't do. The whole set of insecurities that come on stream (..) so that, umm there are jokes that are made, in the office, and umm, and people shut down a whole area of of uhh interpersonal banter, in CASE they slip up somewhere. Because people have slipped up and got into trouble.

Personal experience of working in an internal equality function has illustrated time and time again how equality practitioners are seen as the internal police force of the organisation. Jokes do stop when you enter the room. People do excuse their comments in your presence. People do seem insecure about the words they use in case they get it wrong in front of you. This phenomenon has been documented previously. For example Liff described how the formalised procedural approach to equality could, "at worst it can be experienced as coercion policed by checks on the behaviour of those responsible for activities" (Liff, 1999: 66).

The predominant feeling from the participants was not so much that they did not want to work in mixed groups but a simple statement that social relationships on an individual level at work were much more important than equal opportunity and influenced their reactions to work to a great extent. This finding is supported by the literature, for example, Repetti & Cosmos (1991) reported a moderate relationship between the quality of the social environment at work and individual job satisfaction. Interpersonal relationships were important to participants. The role that equal opportunity played in those interpersonal relationships seemed secondary to the quality of the relationship. As Maddock and Parkin (1993: 3) expressed it, "everyone knows the atmosphere at work can be either stressful or rewarding, but what is not so apparent is how gender cultures influence both men and women's expectations of behaviour. One can assume that the same is true of cultures based on norms other than gender.

2.5.2 Work Group Relationships

Eventually fear of this kind may be exploited by some employees and seriously affect the working relationships within the organisation. This is precisely what happened in participant 16's example. Some employees realised that their manager would also be fearful of disciplining them for poor performance in case their intention could be misconstrued as racist, for example.

P16: Why have resentments built up so massively among some officers here? Because they think that X is incompetent. X is taking the mickey out of the organisation, and I can tell you there are black officers who do that. There are white officers who do that too but black officers seem to do it BECAUSE of equal opportunities and if, and in some sense, it is because of that. Umm, they take the mickey, they come in late, they under-perform. Some white managers are scared of tackling that because the comeback is 'you're being racist' and the disciplinary structure of the organisation is hard on racism, and 'I'm a white manager and I don't want hassle, so I say alright, forget it, let me get on with the work'. That does happen. It happens across all categories, not just black people. Again it's the way a policy is impacting on the work and on relationships that needs to be constantly reviewed by somebody in the organisation but it hasn't happened in [inner London Borough], not in my view.

There are problems created by increasing the diversity of a workforce. Equal opportunity can be difficult, sensitive and powerful subject for many people and when not handled correctly can build resentment and affect employee's mental health ultimately. Again, it was participant 16 who explicitly verbalised this type of situation.

P16: There are all these prohibitions put there. People are made to work within frameworks (inaud) and none of that is left. What we need to do is look and see how the prohibitions in fact impact on relationships and work. Assess that very regularly so that we are correcting any extremes and it's impact on people. I KNOW that some white officers initially, say a borough like [Council name], (inaud) council {Council name}, where, uhh, a white officer had a nervous breakdown, and the reason for that was that the new regimen imposed all these restrictions and he began to work to them but, and he wasn't umm (..) I don't think he was (..) anti-equal opportunities, OK, I think he found himself working in that very rigid atmosphere and (..) eventually broke down because it was, it was not just about equal opportunities, it was about interpersonal relationships and power and the brutality that sometimes can accompany how those things work. (inaud) so it can break down in that. And it also builds up resentment. I KNOW and I've been in some relations long enough to see it now and my experience tells me when I'm talking to white colleagues that I have to (..) unbuckle some things. Because they are (..) expecting, they feel tense, they're expecting trouble or aggravation or aggression (..)

P16: My problem with walking into into a room as an equalities officer is that people think that you're coming in to find for it and to report for it.

The type of experience described by participant 16 has been reported in literature from the US. For example, Fernandez (1991) wrote that the very structure of corporate America was such that it “breeds fear, distrust, dishonesty, and intolerance of diversity. It allows people to point fingers at others for problems they in reality create, and it does not create an atmosphere where real problems are dealt with effectively” proposing that this would ultimately affect organisational profit because “The denial of these problems creates an atmosphere that has led to the inefficient utilisation of large numbers of employees, especially those who are different in terms of race, gender, age, religion, and life-style, and therefore to the inefficient functioning of the corporation, with a resulting negative impact on the corporate bottom line.” (Fernandez, 1991: 32 - 33).

This phenomenon was documented by Maddock & Parkin (1993: 7), who examined equality audits of a number of public authorities and concluded that “the lack of attention to the spirit, informal norms and values of an organisation has led to many equality programmes being sabotaged by both management and male and female staff”.

Not all participants thought that working in a diverse workforce would be so difficult. Some thought it may make for better working relationships, in direct contradiction to the observations made by participant 16 although conceded that increased diversity might bring its own challenges.

INT: WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT A DIVERSE WORKFORCE?]

P17: Well, firstly the great thing is, it's never boring! You know, you have a wealth of personalities (..) and people should embrace that rather than run away from it. You know, on a philosophical level you have a lot to learn from them. (..)

P15: I was probably more cautious because I hadn't ever worked in a big mix of people before....but it seemed to be quite harmonious.

This could be because the participant was not aware of some of the problems occurring around her or simply that there was not the magnitude of difficulty detailed by participant 16. He was describing a workplace with a very rigid equal opportunity structure designed to increase diversity. Participants 15 and 17 were describing their experiences of working in an organisation that had a diverse workforce without the same kind of restrictive policy. Enforcing diversity where it does not naturally occur is problematic, as pointed out by participant 16.

P16: there is a very great set of problems there because you see initially there is, the harmony doesn't really apply, initially. Umm, there is potential for that but if you have a society that really, out there, hasn't sorted out how it deals with certain groups and then, on the front line of change, a local authority like [inner London Borough] begins to employ those groups... people working together like that, builds tensions.

2.5.3 Consciousness Raising

Participant 16 argued that the solution to these tensions must include a raising of consciousness because much of the situation was caused by a lack of awareness of the problems faced by other people within the workforce.

P16: I would like to seesome resources put towards consciousness raising (..) and to raising the equal opportunity expertise of the average worker in this organisation because there's a tremendous, there's still a lot of ignorance. If you talk to some men, they don't know what, what on earth umm, makes for a life of a woman officer and what she has to go through to get through certain hoops, they don't know the details of that. Some may understand that there is a general discrimination. They don't know a lot about what happens, the different rules, people are living in different worlds, yeah? And I think there needs to be uhh, (..) resources put to self-consciousness raising efforts, like training, umm, having videos which people can look at. I don't want to see training which alienates people so that you come in and you shout at people, I mean the sort of thing that really allows officers to understand the worlds that they don't occupy. So that a black officer understands what happens to gay, lesbians and and women in general and women understand and and white officers and, that sort of thing.

This theme provides a good example of the inclusion of outliers, of opinions that ran counter to the majority. No other participants argued for consciousness raising. Equally, no other participants worked in the equality field and had given the issues involved many years consideration. It was included as a theme because it recurred within the data from participant 16's interview. By this point it was becoming quite clear that interviewing participant 16 was a very different experience from the other interviews because of his expertise in the subject matter and the amount of consideration he had given to equal opportunities prior to the interview process. The data resulting from his interview was rich. The author started to consider interviewing more equality practitioners.

Following on from consciousness raising theme, there seemed to be a further theme regarding the ability to recognise discrimination in the workplace.

2.5.4 Recognising Discrimination

It may be true that people do not understand the problems faced by others. There were a number of incidences where participants did not think there was any discrimination occurring in their organisation but then unwittingly described an environment where equal opportunity was clearly not operating. For example, the language used by participant 10 to describe female colleagues hardly construed a vision of an organisation where women were valued as professional employees, with talk of girls and ladies and secretaries.

P10: ...I've only noticed the fact that people who do well get on, regardless of what they are or who they are.

INT: SO IT'S BASICALLY ON THEIR MERIT?

P10: Yeah we have umm in my department I'd say the women side of things is very much (..) we have a secretary, who's obviously a lady and we've got one sales lady, the rest are guys but the other areas, we've got a product manager who is very senior. She's been around (..) a few years. Our whole marketing department bar one is ladies. And they're very successful. I don't know whether it's umm (..) I'm not sure whether it's the fact that they were (..) selected or in the right candidate at the time, I'm not sure. All I know is that I think we're deficient in the fact there's only one girl works in the sales department and there should be more but I think they're, there's a girl being interviewed today for a sales support role, which (..) hopefully (..)

It is common for male managers (as participant 10 was) to assume that women are only discriminated against in traditionally male, blue-collar trades, or that discrimination was a thing that used to happen, that equality has arrived through the passage of time in their own organisation and that it will eventually come in other organisations with time (Maddock & Parkin, 1993). Participant 20 provided some support for this idea.

INT: A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE VERY OLD FASHIONED IDEAS ABOUT WHERE WOMEN SHOULD BE]

P20: I think in the office environment, that's completely been turned around. Maybe on the uhh, factory floor as it were, that's still true.

INT: HOW DO YOU THINK IT STANDS IN THE OFFICE, THEN?

P20: In the office I think men are a dying breed (..) and women have (..) surpassed men in many levels. (..)

Not all participants were unaware of how different people might perceive the same work environment. For example participant 2 challenged his colleagues in the focus

group to imagine how a black person might feel approaching their (all-white) organisation.

P2: (white male) Neither do we have any black people but I mean that's something that (..) you don't know if a black person walked into this department what what perception an all white, what what perception we would give to other companies, all white and we may not even think of it, I mean that's quite a big thing that someone would notice that maybe we won't. And you know, how would a black person feel working here?

Inevitably the process of raising consciousness includes an element of training or education to create a change. Change creates resistance often and with equal opportunity being a sensitive subject, it brought out strong opinions.

P19: I sincerely believe that if you don't go out of your way to be educated in these issues, you know, you will be a racist.

P2: Because people can be racist without knowing they're racist.

Other participants were offended at the notion that they would be considered racist or sexist and thought that no person, especially an educated person, would be capable of such a thing.

P3: ...Educated people should know that any way...

The failure to recognise the presence of discrimination in the workplace may not be a failure, it may be that there simply is no discrimination occurring. Workforce statistics indicate that this conclusion is highly unlikely to be true. More probable is that people read the same situation from their own perspective and read it differently. For example, “both men and women are frequently unaware of the extent to which they are influenced by and operating from a gender-specific approach” (Cutmore-Smith, 1987: 32).

In summary, the overwhelming finding was how little consideration participants had given to equal opportunity prior to participating in this research project. Discussions tended to centre more naturally around issues of general fairness and social relationship rather than the business case for equality. Nevertheless, participants did offer some insights into how the business case was perceived and these data were coded as detailed in Figure 21.

3 BUSINESS CASE VARIABLES

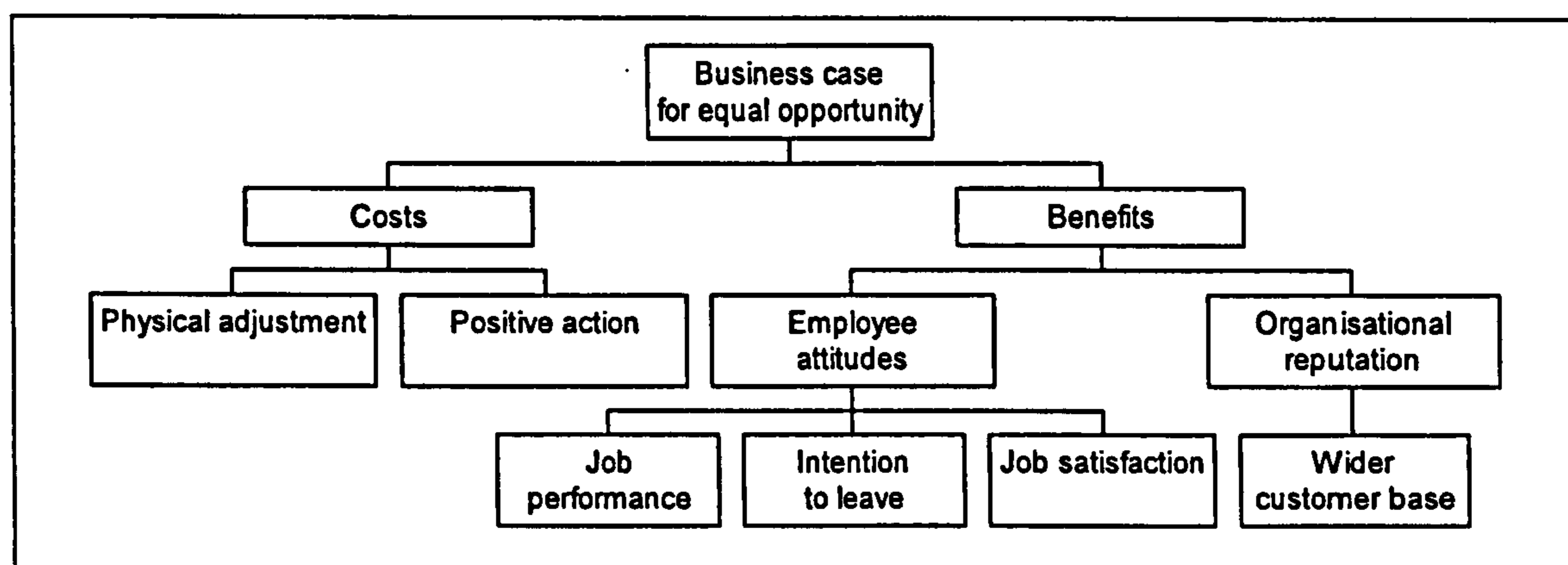


Figure 21: Diagrammatic summary of business case results

3.1 Costs Associated with Equal Opportunities

Looking at the costs and benefits associated with equal opportunity was a small element of the data. Participants had generally not given much thought to it as a topic before taking part in the research project.

3.1.1 Physical Adjustments

Employing disabled people was generally talked about in very simplistic terms. 'Disabled' was interpreted as 'wheelchair user' and was translated to a cost in terms of employing a disabled person.

P1 Well if we had a disabled person, I think it would cost for the wheelchair.

3.1.2 Positive Action

Taking positive action to recruit from a wider pool of applicants was seen as expensive for small organisations, particularly where the local area had low minority ethnic representation, in terms of increased recruitment costs.

This theme was extended to apply to particular industries or sectors where there are a smaller number of qualified women or people from a minority ethnic background. Whether such industries and sectors would suffer low representation if they adopted positive action strategies at the recruitment stage was not raised.

SO WHY ARE THERE SO FEW WOMEN DOING IT THEN?

P10: Because our customer base is very male dominated.... the guys we deal with mainly I work for, I sell stock brooking systems so umm it's very much a male dominated client base who are (..) either barrow boys or come up through the ranks or went to the right schools and they feel intimidated by women so they prefer not to do a deal with them.

3.2 Benefits Associated with Equal Opportunities

3.2.1 Employee Attitudes

The business case proposed a number of employee job attitudes as an outcome of equal opportunity environments, including increased job performance, increased job satisfaction and a decrease in intention to leave. Study one participants tended not to raise job attitudes as benefits unless prompted by the researcher.

Perhaps, there may have been a stronger association between equality and job attitudes in situations where a clear breach of equal opportunities had occurred. Shellenbarger (1993) for example, reported that employees' belief that their employer had discriminated against them correlated with both taking more initiative on the job and, maybe conversely, an increased intention to leave.

3.2.2 Job Performance

There was little evidence that participants would work harder specifically because they were working in an equal opportunity environment. The lack of equal opportunity may have contributed to a generally poor attitude at work for participant 9 but he thought that equality climate made little difference. Mostly participants thought that they worked hard at their jobs, regardless of the environment.

P9: Mmm perhaps have worked harder, treated customers and managed, you know especially management would have been different as well. Not that I treat them badly but my attitude could have been better at times (..) and it probably would have been better at times, if I'd seen..[evidence of equality of opportunity]....when it came to women or err black males getting to management, it, it was something else. It wouldn't, it didn't change, it didn't really change anything, how I worked because we sort of thought that anyway.

Literature has suggested that equal opportunity climate affects how employees feel about their employers and their work and their performance levels because if individuals

feel they are not valued because of their social group membership, it affects their careers, organisational identity and job satisfaction (e.g. Cox, 1993; Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000). As Baron & Pfeffer (1994: 191) explained, “organizations consist of social interdependencies, customs, informal norms, and coalitions of interests, each with profound significance and meaning for organizational members.....Consequently organizations affect inequality by influencing how jobs are defined, how rewards are attached to positions, how people are matched to these jobs, and how workers determine whether they have been treated fairly.” The results of this study suggested that employees the basis for feeling undervalued was not restricted to social group membership.

3.2.3 Intention to Leave

Most participants thought they would feel more committed to an organisation that treated them fairly and invested in them as individuals. Participants felt they would be less likely to leave an organisation that had invested in them, or where they felt valued. Again equal opportunity was an element in this process, rather than the direct cause. It may be that equal opportunity contributes to organisational commitment in which case, it may add value to the business case for equal opportunity.

A few participants mentioned they would stay longer with an organisation that was prepared to invest in them as employees because they would feel more loyal to and satisfied with that organisation. Equal opportunity may contribute to the process in deciding which particular employees may be invested in but is unlikely to have a direct effect unless a direct violation of equal opportunity occurred. In this case the significance of equal opportunity was increased. For example participants 11 and 12 thought equal opportunity would be a very good reason to stay or leave an organisation if they were being rewarded unfairly in their work.

INT: SO HOW MUCH OF AN INFLUENCE DOES HAVING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MAKE ON THAT DECISION TO STAY OR TO GO?

P12: I think it's huge actually... Well, it depends how you're talking about equal opportunities: if you're talking about you know between umm races and sexes and all the rest of it, I think if I felt I was doing the same job as somebody else (..) and yet I wasn't getting paid or recognised (..) it's huge, I mean I just wouldn't...

A lack of equal opportunity experienced as discrimination is in essence conflict. Standard responses to conflict may include the intention to leave (e.g. Thomas, 1992; Martin & Bergmann, 1996).

3.2.4 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was perceived to be associated with the intention to leave an organisation and was mentioned as an outcome of being treated fairly by employees and having good social relationships. Job satisfaction was not specifically attributed to equal opportunity.

P11: Well I think so, definitely. I mean if they invest in you and you feel that you're doing a good job for the company, you feel happier as well. It's all job satisfaction at the end of the day, and if you think you've done a good job and maybe they've rewarded you for doing a good job, then you'll feel happier to stay.

Happy workers however do not necessarily translate into productive and profitable organisations (Argyle, 1989).

INT: SO YOU'D LEAVE?

P11: Yeah (..) I think so.

Generally participants thought they would be able to cope with any discrimination that they may face in the workplace and therefore the level of discrimination would not influence their decision to stay or leave an organisation. The honesty and accuracy of such statements can only be taken at face value.

3.3 Organisational reputation

The reputation of an organisation may be enhanced by the provision of equal opportunities in two ways. Firstly, employees who are committed to their organisation act as good ambassadors for that organisation which helps build a good reputation with the local community. Secondly, dissatisfied employees tend to tell their friends and relatives why they don't like their organisation and this helps contribute to a negative reputation.

P9: OK umm defending it, like being an employer you always thought that you've got stick up and defend for the place that you're working very rarely do I ever bother to defend it or promote it in a

good vein. I turn around and used to say well, I just work here because I need the money to get through university. And the people who want that are OK but as a company as a whole, the food quality is OK but then I wouldn't (..) where as if, you know what I mean, if it was different now and had equal opportunities and they had women managers and black (..) then I would have seen, I would have said well then, I'll speak of them as a company, yeah they're really, yeah equal opportunities is good there. OK it might not be for me but then hey I can recommend it to somebody else and say, yeah go for it. It's a good company, they train you up. There's good examples of women and black men and Asian guys doing well there, so the company's really good. But obviously if you speak about it negatively to people, you can turn people off it. You know, you can put some people off even doing their shopping there.

Further, if a company is seen to be a good equal opportunity employer, the organisation may increase the likelihood of people wanting to work there. Good employers attract and retain good employees.

BUT IF YOU KNEW IT TO BE TRUE THOUGH, IF YOU'D SEEN IT...

P9: OK oh yes it would make a difference yeah. Yeah, it would make a difference on my, on choosing a company to work for.

An improved organisational reputation may also enhance profits because customers will be more attracted to the organisation.

P9: [if you see] women running the shop and black men, and you saw it, the feedback would be very good from customers and other organisations outside...a lot more people seem to be more... conscious and aware of the equal opportunities and I, I mean I've heard people saying, oh I'm not going in that shop over there, they treat people racist and I'm not going to go in there. And I mean it's just the one customer, but then that's a customer lost. I feel that it would give a better outlook to the general public, generally. So it would, I think it would benefit and it would give them a better umm view in people's eyes about the company, as well as possibly, possibly increasing their, their sales revenue as well.

3.3.1 Wider customer base

The business case suggested that equal opportunity may facilitate better meeting the needs of a wider section of the community and this formed an a priori code. Participants however did not readily refer to this theme without prompting and it was excluded from the final analysis

Chapter 5

Study One Conclusions

In summary, Study One results indicated that equal opportunity was considered in terms of a broader base of being treated fairly at work, a construct that was wrapped up with job satisfaction and social contact with colleagues. Working environment was perceived as a place that participants either wanted to work at, or a place that was approached with dread. Equal opportunity was rarely an important factor in this decision except where there was blatant evidence of unfair discrimination.

With regard to the business case, it is possible that the provision of an environment of good equal opportunities could contribute to an employee's performance levels and their intention to leave an organisation. In this manner equal opportunity may contribute to the perception of fair treatment by their employer. Equal opportunity itself did not appear to function as an independent construct and a clear cut business case for equality could not be established by Study One findings.

The major finding of Study One was that of low awareness, which is worrying for people concerned with equal opportunity because it helps maintain the view that equal opportunity only applies to minority ethnic groups, women and disabled people. In an organisational situation of low awareness and expectation, only those people experiencing discrimination are likely to be aware of it whilst the rest of the organisation's employees may believe there is no discrimination occurring and therefore little or no action is taken to address the problem. This highlights the necessity of legislation and organisational policy to protect employees working in organisations where equal opportunity is not a business priority.

As participant 16 explained, discrimination is a long established tradition. Racism and sexism may be institutionalised and raising awareness and consciousness is part of the

solution. Change often creates resistance and attracts criticism but this does not diminish the need for change.

From an employee perspective, people did not want to be associated with equal opportunity programmes within an organisation for fear that they were being treated as token representatives of a particular group, rather than as individuals there on their own merit, making it difficult to see how an equal opportunity programme may work effectively.

The business case proposed a number of job attitude variables, for example increased job satisfaction, that would result from an equal opportunity climate but Study One did not elicit these variables without heavy prompting from the researcher. This finding in itself was important and was interpreted as participants generally not having considered equal opportunity climate in any depth prior to participating in this research project. The findings tended to indicate how little importance is attached to equal opportunity in isolation but emphasised the large extent to which equal opportunity may interact with other variables. The over-riding impression gained from the data was that equal opportunity per se means very little to employees. A feeling of being valued and treated fairly, and good social relationships at work appeared far more important than equal opportunity.

The bottom line, as perceived by the majority of participants was that equal opportunity would not be actively taken up by employers unless employers could see a positive impact on profit levels.

P9 – it comes down to profit, they won't do it otherwise – maybe if it gives a good image they might but it comes down to money.

The business case assumes there is profit to be made but many commercial organisations have not adopted equality programmes. Study One findings had not tackled in any depth the costs and benefits associated with equal opportunities at an individual and organisational level.

Clearly the majority of participants had not considered equal opportunity in any real depth prior to participating in this research project which resulted in fairly basic information being gathered. The data resulting from the interview with participant 16,

who worked in the equal opportunity field, was significantly more detailed than any of the other interviews. Whilst the lack of general knowledge in itself was a valuable finding, there was evidently a lot more to be gained by continuing the research with a specialist rather than a generalist audience. For this reason it was considered sensible to move from a generalist employee sample to include interviews with employers and equality practitioners to gain some insight into the possible motivations of employers and the actual costs and benefits associated with implementing a programme of equal opportunity in the workplace

Thus a second stage, Study Two, was appended to the research design to include in-depth individual interviews with equal opportunity practitioners and employers, as detailed in the following chapters.

Chapter 6

Introduction to Study Two

Study One aimed to identify the breadth and depth of the issues associated with equal opportunities in a commercial context. The objective was to ascertain whether employees consciously associated the perception of equal opportunity with the business case variables identified in the literature.

This objective was originally to be met through a series of qualitative interviews with a sample population of employees. With the power of hindsight, this was rather over-ambitious since participants had generally not given equal opportunity at work much consideration prior to taking part in the research project. Results from Study One did offer some insight into how equal opportunity was perceived but they lacked the detail necessary to elicit variables that may impact on the business case for equal opportunity.

The exception to the rule was participant 16, who had worked as a race equality officer for many years and who was highly informed about equal opportunity. In fact, this participant represented a turning point in the research. The most striking finding up until interviewing participant 16 was just how little thought people had dedicated to equal opportunity. It became obvious that it would be advisable to interview more people who worked in the field and were therefore more knowledgeable about equal opportunity. Consequently the need for a further study, using an expert population was identified and a second study, Study Two, was devised.

Study Two followed the same in-depth interview format as Study One but engaged a sample from an expert population of equality practitioners as participants and employers with responsibility for equality. The modification of research design brought the desired effect. Study Two provided a great deal of detail about equal opportunities and the business case in the context of commercial organisations, as detailed in the following chapters.

Chapter 7

Study Two Methodology

1 RESEARCH DESIGN

As with Study One it was considered that a qualitative research technique would be the most appropriate approach to take. Study Two in fact followed on exactly from Study One except that participants were sampled for their expertise in equality issues. In summary, qualitative individual in-depth interviews were conducted and fully transcribed. Transcripts are attached as Volume 3 of this thesis. Data were analysed using the same coding, clustering and sub-clustering analytic techniques described in Study One (Section 3.3.1, pg. 90).

A series of individual qualitative interviews were planned, following the format of Study One closely. The same discussion guide used in Study One (Table 4) was used again in Study Two, to ensure that all the discussion areas were covered but it was explained to participants that all questions were open-ended and they were free to introduce anything they thought relevant. This technique kept the research data-driven and phenomenological in approach.

2 PROCEDURE

2.1 Sampling Strategy

As with Study One, Study Two used a non-probability sampling technique, snowballing. With Study Two it was particularly crucial that people knowledgeable about equality in the workplace took part in the research and snowballing was an effective technique for achieving this. Again, the question of generalisability with non-probability sampling may rear its head but as Hornby & Symon suggested, “it seems

more appropriate to the questions we are asking to gather specific information from specific informants who are knowledgeable about the process under consideration (Hornby & Symon, 1994: 169).

The demographic make-up of the expert population was not important to this stage of the research project although by chance minority ethnic and white women and men were equally represented in the sample. The aim of the sampling strategy was to gain the widest range of experiences by interviewing equal opportunity practitioners from a range of industries, with different roles and the equality agencies via a snowballing technique.

Initially Human Resource managers of Opportunity 2000 organisations were approached by letter, as were local councils, equality agencies, government departments and an organisational psychology company specialising in managing diversity. Additionally an independent consultant was identified through personal contacts and a couple of leads from Study One participants were followed up.

As with Study One, the procedure involved sitting down with telephone and ringing through a stack of numbers. The longest part of the process was identifying the correct telephone numbers and the name of the most appropriate contact within an organisation. Once this had been achieved and the researcher spoke to potential participants, they were generally very keen to take part. Almost every person that agreed to participate suggested another person that could be approached to participate.

Following verbal agreements on the telephone, letters giving some background to the research project were sent out to participants, confirming the agreed venue and time of meetings and re-emphasising that all information would be treated confidentially and that anonymity would be guaranteed if required.

2.2 Non-participants

The people invited to take part in Study Two were, on the whole, very willing to participate. A couple of people declined due to work commitments but still suggested other people I should try contacting.

The notable exception to this was a woman who managed an equal opportunities unit of a London Borough Council, who refused to take part because she was concerned she would jeopardise her job by voicing personal opinions rather than the organisation's official policy. She explained that the internal politics were such that she would not be able to speak freely and did not wish to participate. This sounded to the researcher like a person with great insight into the realities of equal opportunities in the workplace who could perhaps shed some light on why equality had not been achieved. Attempts by the researcher to engage the non-participant in any further discussion however were not well received, and she emphasised that even asking her any questions over the telephone was asking her to jeopardise her job. As intrigued as the researcher was by this response, there was no intention to cause distress and the telephone call was ended there with a 'thank you for your time'.

2.3 Participants

The final sample was composed of ten equal opportunity specialists from a balanced mix of industries and equality agencies who volunteered their time freely. The decision to have a sample size of ten was reached through the analysis process - the data from the ten participants was fantastically rich and after ten interview transcripts had been analysed, it seemed to the researcher and the PhD supervisor that a point of data saturation had been reached, where an increase in sample size would not add value to the research.

The final sample represented HR personnel from a major clothes retail organisation publicly committed to equal opportunity and an Information Technology retail organisation with no public commitment to equal opportunity; local and central government agency representatives; representatives from the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission; two independent equal opportunity consultants and two diversity management consultants. Participants were invited to participate as experts in their field rather than as representative of their social group membership but considering the limited sample size, there was also a good gender mix and minority ethnic representation in the sample, as detailed in Table 8.

Table 8: Study Two Participants - Gender, Ethnicity & Employer

Equal Opportunities Commission (1 minority ethnic female)	Commission for Racial Equality (1 minority ethnic male)
Local Government Organisation (Race Equality Council) (1 minority ethnic female)	Central Government Organisation (Dept for Employment & Education) (1 white male)
Human Resources: EO Non-Committed Private Company (IT Retail) (1 white male)	Human Resources: EO Committed Private Company (Retail – Clothes) (1 white female)
Diversity Consultants (co-owner of private company & associate) (1 minority ethnic male & 1 minority ethnic female)	Equal Opportunity Consultants (freelancers) (1 white male & 1 white female)

2.4 Venue

Once participants had been identified they were contacted to agree a convenient time and place to meet. As with Study One participants, interviews were conducted in a ‘congenial social environment’ as suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994) to reduce the researcher effect. In every instance, the location was the participant’s work or home office.

The preferred venue from the researcher’s point of view rapidly became participant’s work office, wherever this was possible as participants tended to set aside a length of time (commonly one hour) and to book a quiet meeting room for that duration. For the participants who worked from home or on a freelance basis, every telephone call was potentially, if not actually, regarding work and they could not afford to not take the call for the sake of participating in some student’s research project. Consequently, interviews were interrupted for telephone calls, the postman knocking at the door and window-cleaners requiring payment.

As with Study One participants, total anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to all participants. This guarantee was particularly salient to this group because they were often referring to their current clients during the interview and therefore reassurance

was required that no names would be mentioned outside of the interview in the interest of client confidentiality.

2.5 Interview Procedure

Study Two procedure followed that of Study One exactly. At the start of each interview session, participants were thanked profusely for volunteering their time and for providing a venue, the research topic was introduced and permission was sought (and gainEd.) to tape record the interview. Participants were assured that any quotations used in the study would be anonymous and the promise of confidentiality reiterated.

The researcher kept a log of all interviews, recording the non-verbal aspects of the interview and overall impressions gained. Interviews were fully transcribed and the same analytic techniques adopted in Study One were applied. In summary, the transcription process provided an opportunity for immersion in the data. Data were coded on entry into QSR Nud.IST® software and coding and clustering techniques, as described by Miles & Huberman (1994), were adopted to draw and verify conclusions. The same a priori codes used in Study One were used in Study Two.

2.6 Transcription Convention

As with Study One, transcription convention followed that suggested by Wetherell et al.. (1987) with interviews transcribed to include every word, utterance and pause, using 'P' as an abbreviation for Participant and 'INT' as an abbreviation for Interviewer.

Chapter 8

Study Two Results Discussed

1 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

As with Study One, Study Two results are discussed in one section rather than separate results and discussion chapters. Again, results are presented in terms of the overarching key issues, themes and patterns falling under those key issues, illustrated by transcript data where appropriate. A diagrammatic summary of the results is also given at the start of each section. It is also important to understand how the results were arrived at and example audit trails are given to illustrate the processes involved.

1.1 Results Audit Trail

As with Study One, a coding and clustering analytic process was conducted, with confirmation of category development and data allocation sought (and gained) from the PhD supervisor and another doctoral student colleague.

Unlike Study One, the data resulting from the interviews was vastly complex. So many themes emerged that they often were clustered into higher-order key issues to effectively manage the sheer volume of data.

Data was coded on entry into QSR Nud.IST®. This process produced a large hierarchical tree, a conceptual web, the outline of which is illustrated in Figure 22.

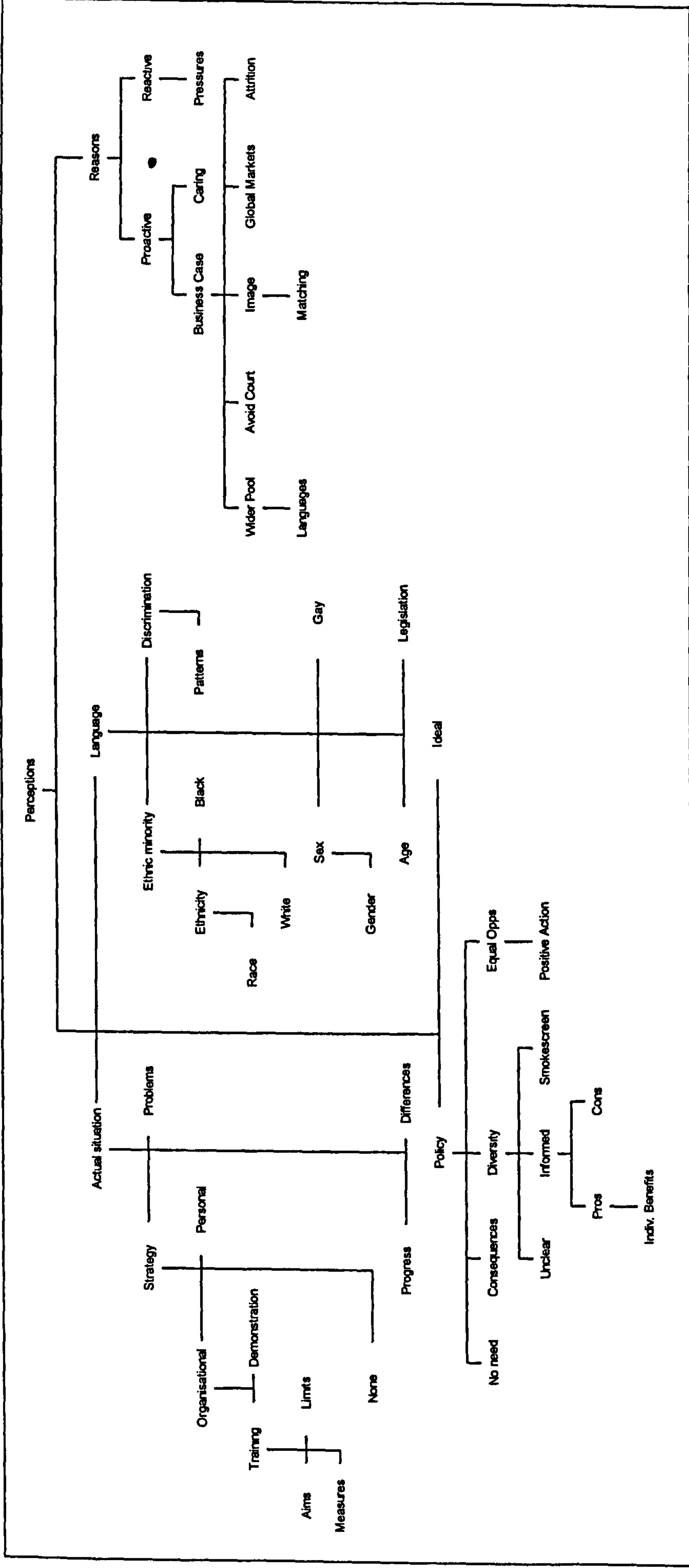


Figure 22: Study Two initial QSR Nud.IST® hierarchical tree data summary

Final results emerged from these initial codes through an analytic process of clustering and subclustering key issues, themes and patterns into smaller units and clustering small codes together into key issues.

Table 3 provides a small excerpt of the patterns and themes falling under the ‘employer motivation’ key issue which emerged from the data coded under the initial code of ‘reasons’ illustrated in Figure 22.

Table 9: Category development for employer motivation code – matrix showing associated key issues, themes and patterns

Key Issues	Themes	Patterns
Morals & Ethics	Equality is about human rights	It’s the right thing to do
		It’s about your organisational values
Money	Monetary costs of EO/diversity	It’s not about money
		Advertising is expensive but recoups elsewhere
		Money talks
		Hidden costs
		Doesn’t have to be expensive
External Pressure	Global business	US company directive
		Standardising procedures in international organisations
	Market/competitor pressure	Keep up with competition/current state of market
	Top dog wants it	Humanitarian boss
		Boss decides it’s an issue
	Reactive	Legal decision – employment tribunal demands action
Had bad publicity/experience		

As with Study One, some a priori codes were used, determined by the research question, literature and impressions gained from the interviews. For example, elements of the business case, like attrition levels, provided a set of codes to start the analysis process. Where codes did not fit any existing nodes, new ones were created. For example,

participants talked about employers facing pressure from external sources like an American parent company or employment tribunal ruling to commit to equality of opportunity. A node already existed for employer motivations with the business case and ethics and morals forming two nodes under employer motivations, as illustrated in Figure 23.

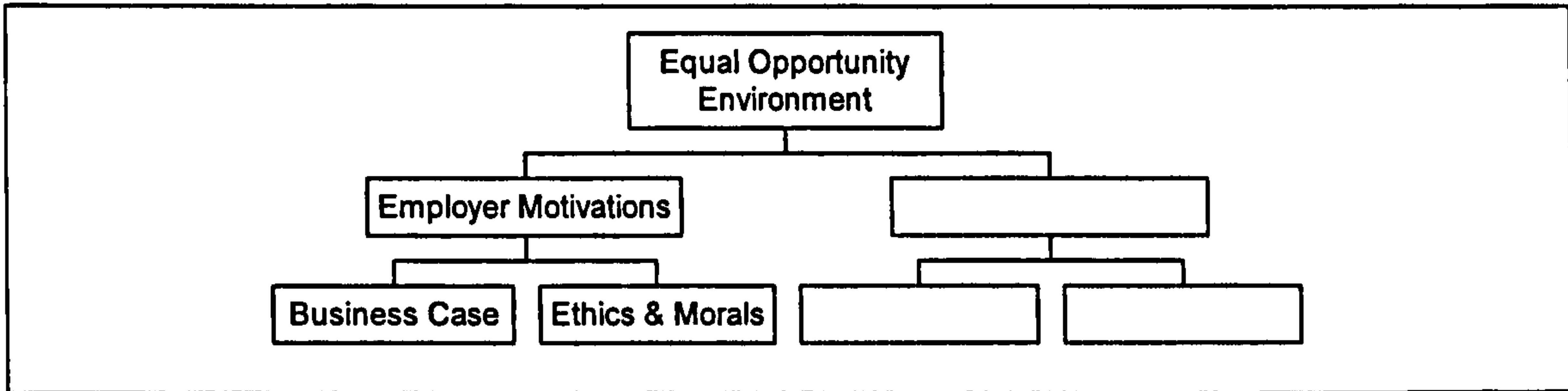


Figure 23: Illustration of a priori code structure

When analysis revealed a new theme in employer motivations, namely external pressures, a new node was added and the relevant text units coded under it, as illustrated by Figure 24.

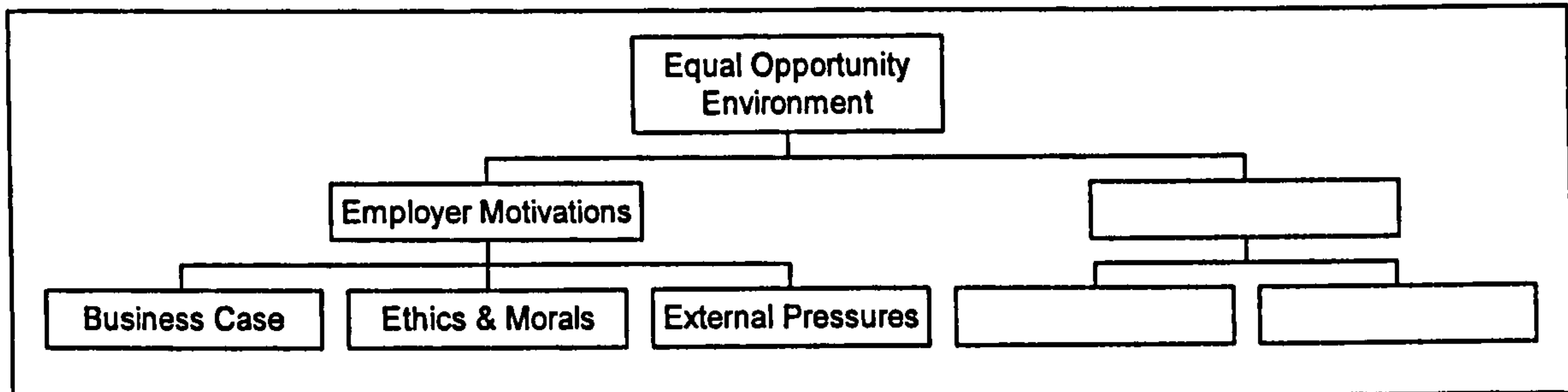


Figure 24: Illustration of new node creation in bottom up content analysis

Each text unit was attached to as many different nodes as were appropriate. This was an essential part of the analysis since the content of text units often overlapped different nodes and an individual text unit often contained more than one theme within it.

Many clusters and subclusters were formed and refined and rejected during the analytic process before final conclusions were drawn. The final results are presented below.

2 FINAL RESULTS

As with Study One, diagrammatic summaries of the results are presented before the results are discussed. The first theme examined was that of equal opportunity environment.

3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Many potential themes and patterns arose around the topic of equal opportunity environment, including what constituted an equal opportunity environment, what equal opportunity was really about and how to achieve equality. Table 4 illustrates a small selection of the potential themes that were explored during the analytic process.

Table 10: Excerpt of equal opportunity environment data analysis process

KEY ISSUES	THEMES	PATTERNS
What constitutes an EO environment?	Creating the perception of good EO	Perception not enough
		Can't fool employees for long
		Perception is everything.
		Perception very strong
		Perceptions about individuals, not work behaviours, and 1% bad behaviour is remembered over 99% good.
	Don't make it an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a naturalness approach • No over-emphasis • No positive action
	Common goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone feels appreciated • People want to work together • It matters to everyone
	Equal treatment Fairness Demonstrate commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating all staff the same • Background, gender, bottom or top level, label not important • Seeing women in senior management positions • Knowing where your women and ethnic minorities are placed in the org. • Happy staff • Good retention levels • Demonstrate commitment by asking pertinent questions about each new vacancy
	Communication Results Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication from top that EO is important • Employees seeing results • EO problems being taken seriously • Having procedures in place to cope with problems
	Diversity Reflection of QUALIFIED population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the best person for the job. • Seeing the diversity of the qualified population reflected in the workplace. Including men in traditional female roles. • Seeing black/female faces in the higher echelons as well as the low. • Selection on merit.
It's not actually about EO	It's about fairness	In organisational processes & appraisals
	It's about communication	In feedback
	It's about management	Management of issues
	It's about human rights	Social justice

From the huge amount of data generated by the interviews, some recurrent themes did eventually emerge. In terms of equal opportunity environment, the main themes are summarised in Figure 25.

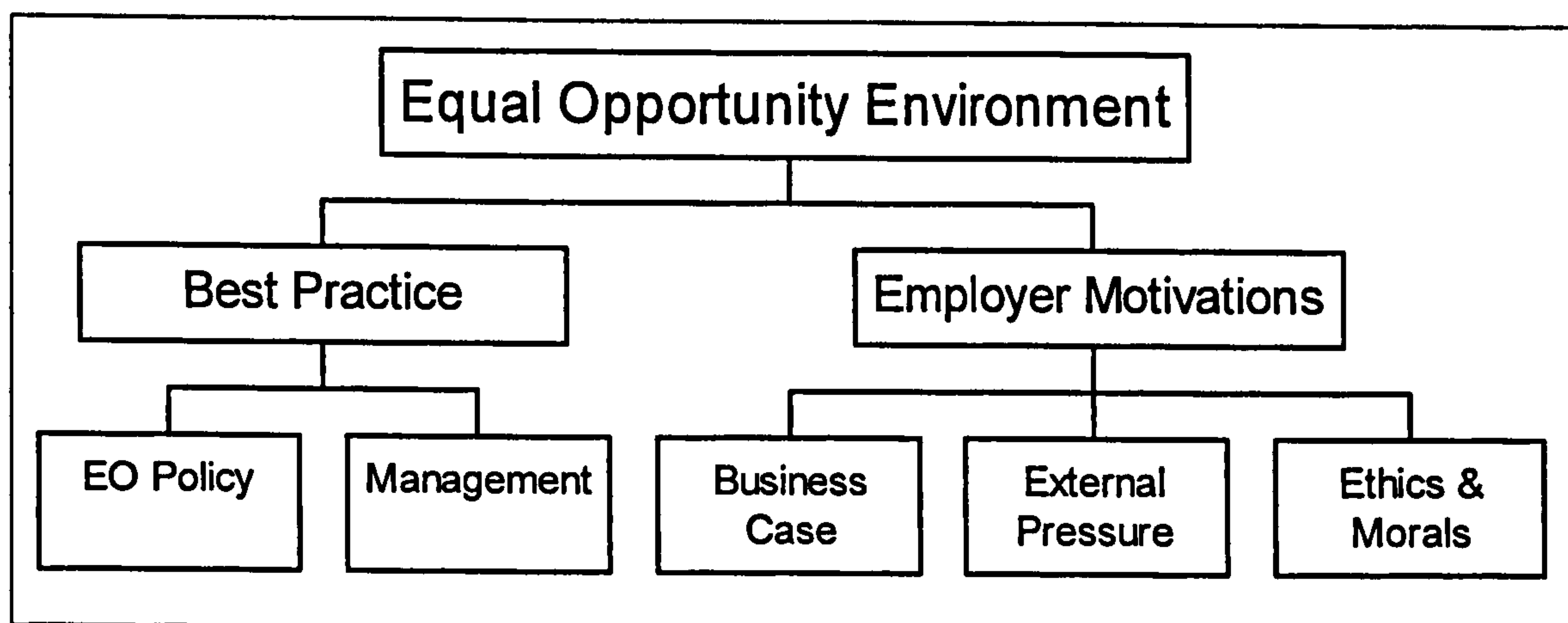


Figure 25: Diagrammatic overview of Study Two results

What constitutes a “good” equal opportunity environment? A familiar theme concerned how hard it was to objectively measure the level of equal opportunity in a workplace because many of the elements were so subtle or intangible. This corresponded with Study One participants not being very aware of equal opportunity in the workplace, until there was some kind of violation experienced.

P26: It's just sort of like how you gauge motivation or morale in an organisation. A lot of that is touchy feely stuff. What does it feel like? Do people seem to be having a good time or do people look miserable?

The importance of employee perception was stressed, to the point that the interviewer asked if it would be possible to create the perception without the supporting ethos and practice. This possibility was rejected by participants because a perception alone could not be sustained and employees are not so easily fooled. This sentiment was echoed by Jewson et al. (1995), who acknowledged the public relations and legal advantages of a formal equal opportunities policy but reported that if policy was perceived as a hypocritical gesture on the part of the organisation then the policy would be discredited in the eyes of employees and management and would be likely to hinder any real progress on the equality front.

If avoidance of litigation was the sole motivation for an employer to adopt a formal equal opportunities policy it is likely that the legal advantage may be lost if it were challenged by the courts. Tribunal panels tend to expect employers to demonstrate that employees were aware of and trained in the organisational equal opportunities policy.

The presence of a paper policy is generally not considered sufficient defence in a tribunal situation.

There was a large degree of agreement between participants' perceptions of the characteristics of an equal opportunity climate, which are outlined in Table 11. These lists are very similar to those found in the literature, for example Dobbs (1996).

Table 11: Characteristics of a good EO climate proposed by Study Two participants

Organisational Elements	Characteristics	Achieved by
Organisational culture	Fairness	Communication
Organisational values	Flexible	Commitment
Training	Honest	Monitoring
Policy	Multicultural	Education
Procedures	Low attrition	Support
Processes	Visible representation	Long term
Strategy	Consistency	Holistic
Management	High performance	Creative
	Happy staff	
	Meritocracy	
	Respect	

3.1 Best Practice

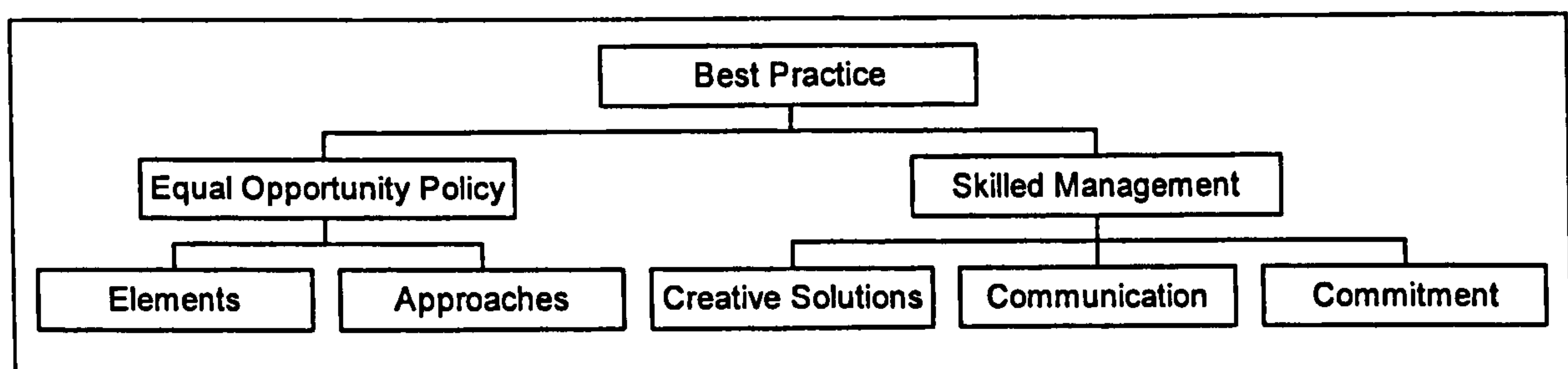


Figure 26: Diagrammatic summary of the best practice key issue

Figure 26 illustrates the next theme in the results, best practice. The themes emerging around best practice issues were very similar to those found in the literature describing how to manage diversity or equal opportunity programmes. For example, Thiederman (1994) espoused the importance of the commitment of top management to diversity because individual staff effort will make little difference without the support of the top management. Cox & Smolinski (1994) explained that top management support was required because of the practical realities and complexities of managing differences among employees. Holland (1988) described a lack of top management support as having an inhibiting effect on the success of a programme.

3.1.1 Equal Opportunity Policy

Study One results showed that equal opportunity policy was meaningless unless it was visibly practised. Study Two participants agreed that a policy was just one element of equal opportunity practice but that it was an important tool in creating an equal opportunity environment. In this context, policy was presented as contributing to the organisational culture, providing a useful peg for setting out an organisation's expectations, employee rights and responsibilities.

Creating an equal opportunity environment generally requires a massive change to occur and participants stressed that behaviour change is a slow process. A policy can be put into place that requires new behaviour. Sometimes a change in attitude will result from the behaviour but this was not cited as an automatic outcome. Participants were very much aware of the limitations of an equal opportunity intervention.

P24: you can change umm the policies and insist that a practice goes on until the practice changes but the people who already have it inbred to behave in such a negative way, you really can't change them.

There was a general consensus though that policy could be effective when properly implemented. For example, participant 29 stated that a policy which included a commitment to recruiting from a wider base would effectively increase the workforce diversity and that learning would increase as the representation increased, thereby helping to create long-term change.

3.1.2 Elements of Equal Opportunity Policies

Fair organisational procedures, particular in terms of recruitment were regular patterns in the data. Fair recruitment was perceived as an essential element of good equality practice that could remove barriers. This was perceived as facilitating recruitment based on merit, selecting the best, recruiting outside of your own image and looking at the skills potential employees used both inside and outside of the workplace when assessing their capabilities, all of which would apparently help create an equal opportunity environment.

3.1.3 Mainstreaming

Keeping equality practice in line with other organisational strategies and building equal opportunity into all processes and procedures is known as mainstreaming. Mainstreaming was cited as an effective way of making an equal opportunity programme successful. By mainstreaming equality it becomes the responsibility of every individual within an organisation rather than ownership resting exclusively with one particular unit of the organisation. A number of participants stressed the need for each individual to be responsible and accountable for their actions for the organisational culture to change.

P28: I think if you, centralised, it's been proven that centralised equal opportunities doesn't work. I think of thirty years worth of data to prove that, you, as I said before we've got four thousand plus individuals that live equal opportunities every day and you know, if ten of them are not doing it, well, you know, in a big, in a major way, if you've got someone who's been racially abusive staff all the time, we've got a major problem. So it does boil down to an individual level.

Mainstreaming was presented as the ultimate approach to equal opportunities by Jewson et al. (1995) and although they called the approach 'assimilation' their assimilation model of policy was characterised by equal opportunities being absorbed 'assimilated' into every organisational practice and procedure, i.e. mainstreaming. Interestingly, Jewson et al.'s assimilation model implied that concepts such as diversity management or 'empowerment' may replace the phraseology of equal opportunity when the organisation becomes familiar enough with the concepts involved. The assumption seems to be that the organisation must be au fait with current debates in equality to have moved to a diversity management framework in the first place. It is also the kind of

assumption that may lead to diversity management acting as a smokescreen because it creates the impression that the organisation is already an equal opportunity employer that has moved onto the more sophisticated elements of diversity management where in fact the organisation may not be equal opportunity employers at all.

Reviewing and evaluating equality practice was another tool for creating an equal opportunity environment regularly suggested by Study Two participants. A review or evaluation process was perceived as useful to establish the organisation's aims, measure progress towards that aim and to communicate successes. Any equality audit should include staff perceptions as well as policy and practice and should be carried out on a regular basis over the long term.

3.1.4 Equal Opportunity Policy Approaches

3.1.5 Positive Action

A number of participants thought that positive action was a necessary tool for achieving an equal opportunity environment because it gave priority to those people who traditionally were not playing on a level field. They considered that positive action addressed the reality of discrimination, that black people and women are disadvantaged groups. Only one participant thought that positive discrimination may be a good tool for increasing the representation of minority ethnic employees throughout an organisation although he balanced this by stating that positive discrimination did not satisfy the moral hurdle.

The majority of participants stressed meritocratic principles over positive action strategies, suggesting that positive action reinforced negative stereotypes of minority ethnic and women employees. Positive action was described as unpopular with employees because it drew attention to them (participant 24) and because it represented a deficiency model that is offensive (participant 30). Study One results were testament to these comments.

Positive action may have some hidden benefits. Participant 27 remarked that her organisation had taken positive action to recruit from a wider base. They had advertised in the minority ethnic press, which may or may not resulted in attracting a better

employee to the post advertised but it had acted as a good advert for the company and enhanced their reputation with the minority ethnic community.

P27: we've tried all sorts of things and um, if I'm absolutely honest, we hardly get any applications at all from the alternative way of advertising but we get an awful lot of good publicity and good comments. We get people ringing in our recruitment agency, we advertise through a recruitment agency, saying, 'I'm actually not suitable for this job but I thought it was a really good idea' um and that was almost what we're trying to promote.

Although their positive action programme brought a good response from the wider community it was not so well received by the job applicants. In Study One, participants stated that they did not trust employers to use the monitoring procedure properly. Participant 27 remarked that potential employees did not like to state where they had seen a job advertisement if it had been placed in a minority newspaper, for example, because they felt that they were identifying themselves as being from a minority ethnic background and therefore exposing themselves to discrimination.

P27: the thing we've found is that even if somebody reads an ad in, I don't know, the Asian Times.... they put the number on, the reference number that was in the advert and in the box that says 'where did you see this vacancy?' they say the Independent or the Guardian. So it's a bit of a stigma, this is just my perceived opinion but there is a bit of a stigma about applying throughminority magazines.

This may be indicative of how much discrimination still occurs today when an employer taking a positive action approach to equal opportunity is still mistrusted to this extent and perhaps highlights the necessity of positive action programmes.

3.1.6 Managing Diversity Versus Equal Opportunity

The author was keen to find out whether management of diversity was considered a good route to achieving an environment of equal opportunity. Thomas (1995: 245) had reported that “because little time has been devoted to understanding diversity per se....the ongoing discussions have positioned diversity as akin to affirmative action and have caused a substantial amount of confusion.” The participants in this sample however were entirely familiar with the concept of managing diversity and fully understood that it did not involve positive action or positive discrimination (the UK equivalent of affirmative action).

Participants understood the difference in emphasis between equal opportunity and diversity but did not make a large distinction between the two approaches, perceiving instead that both were part of the same process, albeit with equal opportunity representing the basic elements and diversity representing the more subtle elements of staff management that built on the basic principles of equal opportunities.

This approach of diversity being framed as something that builds on the basic equal opportunity model may be precisely the thing that diversity consultants had feared. Most writers concerned with equality and diversity have framed them as philosophically opposed (e.g. Liff, 1999). Kandola & Fullerton (1994) were concerned that using managing diversity and equal opportunity as interchangeable terms devalued the diversity approach because it implied it was merely an old concept dressed up in new language, which was not the vision of diversity that they wanted to promote. The majority of Study Two participants whilst understanding the difference in approach, did not find such a clear distinction between the two approaches necessary.

Both approaches were described in terms of being able to select on merit from a qualified representative population but more generally about creating a fair and equal working environment for all staff. Participants were keen that they should be used hand in hand rather than as distinct concepts.

P28: equal opportunities historically has been very much, we've got these specific areas, identifiable areas and we will address issues within those areas. As a block. ...[diversity] it's a new approach... the approach is slightly different in that some people are very comfortable with putting categorisation into place and ... What I would say is (..) there's a synergy that needs to be brought in. That the old style needs to be more accepting of the new style. The new style has to be more accepting of the old...

The two diversity consultant participants placed a heavier emphasis on the differences of approach, describing equal opportunity in terms of equal outcomes, getting the numbers right, highlighting positive action and targets, compared to the values driven approach of diversity management. Once they had described the differences however, they went on to say how the processes were inter-related.

P25: our argument has always been that this diversity oriented approach umm is actually driven by a set of values and you have to determine what type of organisation you want to be and you have to determine what sort of values that you want.

P26: I'd say that traditional equal opportunities is part of managing diversity... before managing diversity became the term... we haven't actually changed what we do. When we were talking equal opportunities, when we were doing equal opportunities awareness courses, actually the major issues are about general unfairness. Um so, we haven't actually changed what we've been saying or doing, it just has another label. But what that has done is that has brought into stark contrast the people who think of equal opportunities as not equal opportunities but equal outcomes. And the people who actually do think of equal opportunities as equal opportunities and the more political people are more about equal outcomes. And that means, so they're more interested in getting the numbers right, they're more interested in doing things for particular groups in order to get the numbers right and that's what's driving them.

There was some concern expressed that management of diversity could be used as a smokescreen to hide the difficult problems of sex and race discrimination or that it assumed a certain level of equality had already been reached. Participant 29 for example made the point that equal opportunity focused on groups because discrimination is group based, therefore a diversity approach could not adequately address this. Generally however participants in this sample considered that issues would still be picked up by either a management of diversity or an equal opportunity programme, how that issue was approached would vary slightly. If anything, participants considered that management of diversity would require a bigger investment in time and money from an organisation than an equal opportunity programme because diversity requires a change of organisational culture whereas equal opportunity programmes may possibly be achieved with a 'tick-box' approach.

Cockburn (1991) described a process of massive organisational (and legal) change required to achieve organisational equality. The underlying philosophy of Cockburn (equal outcomes) compared to Kandola (value individual differences), for example may be quite different but in common is the recognition and requirement of large scale and long term organisational change.

It must be concluded that there is no sense in treating management of diversity as entirely distinct from equal opportunity. Each concept feeds into the other. If management of diversity is sweeping over problems caused by racial or sexual discrimination, it is not successfully managing diversity. If equal opportunity is perceived as an issue only applying to women and minority ethnic staff, it is not an effective programme. An organisation investing in any type of equality programme,

regardless of whether the focus is diversity or equal opportunity must be prepared for the same things; a long term commitment, some resistance to change and very subtle progress.

3.1.7 Skilled Management

There was a consensus among participants that creating an environment of equal opportunity can be difficult. For example, as described by participant 16 in Study One, widening the recruitment pool may create an increased workforce diversity, which may then be abused without the guidance of skilled management. In Study Two, participant 28 spoke of creating a “protected species”,

P28: what happens is you almost become, it's like having a protected species;, 'oh you can't possibly discipline that person because', even though they did the most terrible things. And that's just ridiculous. That's not...equality.

Participant 24 stated that poor management allows people to stop challenging poor work behaviours,

P24: I accept the fact that sometimes people ...go around each other like eggshells because they don't like to challenge any more but it comes down to how you manage your people, how you manage yourself, what are the incentives, you know?

Participant 30 stated that managers may be scared to terminate an individual's employment in case discrimination was claimed and participant 25 spoke about equal opportunity units being perceived as a police force within an organisation.

As stated by participant 24, skilled management solutions to these potential problems may include increased transparency of procedures, improved communication, training or a whole host of other management tools, as suggested by the list in Table 11. All the participants were keen to emphasise that the rules for successful equality practice were not set in stone and that it should be possible to take a flexible and creative approach to each organisation. Management should therefore be open to new ways of doing things. For example, when vacancies arise in an organisation, ask each time whether that post could be filled by a part-time, job-share or flexitime employee. The advice offered by the participants was not to assume that something should not be done simply because it had not been done before.

One participant gave an example of one organisation that had been committed to equal opportunity and staff development for some time. Attrition levels were so low that the creativity of staff had diminished. As staff stayed in their post, the opportunity for promotion within an organisation was reduced and some of the staff left the organisation to progress their career elsewhere. It has been reported that women often leave organisations to progress their career because organisations are poor at promoting women. Organisations should be aware that blocking promotion opportunity may mean losing the best employees regardless of why there is little scope for promotion. This illustrated that low attrition requires just as much management as high attrition. When this type of problem was described to another participant (P30), she offered some creative solutions herself, for example, to offer unpaid career breaks, or to keep the core staff but bring in consultants specific tasks, emphasising again the importance of flexible and creative management.

3.1.8 Top level commitment

Commitment from the top level was cited as an essential element of any equality or diversity programme. Research has shown executive behaviour to be extremely influential organisational and equality climates and cultures through setting priorities (e.g. Schneider et al., 1994; Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000).

Once top level commitment has been secured, it needs to be effectively communicated throughout the organisation. The most common reason given for equal opportunity failing was that the commitment had not filtered through the middle management level properly. Participants stated that all staff should be involved in the process, to be working towards the same aims and suggested that equal opportunity focus groups or task forces be set up to set missions statements and organisational aspirations.

The phenomenon of middle management failing to embrace equality practice has been noted in the literature (for example Liff, 1999; Liff & Dale, 1994; Jewson & Mason, 1986a).

Liff & Aitkenhead (1992) pointed to a case study where an equal opportunities policy was promoted on the grounds of fully utilising the human resource but the managers

remained were not convinced that equality policies or procedures would be effective tools in achieving this.

The managers may have been right. More recent research on managing diversity for example, Prasad et al. (1997) has started to focus on some of the problems associated with equality and diversity initiatives, for example resistance and backlash.

Alternatively, managers may be representing an informal culture of the organisation that conflicts with the organisation's formal stance on equality, or even against their own judgement. For example, Badaracco & Webb documented "young managers receiving explicit instructions from their middle-manager bosses or felt strong organizational pressures to do things that they believed were sleazy, unethical, or sometimes illegal." (Badaracco & Webb, 1995: 8). Presumably not following the recommended practice on equal opportunity would be fairly inconsequential in this type of organisational context?

3.1.9 Long Term Commitment

The commitment must be long-term. Organisational change does not occur overnight and organisations embarking upon a programme of equal opportunity must be aware that it is a long term project. To help sustain the level of interest over a long period of time, participants suggested the programme should include some quick hits to flag up the progress that is being made and to give some visible results. The importance of visibility was also raised in terms of seeing women and minority ethnic employees represented throughout the organisation's hierarchy, as stated by a number of Study One participants.

Often an organisation may only want to change small pieces of their organisational processes or structures but participants stressed that this would be insufficient for policy to make a significant change to the organisational culture and that for an organisation to be working at best practice level, equal opportunity must be embraced by the organisational culture and norms. Translating a commitment into sustainable practice, relies heavily on good communication and consequently communication formed the next theme.

3.1.10 Communication

Change inevitably creates resistance and without clear communication of aims and a genuine commitment to the process, equal opportunity will be hindered by barriers. For example, participant 22 described how equal opportunity training was just seen as time out from employees normal job, rather than something important and therefore had limited ability to create change. This is supported by the literature. Myers (1995) explored the capacity of diversity training and reported how little impact training can have on attitudes, stating that there would be little demonstrable benefit unless it was part of a comprehensive programme. This stressed again the importance of skilled management, so that the need for change and the goals of the change are communicated well, understood and shared by all relevant personnel.

Communication tools suggested by the participants included equal opportunity policy, an equal opportunity newsletter but how those tools are used was considered as important as which tools were used. For example, an equal opportunities policy should be used to communicate the aims to the staff, to define your terms clearly and to help make actions transparent. Equal opportunity programmes will not work if the employees have no confidence in the procedures, so complaints must always be taken seriously. Again this links in with the transparency of strategies and related procedures. Information should be given to staff rather than dictated and appropriate language should be used. Participant 30 remarked upon the dynamic nature of language, meant that the appropriateness of terminology would change with time, emphasising the importance of regular review and evaluation of your equal opportunity activities.

P30: language to me is a dynamic you know and if you described my mother as coloured, she'd probably not even bat an eyelid...if you described me as coloured I'd be very offended.

In summary, equal opportunity cannot be achieved without the accompanying processes and procedures being in place to support it. The type of organisation that has a policy for tribunal purposes only will not succeed in creating an environment of equal opportunity. The focus then turns to why an organisation may want to try to create an environment of equal opportunity.

3.2 Employer Motivations

Employer motivations provided an a priori code for one strand of the research, since it was a topic covered in the discussion guide. Themes falling under the 'employer motivations' key issue were morals and ethics, business case and external pressures. Using morals and ethics as an example, text units formed a pattern of equality being about human rights and a pattern about equal opportunity being the right thing to do evolved.

By way of illustration, the following text units were coded under the 'employer motivation' key issue:

INT: AND YOU'D DO IT ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS RATHER THAN ECONOMIC?

P22: Yeah.

INT: DO YOU SEE THAT THERE IS AN ECONOMIC GAIN TO BE MADE?

P22: Well I should think that if, if the company chooses everybody equal, everybody feels that they can get on with their work and their career and um people are going to join the company they're going to stay there, so that's going to save them a lot of money just in terms of people staying and (..) and because they're working together effectively it's good for the company. But that's the diversity bit, isn't it about people from different backgrounds working together. They're all valued equally, they can do better at problem-solving, they can be a more effective company, if they are all genuinely being valued. Being an optimist, I think yeah it could (laughs) (..) Umm, umm, I believe that it's possible. And, and I want to believe that it's possible.

For example, a paragraph like the one above was coded under lower-level codes (patterns) such as ethics & morals, individual job performance, intention to leave, business case, valuing diversity, effective team working, problem solving & equality unrealistic, for example. From these lower-level nodes, a smaller number of higher-level codes (themes) were created. Some patterns did not build into anything else and were excluded from further analysis whilst other proved very fruitful and ended up with so much data coded under them that they needed to be broken down again into smaller codes. Ethics and morals associated with employer motivations remained a strong theme, suggesting that employers were motivated by equal opportunity being the right thing to do, and this formed the key issue presented in the final results.

This type of qualitative analysis does not rely on a count of how many times particular issues were mentioned, unlike some quasi-statistical analyses such as content analysis. Using QSR Nud.IST® 3.0 to manage the data however meant it was possible to see the number of text units attached to each node and this served to check that a topic raised by only one participant once, for example, had not been overemphasised inappropriately in the analysis process. The software simply helped to manage and hold the data, including the transcripts, written impressions of each interview and memos of possible links, concepts and ideas produced during the analysis process.

The key issue of employer motivation was further broken down into a number of themes and patterns as illustrated in Figure 27.

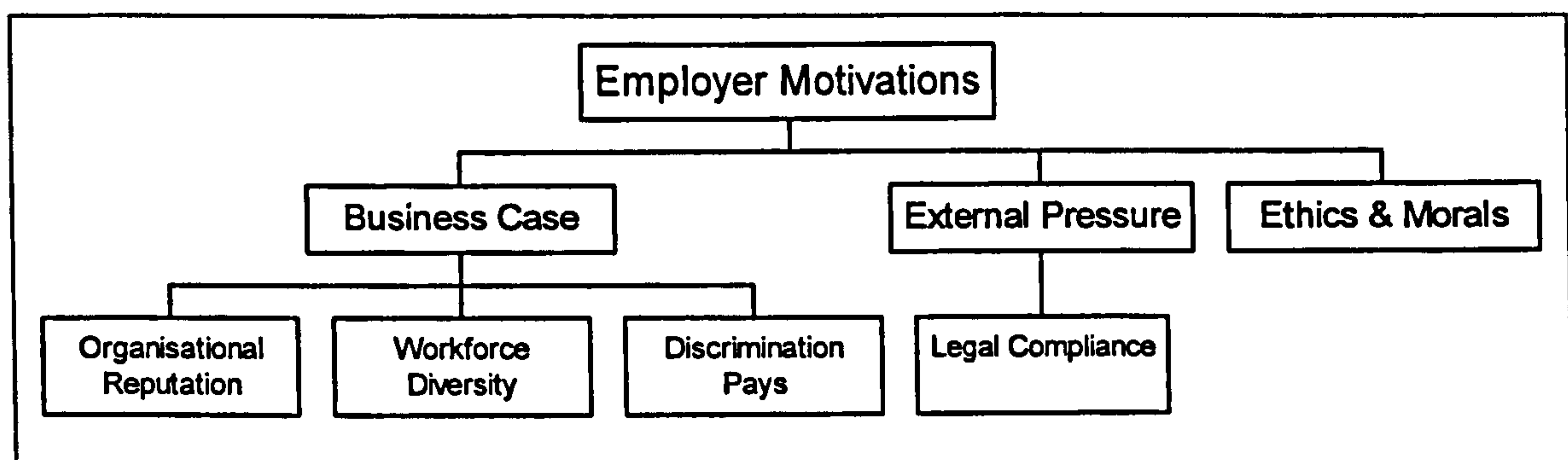


Figure 27: Diagrammatic summary of the employer motivations key issue

3.2.1 Business Case

Two participants thought money financial loss or gain was not the main motivating factor. They indicated that the decision was often based on the type of organisation you wanted to be but for the majority of employers, costs and potential savings were perceived as central to the decision to implement an equal opportunity programme. Participants explained that financial constraints were the most frequent reasons they were given for organisations not investing in equal opportunity. Whilst they were keen to point out it need not be a costly process, they felt that employers had the perception that it would cost them money they could not afford as a business. Participant 21, as an employer, expressed this very concern. His organisation did not have a formal equal opportunity policy or strategy, he simply hired the best person for the job, which was in

the best interests of his organisation. He perceived that introducing a formal equal opportunity measure would detract from his ability to hire the best, as if equal opportunity were diametrically opposed to meritocracy. The outcome of this perception was again that equal opportunity was bad for business and would cost the organisation money that it could not afford.

P21: Well I can't say that I have any involvement at all with equal opportunities because (..) it is an innate part of our company ethos... I don't even know whether we have a policy. It's a non-issue for us and we want it to remain a non-issue. Because we really try to run a meritocracy.

[INT: AND IF YOU DID?]

P21: I think you end up with ... people who haven't got a job on merit. I think the economic consequences are disastrous... we are obliged to reflect legislation in our company policies umm we can't, you know, we can't write policies that are not in conformity with the law but what I'm saying is I think the the the naturalness approach to it all works better than all the (..) dictates or whatever.

On the whole though, participants thought that there was a business case for equal opportunity. The most frequently quoted benefits sprang from the enhanced reputation that an organisation may gain through investing in equal opportunity.

3.2.2 Organisational Reputation

The reputation of an organisation with the public was considered to be a very powerful factor by seven participants. It was perceived to be powerful enough to motivate an organisation to invest in equal opportunity in order to avoid negative publicity through employment tribunal for example. It was also perceived to be powerful enough to increase profits through the enhanced reputation with the public or client base, thereby increasing sales and profits. Promoting a good image of the organisation to the external world was very thought to be very important. Participants also implied however that organisational reputation becomes most powerful when it is lost. This finding is corroborated by Paine (1994) who researched the importance of ethic and organisational integrity and concluded that an organisation's reputation was crucial to its success.

Reputation was also seen as a factor in attracting and maintaining high quality staff. In this thematic pattern, employers were presented as either bad employers or good employers. Equal opportunity was perceived to be a composite element of being a good

employer. Good employers become employers of choice, attracting the best employees, which further enhanced the reputation of the organisation.

This finding also supports the conclusions of Wright et al. (1995) who found that organisational reputation impacted on stock market valuation. Wright et al.'s research however reflected a very American perspective where winning an exemplary affirmative action award was well publicised and well received enough to impact on stock prices. The UK equivalent of affirmative action, positive discrimination, would result in an organisation being taken to court for breaking the law, so it is difficult to see how the beneficial elements of Wright et al.'s findings would translate across the Atlantic. The negative aspects of their argument may translate rather better, namely that announcements of damage awards from the settlement of discrimination lawsuits negatively impacted stock market valuations because an announcement of this nature was associated with an inability to achieve the competitive advantage associated with positive announcements. Wright et al.'s research was based on large US employers. Would a small UK organisation attract the same attention on the stock market? Presumably not, therefore reputation argument based on stock market valuation becomes null and void. Wright et al. presented their results in terms of an ability to attract, retain or lose good quality employees but this explanation, by their own admission, was pure conjecture and it moves the argument back from quantitative evidence to the naïve wish-lists that equality researchers are most familiar with. This one study by Wright et al. is quoted prodigiously by other researchers in the field, suggesting that supporting evidence from other sources is not available, perhaps due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the subject. In any event it is fair to say that there is insufficient research of this type to draw firm conclusions about the contribution of equal opportunity to organisational reputation.

3.2.3 Workforce Diversity

Attracting the best employees may mean that the workforce becomes more diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, age or nationality for example. Participants thought that an increase in workforce diversity may be advantageous to organisation in a number of ways:

- increasing the number of languages spoken and thereby improving communication in an international setting
- increasing the creativity of an organisation by having a wider range of ideas, perspectives, backgrounds and knowledge
- improving customer relations because the workforce is representative of the client base, have a greater understanding of other cultures and therefore improved communication.

Participant 28 put together a very persuasive argument for increased diversity that encompassed the main themes in one section.

P28: we need people that there is an empathy with between the people being consulted and the actual people doing the analysis from inside. Um also, can we approach this problem in a different way? So if you're taking, say for example, people with science backgrounds, they'll look at problems in a different way, a philosophical background, they'll look at it a slightly different way. Um cultural backgrounds (..) have a different mindset about the way that I approach problems. So what you're actually doing is that you're building a flexibility with your problem solving, within your organisation. Now it's not, it doesn't happen overnight, you know. And the odd one or two people here, might not necessarily make that much difference, but what it does do is it gives you a blend and I'm very much of the belief that if you have the right mix, it's better than having a very uniform mix... life isn't like a melting pot, you don't want to make everything the same, it's more like salad, where you actually enjoy the differences within the actual product. So, it's, it's a very (..) it's an interesting concept in that the melting pot, you produces something that's very very uniform. With the salad it can be very very different, different types of salad, different ingredients in the salad, it's still salad! So you know, that that's, I think that's a very good way of understanding how difference can make something better. And it's not that, and it's not about having targets. It's not about saying we will have a quota, we, you know, we want to have X amount of people from this particular background in our organisation. What it's saying is we want the best people in our organisation. And that is paramount. In in in, it's, even within equality you have to have the best people. It's making sure that everything you do to get the best people is fair and objective.

Participant 28's use of metaphor to describe diversity was unusual in this sample but is a regularly-used tool in the American diversity literature. For example, "the melting pot may well have become a cauldron (Nash, 1989), the quilt may have been torn, cracks may have begun to appear in the mosaic, and the rainbow may have become twisted out of shape." (Prasad & Mills, 1997: 5). Perhaps the use of metaphor serves a distinct purpose? For example it emphasises the emotion of the topic but disguises the lack of non-emotional evidence, making an unsupported argument sound stronger.

3.2.4 Discrimination Makes Business Sense

One unsettling and provocative thematic pattern that arose out of the business case key issue was that discrimination makes good business sense. The logic behind this was that because racial discrimination exists, a pool of untapped human resource exists in minority ethnic populations. Employing someone from a minority ethnic background may be advantageous because they may accept lower pay than a white person and they may be a very good worker by virtue of having to have worked harder to overcome discrimination, and therefore represent very good value for money.

P21: I have always believed that it is possible to get dramatically better value for money out of minority groups than umm your average Brit., in so much as if the average minority group member is being treated prejudicially then there are more of them around for people like us to take advantage of. So we get a better person per pound than what we would do if we were in the white person market, or the male market rather than the female market...supply and demand, there's not as much demand. So we can take our pick.

and later in the interview:

P21: the only way we can get people to do work in that warehouse at the salaries we pay over there is to take masses of ethnic minorities.

Apart from the obvious moral issues here, the argument is circular because by employing more people from minority ethnic groups will reduce the available pool of untapped resource, and increase the market forces determining acceptable pay levels. A total of six participants had mentioned the advantages of recruiting from a wider pool of talent but it cannot be concluded that this was what they had in mind.

Only one participant (participant 21) voiced this theme but he was a human resource professional from the only organisation in the sample that had made no particular commitment to equal opportunity and as such he may be representative of a far wider group than the other participants in sample 2, who worked predominantly within the equal opportunity field. A similar thematic pattern came from some Study One participants.

P15: The the Asians and the people who've come across to (..) maybe only just got their work permits or something - they're discriminating in their favour because they're cheaper.

INT: RIGHT, SO THEY'RE PREPARED TO WORK FOR LESS?

P15: Yes.

This finding supports one argument for the business case proposed by Rennie (1993) who suggested that the argument might run thus, “Our business should adopt equal opportunities practice because it will make us more effective competitors in the market place. After all, there is a vast, unexploited reservoir of untapped skills amongst women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, older people, younger people etc. What is more, employees from disadvantaged groups will probably work harder/longer hours/for less pay.” (Rennie, 1993: 56).

Findings such as this may be unpalatable but they may also reveal harsh truths. As Rubenstein (1987) pointed out, if there was a clear-cut economic business case for equal opportunities, every organisation would be doing it.

The fact remains that there are costs to equal opportunity. The business case rests on these costs being exceeded by the savings and gains to be made from spending that money. Participant 27, an HR professional in an organisation committed to equal opportunity, gave an example of increased recruitment costs being balanced by the good publicity gained by the organisation.

P27: It's doubled the recruitment costs because we're advertising at least twice as much but, we're advertising the same vacancy twice, um but we are getting quite a lot of good publicity.

There is a difficult balance to be achieved between investing in equal opportunity and profit-related business needs. Schmidt, Ones & Hunter (1992: 662) concluded that research “cannot resolve the conflict between the competing values of...individual merit, economic efficiency, and international competitiveness on the one hand and economic equality and opportunity for minorities, on the other.”

3.2.5 External Pressure

Themes concerning employer motivation centred around external pressure being the prime motivating factor for organisations investing in equal opportunity. Sometimes pressure was from competitors or the market forces, particularly where the organisation considered its business to be global and wanted to attract and retain a high workforce diversity. Sometimes it was from the parent division of an international organisation

that wanted to standardise its policy and procedures across all of its divisions. External pressure may come from within an organisation, for example three participants mentioned that whole organisations took on an equal opportunity programme because it was a particular interest of one high level manager within an organisation.

Potential employer motivations were captured by participant 26.

P26: Umm, it's a whole range of things. There's often some sort of catalyst. It may not be a crisis particularly... they may be part of a wider group of organisations and there's been a directive going around that you've got to look at something ...but that may not have been prompted by any particular crisis, it was just part of a more general strategy but this operating organisation may not be totally committed to doing this and they don't know why they're doing it. Umm it may be an American organisation who have had a directive from the States that sort of thing....It may be something like they've had a nasty case which has cost them lots of money, or got them a lot of bad publicity, that tends to kick them into action. OCCASIONALLY, occasionally, it's people who are...being quite strategic about HR and um the people resource, often linked with perhaps some sort of organisational change umm and they are being forward thinking but I'd say that's probably less common, less common. It tends to be more, there has to be a catalyst to do it and it could be anything, you know. It may just be, I mean it could actually be that um you've had a change of person come in and they just want to do something to show that they do something, and they picked on this because nothing's been done about it in this organisation in the past and they did in their last organisation and it was a great success so they're going to get lots of brownie points! You know, it could be a whole host of things. And whether or not they actually tell us what the reason is is another matter.

When an external source has instigated the involvement, the operating organisation must be clear about why they want an equal opportunity programme. Participants stated that if the goals are not known and shared, the programme was unlikely to succeed as it would not be cascaded through the organisation.

3.2.6 Legal Compliance

Lynch (1994) suggested that diversity management and training has now become viewed as protection against litigation because it demonstrates in a tribunal situation that the organisation has made every reasonable effort to ensure that discrimination does not occur. Whether or not the organisational culture and climate are supportive of equality or diversity initiatives, a formal and public commitment, demonstrated through the hiring of diversity / equality consultants provides a level of defence in a legal contest. Although Lynch was writing about the American situation, in the UK, much of the business case is presented in terms of how much money it will cost you if you are

caught not complying. Even Rubenstein (1987), who scoffed at the existence of a business case, concluded that employers would continue to discriminate until it cost them more to discriminate than not. This trend, to use fear of litigation as the motivating force behind diversity training, was also documented by Lynch who concluded saw the logical conclusion of this path as being employers only “buying only as much protection as they think they need” (Lynch, 1994: 36) rather than bringing in expertise to try to achieve genuine, long-term organisational change.

The side of the business case that equality practitioners are keen to promote involves the positive elements and of proactively building equal opportunity into the organisation’s mainstream. Employers do not always share this enthusiasm. The business case for employers may mean simply the avoidance of costly employment tribunals, an insurance policy. Many participants thought that organisations were motivated by the need to operate within their legal obligations, rather than adopting equal opportunity for strategic reasons. The avoidance of litigation was cited as a very powerful motivator, particularly as awards at tribunal can reach substantial amounts. Organisations that have lost a case at employment tribunal are also frequently required to change their procedures and are referred to, or seek help from, the equality agencies (EOC, CRE, REC). Even without a case reaching an employment tribunal, organisations may have been subject to negative publicity from a past experience and invest in equal opportunity to avoid repeating the experience.

INT: IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR MOTIVATION FOR PEOPLE TO APPROACH YOU?

P29: Yes, a number of reasons, one maybe they have been found guilty of racial discrimination at an industrial tribunal, um. Another reason may be they just want to take forward race equality, or as a wider, equal opportunities programme umm, I mean those are the two reasons, either they generally want to do it and haven't done anything before, or they've been sort of cajoled into doing it. One of the reasons for that is that they've been through an IT process or been warned if they don't do something, they will do.

INT: SO THE PEOPLE THAT COME OF THEIR OWN VOLITION, ARE THEY DOING IT TO AVOID POSSIBLE LITIGATION OR I.T. IN THE FUTURE OR ARE THEY DOING IT OUT OF THE GOODNESS OF THEIR HEARTS?

P29: You can never be sure but it's a mixture of both.

Participants reported that some employers thought an equal opportunity policy would act as a defence if an employee brought a claim against them.

P28: I just think that it's an issue that will raise it's head and if you're not prepared for it, you can be in bigger trouble. For example if that company... said we've never had an I.T. you know, what happens if you do get one? You'll lose! Because you've got nothing in place ... it's as simple as that!... think of it as an insurance policy. You don't have to do much with it. Just have it there.

The implication here is that an organisation will not be committed to equality but will just have a policy so that it looks as if they are working within the legal requirements. In this way a policy may be used as a minimum measure and replaces honest discussion and commitment. One participant, an independent consultant, reported that she felt a number of organisations hired her to provide equal opportunity training for their employees in order to shift the responsibility for equal opportunity away from them as employers and onto individual employees.

P22: Um, I mean this is just my interpretation (..) and I may be wrong but I get the feeling from the way it is approached that this is the central point. I think it's about shifting blame off corporate to individuals.

INT: YEAH? WHAT TICK THE BOX TO SAY I'VE DONE THE TRAINING?

P22: Yeah. So that whatever racist remarks are made or whatever happens, they can say that it's not their fault because they've trained their employees and shifted the responsibility away from them.

Whilst these examples do not portray the ideal relationship between employers and equal opportunity, they do motivate employers to be interested. Another participant remarked that the reason why an employer got involved with equal opportunity was irrelevant because change would occur as a result of that involvement. As far as the business case is concerned, it seems to illustrate that employers may reap some benefits from equal opportunity without any real commitment to the process. Obviously this is not the ethical ideal but it does reflect the pure profit and loss approach of many organisations.

This supported the findings of Coussey (1995) who conducted a survey looking at the equal opportunity practice of employers. She reported that employers who were actively involved in equal opportunities were involved because of external influences, such as tribunal decisions, or because it was a requirement to tender for government contracts.

Whatever the motivation for employers, the provision of training itself may be fraught with difficulties. For example, ineffective training may help create a white male

backlash, or unrealistically raise the expectations of women and minority ethnic employees (e.g. Caudron, 1993). It is a commonly documented problem that EO is seen as the domain of women and minority ethnic employees or that straight, white men may feel threatened, or feel that the issue is presented as if they are the problem, regardless of their own personal stance on EO matters. (e.g. Caudron, 1993; Karp & Sutton, 1993; Jacques, 1997).

3.2.7 Ethics & Morals

On the idealistic front, one theme common to many of the participants was that employers may be motivated to invest in equal opportunity simply because it was the principled course of action.

P23: There are people who genuinely believe from an ethical and moral point of view that equality of opportunity, valuing of differences, whatever label we put on it, IS the right thing to do. There is no question about it.

The cynics in the sample mentioned that good ethics were rather fashionable within business currently and that the image of a caring company would do their profits no harm. Other spoke in terms of the values of an organisation, where equal opportunity would be a proactive choice and an essential element of the organisation's culture or strategy.

Chapter 9

Qualitative Research Conclusions

Equal opportunity for the practitioners in Study Two and the employees in Study One was perceived as an issue concerning fairness, respect, human rights and social justice, not profit. There are organisational benefits to be made, primarily through enhancing the reputation of an organisation with its customers, clients and staff. There are also costs to implementing an equality programme, for example increased recruitment costs. A successful equality programme requires good communication channels and skilled managers to make it work which may mean increased training costs. If an organisation has invested in equal opportunity purely to make a profit, they may be disappointed. A successful equality programme must be underpinned by an organisational culture and set of values that are based on human rights and fairness, not a profit motive.

For those organisations that have no interest in equality, we should expect to see discrimination continuing until such time as it costs employers more to discriminate than it does to not discriminate, as Rubenstein (1987) suggested. Punitive legislative measures may not be the solution however because if an organisation invests in equal opportunity only to avoid the costs of potential litigation, the underlying motive is still profit rather than fairness. Ten years later, Usha Prashar CBE speaking for the Wainwright Trust in 1997 (Wainwright Trust, 1997: 3) outlined the limitations of an approach based on legal compliance, saying that “legislation was intended to be but one part of a comprehensive strategy for tackling disadvantage.”

Perhaps then, it is worth continuing to promote equal opportunity and management of diversity on the business case, even if the benefits are not always tangible. It does make sense that employees prefer to work in a caring organisation and therefore may stay longer, or be more committed to an organisation that treats its employees fairly than one which shows no concern for its employees. It is an issue that depends on the type of organisation that you want to be, as stated by Participant 25.

P25: at the end of the day it isn't just an issue about the money that it may make you or the money that it may save you, it's actually an issue about the type of organisation that you want to have...if you want to be a cost-cutting, low-cost operated, doesn't really give much concern for people-type issues, then that's fine....this approach isn't for you but if you actually have values, and ... something like respect for peoplethat may or may not bother them but it should bother them because it's actually respect for individuals, that's a part of their values.

For the business case benefits that rely on increased job satisfaction as their base, (increased productivity, increased organisational commitment and reduced turnover for example) organisations may get stuck in a circular argument because as the organisation increases the equal opportunity activity so the employee expectation is raised. That raised expectation means that the organisation will have to continue improving the level of equal opportunity to maintain the same level of employee satisfaction.

Equal opportunity in the workplace is not easy to achieve. Those organisations that have equal opportunity measures in place create employees who may be more knowledgeable and therefore more critical of their employers as their expectations are increased. In organisations where employees have no expectations regarding equal opportunity, there is lower awareness of the issues and problems may go unnoticed. Although in theory participants supported organisations which had some equal opportunity measures over those that had none, the participants' comments showed that organisations with some EO measures in place may be judged negatively for getting things wrong rather than positively for trying to change the working environment. The risk of employees being more critical because of the organisation's high profile stance on equal opportunity must be worth taking.

Chapter 10

Study Three Overview

Studies One and Two explored the variables associated with equality of opportunity in the workplace for a sample of UK employees and a sample of equality practitioners. The results suggested that both groups perceived equal opportunity and a general sense of fairness as being associated with the job attitude outcome variables suggested by the business case for equal opportunity.

Study Three explored the possibility of quantitatively assessing some organisational and individual factors associated with the business case for equality of opportunity identified in studies one and two and the literature. Specifically Study Three hypothesised that the self-reported job attitude outcome variables of organisational commitment, job satisfaction, intention to leave and perceived workgroup effectiveness were associated with perceived equality climate. Further it was hypothesised that the association between job attitude outcome variables and equality climate may be moderated an individual difference factor, equity sensitivity.

A questionnaire, the Social Atmosphere at Work Survey, was constructed to measure the range of variables tested. One thousand, seven hundred and five of these questionnaires were distributed to employees across two major commercial organisations in Britain; one the headquarters of a high street retailer, the second the electrical goods retail division of a major utilities company.

Regression and discriminant function analyses of the questionnaire data suggested that perceived equality climate was associated with the self-reported job attitude outcome variables of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, workgroup performance and intention to leave. The equality climate measure comprised measures of both equal opportunity climate and organisational egalitarianism. Analysing equality climate as an entity revealed significant association with the outcome variables. Analysing both

equal opportunity and organisational egalitarianism elements independently also revealed significant association with the outcome variables however the association was stronger for organisational egalitarianism than for equal opportunity climate.

The individual difference factor of equity sensitivity did not significantly moderate any of the relationships between equality climate variables and job attitude outcome variables.

Chapter 11

Study Three Introduction

1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

Studies one and two revealed a number of variables to be associated with the business case for equal opportunity, including individual job attitude variables such as job satisfaction and intention to leave. Results also indicated that participants thought they would feel more committed to an organisation that they felt treated them fairly and where they felt valued. The next avenue to explore was whether participants describing their feelings towards equal opportunity and general fairness and their employers would translate into a measurable phenomena that may provide some hard evidence for the business case.

There have been various calls in the literature for further examination of the business case variables, for example, James et al. (1994) suggested that perceptions of organisational fairness, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover were all worthy of further examination as outcomes of discrimination and prejudice. Cox & Smolinski (1994) suggested that research had not kept up with practice and called for research to validate useful measurements in the field of diversity management.

In order to explore this further, a quantitative study was planned with an aim of measuring perceived organisational climate for equality and to compare this measure against a number of job attitude measures.

A number of approaches could have been taken to this final stage of the research, so a trawl of the literature was carried out to ascertain the most appropriate research methodology and theoretical framework for the study.

The first question to address was that of how organisational climate for equality may be measured. For example, what is meant by organisational climate? Are we measuring the formal equal opportunity climate or the informal group norms, the culture of an organisation? Equality climate may mean different things to different people. If defined in terms of discrimination, there may be differences between perceived and actual discrimination (e.g. James et al., 1994).

1.1 Perceptions of organisational climate

Organisational climate generally refers to perceptions of the working environment and how those perceptions influence employee attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Schneider & Reichers, 1993; Kossek & Zonia, 1993). This study was concerned with a particular aspect of the organisational climate, that of the perceived level of equal opportunity. There has been some research to suggest that the perception of equal opportunity is a distinct element of organisational climate (e.g. Kossek & Zonia, 1993). It seems likely that more than one organisational climate exists in each organisation. Kossek & Zonia (1993) for example, used the term 'diversity climate' to describe one among a number of organisational climates, that refers to a general perception of the importance that an employer places on diversity and a specific attitude towards minority ethnic and women employees. Landis, Dansby & Tallarigo (1996) argued specifically that perceptual climate measures have an important role in management workforce diversity. This is interesting because Study One participants had in general not considered the level of equal opportunity in their workplace environment unless they had experience of a violation of their rights or expectations. Study Two participants, the "expert" population, however had automatically assumed that equal opportunity was an integral, important and distinct element of organisational climate.

Perceptual measures are frequently used in organisational research (Landis et al. 1996). The question here was which measure would be most appropriate to the research question. Landis et al. (1996: 245) assumed that perceptions of "organizational climate include social perceptions...as well as perceptions of organizational characteristics" and this prescriptive usage has been adopted in this project. Further their definitions of

'organisational climate' (behaviour-centred) as opposed to 'organisational culture' (value-centred) suit the purposes of this research and have accordingly been adopted.

1.1.1 Organisational Climate & Culture

Organisational climates and cultures are distinct concepts but related terms (Moran & Volkwein, 1992). The two terms are sometimes confused or used as interchangeable terms but generally culture is understood as the underlying ethos of an organisation, which then influences a more dynamic organisational climate. Schneider et al. (1994) described climate as one aspect of culture whilst Rose (1988) suggested that organisations have multiple cultures. Cassell & Walsh (1997: 224) described culture as "the most pervasive source of ongoing discriminatory attitudes and behaviour" whilst acknowledging that culture also represents one of the most difficult aspects of organisational change. Cockburn (1991) provided an excellent extended discussion on the gendered culture of organisations from a feminist perspective and would be recommended reading for those interested in the formation and perpetuation of organisational cultures. Changing attitudes and culture was beyond the scope of this project however and Study Three focused on exploring the influence that the perception of an equal opportunity climate may have on job attitude variables.

The definition of organisational climate employed in this instance follows the lines of that described by Schneider et al. (1994: 18), who described climate in terms of "the atmosphere that employees perceive is created in their organisations by practices, procedures, and rewards." The prime concern for this stage of the research project was to find a suitable measure of equal opportunity climate.

1.2 Measures of organisational climate

There are a number of instruments available for measuring perceived organisational climate. For example, Wallach (1983) developed the Organizational Culture Index (OCI). Whilst this measure was not designed specifically to explore the perception of equal opportunity in the workplace, Koberg & Hood (1991) used it to measure cultural pluralism, a similar concept to cultural diversity. They were particularly interested in whether the perception of organisational culture differed on hierarchical lines and found

that top level managers (partners) perceived the culture of their organisation as significantly more innovative and supportive than did individuals at lower hierarchical levels. Measuring, as this instrument did, an organisation's bureaucracy, innovation and support however does not tackle the issue of perceived equal opportunity adequately and was not considered a suitable measure.

Other potential instruments included Hatfield, Utne & Troupmann's (1979) global measure of equity-inequity but equity and equality, although related, are not the same thing. Similarly Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) exchange ideology questionnaire measured a similar concept but was very equity theory based and did not deal directly with the type of behaviour that constituted an environment of equal opportunity, as described by the participants in Studies One and Two.

There were also a number of instruments developed that measured aspects of racial diversity and discrimination. For example, the Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (PADAA) Instrument developed by Stanley (1996) which measured the degree to which an individual was comfortable with, appreciated, valued and implemented cultural diversity and the USPI-ESPI model (Soriano & Ramirez, 1991) which looked at the social power and influence status of in/equitable work environments and ethnicity. These instruments however were designed to measure very specific elements that were not relevant to this study.

Beere et al. (1984) developed the Sex-Role Egalitarianism Scale (SRES), which again sounded promising, but the instrument was designed to measure attitudes toward sex equality only and was not appropriate to the research question here. Other possibilities included a survey developed by Kossek & Zonia (1993). It was designed to measure attitudes towards diversity at a university and developed at the request of the university's administration. Elements of the survey were relevant but the university focus and the language used were not suitable. For example, they included sections entitled 'equality of department support of racioethnic minorities'. It was considered that many employees would simply not understand what was being asked. The survey was designed for an American university where a diversity programme was in place, not UK commercial organisations where, although there may be a formal equal opportunity policy in place, it is unlikely to carry the same emphasis or salience that USA diversity

programmes carry. The items also relied on having a diverse workforce to refer to and it was not known whether this would be the case with the sample for Study Three.

The next group of potential instruments were more directly related to this study and included Nancy Green's (1995) Perception of Racism Scale, James, Lovato & Cropanzano's (1994) Workplace Prejudice / Discrimination Inventory (WPDI), Hooper et al.'s (1989) Equal Opportunity Measure, Cox's (1993) Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity (IMCD) and Landis, Fisher & Dansby's (1988) Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS).

Most of these instruments had a heavy emphasis on racism however and racism is not the only indicator of an equal opportunity climate. For example, James et al.'s (1994) WPDI used only minority ethnic employees and there were a total of 16 items producing one scale measuring perceived racial prejudice. The sample size was small (89) and participants were paid to complete the inventory. For these reasons, the WPDI was not considered appropriate for this study.

As illustrated by the participants in Study One and Study Two, equal opportunity encompassed elements of ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and simply whether your face fits the organisation's image. Many of the scales asked directly about discrimination due to ethnicity, which required an understanding and awareness of discrimination in the workplace that Study 1 showed did not necessarily exist for employees generally. Landis et al.'s (1988) MEOCS was the only measure that asked about specific example behaviours and loaded these questions onto scales measuring particular types of discrimination, therefore not requiring the participants to assess the level or type of discrimination occurring themselves. This may not be necessary in US but, from Study One results, appeared to be needed with a UK sample.

Additionally, most of these scales lacked extensive validation. James et al.'s (1994) inventory for example was an initial validation of their scale. By their own admission, "one difficulty with systematically exploring the causes and consequences of perceptions of racial prejudice and discrimination in the workplace is the lack of a validated inventory for accurately assessing them" (James et al., 1994: 1573). It seemed therefore that it had been recognised by other researchers that there is a lack of validated

measurement tools, however it seemed that rather than provide further validation for existing tools, to build up the case for a valid tool, each individual research project / set of authors constructed a new tool, often for the purposes of an academic degree and no further validation was sought past their academic research, e.g. Green's perceptions of racism scale. Hooper's measure seemed potentially suitable for the purposes of this study in that it was called an 'equal opportunity measure'. On closer inspection, it was actually designed to measure the ecological dissonance created by sexual harassment on US college campuses. As such, its usage was very prescriptive and tailoring it for a population of employees in the UK would have entailed more of a re-write than a slight alteration. Additionally it was not a robustly constructed or well-validated instrument. MEOCS had undergone extensive testing, the authors actively encouraged cross-cultural usage and this instrument was chosen as the most appropriate for this project.

Cox's (1993) Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity (IMCD) provided a very interesting possibility in terms of measurement tools to use for this study. It focused primarily on gender and ethnicity and examined three levels of cultural diversity: individual, group/intergroup and organisational factors. Measured diversity climate was then related to individual career outcomes, which overlapped somewhat with the job attitudes measured in this study. Cox also made the point that the business case relied on a tiered process, i.e. diversity climate affects individual career outcomes which in turn related to organisational effectiveness. Further Cox broke organisational effectiveness down into first level factors (e.g. labour turnover) and second level factors (e.g. profit levels). Cox's model seemed to provide a very comprehensive model for measuring diversity climate and its effect and this was the reason that it was not considered the most suitable for this research.

The model required many types of measurement from participating organisations, which inevitably creates difficulties in an applied commercial setting. Using Cox's model would have required organisations to provide a whole host of information about their organisational structure, policy conditions, turnover levels etc. Many organisations simply do not monitor their own organisation stringently enough to provide relevant data, and those that do may consider it commercially sensitive. One major aspect of the business case for equal opportunities is that business cannot afford to get it wrong.

Providing a wide range of information of the type required by Cox's model may be opening the organisation up to accusations of bad practice and understandably, the vast majority of commercial organisations would be unwilling to put themselves through this type of process. Without the benefit of inside contacts and access to sensitive Human Resource information, Cox's model was considered impractical for the purposes of this study. Additionally, the terminology was terribly jargonistic and it was considered, as a result of Study One findings that participants would not generally understand concepts such as 'structural' and 'social integration' and the 'acculturation process'. It was decided not to use Cox's model.

Subsequent to this research being carried out, Hicks-Clarke & Iles (2000: 324) published a paper describing a conceptual model of a "positive climate for diversity" (PCFD), which referred to "the degree to which there is an organisational climate in which human resource diversity is valued and in which employees from diverse backgrounds feel welcomed and included." Hicks-Clarke & Iles' (2000) work built on the work of Kossek & Zonia (1993). Kossek and Zonia's research suggested that a number of organisational and biographic variables moderated the perception of diversity climate. A major criticism of their research was that the sample was taken from only one organisation, a US university, and the participants were academic staff, i.e. "a highly qualified and specific set of respondents" (Hicks & Clarke 2000: 327). Hicks-Clarke & Iles (2000: 327) built on their work by "exploring individual outcomes of diversity climates in two UK sectors, retail and health, using a managerial sample." Their model included indicators of a positive climate for diversity including job attitude variables and, had this model been available at the time the research was conducted, it may have been considered appropriate.

Many of these instruments examined at the point of the research design had undergone little validation. The exception to these criticisms was the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey, which had been extensively validated and included multiple aspects of an equal opportunity climate and this was chosen as the most appropriate instrument for this research project.

1.2.1 Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS)

The MEOCS was developed by Landis, Fisher & Dansby (1988) at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) in Florida as an aid to commanders from all Services in improving their equal opportunity and organisational climates. Equal opportunity climate is considered an essential element of organisational effectiveness for the US military and the MEOCS has been extensively validated and widely employed.

It measures the organisational climate, which they defined as, “the expectation by individuals that opportunities, responsibilities, and rewards will be accorded on the basis of a person’s abilities, efforts, and contributions, and not on race, colour, sex, religion, or national origin. It is to be emphasized that this definition involves the individual’s perceptions and may or may not be based on the actual witnessing of behavior.” (Landis, Fisher & Dansby, 1988: 488). The relationship between equal opportunity climate, organisational efficiency and the MEOCS is represented diagrammatically at Figure 28.

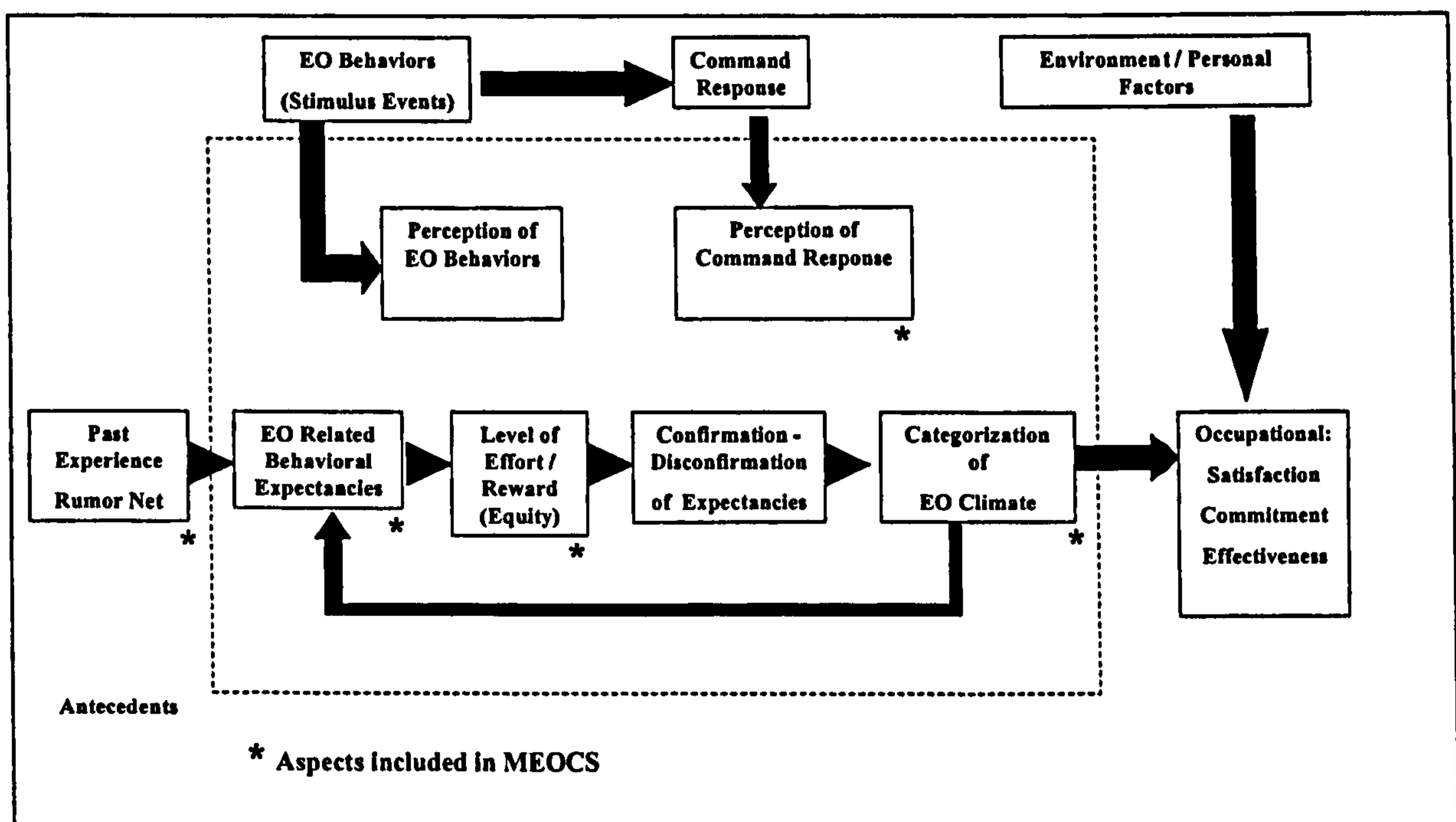


Figure 28: Landis-Fisher model of EO climate and readiness (1987)

This model emphasised that the instrument was designed to measure the perceptions of equal opportunity climate rather than a physical condition of equal opportunity, which fitted well with the qualitative research conducted in Studies One and Two.

1.2.2 Construction of the MEOCS

In addition to equal opportunity climate, MEOCS measures organisational effectiveness. The most recent version of the survey consisted of fifty behaviours that required an estimate of occurrence over a fixed time period; twenty-seven attitude statements in Likert-scale format; measures of organisational commitment (using a scale based on Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, re-written to conform to a military context), job satisfaction (using a measure drawn from the Short's, 1985, Organizational Assessment Package), perceived work-group effectiveness; and several demographic questions.

Further versions of the instrument have also been developed for use with specific populations, including one for the military's civilian population, the Equal Employment Opportunity Climate (EEOC) and the Small Units Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (SUEOCS) for units of less than fifty people. The EEOC expanded the MEOCS scales to include items tapping sexist behaviour, age discrimination, sexual harassment, religious discrimination and discrimination against the disabled. The SUEOCS employed attitudinal items rather than perceptual items to account for situations where there may be little or no ethnic or gender diversity. The authors suggested that, although the MEOCS models the process in a military setting, it could just as easily be used in other settings, including commercial organisations.

Dansby & Landis (1991: 392) reported that the perception of equal opportunity behaviours were "related to the level of effort the individual expends in order to obtain some kind of reward". This implied that they drew on equity theory in their formulation of an equal opportunity climate measure in that their definition refers to the input-output relationship that is at the core of equity & expectancy theory.

1.3 Individual differences in perception

According to Study One results, equal opportunity includes a strong element of fairness, of egalitarianism. Is the relationship between the employer and the employee perceived to be a fair one, an equitable one? As described in the introduction (Chapter 1), equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) may be used to predict behavioural responses to situations of over-reward or under-reward, i.e. inequitable situations. If, as the results from Studies One and Two indicated, fairness was a composite element of equal opportunity, then the perception of equity may be related to the perception of equal opportunity. Most likely, equal opportunity contributes to the perception of equity.

The Landis-Fisher model shown in Figure 28 set the “Environment/Personal factors” as something distinct from the rest of the model but that element could be looked at in terms of the situational versus dispositional theories, where an individual’s job satisfaction is viewed as in/dependent from the actual work environment.

The research was also concerned with the possibility of the organisational climate having no impact on outcome variables such as job satisfaction because job satisfaction is a function of a stable personality trait, as suggested by Staw (1986). “Recently, the argument has been made that self-reports of negative organizational experiences and outcomes, such as high levels of job stress and job dissatisfaction, may be due to general dispositional negative affectivity rather than genuine experiences or true domain-specific reactions (Watson, Pennebaker & Folger, 1986). That is, it is claimed that some individuals are simply predisposed to unhappiness and complaints about whatever organizational elements they are asked about. If this occurs with our prejudice / discrimination inventory, we might expect some individuals to indicate high levels of experienced workplace prejudice / discrimination regardless of the levels they have been exposed to in their organizations. To assess this, we included a measure of dispositional expressivity, that is, individual’s inclination to strongly experience and forcefully express reactions to the social environment. Assuming validity of our inventory, prejudice / discrimination scores should be uncorrelated with expressiveness.” (James et al., 1994: 1579).

In that equity and equality are related concepts, it was deemed appropriate to further explore an individual difference relevant to the perception of equity; 'equity sensitivity'.

1.3.1 Equity Sensitivity

Equity in organisational contexts is normally interpreted in terms of the relationship between employee effort or performance and pay reward. Under equity theory, employees contributing more to the organisation receive greater rewards (e.g. Mowday, 1996). Discrimination statistics however show that pay is not equitable for many women, or that effort is not rewarded equitably if your skin is the wrong colour. Could equity sensitivity therefore be used to explain some of the discrimination? Or could it moderate perceptions of how equitable the workplace is?

Equity sensitivity is a theory concerning individual difference in equity perception. In an organisational context, equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) was used to explain how individuals evaluated their relationships with other, for example their employers by assessing the ratio of their input to the relationship with the outcome of a comparable other. The comparable other may take the form of a colleague, a peer external to the organisation, industry standards or some kind of internal standard. If the perceived input is not balanced by the perceived outcome, inequity exists. Equity theory predicted that this inequity caused tension that motivated the individual to take action to restore the balance of the input/outcome ratio. In this manner equity theory may be used to explain employee behaviour. For example, it could be used to explain intention to leave an organisation as an action taken to correct the over/under-reward imbalance.

As suggested in Chapter 1 however, the 'one size fits all' approach of equity theory was too restrictive and did not allow for any measure of individual difference. These types of criticism led new researchers to try to improve the predictive value of equity theory. Huseman, Hatfield & Miles (1985) devised a conceptual framework identifying three types of individuals who differed in their response to inequitable situations:

- 1 Benevolents
- 2 Equity Sensitives

3 Entitleds.

According to Miles, Hatfield and Huseman (1994: 585) the three groups were originally defined as groups which varied in their “desire for outcomes (e.g. pay) in a relationship.”

In an outcome/reward situation, it was predicted that individuals who were equity sensitive would adhere to the predictions of equity theory, individuals classified as benevolent would prefer to be rewarded less than a comparable other whereas individuals classified as entitled would prefer to be rewarded more than a comparable other.

Returning to an example in an organisational setting, King & Miles (1994) correlated ESI scores with the work-related variables of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, turnover intention and perceived justice in the distribution of pay and other outcomes. It may also be framed in terms of job satisfaction. As illustrated in Figure 29, equity sensitive individuals experience highest job satisfaction when their reward level is equitable. Entitled individuals experience greatest job satisfaction in situations of over-reward, for example because they feel they have done well out of the deal. Benevolent individuals experience greatest satisfaction in a situation of under-reward because they perceive they have made a good contribution to the relationship.

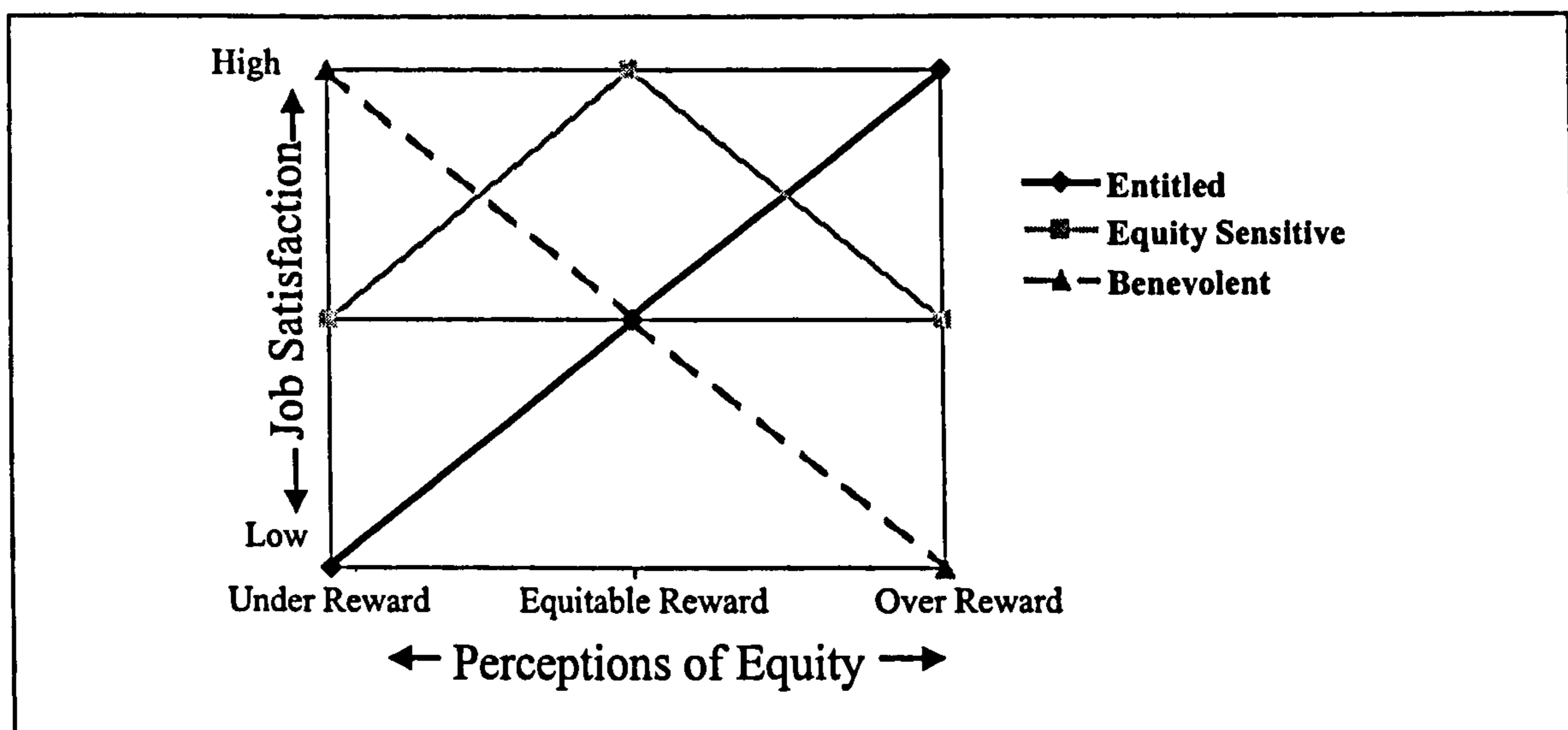


Figure 29: Predictions of job satisfaction for conditions of sensitivity to equity

Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI)

King et al. (1993) & King & Hinson (1994) recast the benevolent category in terms of tolerance rather than a preference for under-reward. Individuals high in entitlement appear to be “relatively intolerant of under-reward, relatively tolerant of over-reward, and more attuned to the receipt of rewards while having relatively little regard for the input component of the equity exchange. For these individuals, satisfaction and receipt of rewards are positively and linearly related.” (King & Hinson, 1994: 607).

Equity sensitivity is measured with the Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI): a five-item forced-distribution scale developed by Huseman et al. (1985) that identifies an individual’s “desire for outcomes versus inputs in a general work situations. The subject has a choice of two responses for each item, one representing a benevolent response and the other, an entitled response. Subjects show their agreement or disagreement with each response by distributing 10 points between the two statements. The instrument is based on the premise that benevolents will allocate more of their 10 points to the benevolent statement than to the entitled statement; that entitleds will allocate more of their 10 points to the entitled statement than to the benevolent statement; and that equity sensitives will allocate their 10 points equally between the benevolent and entitled statements.” (King, Miles & Day, 1993: 304).

Mason & Mudrack (1997) used equity sensitivity in a study about the personal variables associated with “corporate social responsibility” (CSR). Findings suggested that the equity sensitivity category of “entitled” was linked with higher levels of Machiavellianism and social responsibility traditionalism (i.e. that managers should only consider economic, technical and legal issues: direct profit issues, to the exclusion on any social responsibility issues). The authors believed that examining the personal variables associated with CSR was novel. This research project did not aim to add anything to this particular avenue of enquiry but it is useful to note that equity sensitivity as a stable personal variable has been used across a number of lines of psychological enquiry.

It is interesting to note the use of equity sensitivity as a component of attitudes to ethics in organisations. Firstly, because it establishes the ESI as a useful, accepted and

validated tool and secondly because the early findings of this research project suggested that individuals' attitudes to ethically related behaviour in organisations was entirely related to their working environment rather than their personality traits.

Konovsky & Organ (1996: 253) looked at the dispositional factors of 'agreeableness', 'conscientiousness', and 'equity sensitivity' could account for the relationship between contextual work attitudes and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB): the "contributions not contractually rewarded nor practicably enforceable by supervision or a job description" but found that equity sensitivity did not affect OCB, although fairness and satisfaction had independent effects on OCB, with fairness a better predictor of OCB than job satisfaction. One explanation for this finding is that the perception of fairness underlies much of the variance in job satisfaction measures (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994), which is further corroborated by the qualitative findings of Study One and Study Two.

O'Neill & Mone (1998) examined how equity sensitivity could moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction, self-efficacy and organisational commitment, and self-efficacy and intention to leave. Although they concluded that equity sensitivity did not have a moderating effect on any of these relationships, it is possible that using self-efficacy as a middle step between the perceived organisational environment and job attitudes was unnecessary. The business case for equality proposes a direct link between organisational environment and job attitudes. It is therefore possible that equity sensitivity may operate as a moderator in this more direct relationship despite having no significant effect on self-efficacy.

Equity sensitivity has been shown to be a predictor of a number of individual preferences including level of inputs in a work relationship, the outcome/input ratio in a work relationship and distribution preferences (Miles et al., 1989; King et al., 1993). It has also proven useful in predicting both satisfaction with outcomes irrespective of reward condition and individuals' preference for different organizational outcomes.

It would seem logical that an individual difference in how people perceive the level of equity afforded them in an organisational context may influence individual job attitudes even though this does not appear to have been borne out by previous research attempts.

But the possibility that equity sensitivity moderates job attitudes is an important one. If the business relies on a direct relationship between job attitudes and organisational environment, then there are implications for testing potential employees for equity sensitivity in commercial organisations. A radical proposition admittedly but a logical outcome of finding consistent individual differences in a business world driven by profit, not ethics.

Therefore it was decided to include equity sensitivity in this stage of the research project, in order to explore precisely this question: could equity sensitivity moderate the job attitude components of the business case for equality of opportunity?

1.3.2 Fairness

According to Study One results, equal opportunity includes a strong element of fairness, of egalitarianism. Is the relationship between the employer and the employee perceived to be a fair one, an equitable one? As described in the introduction (Chapter 1), equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965) may be used to predict behavioural responses to situations of over-reward or under-reward, i.e. inequitable situations. If, as the results from Studies One and Two indicated, fairness is a composite element of equal opportunity, then the perception of equity may be related to the perception of equal opportunity. Most likely, equal opportunity contributes to the perception of equity.

The concept of fairness has been translated into egalitarianism for the purposes of this research project because the participants qualitatively presented their notions of fairness in terms of egalitarianism. Egalitarianism is a well established concept, often used in organisational research and successfully measured by Payne & Pheysey's (1971) egalitarianism scale.

1.4 Business Case Job Attitude Variables

Job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to leave were all identified in Studies One and Two 2 as outcome variables potentially affected by the perceived equality climate of an organisation. There was inconclusive evidence concerning perceived performance levels, with some participants believing that they worked hard

regardless of their working environment and others believing that they would work harder for an organisation that demonstrated its commitment to the employee.

The relationship between job satisfaction and job performance is not a clear cut conclusion despite much research in this field. Iaffaldano & Muchinsky (1985) meta-analysis found low correlations for example, but the relationship between satisfaction and performance is intuitively plausible and research has continued in search of evidence of stronger correlations between satisfaction and performance (e.g. Organ, 1988).

Other research in this field contended that “individual outcomes posited to be affected by diversity climate include organisational commitment, job satisfaction, career planning behaviour, career commitment, career satisfaction, career future satisfaction, and satisfaction with manager. These impacts are also hypothesised to be moderated by a variety of variables, such as gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, care responsibilities, ability/disability and management level.” (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000: 329).

This melting pot of inter-related variables explains in part why this area is such a difficult one to research. This study to unravel some of the inter-related variables and critically assess the relationships between equality variables and job attitude outcome variables that may impact on the business case.

1.5 Study Three Business Case Variables

Variables included in the analysis conducted in Study Three were chosen on the basis of the qualitative findings from Studies One and Two and from previous research in this area. Equality variables included were:

- perceived equal opportunity climate
- organisational fairness / egalitarianism
- equity sensitivity

Business case outcome variables included were:

- organisational commitment

- **job satisfaction**
- **perceived group performance**
- **intention to leave**

The method used to analyse these relationships is described in Chapter 12.

Chapter 12

Study Three Method

1 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Study Three aimed to measure three strands of data concerned with the business case for equality of opportunity. The first strand concerned the perceived level of equal opportunity and organisational egalitarianism (collectively referred to here as equal opportunity environment) in the workplace perceived by employees. The second strand related to variables which previous literature (e.g. Cox & Blake, 1991; Cox, 1993; Kandola et al, 1995, Van Yperen et al, 1996, Leung, 1997, Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000) and Study One and Two results suggested were associated with the business case for equality of opportunity, namely job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived workgroup effectiveness and intention to leave. The third strand concerned a measure of individual difference, equity sensitivity, which previous literature, for example, Mason & Mudrack (1997), King & Kinson, (1994) and O'Neill & Mone (1998) suggested may moderate employee behaviour in response to the perception of organisational and individual equity.

Study Three aimed to analyse the relationships between these three strands of data. As described in the introduction to Study Three, previous research has often stopped short of looking at the empirical evidence supporting the business case for equality of opportunity. Thus, the objective of this study was to critically examine the extent to which the business case could be supported empirically and better understand the likely outcomes of investing in equality programmes for commercial organisations.

Based on the above, a series of hypotheses were proposed to explore the inter-relationships between the variables from each strand of questionnaire data.

2 HYPOTHESES & PLANNED ANALYSES

Study Three aimed to statistically assess the relationship between perceived equality climate and the job attitude outcome variables forming the basis of the business case. Multiple regression, moderated regression and discriminant function analyses, using SPSS version 8 (a standard statistical software package for the social sciences) were planned.

A total of four separate variables were used to establish a useful measure of equality climate:

Personal rating of equal opportunity level, a single item measure asking participants how they would personally rate the level of equal opportunity in the organisation

General rating of equal opportunity level, a single item measure asking participants how most people would rate the level of equal opportunity climate in the organisation

MEOCS- based equal opportunity climate scale, measuring the perceived likelihood of discrimination occurring

Organisational egalitarianism scale, measuring the perceived fairness of the organisation.

These four measures collectively were termed 'equality climate' variables. The personal rating, general rating and the MEOCS-based measure (variables 1 to 3 in the list above) collectively were termed the 'equal opportunity climate' variables. Where the equality variables showed no significant difference, they were excluded from the analyses to avoid multicollinearity. Where there were significant differences between equality variables, equality variables were computed separately.

A total of four hypotheses were proposed to effectively unpack the complexity of the inter-relationships between the variables.

Hypothesis 1: Equal opportunity level rating and organisational egalitarianism are inversely related to the perceived likelihood of discriminatory practices.

Hypothesis 1 was concerned with the relationship between the equality climate variables. It sought to establish whether participants' rating of equal opportunity level was measuring the perceived likelihood of discrimination occurring (termed the 'equal opportunity climate') or the perceived level of organisational egalitarianism.

Specifically it was hypothesised that the MEOCS-based perceived likelihood of discrimination occurring variable was inversely related to the equal opportunity level rating and organisational egalitarianism variables, i.e. a high level of discrimination was associated with a low or poor equality climate.

Initial analyses planned to establish, through the use of one-tailed multiple regression analyses, whether personal equal opportunity level rating (criterion variable) could be predicted from perceived organisational egalitarianism and the perceived likelihood of discriminatory practices occurring (predictor variables). A bivariate correlation between the predictor variables was planned to ensure multicollinearity was avoided.

A further bivariate correlation would establish whether MEOCS based perceived level of discrimination occurring and organisational egalitarianism scales were measuring the same or distinct concepts.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived equality climate is related to the job attitude business case variables of:

- Perceived workgroup effectiveness
- Intention to leave
- Organisational commitment
- Job satisfaction

Following the qualitative findings of Study One that general fairness at work, termed here as organisational egalitarianism, was considered more important to employees than equal opportunity per se, it was further hypothesised that perceived organisational

egalitarianism has a stronger relationship with the business case variables than perceived equal opportunity climate.

A series of 2-tailed bivariate correlations between each of the variables was planned to test hypothesis 2. Three equality climate variables were planned for inclusion in the correlation matrix, those of general equal opportunity level rating, personal equal opportunity level rating and perceived organisational egalitarianism, to see which had the strongest relationship with the outcome business case variables.

No direction was specified for the hypothesised relationships but it was anticipated that equality climate variables would be positively correlated with perceived workgroup effectiveness, organisational commitment and job satisfaction, and negatively correlated with intention to leave.

The second stage of hypothesis 2, that the perceived level of organisational egalitarianism would show a stronger relationship with the outcome variables than equal opportunity ratings, would also be tested using 2-tailed bivariate correlations. Again, no direction was specified but it was anticipated that the relationships between perceived organisational egalitarianism and the business case variables would mirror those of equal opportunity climate variables with the outcome variables.

Hypothesis 3a: There are gender differences in the perception of equality climate.

Hypothesis 3b: There are gender differences in the business case outcome variables.

It was decided to test hypotheses 3a and 3b using discriminant function analysis to predict gender group membership (male/female) from the equality climate variables (equal opportunity level rating, equal opportunity climate, the MEOCS-based scale measuring perceived likelihood of discriminatory practices occurring, and organisational egalitarianism) in the case of hypothesis 3a and to predict gender from business case outcome variables (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived workgroup effectiveness and intention to leave) in the case of hypothesis 3b.

Hypothesis 4: Job attitude outcome variables can be predicted from perceived equality climate and equity sensitivity moderates the predictions.

It was planned to test hypothesis 4 using multiple regression analyses to assess the predictive value of the equality climate variables on the job attitude outcome variables forming the basis of the business case, namely intention to leave, organisational commitment, job satisfaction and perceived workgroup performance.

Theory suggested (Huseman et al., 1985) that in terms of perceived equity in the workplace, over or under-reward situations may be intrinsically pleasing to individuals, according to their equity sensitivity levels, thereby affecting their job satisfaction levels. Thus it was hypothesised that an individual's level of equity sensitivity would effectively moderate the relationship between perceived equality climate and the job attitude outcome variables. Moderated regression analysis was chosen to assess the change in prediction made by the addition of equity sensitivity.

3 METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

In summary, Study Three aimed to statistically explore the inter-relationships proposed by the business case for equal opportunities. Further it hypothesised that the relationships that the business case relies on may be moderated by a known individual difference, equity sensitivity. Figure 30 shows the hypothesised relationships in diagrammatic form.

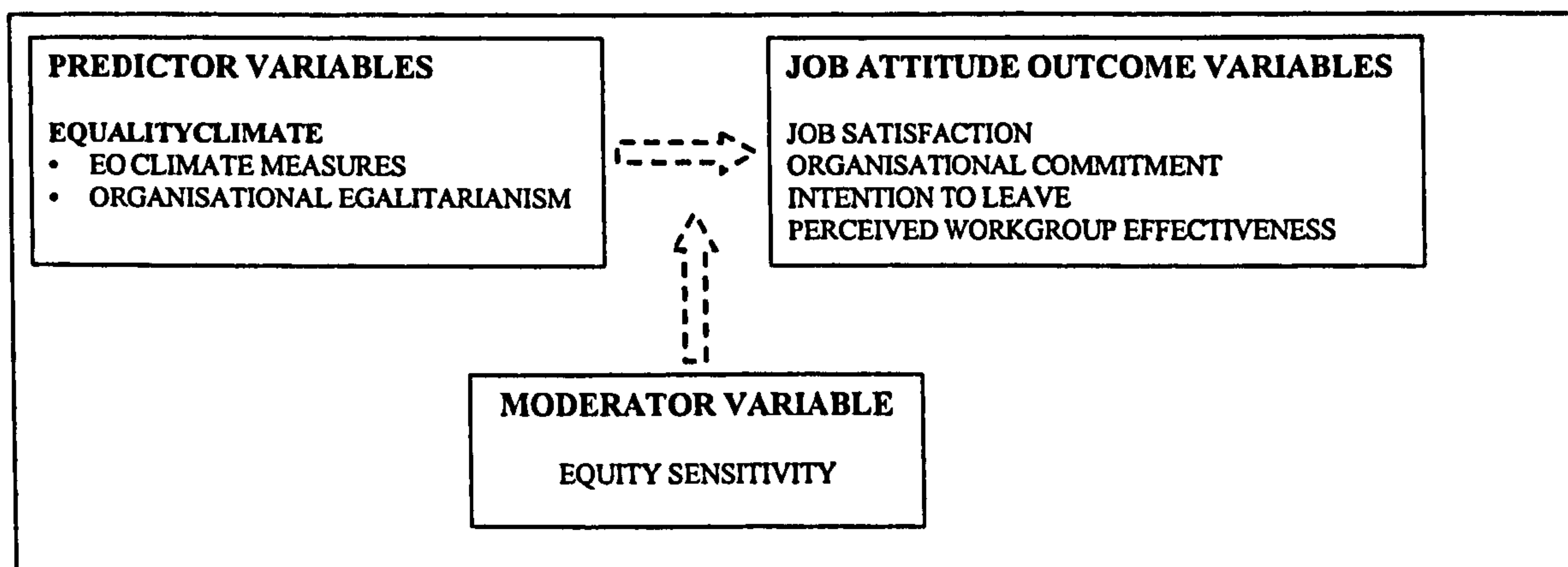


Figure 30: Study Three hypothesised relationships in diagrammatic form

Clearly the hypotheses concerned the inter-relationships between multiple predictor and outcome variables. In order to collect all the necessary measures from the same individual at the same point in time, it was decided that using a single self-completion, self-report questionnaire, containing all the relevant measures, would be the most appropriate method for data collection.

Since there was no existing questionnaire available that was capable of fulfilling the research objectives, a new questionnaire was constructed. The questionnaire construction process is detailed in Section 3.1 below.

3.1 Initial construction of the Social Atmosphere at Work Survey

It was not intended to re-invent the wheel, so where existing instruments were suitable they were utilised alongside newly developed scales. Established measures of organisational commitment, organisational egalitarianism and equity sensitivity were used to form discrete scales within the questionnaire. The established instruments selected were:

- Cook & Wall's (1980) Organisational Commitment Scale
- Payne & Pheysey's (1971) Organisational Egalitarianism Scale
- Huseman et al.'s (1985, 1987) Equity Sensitivity Instrument.

These validated instruments were chosen primarily for their ability to measure the individual job attitude variables identified as being associated with equality of opportunity in the workplace by the participants of Studies 1 and 2 and the literature, namely organisational commitment, organisational egalitarianism, job satisfaction and intention to leave. Secondly, the length and response type of the instrument was considered because it was important to minimise the overall length of the questionnaire. Thirdly, an effort was made to vary the response type and length of instrument used. There is some research to suggest that particular response formats or instrument lengths produce gender differences (Miles & King, 1998), so a combination of different instrument type and length were chosen to help reduce any potential gender bias.

As noted earlier (Chapter 11), there was no existing measure of equal opportunity climate ideally suited to the purposes of this study. The closest match to requirements was provided by Dansby & Landis' (1985, 1987) Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) and the potential of adapting it for use by a civilian UK population was explored, as detailed below in Section 3.1.1.

3.1.1 The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS)

A new instrument, a modified version of the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) (Dansby & Landis, 1991), was constructed and validated to measure perceived equal opportunity climate.

Background to MEOCSs

The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) was designed as an organisation development survey focusing on issues of equal opportunity and organisational effectiveness for the United States military. Administered by the United States Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), MEOCS was used as an aid to commanders from all Services to improve their equal opportunity and organisational climate.

Development and validation of the instrument commenced in 1998 and MEOCS was first used with the US military in 1990 (see Dansby & Landis, 1991 and Landis, Dansby & Tallarigo, 1996, for details of the construction and validation processes). Since then, over 4200 unit-level surveys, translating to approximately 600,000 individual cases, have been completed, MEOCS has been extensively validated and refined and four distinct versions have been developed. Fifty survey items are common to all four MEOCS versions, with additional sections being added or removed as appropriate to the target population. The four versions developed were:

Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey – Standard Version (MEOCS), designed for use with units of more than one hundred people and based on the core twelve factors.

Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey – Equal Employment Opportunity (MEOCS-EEO), in which Tallarigo (1994) expanded on the standard version to include

additional factors more relevant to civilian equal employment opportunity (EEO) issues, including sexist behaviour, religious and age discrimination.

Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey – Less Intensive, Truncated Edition (MEOCS-LITE), the newest version, which had yet to be fully validated but which reduced the number of items in the standard MEOCS to provide a shorter version.

Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey - Small Unit Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (SUEOCS), designed for military units of less than fifty people, SUEOCS employed attitudinal rather than perceptual items to account for situations where there may be little or no ethnic or gender diversity.

Each version is based on twelve standard factors, nine concerning equal opportunity and three concerning organisational effectiveness issues:

Scale 1 – Sexual harassment & discrimination

Scale 2 – Differential command behaviour towards minorities

Scale 3 – Positive EO behaviours

Scale 4 – Racist / Sexist behaviours

Scale 5 – Reverse discrimination (I)

Scale 6 – Organisational Commitment

Scale 7 – Perceived work group effectiveness

Scale 8 – Job Satisfaction

Scale 9 – Discrimination towards minorities and women

Scale 10 – Reverse discrimination (II)

Scale 11 – Attitudes toward racial separatism

Scale 12 – Overall EO Climate

Full descriptions of MEOCS-based scales used in the Social Atmosphere at Work survey are given at Appendix 2.

Suitability of MEOCS

The possibility of using the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) as the basis for the equal opportunity climate measure in the questionnaire in Study Three was appealing for a number of reasons. Primarily MEOCS was attractive because of the style of questions asked. MEOCS asks respondents to give an opinion on how likely they thought it was that specific behaviours would occur in their workplace. By asking questions in this format, the problem of respondents not being aware of what good equal opportunity practice might look like in practice (as experienced in Study One) was avoided and participants were not restricted to answering in terms of their personal experience. MEOCS allowed participants with no personal experience of discrimination or those working in an environment where there is no gender or ethnic diversity to give an opinion on how likely they felt it was that a specific discriminatory practice might occur in their workplace. MEOCS was also attractive in that it was an established and extensively validated instrument. In terms of practicality and budget constraints, MEOCS was also made freely available by one of the survey's authors, Dr Dansby, who was keen to see how MEOCS might work with a UK civilian population. He granted permission to use MEOCS with the proviso that the survey items were culturally translated.

As recognised by the authors, MEOCS was designed with a specific audience in mind (the US military) and the wording of the items clearly reflected this specific usage. This prescriptive design meant MEOCS was unsuitable for use in Study Three in its original format. However MEOCS items had the potential to be culturally translated and the possibility of retaining elements of the original MEOCS but modifying it to suit the research purpose was further explored.

Modification of MEOCS & new questionnaire development

Initially, qualitative themes resulting from studies 1 and 2 and factors from each MEOCS version were listed out and any repeated MEOCS factors were deleted. From sight, there appeared to be a considerable overlap between the qualitative themes and the MEOCS factors. To better assess the overlap, every factor and individual survey item from MEOCS and every theme resulting from Study One and 2 and the qualitative text associated with those themes were listed out alongside each other. Repeated items were deleted. Where there was complete overlap between the quantitative MEOCS factors and the qualitative themes, they were combined. For example, the perception of positive discrimination was raised in studies 1 and 2 and MEOCS contained a scale measuring the perception of reverse discrimination so one new factor of 'positive discrimination' was proposed. The impact of diversity on workgroup relationships was an issue raised by Study One and 2 participants and MEOCS included a measure of workgroup effectiveness, so these workgroup factors were combined.

Where there was no existing MEOCS factor, the qualitative issues provided a new potential factors, for example the concept of fairness as something distinct from equal opportunity was not contained within MEOCS, so organisational egalitarianism provided a new potential factor.

Each of the resultant 'factors' was written onto separate cards and each potential questionnaire item was written onto a separate piece of paper. Potential items were then sorted into piles on top of the appropriate factor card. MEOCS items were sorted as per the factor loading information provided by the survey authors and the items generated from the qualitative research studies were sorted as per the qualitative analysis results.

From these piles of factor-related items, duplicated items were deleted. As noted previously, MEOCS used very culturally specific language and terminology so MEOCS items with no applicability to the new audience were deleted. Relevant MEOCS items were reworded where necessary to make them relevant to a civilian UK population, retaining the structure of the scales wherever possible. Treatment of the MEOCS items is detailed at Appendix 3. This process was informed by the qualitative data collected in studies 1 and 2 regarding the types of activities and language use associated with

equal opportunity in the workplace. Further items that were potentially interesting but not specifically relevant to the research question were deleted.

This process effectively reduced the number of items assigned to each factor to a more appropriate size and comprised of six equal opportunity sub-sections (potential sub-scales) for measuring the perceived likelihood of different types of discrimination (sexual, racial, overt, global, age and sexual orientation). From these six sub-sections, one composite equality section (potential scale) was formed to give a measure of the overall equal opportunity climate. The items making up each sub-section are detailed at Appendix 4.

With the development of an equal opportunity climate measure, the draft content of the Social Atmosphere at Work Survey was finalised.

3.2 The Social Atmosphere at Work Survey

The questionnaire was named the “Social Atmosphere at Work Survey”. Equal opportunity in the workplace is a sensitive and political issue and it was considered that using a more neutral title might encourage more organisations to participate in the research. Additionally there research suggests that response rates are increased when the questionnaire topic is of interest to respondents (Martin, 1995) and it was hoped that ‘social atmosphere survey’ would be of more interest to respondents than and ‘equal opportunity climate questionnaire’ without misrepresenting the content of the questionnaire.

3.2.1 Social Atmosphere at Work Survey Components

Part 1 - Organisational Commitment Scale (Cook & Wall, 1980)

This scale was a nine-item (question numbers 1 to 9 inclusive), seven-point Likert scale with the response scale ranging through:

1. No, I strongly disagree
2. No, I disagree quite a lot
3. No, I disagree just a little

4. I'm not sure
5. Yes, I agree just a little
6. Yes, I agree quite a lot
7. Yes, I strongly agree

Part 2 - Work Group Effectiveness

Adapted from the MEOCS (Landis et al. 1988), this scale was a five-item (items 10 to 14 inclusive) Likert scale with a five-point response scale as follows:

1. Totally disagree
2. Moderately disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Moderately agree
5. Totally agree

Part 3 - Organisational Egalitarianism

This section (items 15 to 22 inclusive) used Payne & Pheysey's (1971) Egalitarianism Scale, an eight-item Likert scale, with a five point response scale ranging through:

1. Definitely true
2. Mostly true
3. Unsure
4. Mostly false
5. Definitely false

Part 4 - Individual Equity

This section (question numbers 27 to 31 inclusive) used the Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI)(Huseman, Hatfield & Miles,1985), a five-item, forced distribution scale where respondents were asked to distribute a total of ten points between two answer options, A and B, representing benevolent or entitled responses, for each of the five items.

Part 5: Equal Opportunity Climate

This section (question numbers 32 to 60 inclusive) held a total of 29 items (based on Landis et al.'s 1988 MEOCS) and used a five-point Likert scale response range.

1. Almost no chance
2. Small chance
3. Moderate chance
4. Reasonably high chance
5. Very high chance

The 29 items in this section composed a series of sub-scales, which were then computed to form a single composite scale measuring overall equal opportunity climate.

Part 6 – Equal Opportunity Level, Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave

Question numbers 61 to 67 inclusive concerned the general equal opportunity perceptions, intention to leave the organisation and job satisfaction level.

Respondents were asked to rate the level of equal opportunity in their organisation, firstly from their own perspective and secondly how they thought the majority of people in their organisation would rate it. Both of these items used a five-point response scale:

1. Very poor
2. Poor
3. About average
4. Good
5. Very good

Intention to leave was measured using two single items. The first item (question number 65) asked whether the respondent had been considering changing employers and was taken from Van Yperen (1996). This item used a five-point response scale ranging from '1) I completely disagree' to '5) I completely agree'.

The second item (question number 67) concerning intention to leave, taken from Berg (1991), asked if the respondent thought they might stay with the organisation for the next twelve months. Again the responses were placed on a five-point scale:

1. I definitely will not leave
2. I probably will not leave
3. I am uncertain about my future here
4. I probably will leave
5. I definitely will leave

Two additional items were included in this section, asking respondents to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement firstly that equal opportunity was an important issue (item number 63) and secondly that they had not thought much about equal opportunity before completing the questionnaire (item 64). These items are self-explanatory and were included to provide a crude double check for the Study One results that found most participants had not considered equal opportunity prior to participating. Both of these items used a five-point response scale:

1. I completely disagree
2. I mostly disagree
3. I neither agree nor disagree
4. I mostly agree
5. I completely agree

Job Satisfaction was also measured with a single item (question number 66) in an effort to keep the size of the questionnaire to a minimum. Further justification for the merit of a single item versus multi-item measure of job satisfaction may be found in Van Yperen et al. (1996). The item used here employed a five-point Likert scale-type response ranging through:

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Moderately dissatisfied
3. Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied
4. Quite satisfied
5. Very satisfied

Part 7 – Demographic Information

The final section of the questionnaire (question numbers 68 to 74 inclusive) asked respondents to provide details of their age, gender, ethnic origin, education level, job level, the diversity of their workgroup and previous experience of discrimination. Ethnic origin categories were based on the 1991 census standard nine categories but

included additional categories to distinguish white minority ethnic and mixed ethnic origin employees.

Demographic information was included in the questionnaire to facilitate the possibility of further analysis being carried out on the data. For example, education level has been found to moderate the relationship between perceived inequity and turnover intention (Berg 1991, Van Yperen 1996) with lower education level being related to lower turnover levels. Educational attainment therefore was included, asking participants to answer yes or no option to whether university had been attended. University level was chosen as the threshold on the supposition that people who have attended university will have some experience of diverse colleagues, as indicated by Study One participants.

3.2.2 Excluded Variables

It may have been interesting to include further categories such as sexual orientation, however Study One participants made little reference to sexual orientation in their explanations of equal opportunities indicating that sexual orientation is not a major issue associated with equal opportunity for the majority of employees. Further, since there is no legislation directly outlawing discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, it would be difficult to justify elements of sexuality being included in the survey to potential participating organisations because it leaves the realms of legislative requirement and moves into voluntary good practice organisational behaviours. Thus sexual orientation was not included as a demographic variable but two items in the MEOCS based discrimination scales did refer to the perceived likelihood of discrimination occurring on the basis of sexual orientation.

3.3 Piloting the Questionnaire

Verbal feedback was sought from a number of colleagues and the structure and content of the questionnaire were approved by the project supervisor. To ensure that the questionnaire items and the direction of the items were interpreted as intended, the questionnaire was piloted with a convenience sample of 110 employees from a wide range of employees. Surveys were distributed using a technique well known in applied qualitative research and borrowed from that domain, termed 'snowball sampling'

Burgess (1982), whereby employed friends of the researcher agreed to act as pilot participants. Each of these participants were asked to distribute two or three surveys to their employed colleagues, friends or family and each new participant that this generated was asked to do the same. Since the target population for the questionnaire was UK employees, piloting in this manner provided a sample that was broadly representative of the target population.

3.3.1 Pilot Questionnaire Reliability

The pilot sample size of 110 was insufficient to factor analyse the results, however the scales appeared to have good face validity. Cronbach's alpha levels, calculated using SPSS, were high for each of the scales (all well above 0.7), including the new equal opportunity climate scale and sub-scales (covert sex discrimination, covert racial discrimination, overt discrimination, global discrimination, age discrimination and sexual orientation discrimination), indicating good reliability in terms of internal consistency.

The organisational commitment scale (Cook & Wall 1980), egalitarianism scale (Payne & Pheysey, 1971) and the Equity Sensitivity Instrument (Huseman et al. 1985) used within the questionnaire are well established and extensively validated scales. Both job satisfaction and intention to leave measured were single items so scale reliability was not applicable to these measures.

3.3.2 Pilot Questionnaire Feedback

All pilot participants were asked to give feedback on the design, readability and content of the questionnaire by writing their comments on the back of the questionnaire or by contacting the researcher directly. Pilot participants did provide a number of useful comments. Feedback primarily concerned the unpopularity of the disparate format of answering options, for example, underlining on one section, then circling on the next. Consequently the final survey was redesigned to standardise the answering format as far as possible. Other feedback suggested the Equity Sensitivity Instrument completion instructions were ambiguous, so these were reworded, using the instructions to Belbin's

Team Role Inventory (1981) as a guideline, which also used a ten-point distribution system for scoring for the final questionnaire.

Other feedback concerned the militaristic style of language of the MEOCS items and these items were reworded further to make them more appropriate to a civilian population. The final change made to the questionnaire on the basis of pilot feedback was that the original survey lacked a male perspective. For example, one male respondent wrote that he felt “victimised” as a white male and another reported he was currently being sexually harassed by his female supervisor and lamented the emphasis on traditional forms of discrimination when his workplace had ‘moved on’ from there. This was not a criticism about using sexist or non-sexist language but a question of there being no example behaviours of women unfairly discriminating against or harassing men. The discrimination scales based on MEOCS asked participants to rate the likelihood of specific example equal opportunity behaviours occurring in their workplace, so in response to these criticisms two items were added to the questionnaire asking about perceived discrimination against men. The emphasis of the questionnaire however remained the more “traditional” experience of discrimination against women and minority ethnic people.

Feedback on two further issues did not result in changes being made to the questionnaire. Firstly the notion of work performance being related to “outputs” was stated as inappropriate by those in charitable or caring employment, but the target population was employees in commercial organisations where the concept of productivity measures at work would be more applicable, so no changes were made on the basis of these comments. Secondly, five pilot respondents remarked that example equal opportunity behaviours did occur but that they were said only in jest and were as likely to be directed against men as women but the questionnaire did not allow for comments to be construed as banter. No changes were made to the questionnaire on the basis of this criticism because discrimination law clearly states that harassment is a subjective experience defined by how a victim perceived the behaviour in question, not by how the behaviour was intended. This complexity could not realistically be reflected by a questionnaire item but the feedback did echo some of the comments made by Study

One and Two participants and this issue is discussed further in the Discussion section (Chapter 14).

The questionnaire revisions made on the basis of pilot participant feedback were checked with a smaller group of pilot participants known to the researcher, the project supervisor and a number of volunteer colleagues until the questionnaire was considered clear and meaningful. It was decided at this point that reasonable level of validity, reliability and readability checks had been made and to proceed with the distribution of the final survey with a larger sample. The final questionnaire (attached at Appendix 8) was distributed to a sample employees working in commercial UK organisations.

3.4 Final Questionnaire Distribution

3.4.1 Sampling Strategy

The research aims and objectives concerned the business case for equality of opportunity in commercial organisations therefore the research needed to focus on the business environment. Academic research often relies on using student or university staff samples but it was not appropriate to do so in this instance and the first priority of the sampling strategy was to ensure that participants employees of commercial UK organisations. Additionally the sampling strategy should ensure that the sample was representative of the general working UK population in demographic terms. The research was also interested in demographic differences in the perception of the same equal opportunity climate, so the representativeness of the sample in demographic terms was particularly important in this instance.

To meet these needs, it was decided to ask large commercial UK organisations to allow all their employees in a particular branch or division of their organisation to participate in the research, thereby gaining access to a large number of employees working under the same equal opportunity policy and practice conditions. The reality of applied research is such that academic rigour does not always translate easily to the demands of business in commercial environments however and equality of opportunity is a sensitive subject for most organisations. Gaining access to large commercial UK organisations willing to commit their resources to participating in an academic project, whatever the

benefit to them, was difficult. Organisations unwilling to make a formal commitment to equality of opportunity are unlikely to participate in research that may place the perceived level of equal opportunity climate under scrutiny in their organisation. To alleviate potential difficulties, only those organisations that had already made a public commitment to equality of opportunity were approached.

In practice a list of potential participant organisations was drawn up from the membership lists of the Equal Opportunities Commission's Equality Exchange and Opportunity 2000 membership lists and Opportunity 2000's "Women on the Boards of Britain's Top 200 Companies 1997" and the Commission for Racial Equality's Leadership Challenge. All of these memberships involved a substantial public commitment to equality of opportunity and it was hoped that these people would be willing to participate in research investigating the business case for equal opportunities. This process resulted in a substantial list of organisations. Non-commercial organisations were deleted from the list and the remaining names were cross-referenced, leaving a total of 76 organisations.

Next, the researcher sat down in a quiet office with a telephone and made numerous calls over a period of a few weeks to try to establish the name of the most appropriate contact within each of those 76 organisations. When a named contact was identified, a letter was written asking for their participation in the research project (see Appendix 6 for a copy of the standard letter). Follow-up telephone calls made as appropriate. After many hours and days spent on the telephone it became evident to the researcher that equality of opportunity was not a popular topic. Many reasons for participating tended were offered, for example concern at subjecting their employees to survey fatigue as they had just, were in the process of, or were just about to survey their employees about some current topic, or that they frequently received requests from students and could not participate in every one. The grand total of organisations willing to participate was two. Whilst all the reasons given for non-participation were perfectly plausible, it was difficult to imagine that all were genuine and the researcher gained a distinct impression that equal opportunity was considered too controversial a topic to emphasise unnecessarily, which was disappointing considering that these organisations had all made a public commitment to promote equality of opportunity.

3.4.2 Organisational Participants

The two organisations that agreed to take part at this stage were able to offer a sample size sufficient for the purposes of this research, so no further contacts were pursued. Participant organisations were promised absolute confidentiality and anonymity and for this reason are not named. One organisation, a major UK national retail organisation, offered to distribute the questionnaire to every member of staff at their headquarters. The second organisation, a national UK utilities & retail organisation offered to distribute the questionnaire to all of their staff employed in England.

Participating organisations agreed to distribute questionnaire surveys to all of their staff, across the board, in order to encompass all levels of the organisation, job types, age, race, disability and gender and ensure a representative sample of employees. This meant that the participating organisation did not have to engage in any complicated sampling methodology and reduced the amount of resource they needed to participate in the research. It also meant however that the researcher relinquished control of the distribution process and this later made it difficult to generate a higher response rate.

It must be acknowledged that this sampling technique was not ideal and consequently some degree of sample bias was inevitable. A stratified random sample of the employees on a national basis may have been preferable for example but was not practicable due to the restrictions imposed by the participating organisations. The necessity of compromising the research design to some extent in applied research is well recognised and ultimately the researcher gained access to 1700 employees of commercial UK organisations, which would not have been achieved without making the sampling compromise. Distributing the questionnaire to every member of staff in the designated divisions was a good compromise in that all sections of the workforce were reached, albeit limited to that division, but sample bias was reduced in this manner to some degree. Accordingly statistical analyses of the survey results, rather than the sampling technique provided the means of checking representation of the sample in terms of job level, ethnicity, gender or age and inevitably the generalisability of the results was compromised by using a non-probability sampling technique. If this

experience is typical, it goes some way towards explaining why current evidence for the business case for equal opportunity is based almost exclusively on case study evidence.

3.4.3 Individual Participants

The sample frame consisted of all the staff (n= 700) employed at the headquarters of a major UK retail organisation and all the staff, (n=1005) employed across England in the retail division of a major UK utility and retail company. Survey completion was voluntary and controlled by the personnel departments of participating organisations. Data on the age, gender and ethnicity of the respondents were collected through completion of the questionnaire but information about the workforce composition of the participating organisations was not available. It was not known therefore whether the respondent samples were representative of the entire organisation in terms of age, ethnicity or gender however the sample showed a similar profile to that of the general UK working population in terms of gender, ethnicity and age.

Gender

Fifty-seven per cent of participants were female and 43 percent were male, meaning that women were slightly over-represented compared to the general working population where the figure hovers around the 50% level. The number of women employees continues to increase throughout the country however and in some cities, such as Leeds, the number of women working has exceeded 50% (Labour Force Survey, Spring 1998).

Age

Mean age of the respondents was approximately 33 years, with the youngest participant being 17, the oldest 60 and a good representation of all ages in between these extremes. Figure 31 shows the age distribution profile graphically.

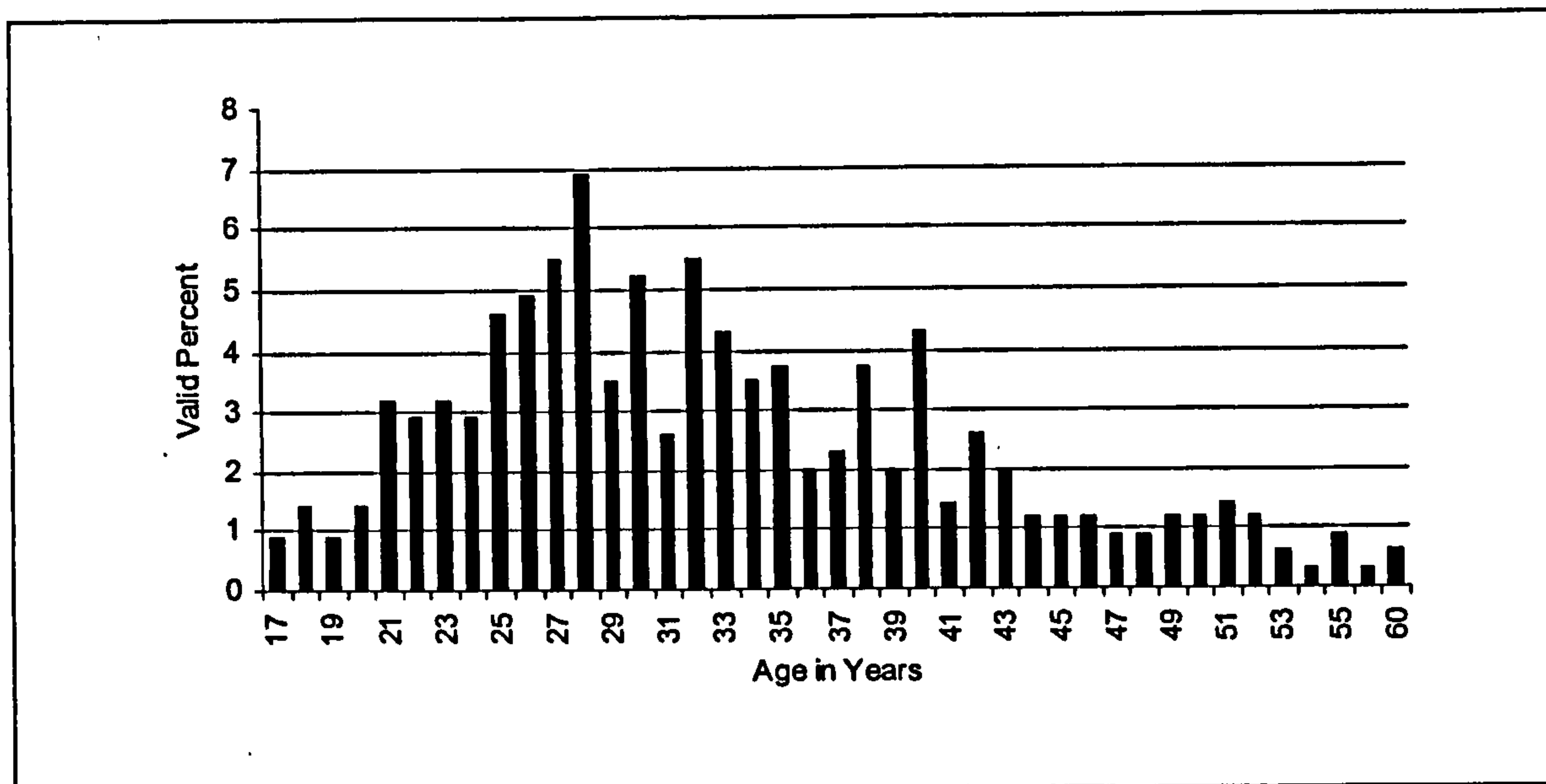


Figure 31: Study Three participant age profile

Ethnicity

The sample had a low level of minority ethnic representation, with only twenty-two participants identifying themselves as belonging to a visible minority group. However twenty-two participants translated to six per cent of the sample, which is higher than the national general population figure of five percent and equal to the percentage of the population of working age who identify themselves as members of minority ethnic populations. The percentage rises when looking at working age populations because of the younger age profile of most of the minority ethnic populations compared with the white population (Pathak, 2000).

3.5 Procedure

Survey questionnaires were posted to the relevant organisations for distribution. In the case of the utility & retail organisation, the researcher posted the relevant number of surveys to each retail outlet. In the case of the retail organisation, the researcher posted the entire set of questionnaires to the personnel department of the company, who then distributed them through their internal mail system.

Participants were issued with an envelope containing one “Social Atmosphere at Work Survey”, a covering letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and completion

instructions, some background information about the research they were being asked to participate in and a freepost return envelope for the respondent to return the completed survey directly to the researcher, thus ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Completed questionnaires were returned directly to the researcher by mail.

The information provided with the survey explained that the research was being conducted by Cranfield University and that results would only be available to their organisation in aggregate statistical form, thereby ensuring confidentiality and anonymity were retained. A sample of the participant information document is included at Appendix 9.

3.5.1 Response Rates

Despite follow up calls being made to both organisations to try to increase the response rate, of the 1705 questionnaires distributed, 366 were returned to the researcher, which yielded a response rate of 21.5 per cent. Admittedly this response rate was disappointingly low but a low response rate does not necessarily correspond with low validity (Visser et al. 1996).

Factors that have been shown to affect response rates include type of sample and follow-up (Calahan & Schumm, 1995) and both these factors were limited by access to participating organisations in this study. The level of follow-up in this instance was dictated entirely by the participating organisations. Calahan and Schumm (1995) reported that the importance of the study affected response rates. Martin (1995) reported that participants being interested in the topic of the questionnaire almost doubled the response rate of a mail survey. Whilst the study was of utmost importance to the researcher, it evidently and understandably was not so important or probably interesting to the majority of participants.

Despite there being a smaller sample size than hoped for however, the resultant sample size was more than adequate for the statistical techniques employed. For example, using multiple regression analyses ideally requires a ratio of 20 sample to 1 predictor variable, which was satisfied in this instance, thereby avoiding overfitting. The 366 questionnaires returned formed the basis of the analysis.

3.6 Treatment of Final Survey Data

3.6.1 Scale Descriptives

Table 22 details the reliability statistics for each of the scales used in the Social Atmosphere at Work Survey. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated using SPSS to assess the reliability of the scales and the co-efficient was greater than 0.7 for each scale, indicating that they could be considered reliable and representative of a cohesive subscale. The scale direction stated in Table 12 indicates the meaning of a high versus a low score on each scale.

Table 12: Social atmosphere at work survey scale reliability

Scale Name	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Coeff. Alpha	Direction
Perceived Workgroup Effectiveness	3.94	.74	.83	high score = high effectiveness
Organisational Commitment	5.14	.91	.79	high score = high commitment
Perceived Egalitarianism	3.23	.82	.83	high score = high egalitarian
Composite Equal Opportunity Climate Scale*	1.93	.67	.89	high score = high discrimination (low EO climate)
Equity Sensitivity Instrument	25.79	5.19	.73	high score = benevolent low score = entitled

3.6.2 Composite Equal Opportunity Climate Scale

As with the pilot questionnaire, the final social atmosphere at work survey used a composite scale formed from the MEOCS-based sub-scales measuring covert sex discrimination, covert racial discrimination, overt discrimination, global discrimination, age discrimination and sexual orientation discrimination to give an overall measure of the perceived likelihood of discrimination. Table 13 lists the questionnaire items making up the six discrimination scales and the Cronbach's alpha levels for each of the scales. These six scales formed the sub-scales of the composite scale measuring the overall perceived level of discrimination, labelled 'equal opportunity climate' for the purposes of this study.

Table 13: Equal opportunity climate scale: Sub-scale reliability and component items

Sub-scale	Component questionnaire item nos.	Alpha
Covert sex discrimination	32, 34, 37, 41, 44 & 45.	0.8406
Covert racial discrimination	42, 46, 52, 55, 57.	0.8648
Overt discrimination	35, 36, 38, 43, 48, 50, 56 & 59.	0.8490
Global discrimination	40, 53, 54 & 58.	0.8264
Age discrimination	33 & 47.	0.9007
Sexual orientation discrimination	49 & 51.	0.8837

Table 14 shows the reliability statistics for the composite equal opportunity climate scale. It is generally accepted that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 and above constitutes a valid scale. This level was exceeded in every instance with the scales developed from MEOCS. As Table 14 illustrates, the alpha levels ranged from 0.86 to 0.90 and the resultant composite scale had an alpha level of 0.89.

Table 14: Equal opportunity climate composite scale reliability

Composite scale	Sub-scales	Alpha if item deleted
Equal opportunity climate	Sex discrimination	0.8605
	Race discrimination	0.8738
	Overt discrimination	0.8726
	Global discrimination	0.8568
	Age discrimination	0.9007
	Sexual orientation discrimination	0.8837
Composite scale alpha = 0.8933		

Although construct validity requires predictions to be made, tested and supported by data, a crude check on the construct validity of this new global equal opportunity climate scale was provided by correlating it against the single equal opportunity climate questionnaire item number 61, "I personally would rate the level of equal opportunity in

this organisation as:” 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). The correlation, at -0.793, suggested a strong inverse relationship, as anticipated.

3.6.3 Equity Sensitivity Scale Formation

Equity sensitivity was scored on a continuum from 0 to 50. The sample was classified into three categories of equity sensitivity at “conceptual breakpoints” which were formed in line with the decision rule used in the previous literature (King, Miles & Day, 1993; Huseman et al., and Miles et al., 1989). This rule suggested that the equity sensitivity categories be formed by splitting the sample at approximately $\pm \frac{1}{2}$ standard deviation from the mean of the entire sample (see King et al. 1992 for an extended discussion on the need for sample-specific breakpoints).

The three categories of equity sensitivity were:

1. Benevolent
2. Equity sensitive
3. Entitled

For this sample, the equity sensitivity scores ranged from 0 to 43, with all measures of central tendency falling around 25. The standard deviation was 5.19 and the mean was 25.79, as detailed in Table 15. Applying the conceptual breakpoint rule to this sample, the mean was approximated to 25, the standard deviation was approximated to 5, so that $\pm \frac{1}{2}$ standard deviation was 2.5, producing the following classifications:

- Participants scoring between 0 and 22 were classified as entitled (n=81).
- Participants scoring between 23 and 28 were classified as equity sensitive (n=174).
- Participants scoring between 29 and 50 were classified as benevolent (n=90).

Table 15: Equity sensitivity instrument results

N	Valid 345 Missing 21
Mean	25.79
Median	25.00
Mode	25.00
Standard Deviation	5.19
Variance	26.96
Range	43.00
Minimum	.00
Maximum	43.00

Table 16 details the percentage of participants falling into each equity sensitivity category. A total of twenty-one participants (5.7%) did not answer the equity sensitivity questions, or scored their answers incorrectly, 23.5% of participants were classified as “entitleds”, 50.4% were classified as “equity sensitives” and 26.1% were classified “benevolents”. Results therefore followed a normal distribution curve, as illustrated by Figure 27.

Table 16: Equity sensitivity classifications

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Entitled	81	22.1	23.5
Valid Equity Sensitive	174	47.5	50.4
Valid Benevolent	90	24.6	26.1
Valid Total	345	94.3	100
Missing	21	5.7	
Total	366	100	

Plotting the equity sensitivity scores on a graph produced a normal curve, as illustrated in Figure 32.

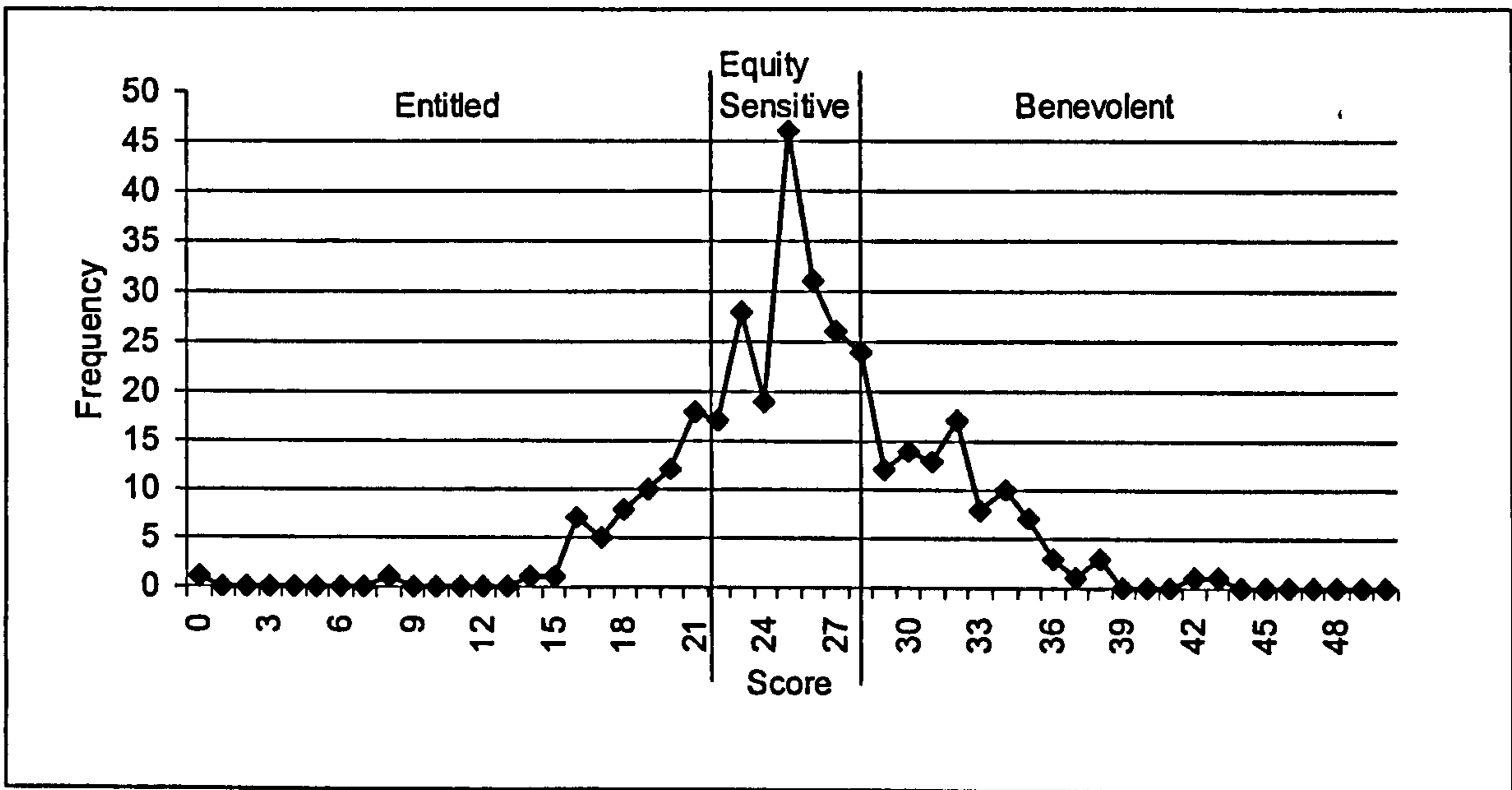


Figure 32: Equity sensitivity scores & categorisation

Chapter 13

Study Three Results

1 ANALYSES

1.1 Hypothesis 1 Results

The first stage of hypothesis 1 explored whether personal rating of equal opportunity level (criterion variable) could be predicted from perceived organisational egalitarianism and the MEOCS-based 'equal opportunity climate' scale measuring the perceived likelihood of discrimination occurring (predictor variables), using multiple regression analysis. A bivariate correlation between the predictor variables was calculated to check for multicollinearity which revealed a correlation co-efficient of 0.497, suggesting that the predictors were related but not to the extent that they violated the multivariate solution.

Table 17: H₁ regression summary (equality climate variables)

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.563 ^a	0.317	0.313	0.82

^a Predictors: (Constant), EO climate, egalitarianism.

Regression analysis results (detailed in Table 17) resulted in a R² value of 0.317, indicating that together the variables accounted for 32% of the variance in the personal rating of equal opportunity level.

Using the Beta weights to examine the relative predictive value of the equal opportunity climate variable (measuring perceived likelihood of discrimination) and the organisational egalitarianism variable, results indicated that there was very little difference in predictive value between the two variables (B = 0.34 for equal opportunity

climate and $B = 0.31$ for egalitarianism). These results, detailed in Table 18, suggested that the variables were similarly important predictors of personal rating of equal opportunity level.

Table 18: H₁ regression results (equality climate variables)

Model	Unstandardised co-efficients		Standardised co-efficients	t	Sig	Correlations			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	
1	(Constant)	3.493	0.304		11.492	0.000			
	Perceived organisational egalitarianism	4.569E-02	0.008	0.307	5.912	0.000	0.478	0.307	0.266
	Equal opportunity climate (Likelihood of discrimination)	-8.40E-02	0.013	-0.344	-6.634	0.000	-0.496	-0.340	-0.299

Dependent Variable: Personal EO level rating

Using the squared semi-partial (part corr²) to calculate the unique variance, showed that perceived organisational egalitarianism uniquely accounted for 7% of the variance compared to 9% for the equal opportunity climate (measuring perceived likelihood of discrimination), again suggesting that the concepts of likelihood of discrimination and organisational egalitarianism were related but distinct.

The 2-tailed bivariate correlation between the criterion variable of personal equal opportunity level rating and the predictor variable of perceived organisational egalitarianism resulted in a correlation co-efficient of 0.469, which was significant at the 0.01 level but not extremely high, suggesting that the variables were related but distinct.

These results provided significant support for hypothesis 1. A high likelihood of discriminatory practices was inversely related to high personal equal opportunity level rating, thus hypothesis 1 was accepted.

1.2 Hypothesis 2 Results

Hypothesis 2 predicted a relationship between the job attitude business case variables (perceived workgroup effectiveness, intention to leave, organisational commitment and

job satisfaction) and perceived equality climate, assessed independently for general rating of the equal opportunity level, personal rating of the equal opportunity level and perceived organisational egalitarianism.

No direction was predicted for these relationships so a two-tailed test was used. It was anticipated however that perceived equality climate would be positively correlated with perceived workgroup effectiveness, organisational commitment and job satisfaction and negatively with intention to leave.

The second stage of hypothesis 2 proposed that the perceived level of organisational egalitarianism would show a stronger relationship with the outcome variables than equal opportunity ratings. Again the direction of the relationship was not specified and a two-tailed test was used but it was anticipated that the direction of the correlations would mirror those of the equal opportunity ratings and outcome variables correlations.

The correlation matrix for the outcome variables and the equality climate variables are presented in Table 19. According to these results, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and perceived workgroup effectiveness were all positively related with equality climate variables. Intention to leave was negatively correlated with equality climate. All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 19: H₂ correlation matrix of outcome variables and equality climate variables

		General rating of EO level	Personal rating of EO level	Organisational egalitarianism
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.262**	.341**	.441**
	Sig. (2-tailEd.)	.000	.000	.000
	N	358	360	354
Perceived workgroup effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.196**	.231**	.287**
	Sig. (2-tailEd.)	.000	.000	.000
	N	351	353	354
Intention to leave	Pearson Correlation	-.244**	-.324**	-.426**
	Sig. (2-tailEd.)	.000	.000	.000
	N	357	359	353
Organisational commitment	Pearson Correlation	.301**	.382**	.475**
	Sig. (2-tailEd.)	.000	.000	.000
	N	353	354	353

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailEd.).

Organisational commitment and organisational egalitarianism showed the strongest association and, as anticipated, the relationships between the business case outcome variables and organisational egalitarianism were stronger than the association between outcome variables and equal opportunity ratings.

Data provided highly significant support for hypothesis 2, namely that there was a relationship between perceived equality climate and the business case outcome variables. Thus hypothesis 2 was accepted.

1.3 Hypothesis 3 Results

1.3.1 Hypothesis 3a

Hypothesis 3a predicted there would be gender differences in the perception of equality climate. Discriminant function analysis (DFA) was performed using SPSS to try to predict gender from the equality climate variables of personal equal opportunity level rating, equal opportunity climate (measuring the perceived likelihood of discriminatory practices occurring) and organisational egalitarianism.

As summarised in Table 20, the results indicated there were no gender differences in the perception of equality climate. Analysis revealed an eigenvalue of 0.025 and a Wilks' lambda value of 0.975 which suggested that very little variance was accounted for by gender. This function was not significant and hypothesis 3a was rejected.

Table 20: H_{3a} Summary of DFA with gender as the criterion and equality climate variables as the predictor variables

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Canonical Correlation	Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig
1	0.025 ^a	100.0	0.157	1	0.975	8.295	5	0.141

First 1 canonical discriminant functions were used in the analysis.

1.3.2 Hypothesis 3b

Hypothesis 3b predicted gender differences in the business case outcome variables. Business case outcome variables (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to leave and perceived workgroup effectiveness) and equity sensitivity were analysed for gender differences again using discriminant function analysis.

Table 21 summarises the DFA results using gender as a criterion variable and the business case outcome variables as the predictor variables. Gender was not a significant function for the business case outcome variables. Hypothesis 3b was rejected.

Table 21: H_{3b} summary of DFA with gender as the criterion and business case outcome variables as the predictor variables

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Canonical Correlation	Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig
1	0.024	100.0	.152	1	0.977	8.062	4	0.089

First 1 canonical discriminant functions were used in the analysis.

1.4 Hypothesis 4 Results

Results from hypothesis 2 analyses suggested that equality climate variables and business case outcome variables were significantly correlated. Using multiple regression analyses, hypothesis 4 assessed the ability of the equality climate variables to predict the business case outcome variables of intention to leave, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and perceived workgroup effectiveness. Further, moderated regression analyses were computed to statistically assess the change in prediction of each outcome variable by adding equity sensitivity to the equation.

1.4.1 Regression 1 Intention to Leave

In regression 1, intention to leave was the criterion variable and the equality climate variables (organisational egalitarianism, equal opportunity climate, measuring the perceived likelihood of discrimination, and personal equal opportunity level rating) were predictor variables. Regression analysis assessed whether intention to leave could be predicted from the equality climate variables and then whether the predictive relationship was moderated by equity sensitivity. Results are summarised in Table 32.

Table 22: H₄ regression 1 summary (intention to leave & equality climate)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	0.451a	0.204	0.196	1.22	0.204	27.049	3	317	0.000
2	0.452b	0.205	0.194	1.22	0.001	0.280	1	316	0.597

a Predictors: (Constant), personal EO level, egalitarianism, EO climate (likelihood of discrimination)

b Predictors: (Constant), personal EO level, egalitarianism, EO climate (likelihood of discrimination), equity sensitivity

According to the results, equality climate variables accounted for 20% of the variance (R^2) in intention to leave. At the second step of the regression analysis, equity sensitivity was added in to see if this produced any significant improvement of the prediction. Prediction was not significantly improved by the addition of an equity sensitivity measure, as indicated by the significant F change figure in Table 22.

Table 23: H₄ regression results (intention to leave & equality climate)

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig	Correlations		
		B	Std. Error				Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	4.521	0.550		8.217	0.000			
	Organisational egalitarianism	-6.40E-02	0.012	-0.311	-5.131	0.000	-0.420	-0.277	-0.257
	Likelihood of discrimination	3.044E-02	0.021	0.090	1.461	0.145	0.311	0.082	0.073
	Personal EO level	-0.189	0.084	-0.137	-2.254	0.025	-0.331	-0.126	-0.133
2	(Constant)	4.454	0.565		7.884	0.000			
	Organisational egalitarianism	-6.36E-02	0.013	-0.309	-5.087	0.000	-0.420	-0.275	-0.255
	Likelihood of discrimination	3.154E-02	0.021	0.093	1.505	0.133	0.311	0.084	0.075
	Personal EO level	-0.187	0.084	-0.136	-2.229	0.026	-0.331	-0.124	-0.112
	Equity sensitivity	7.231E-02	0.137	0.027	0.529	0.597	0.033	0.030	0.027

As detailed in Table 23, the most useful predictor variable in this set of equality climate variables was organisational egalitarianism which showed a Beta value of -0.311. Organisational egalitarianism uniquely accounted for nearly 7% of the variance (part corr^2). Both organisational egalitarianism and personal equal opportunity level rating made a significant contribution to the prediction of intention to leave but the perceived likelihood of discriminatory practices did not. Possible reasons for this distinction between the equality climate variables are discussed in the following chapter.

On the basis of these results, a further moderated regression analysis was performed to assess whether organisational egalitarianism alone could predict intention to leave and whether equity sensitivity would moderate the prediction. Results are detailed in Table 24.

Table 24: H₄ moderated regression 1 summary (intention to leave & organisational egalitarianism)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	C h a n g e S t a t i s t i c s				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	0.422 ^a	0.178	0.176	1.23	0.178	72.514	1	334	0.000
2	0.422 ^b	0.178	0.174	1.23	0.000	0.039	1	333	0.844
3	0.423 ^c	0.179	0.171	1.23	0.000	0.017	1	332	0.895

a Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism

b Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity

c Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity, product (egalitarianism x equity sensitivity)

Results indicated that organisational egalitarianism uniquely accounted for 17.8% of the variance (R^2) but there was no significant change (R^2 change) achieved by the addition of equity sensitivity. The addition of the product also resulted in no significant change. It was therefore concluded that equity sensitivity did not moderate the relationship between intention to leave and organisational egalitarianism.

1.4.2 Regression 2 Perceived Workgroup Effectiveness

Table 25: H₄ regression 2 summary (workgroup effectiveness & equality climate)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	0.329a	0.108	0.100	3.5588	0.108	13.392	3	331	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, personal EO level rating, EO climate (likelihood of discrimination)

Results illustrated in Table 25 indicated that the equality climate variables of organisational egalitarianism, equal opportunity climate (likelihood of discrimination) and personal equal opportunity level rating together accounted for 11% in the perceived workgroup effectiveness. Of these variables, perceived egalitarianism, with a Beta value of 0.209, was again the most useful predictor, and accounted for approximately 3% of the variance, as summarised in Table 26.

Table 26: H₄ multiple regression 2 results (workgroup performance & EO climate)

Model		Unstandardised Co-efficients		Standardised Co-efficients	t	Sig	Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	17.120	1.571		10.899	0.000			
	Personal EO level	0.242	0.239	0.064	1.0009	0.314	0.244	0.055	0.052
	Likelihood of discrimination	-0.113	0.059	-0.122	-1.924	0.055	-0.257	-0.105	-0.100
	Organisational egalitarianism	0.118	0.035	0.209	3.331	0.001	0.300	0.180	0.173

Dependent Variable: perceived workgroup effectiveness

Using organisational egalitarianism as the predictor variable, a moderated regression analysis was performed to assess the change in prediction of perceived workgroup effectiveness attained by adding a measure of equity sensitivity. The R² value indicated that perceived egalitarianism uniquely accounted for 7.6% of the variance (see Table 27). Adding equity sensitivity did not improve the prediction of workgroup

performance. Equity sensitivity does not moderate the relationship between perceived workgroup effectiveness and organisational egalitarianism.

Table 27: H₄ moderated regression 2 results (workgroup performance & organisational egalitarianism)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	C h a n g e S t a t i s t i c s				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	0.276 ^a	0.076	0.073	3.5745	0.076	27.365	1	333	0.000
2	0.286 ^b	0.082	0.076	3.5686	0.006	2.099	1	332	0.148
3	0.288 ^c	0.083	0.075	3.5712	0.001	0.521	1	331	0.471

a Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism

b Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity

c Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity, product (egalitarianism x equity sensitivity)

1.4.3 Regression 3 Organisational Commitment

Regression 3 used multiple regression analysis to assess whether organisational commitment could be predicted from the equality climate variables and a moderated regression analysis to assess whether the prediction would be moderated by equity sensitivity.

Table 28: H₄ regression 3 summary (organisational commitment & equality climate)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	C h a n g e S t a t i s t i c s				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	0.546 ^a	0.299	0.292	6.9450	0.299	46.835	3	330	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, personal EO level, EO climate (likelihood of discrimination)

According to the results illustrated in Table 28, equal opportunity variables together accounted for an enormous 30% of the variance in organisational commitment. Again, perceived egalitarianism was the biggest contributor (B = .317) and uniquely accounted for 7% of the variance, as indicated in Table 29.

Table 29: H₄ multiple regression 3 results (organisational commitment & equality climate)

Model		Unstandardised Co-efficients		Standardised Co-efficients	t	Sig	Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	36.904	3.076		11.998	0.000			
	Personal EO level	1.148	0.469	0.134	2.450	0.015	0.382	0.134	0.133
	Likelihood of discrimination	-0.451	0.115	-0.218	-3.924	0.000	-0.433	-0.211	-0.181
	Organisational egalitarianism	0.402	0.070	0.317	5.773	0.000	0.482	0.303	0.266

Dependent Variable: organisational commitment

Using perceived egalitarianism as the predictor variable, a moderated regression was computed to assess whether equity sensitivity moderated the relationship between perceived egalitarianism and organisational commitment. Table 30 details the moderated regression results.

Table 30: H₄ moderated regression 3 results (organisational commitment & organisational egalitarianism)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.479 ^a	0.230	0.228	7.3029	0.230	98.809	1	331	0.000
2	0.480 ^b	0.230	0.226	7.3116	0.000	0.211	1	330	0.647
3	0.484 ^c	0.234	0.227	7.3064	0.003	1.470	1	329	0.226

a Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism

b Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity

c Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity, product (egalitarianism x equity sensitivity)

Perceived organisational egalitarianism accounted for 23% of the variance but this was not significantly improved by the addition of equity sensitivity. Data suggested that equity sensitivity did not moderate the relationship between organisational egalitarianism and organisational commitment.

1.4.4 Regression 4 Job Satisfaction

Regression 4 assessed whether job satisfaction could be predicted from the equal opportunity climate variables. Results, detailed in Table 31, revealed that equality climate variables together accounted for a considerable amount (22%) of the variance in job satisfaction.

Table 31: H₄ regression 4 summary (job satisfaction & equality climate)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	0.467a	0.218	0.211	0.99	0.218	31.078	3	335	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), egalitarianism, personal EO level, EO climate (likelihood of discrimination)

Again, perceived organisational egalitarianism was the biggest contributor ($B = 0.361$) and uniquely accounted for 9% of the variance, as illustrated in Table 32.

Table 32: H₄ multiple regression 4 results (job satisfaction & equality climate)

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	1.650	0.463		3.781	0.000			
	Personal EO level	0.144	0.066	0.127	2.167	0.031	0.325	0.118	0.105
	Likelihood of discrimination	-1.43E-02	0.016	-0.52	-0.871	0.384	-0.293	-0.048	-0.042
	Organisational egalitarianism	6.101E-02	0.010	0.361	6.175	0.000	0.447	0.320	0.298

Dependent Variable: overall job satisfaction

Using perceived egalitarianism as the predictor variable, a moderated regression was computed to assess whether equity sensitivity moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and perceived organisational egalitarianism. Results are illustrated in Table 33.

Table 33: H₄ moderated regression 4 results (job satisfaction & organisational egalitarianism)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	C h a n g e S t a t i s t i c s				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change
1	0.447 ^a	0.200	0.197	.99	0.200	83.655	1	335	0.000
2	0.450 ^b	0.203	0.198	.99	0.003	1.252	1	334	0.264
3	0.451 ^c	0.203	0.196	.99	0.000	0.150	1	333	0.699

a Predictors (Constant), egalitarianism

b Predictors (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity

c Predictors (Constant), egalitarianism, equity sensitivity, product (egalitarianism x equity sensitivity)

Perceived organisational egalitarianism accounted for 20% of the variance but again this was not significantly improved by the addition of equity sensitivity. Data suggested that equity sensitivity did not moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and perceived egalitarianism.

Accordingly, stage one of hypothesis 4, that business outcome variables were predicted by equality climate, was accepted but the second stage of hypothesis 4, that the predictions were moderated by equity sensitivity, was rejected.

Chapter 14

Study Three Discussion

Overall, results were quite encouraging and may provide some support for the business case for equality of opportunity. The strongest relationship revealed through the analysis appeared to be that between organisational commitment and perceived organisational egalitarianism. The potential power of organisational egalitarianism in predicting equality business case outcome variables was perhaps the most remarkable finding in this study but other results also suggested support for the literature.

The results from the present study supported hypothesis 1, that the perception of a high likelihood of discrimination occurring was inversely related to equal opportunity level rating. This result seemed to indicate that equal opportunity was understood in terms of perceived discrimination, as the legal compliance equal opportunity literature had suggested (e.g. Liff, 1999). Although a two-tailed test was used, the likelihood of this being a type II error was considered low. Common sense tells us that these concepts are related, the statistical results here confirmed the relationship and the relationship was also supported by the qualitative research results of Studies One and Two.

Hypothesis 2, that perceived equality climate was related to the job attitude outcome variables, was also accepted. Hypothesis 2 results mirrored those of the qualitative data collected from Study One, where participants talked of a general sense of fairness (i.e. organisational egalitarianism) being more important than equal opportunity. This was backed up by the statistical analysis, with the strongest relationships being that of organisational commitment and perceived egalitarianism. The correlations with perceived egalitarianism were consistently stronger than those of equal opportunity variables and outcome variables.

Hypotheses 3a and 3b, that there would be gender differences in the perception of equality climate and the business case outcome variables was rejected because the

statistical analysis did not reveal gender to be a significant function. It had been suggested in the literature that men and women perceive organisational equality differently, with men being more likely to rate the equality climate as acceptable than women (e.g. Cockburn, 1991). Alternatively the lack of significant results here may have been due to a male backlash cancelling out the gender effect because if men viewed the equality climate as being positively discriminatory, then they may have rated the equal opportunity climate as poor, just as women had rated it poorly because they had perceived a high level of discrimination to be occurring. Perhaps a follow up qualitative study could have clarified the reasons behind the lack of significant gender differences. Of course, it could simply be that there were no gender differences because employees, whatever their gender, perceived their working environment similarly to one another.

The business case argued that a better equal opportunity climate reduces attrition, increases job satisfaction, increases organisational commitment and increases organisational effectiveness. Hypothesis 4 results suggested that these business case outcome variables could be predicted from perceived equality climate. This finding held regardless of the equity sensitivity category of the participants. Equity sensitivity did not add anything to the predictive value of the equality climate variables.

1 EQUALITY CLIMATE VARIABLES

The correlation results suggested that equality and egalitarianism were related but distinct concepts, which fitted well with the qualitative findings that participants tended to distinguish between a sense of general fairness and equal opportunity per se. Alternatively it could be interpreted that equality and egalitarianism are such related concepts that they are one and the same thing and that it was only experimental error that prevented a perfect correlation between the two variables, or that they are entirely distinct concepts and only experimental error produced a significant correlation between the variables. Time and time again however, perceived organisational egalitarianism provided a better predictor of outcome variables than equal opportunity variables did. It

seemed logical therefore to accept that participants were distinguishing between egalitarianism and equal opportunity.

The equal opportunity variables (personal and general ratings of equal opportunity level and the MEOCS-based equal opportunity climate measuring the perceived likelihood of discrimination) showed very little difference in their predictive and contributive values and could be used interchangeably in most instances. An exception to this was found in hypothesis 4 results, which showed that both organisational egalitarianism and personal equal opportunity level rating made a significant contribution to the prediction of intention to leave but the perceived likelihood of discriminatory practices did not. If this result was due to anything other than experimental error, it may have represented a shift in perception from general fairness (egalitarianism and overall equality climate) to specific equal opportunity behaviours (perceived likelihood of discrimination). Results from the qualitative Study One suggested that participants perceived discrimination as something that happened to other people, something that they personally were not affected by. It may follow then, that the perceived likelihood of discrimination would have little personal relevance to participants but that the intention to leave an organisation and general equality climate would have personal relevance.

Egalitarianism revealed itself to be a good predictor of the business case outcome variables. When personal equal opportunity level ratings, the perceived likelihood of discrimination occurring and egalitarianism were fed into an equation to predict intention to leave, 20% of the variance was accounted for. Egalitarianism by itself accounted for 17.8% of the variance in intention to leave.

The major finding of this whole research project was that organisational egalitarianism appeared to be a stronger influencing factor on the business case variables than the factors traditionally associated with equality of opportunity, namely discrimination and the concept of equal opportunity itself as understood by most employees. The importance of egalitarianism was found both qualitatively and quantitatively in this research project, suggesting that a robust finding. There is also some support in the literature for perceived fairness being very important in terms of organisational behaviours. For example, Moorman (1991) suggested that fairness perceptions were instrumental in predicting citizenship behaviours, concluding that managers should be

aware of the importance of treating their employees fairly, and Konovsky & Organ (1996: 253) suggested that “fairness cognitions underlie much of the variance in measure of job satisfaction, and perceived fairness promotes the trust by which participants enter into noncontractual exchange with the organization and/or its agents.”

That there were any significant correlations resulting from Study Three starts to build some evidence for the business case for equal opportunities because the results indicated an association between the perceived level of fairness and equality in the workplace and employee job attitudes. The job attitude variables researched in this study had already been shown to be related to organisational effectiveness, for example, Angle & Perry (1981) reported that organisational commitment was associated with organisational effectiveness in terms of turnover, adaptability and tardiness rate at the organisational level. In this manner, the perception of equality and egalitarianism contribute to organisational effectiveness, i.e. tentative support for the business case.

2 OUTCOME VARIABLES

2.1 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has consistently been shown to be inversely related to turnover (e.g. Porter & Steers, 1973). If turnover is expensive for organisations, and Pfeffer (1994) indicated that gaining competitive advantage through your human resource relied on retaining your workforce for as long as possible, then job satisfaction forms an important element of the business case for equality of opportunity. Job satisfaction was shown in this study to be significantly correlated with perceived equality climate and this may therefore indicate some degree of support for the business case for equality. Of course categorical statements of association cannot be made on the basis of this research study alone but other researchers have also found this to be a significant association. For example Miller et al. reported that high job satisfaction was a consequence of being provided with ‘complete equal employment opportunity’ (Miller et al., 1993: 36) and Witt (1991) reported that the perception of equal opportunity was significantly related to job satisfaction, so the findings reported here can be understood

to support previous research suggesting job satisfaction is related to the perception of equality opportunity.

2.2 Organisational Commitment

Organisational Commitment was shown to be related to egalitarianism and equality in this sample. In fact the strongest result of Study Three was the relationship between perceived organisational egalitarianism and organisational commitment. Previous research (e.g. Angle & Perry, 1991; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Leung, 1997) has suggested that organisational commitment is associated with organisational effectiveness, for example through reduced attrition levels, and therefore is relevant to the business case. If organisational egalitarianism may be used to predict organisational commitment then this opens a window of opportunity for organisations to maximise their gain by managing employee perceptions of fairness. Again, although this study alone cannot claim to provide concrete evidence for the business case, it contributes to the possibility of a business case for equality existing.

2.3 Attrition

The Industrial Relations Services (IRS) Management Review in April 1999 reported that 69% of organisations have encountered staff retention problems. Results from Holtermann's (1995) study suggested that the intention to leave an organisation may be reduced simply by the perception of good equal opportunity climate. Of course the intention to leave an organisation may be influenced by many factors but research suggests that equity plays a part in the process. For example, the perception of inequity is recognised as a predictor variable of employee turnover and is related to intention to leave (e.g. Van Yperen et al., 1996; Mowday, 1991). From the opposite angle, the impact of equity perception was found to be a predictor variable of intention to stay by Berg (1991).

It would appear on the basis of the findings reported here that perceived equality climate is a factor in intention to leave. Both organisational egalitarianism and personal equal opportunity level rating made a significant contribution to the prediction of intention to leave in this study, suggesting again that equality climate may be a factor in attrition

levels. If this finding is robust, it adds more weight to the business case for equality, assuming that high attrition is undesirable to an organisation.

One further, slightly obscure, variable proposed to affect turnover is the source of referral. People introduced informally rather than via advertisements and agencies, tend to have lower turnover (Mobley, 1982). If this is the case, it adds further weight to the necessity of an organisation maintaining a good reputation with its staff and community. Again, this adds to the business case, albeit in a perverse fashion, particularly since fair recruitment practices rarely complement informal referrals.

Further support for equality climate influencing the intention to leave an organisation may be found in ecological dissonance theory. Developed by Miller et al. (1989), ecological dissonance is essentially a cross between Barker's (1968) ecological theory and cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). It was offered as a theoretical explanation for "many of the phenomena associated with the concept of organisational climate" (Miller et al., 1990: 166) and is said to exist "when two or more environmental systems conflict or when one or more personal subsystems conflict with one or more environmental systems. (Miller et al. 1990: 164). One way to reduce that conflict is to leave the organisation. Hooper et al. (1989: 1238) stated that "ecological dissonance would predict that climates with high levels of sexism will be characterised by, among other things,....high turnover." Study Three results appear to support these claims in so far as equality climate was associated with intention to leave.

Ultimately though, ecological dissonance despite the impressive name, boils down to a name for the tension created by an inequitable situation and therefore adds little value to the literature. For example, Berg (1991) and Van Yperen et al. (1996) mentioned previously, researched reactions to perceived inequity perfectly adequately without recourse to ecological dissonance theory.

2.4 Perceived Work Group Performance

The business case suggests that an equality climate will result in improved organisational performance. Measurement of performance in terms of share price on the stock market for example have been researched previously (Wright et al., 1995), or

in terms of team creativity and diversity (e.g. Robinson & Dechant, 1997) but such measures were not practicable within the scope of this research project. A self-reported measure of perceived work-group performance was however included to give some indication of whether participants associated performance with equality climate.

Workgroup performance, with a correlation co-efficient of 0.287, was significantly but not highly correlated with equality climate variables in this study.

Job satisfaction is thought to be related to performance to some degree (e.g. Schneider & Schmidt, 1986; Ostroff, 1992) so it could be that organisational performance may be improved through job satisfaction and organisational commitment reducing the costs associated with high attrition levels, rather than by workgroup effectiveness.

It cannot be concluded that workgroup performance is associated with equal opportunity from the results reported here however it may be an area worthy of further investigation.

3 MODERATOR VARIABLES

3.1 Equity Sensitivity

Study Three sample produced a normal distribution curve on the Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI) scores using the sample specific conceptual breakpoints categorisation rule suggested by King, Miles & Day, 1993; Huseman et al., 1985 and Miles et al., 1989. Approximately 25% of the sample were classified as entitled, approximately 50% were classified as equity sensitive and 25% were classified as benevolent. This result offers possible additional support to the use of sample specific conceptual breakpoints.

Support for the hypothesis that equity sensitivity would moderate the relationship between the equality variables and the outcome variables was not offered by these results however. Equity sensitivity did not make any significant difference to any of the relationships in this research study. Although it has been used across a number of

organisational variables (e.g. O'Neill & Mone, 1998) it was not a useful measure in this instance.

This was slightly surprising since similar individual difference factors like exchange ideology have been shown to moderate the relationships of EO perceptions with job satisfaction and perceptions of procedural justice (Witt, 1991). Exchange ideology concerns the reciprocity of the relationship between an organisation and an individual and is rather similar to the concept of equity sensitivity. 'High exchange ideology' may be applied to individuals whose effort depends on what the organisation gives them, 'low exchange ideology' to individuals whose effort is independent of organisational reinforcement. Witt (1991) also reported that the perception of equal opportunity accounted for greater variance in job satisfaction among people with high exchange ideology, than people with low exchange ideology. The similarity with equity sensitivity stops there however because exchange ideology orientation did moderate the relationship between equal opportunity perceptions with job satisfaction but equity sensitivity did not. This may be interpreted in different ways: exchange ideology and equity sensitivity both sound like dispositional variables in that they predict how individuals may react to particular situations. Therefore a finding that exchange ideology moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and organisational climate would indicate that evidence for the dispositional job satisfaction argument. Alternatively, it would make common sense that people who alter their behaviour according to how much they feel their organisation gives them are reacting to their situation and therefore are providing support for the situational job satisfaction argument. Equally, equity sensitivity having no effect would suggest that job satisfaction is situational because the relationship between perceived equal opportunity climate and job satisfaction would have been moderated if it was dispositional.

This study was not the first to find no effect due to equity sensitivity. King & Hinson (1994), for example, found that equity sensitivity was not significantly correlated with satisfaction and although in this instance the study was looking at bargaining behaviour, it appears that equity sensitivity, despite being used fairly widely, does not seem to transfer from theoretical model to academic support or practical reality. This is not the first criticism of the equity sensitivity construct. Greenberg (1990: 414) described

equity sensitivity as “seriously flawed in its derivation”, suggesting instead that situational factors are the variables influencing individual behaviour, not equity sensitivity. Whilst equity sensitivity researchers defended it (e.g. King & Hinson, 1994), the results are not overwhelming in their support for the construct. Equity sensitivity theory predicted that benevolent individuals report higher job satisfaction, which links into dispositional theories of job satisfaction, as proposed by Staw and colleagues (e.g. Staw et al., 1986). Dispositional meaning, as described in Chapter 1 means that job satisfaction is a genetically linked predisposition refined by life experience. King & Hinson (1994: 621) described the lack of significance for the correlation between job satisfaction, negotiation and equity sensitivity as “intriguing” in the light of previous research which had found significant relationships (e.g. Huseman et al., 1985; King et al., 1993).

Possible explanations for this include that equity sensitivity simply does not have any moderating effect or that the research design was insufficiently robust to see an effect, or that the sample size was too small, or that equity sensitivity is a moderator of equity but not equality.

The link between equity sensitivity and the dispositional versus situational arguments is interesting however and perhaps a different measure of individual difference would be more appropriate for further research along these lines. Certainly further research into equity sensitivity is required before any concrete conclusions can be drawn.

For example, The Workplace Prejudice / Discrimination Inventory (WPDI) (James, Lovato & Cropanzano 1994: 1579) was developed as part of a larger study looking at work stress and health. They included in their research a measure of dispositional expressiveness, an “individuals’ inclination to strongly experience and forcefully express reactions to the social environment. Assuming validity of our inventory, prejudice / discrimination scores should be uncorrelated with expressiveness. Expressiveness was measured using Riggio’s (1986) Social Skills Inventory (SSI) and results followed their prediction.

Although theirs was a preliminary study with a small and exclusively minority ethnic sample, it may be that this would be a more useful measure. Indeed the authors

concluded that it would be worthwhile to study perceptions of prejudice/discrimination and include further measures along the lines of this research, naming perceptions of organisational fairness, satisfaction and commitment, turnover, absenteeism and health problems as possibilities for further investigation.

In terms of the business case for equal opportunity, it is encouraging that a situational slant may be applied to job satisfaction because no gain would be made by improving the equal opportunity climate if job satisfaction was entirely dispositional. Even staunch supporters of the dispositional argument (for example, Staw, 1986) concede that there will be both a situational and a dispositional element to job satisfaction however so it we may continue to promote job satisfaction as an organisational and individual benefit of equality. To this, egalitarianism must be added. The research showed that perceived fairness and egalitarianism were stronger predictors of outcome variables than perceived equal opportunity climate.

3.1 Gender & Ethnicity

Study Three results indicated that there were no significant differences in perception of the equal opportunity climate or in the relationship between equal opportunity climate and the outcome variables attributable to gender. It may have been anticipated that gender would have moderated some of the relationships. Maddock & Parkin (1993), for example, suggested that women were more aware of gender culture at work because of the restrictions it placed on them. It was particularly surprising that there was no gender difference on the job satisfaction variable since there have been consistent gender differences found in previous literature, which suggested that women are more benevolent (e.g. King & Hinson, 1994) and that in general women report higher levels of job satisfaction (e.g. Hakim, 1991; Parker et al., 1997). Hakim reported that, "there is a solid body of evidence reporting a long-standing pattern of high levels of reported job and pay satisfaction among women compared with men. Given the marked discrepancies in occupational status and earnings between men and women, even *equal* levels of job satisfaction would be surprising and contrary to expectation." (Hakim, 1991: 102). This type of finding starts to reveal just how complex job attitudes are. Clearly job satisfaction is about more than pay or status reward. This may in part

explain why equity sensitivity did not moderate any relationships here, if equity sensitivity was essentially designed to measure the equitableness of reward.

It would have been interesting to see if the same was true for ethnicity. There is some evidence in the literature to suggest that minority ethnic employees will have different perceptions from majority group members, commonly reporting higher levels of perceived discrimination (e.g. Dansby & Landis, 1991; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Cox, 1993; Greenhaus et al., 1990; Jones, 1986; Ohlott et al., 1994).

James et al. (1994) however did not find any significant differences in the perception of prejudice / discrimination attributable to ethnicity, although, by their own admission their cell sizes were too small to check for inter-unit interactions. They called for “additional studies with larger samples and across organizations with a variety of racial climates are needed to determine whether minority individuals generally perceive higher levels of workplace bias.” (James et al., 1994: 1588).

It is also unwise to treat all minority ethnic employees as a homogeneous group and an analysis on the basis of minority/majority with the small sample available in this study would not permit any breakdown of the minority ethnic groups. It was not possible to test these theories due to the very small number of minority ethnic participants in this study. This was disappointing especially since the literature suggests that the perceived discrimination levels being higher for the minority ethnic employee may be moderated by the racial composition of the workgroup (Parker, 1974). Further, the body of literature in this field is lacking the perspective of the minority ethnic employee and it would have been desirable to redress this in some manner. Mamman (1996: 449) described this situation eloquently, “most effort seems to have concentrated on how organizations can take advantage of workforce diversity.....or how the dominant group in the workplace can adapt to the changes affecting the work setting.....limited attention has been paid to how diverse work employees can adapt to the heterogeneity of the workforce.”

Mamman produced a diagram illustrated in Figure 33, showing the factors that can impinge on a diverse employee’s “interaction adjustment” of a diverse employee which mirrored many of the variables that were tackled in this research project. Ideally, the

perspective of minority ethnic employees would have been better represented in Study Three.

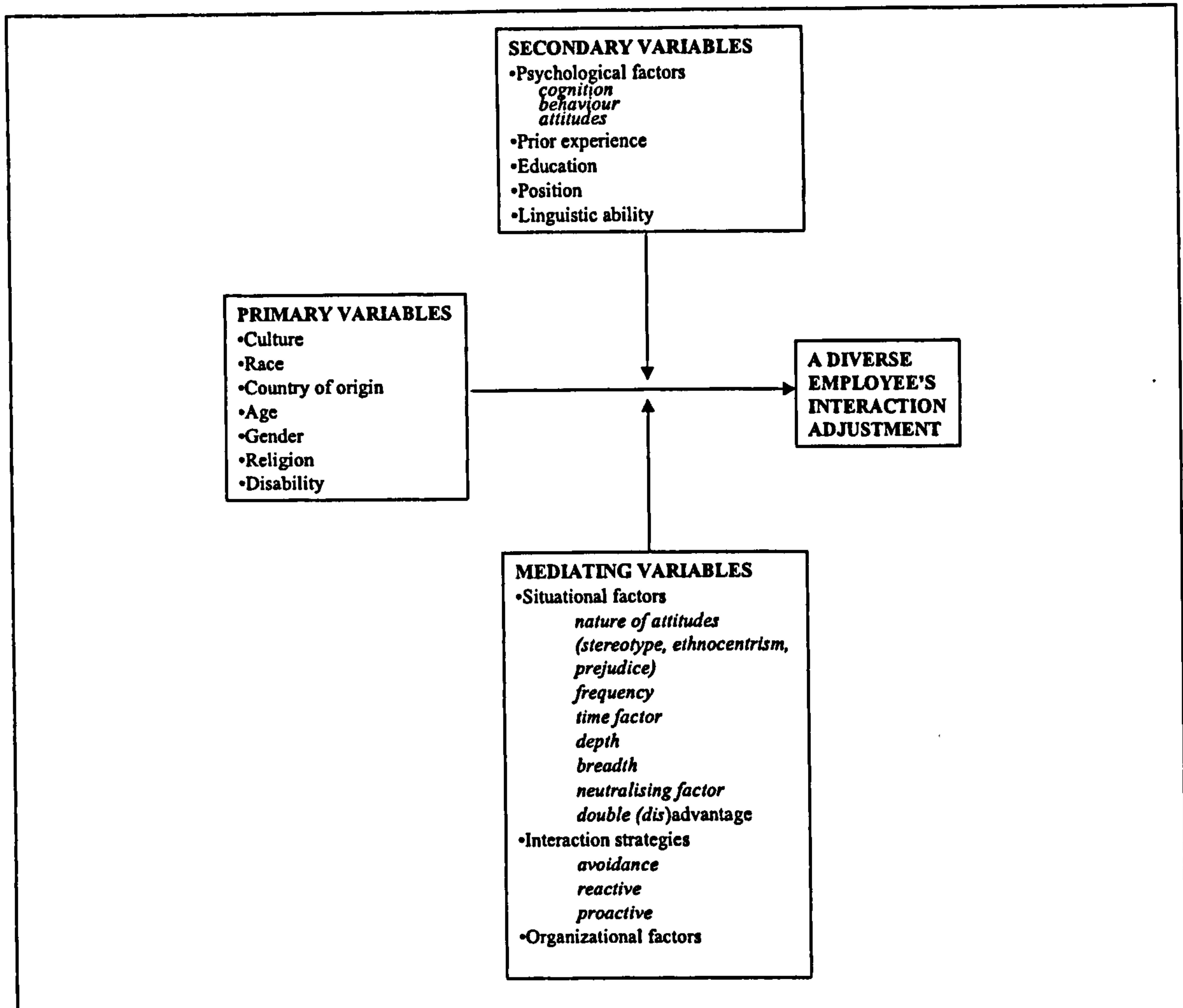


Figure 33: A schematic representation of factors that can impinge on a diverse employee's interaction adjustment (Mamman 1996)

In summary, Study Three results do appear to offer some limited support for the business case for equal opportunities. The results do not tell the whole picture however and there are plenty of veins of future research to exhaust before it could be concluded that there is a business case for equality of opportunity.

Chapter 15

Conclusions & Recommendations

1 LESSONS LEARNT

1.1 Perceptions of Equal Opportunity

Study Three results indicated that the perception of equal opportunity, equity and egalitarianism all contribute to the perception of an equal opportunity climate. Statistical analysis showed the strongest relationships to involve organisational egalitarianism rather than equal opportunity. Similarly participants from Study One perceived a general sense of fairness (i.e. organisational egalitarianism) to be more important than equal opportunity per se.

In part this finding may be explained by the common misconception that equal opportunity is about positive discrimination. This association appeared to result in participants distancing themselves from equal opportunity programmes to avoid accusations of holding their position on the basis of their social group membership rather than on merit. This type of finding is particularly prevalent in the literature concerning women or minority ethnic managers and is especially relevant for minority ethnic women managers (e.g. Davidson, 1997), where 'tokenism' means that the individual becomes perceived as a representative of their social group rather than an individual employee. This tends to result in employees feeling they have to prove they hold their position on merit and not as a token, a coping strategy tagged 'overfunctioning' by Cassell & Walsh (1997) with reference to gender management strategies.

Equal opportunities arose from a desire for 'justice' or 'fairness' (Rennie, 1993). If the people participating in Study One were at all representative of popular view, it seems that over time this essence of fairness may be eroded and replaced by the perception that equal opportunity is only about women, minority groups, targets and quotas.

Positive action was perceived as being synonymous with positive discrimination by many of Study One participants and, because positive action has become an orthodox component of equal opportunity, equality of opportunity has come to mean positive discrimination. Each new development in the legislative framework of equal opportunity, for example age discrimination codes of practice and new legislation regarding gender reassignment appear to reinforce the belief that equal opportunity is about other people, rather than a simple premise of fair and just treatment for everybody. This type of perception may be an inherent problem with the legislative approach, which seems to imply that equality is something to be granted by law. As Thomas (1990: 109) said, “so long as racial and gender equality is something we grant to minorities and women, there will be no racial and gender equality.”

1.2 Managing Diversity

Diversity management approaches seemed to offer a way of redressing this shift of emphasis but diversity management was poorly understood by the participants in Study One and actively supported by only two of the participants in Study Two, both of them working as diversity consultants.

Noel (1994) called for an examination of the conceptualisation of equal opportunities. She stated that the meaning and application of equal opportunity needed to be explored more deeply if it was to have any meaningful impact on organisations in the future. From the results of the qualitative studies here it appeared that the same may be true of diversity management.

Liff's (1999) call for a constructive compromise between equal opportunity and management of diversity seems, to the author, the most logical path forward. There is something to be offered by each approach and forcing a distinction between the two may cloud the fact that the ultimate goal, genuine equality, is the same even if they underlying philosophy means that the path to achieving it is different. It is hoped that this research has started to provide some insight into how equal opportunity was conceptualised by a sample of employees, employers and practitioners at a snapshot in time.

Liff's (1999) argument for a constructive compromise seems plausible. As with Jewson & Mason's (1986) distinction between liberal and radical approaches to equal opportunity, the liberal approach is framed as meritocratic, the radical approach as taking positive action to ensure equal outcomes, but is there a practical reason why the two cannot work together? Taking a liberal approach does not have to mean that equality is already assumed, as it was characterised by Liff & Aitkenhead (1992) for example. Redressing current imbalances requires meritocratic processes to be in place and is a long and slow process. Equal outcomes, as discussed by Hakim (1991) may not even be a desirable goal. Managing diversity could be construed as an approach that combined the liberal and radical approaches, if, and admittedly it is a big if, the radical approach does not necessarily entail positive action. Otherwise, managing diversity initiatives may be seen in the same light as liberal equal opportunity approaches and are likely to fail for the same reasons, i.e. it is difficult to consider suitability in isolation from social group membership and, as Cockburn (1991) suggested, it may be desirable to take social group membership into account in some circumstances. In the case of disability, the Disability Discrimination Act requires that group membership infers special treatment, in the form of 'reasonable adjustment'.

Cockburn (1991) suggested moving forward from the dichotomy by reconsidering the structural elements of a job that may impose more restrictions on some groups rather than others, e.g. insisting a job be a full-time post rather than considering more flexible options. However, it could be argued that Cockburn's third way is the same thing as a thorough liberal approach. If removing barriers to ensure principles of merit and suitability may flourish can include an examination of the institutionalised elements of an organisation, then there is really no need for a third approach and outcomes will inevitably become more equal, satisfying more parties than are currently satisfied. Again though, the question is, although it may be morally desirable to achieve this, will it be a commercially sound decision?

2 FUTURE INFLUENCES & DIRECTIONS

Forcing a dichotomy between management of diversity and equal opportunities is probably not the best way to progress and this has been recognised by various parties. Concerns from the Commission for Racial Equality, for example, that discrimination on the grounds of social group membership may be ignored through a diversity approach have led the Institute for Personnel and Development to suggest that diversity initiatives can build on equality initiatives, i.e. a compromise position.

At the time of conducting this research, the practitioners were concerned with differentiating, or assimilating, the two practices of equal opportunities and management of diversity. The argument for management of diversity being that it was perceived as applicable to more people whereas equal opportunities was perceived as applicable only to women and minority ethnic people. Progress in the world of business organisations was argued for along one of these lines, probably with diversity management winning because of its all-inclusive emphasis. This would help to make it acceptable to a wider audience, easier to sell, and taken on in larger numbers.

Both of these viewpoints however seem slightly narrow in their outlook. It seems quite possible that the largest influence on whether or not UK business organisations actively embrace equality will be the advances in legislation like the Human Rights Act. On an anecdotal level, the Macpherson report and has resulted in a large increase in the number of enquiries received by the author about equality programmes available. It is easy to extrapolate that the same will be true of the Race Relations Amendment Bill.

2.1 Discrimination Law

The biggest motivation for employers interviewed as part of this research project was the desire and necessity to operate within the legislative requirements and therefore avoid any costly tribunals or negative publicity.

Employers are rightly concerned about their legal obligations because discrimination law makes them liable for their employees as well as their organisation. An act of discrimination by an employee "in the course of his employment shall be treated for the

purpose[s] of [the SDA and RRA] as done by his employer as well as by him, whether or not it was done with the employer's knowledge or approval." (Section 41 (1) Sex Discrimination Act and Section 32 (1) Race Relations Act. Any employer will find it very hard to defend themselves from legal action without a comprehensive equal opportunity policy being actively implemented.

2.1.1 Legislation Developments

Discrimination law is set to change radically in the next few years and a different approach to discrimination law will be inevitable. With the advent of the Human Rights Act 1998, which came into force in October 2000, for example, international human rights and equality issues are absolutely under the spotlight. Discrimination lawyers are working away to update legislation to reflect the UK's new obligations under international human rights law.

2.2 Promoting Equality

If the power of legislation is already enough to be the main motivation behind employers investing in equal opportunity, then it must make sense to promote it on these grounds. There may be a business case, as suggested by this research project but it does not have the sweeping power that legislative requirement does. As Rubenstein (1987) asserted, employers will continue to discriminate until it costs them more to discriminate than it does not to. Perhaps that time has arrived.

If the ethics of promoting equality on legal grounds are not appealing, then it is possible to promote equality on the grounds of the business case. However as a profession, we need to re-assess the employment relation and identify more specifically what we are talking about rather than alluding to obscure and intangible possible outcomes. For example, when we talk about 'effectively managing the full potential of your workforce' in terms of positive business outcomes, it would be a tremendous step forward to stipulate exactly what the input and outcomes are likely to be. This may mean running a cost analysis on a case by case basis as suggested by Holtermann (1995) but of course this runs the risk of cherry-picking the elements of equal opportunity programmes that will bring the greatest return to the organisation, at the expense of the

less cost-effective elements, as suggested by Dickens (1994). The answer then, is that equal opportunity for employers is question of what type of organisation you want to be, as suggested by participant 25 in Study Two.

3 POLICY, PERCEPTION, PRACTICE AND PUBLICITY

Those organisations operating within a framework of equality would be well advised to check that their culture is supporting the equality framework. Participants in Study One were not convinced by a paper policy that did not translate into everyday activities. The difference between a formal commitment to equality and the culture supporting or hindering that commitment was also a feature of the literature in this field (e.g. Liff, 1999; Cassell & Walsh, 1997).

The business case for equality rests on employees perceiving there to be an equal opportunity or egalitarian climate but Study One results suggested that employees rarely think about equal opportunity unless they are in violation situation. In practical terms then, it may be useful to suggest that good practice guides and management guidelines should include a call to publicise your organisations efforts wherever possible to help create a climate and culture of equality.

4 CONCLUSION

Most businesses agree that they need to be able to recruit and retain the best employees to be competitive. Whether this is achieved by a diverse or homogeneous workforce is not necessarily relevant to employers motivated only by commercial principles. If actively seeking a diverse workforce, there may be additional costs in terms of money and in terms of the additional management skills required to successfully manage a diverse workforce (e.g. Prasad et al., 1997) and the primary question for commercially motivated organisations will inevitably be whether the costs incurred pursuing a diversity programme will be recouped. Humphries & Rubery's (1995) collection of articles about the economics of equal opportunity concluded that the pursuit of equal

opportunity and economic efficiency are not necessarily mutually exclusive but the evidence to support such claims is not always clear cut.

Equality practitioners and agencies actively promote the idea that equality is good for business yet the business case is not clear cut. This research project has suggested a positive association between the perception of equality climate and organisational commitment, job satisfaction, workgroup performance and a negative association with intention to leave an organisation. Results also suggested that these outcome variables were better predicted by perceived organisational egalitarianism than by perceived equal opportunity climate. The implication would appear to be that fairness is more important than equality per se for employees although the concepts are related. The lesson to be learned here may be that any programme of equality should be presented in terms of fairness in order for the programme to make maximum impact on measurable outcome variables.

This research increases the plausibility of a business case with reference to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, workgroup performance and turnover. Study Three data confirmed the findings of Studies One and Two and found associations between equality climate and business case outcome variables however these relationships are tentative and have yet to be demonstrated conclusively.

It must be noted also that this research project did not include any quantitative measure of the cost of creating an equal opportunity or egalitarian climate. For an equal opportunity programme to be successful, it must be an integral part of the values, systems and procedures of the organisation. Any organisation that has regard only for profit, to the exclusion of the welfare of their staff, may find that equal opportunity does not make business sense.

Qualitative studies “can reveal much about social processes.....but like all research methods, they have limitations. Prominent among them are the relatively small and homogeneous samples that constitute the subjects of each study.” (Cannon et al., 1991: 237). It would be interesting to see a future research project with a larger sample either qualitatively or quantitatively could clarify the lines of group membership with regard to equal opportunity in a workplace context. Role conflict has already been documented

on the basis of ethnicity and gender versus job role (e.g. Elmes & Connelley, 1997) but it may be that group membership is defined on other grounds. A larger sample may allow analysis by job level or organisational hierarchy for example.

So, is there a business case for equal opportunity? At the final count, the best answer that can be offered is 'sometimes'. Holtermann (1995) recommended a cost analysis on a case by case basis, which in itself is a costly process but there do appear to be a number of ways to gain economic advantage. One employee-friendly way may be to treat employees fairly, as Study One and Three results and researchers such as Bennett et al. (1993) suggested. One less employee-friendly way is to only employ individuals without any special requirements.

Those organisations wanting to invest in an equal opportunity programme may be well advised to follow Holland's (1988) advice. Holland (1988: 18) argued that equality policy should not aim at changing attitudes, since this is too difficult a process, but rather to require particular business standards for equal opportunity, as one would expect health & safety behaviours to be adhered to. This, she contended would help people to relax, "when they realised that their attitudes are not under scrutiny. This is one of the paradoxes about equal opportunity. People perceive and, therefore, resist it as a woolly liberal concept, yet at the same time see it as totalitarian and mutter darkly about the Thought Police."

The authors view has shifted during the process of the research from believing that there is a simple business case for equality to believing that a business case is really not the point of equal opportunity. There is a human right and moral obligation that far supercedes any possible organisational benefits. Similarly, Prasad & Elmes concluded that "the enterprise of diversity management is morally indefensible." (Prasad & Elmes, 1997: 374). Equal opportunity is about the type of organisation that you want to be.

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Appendix 1

Factor & Focus Group Matrix – Initial Design

	No. of groups	Facilitator's gender	Facilitator's ethnicity
WHITE MAJORITY GROUPS			
All Female Groups	2	F	W
	2	M	W
All Male Groups	2	F	W
	2	M	W
Mixed Sex Groups	2	F	W
	2	M	W
Sub – Total	12		
MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS			
All Female Groups	2	F	M/E
	2	M	M/E
All Male Groups	2	F	M/E
	2	M	M/E
Mixed Sex Groups	2	F	M/E
	2	M	M/E
Sub – Total	12		
MIXED ETHNICITY GROUPS			
Mixed Sex & Ethnicity Groups	2	F	M/E
	2	M	M/E
	2	F	W
	2	M	W
Sub –Total	8		
Grand Total of Focus Groups	32		

Key:

M/E = Minority Ethnic participant

W = White participant

F = Female participant

M = Male participants

Appendix 2

The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey

1 MEOCS, MEOCS-LITE, MEOCS-EEO & SUEOCS FACTORS

1.1 Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS)

Factors 1-5 focus on perceptions of EO behaviors within the respondent's unit.

Factor No.	Factor Name/Description
1	<p>Sexual Harassment and (Sex) Discrimination.</p> <p>Perceptions of how extensively sexual harassment and discrimination against women are thought to occur within the respondent's unit.</p>
2	<p>Differential Command Behavior toward Minorities.</p> <p>Perceptions of differential treatment of minority members within the unit (for example, if they are not as likely to be offered opportunities for Service-related schools). The same scale is used as for factor 1.</p>
3	<p>Positive Equal Opportunity Behaviors.</p> <p>Estimates of how well majority members and minority members get along in the unit and how well integrated women and minorities are in the unit's functioning. The scale addresses how frequently positive actions occur and is the same as for factor 1, except the numbers are reversed (i.e., 1 is almost no chance and 5 is a very high chance). Therefore, as with the other factor scores, higher is better.</p>
4	<p>Racist/Sexist Behaviors.</p> <p>This factor taps perceptions of traditional overt racist or sexist behaviors, such as name calling and telling sexist or racist jokes. The same scale is used as for factor 1.</p>
5	<p>"Reverse" Discrimination (I).</p> <p>Measures the extent to which so-called "reverse" discrimination occurs within the unit. The concept of "reverse" discrimination has no legal basis; however, it is a perceptual concern in the minds of many survey respondents, and, as noted sociologist W. I. Thomas has observed, that which is perceived as real is real in its consequences. In the minds of many, "reverse" discrimination is preferential treatment of women or minorities at the expense of white males. This factor focuses on how frequently "reverse" discrimination is thought to occur within the unit. (Factor 10, to be discussed later, measures perceptions of "reverse" discrimination in a broader context.) The same scale is used as for factor 1.</p>

Factors 6-8 measure perceptions of organizational effectiveness (OE). They are not on the same scale as factors 1-5.

Factor No.	Factor Description
6	<p>Commitment.</p> <p>Measures commitment to the organization. A higher score means the respondent identifies with the organization to which he or she is assigned and would like to remain in that organization. Statements reflecting commitment are rated on the following scale:</p>
7	<p>Perceived Work Group Effectiveness.</p> <p>This factor reflects the degree to which the respondent's unit is perceived to be productive and effective in accomplishing its mission. It is measured in the same way as factor 6.</p>
8	<p>Job Satisfaction.</p> <p>Indicates the degree of satisfaction the respondent has with his or her current job. It is measured on the following scale:</p>

Factors 9-11 measure more general attitudes toward EO issues. They reflect perceptions about the Service and society as a whole, and not just within the respondent's specific unit of assignment.

Factor No.	Factor Description
9	<p>Discrimination Against Minorities and Women.</p> <p>In general, how much are minorities and women discriminated against?</p>
10	<p>"Reverse" Discrimination (II).</p> <p>Similar to the concept measured in factor 5, but relating more generally to the Service and the general environment and not just the particular unit of assignment. The same scale is used as for factor 9.</p>
11	<p>Attitudes Toward Racial Separatism.</p> <p>This factor measures how much respondents believe the races should remain separate. It uses the same scale as factor 9.</p>

Factor 12 is an overall, global assessment of EO climate in the unit.

Factor No.	Factor Description
12	<p>Overall EO Climate.</p> <p>This is a global measure of how the respondent views EO within the unit of assignment. It reflects the respondent's rating of the EO climate on the following scale:</p>

1.2 Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey --Less Intensive, Truncated Edition (MEOCS-LITE)

1.2.1 Standard MEOCS Factors Included in MEOCS-LITE

Factor No.	Factor Description
1	Sexual Harassment and Discrimination
2	Differential Command Behavior toward Minorities
3	Positive Equal Opportunity Behaviors
4	Racist/Sexist Behaviors
5	“Reverse” Discrimination I (at the local unit level)
6	Commitment (to the organization)
7	Perceived Work Group Effectiveness
8	Job Satisfaction
12	Overall EO Climate

1.2.1 Standard MEOCS Factors Eliminated from MEOCS-LITE

Factor No.	Factor Description
9	Discrimination toward Minorities and Women (at the global level)
10	“Reverse” Discrimination II (at the global level)
11	(Desire for) Racial Separatism (at the global level)

1.2.3 Additional EO Factors Included in MEOCS-LITE

Factor No.	Factor Description
13	EO Issues. Measures perceptions of how much a concern there is for relationships between various groups, such as men-women, minority-majority, etc.
14	Success of EO Programs. Measures perceptions of how successful the unit has been in dealing with EO issues.
15	Helpfulness of EO Programs. Measures perceptions of whether EO programs have been more helpful or harmful in striving toward EO in the organization.
16	EO Link to Leadership and Readiness Measures perceptions of the need for EO and leadership support for EO in order to get the job done.
32	Relative EO Climate Measures perceptions of the EO climate in the current unit compared to other units the respondent is familiar with.

1.3 Military Equal Employment Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS-EEO)

1.3.1 Standard MEOCS Factors Included in MEOCS-EEO

Factor No.	Factor Description
1	Sexual Harassment and Discrimination
2	Differential Command Behavior toward Minorities
3	Positive Equal Opportunity Behaviors
4	Racist/Sexist Behaviors
5	"Reverse" Discrimination I (at the local unit level)
6	Commitment (to the organization)
7	Perceived Work Group Effectiveness
8	Job Satisfaction
12	Overall EO Climate

1.3.2 Standard MEOCS Factors Eliminated from MEOCS-EEO

Factor No.	Factor Description
9	Discrimination toward Minorities and Women (at the global level)
10	“Reverse” Discrimination II (at the global level)
11	(Desire for) Racial Separatism (at the global level)

1.3.3 Additional OE Factors Included in MEOCS-EEO

Factor No.	Factor Description
17	<p>Work Group Cohesion</p> <p>A measure of how work groups work well together, pull together on projects, and care for and trust each other.</p>
18	<p>Leadership Cohesion</p> <p>Similar to Work Group Cohesion, but focused on how members perceive leaders above them working well together.</p>
19	<p>Trust in the Organization</p> <p>An indicator of how well people perceive the organization as “taking care” of its people.</p>
20	<p>Total Quality Programs</p> <p>Indicator of total quality ideals such as worker empowerment and orientations toward customer satisfaction and continuous improvement.</p>

1.3.4 Additional EEO Factors Included in MEOCS-EEO

Factor No.	Factor Description
21	<p>Age Discrimination</p> <p>Perceptions of whether people are discriminated against because of their age.</p>
22	<p>Religious Discrimination</p> <p>Perceptions of whether people are discriminated against because of their religion.</p>
23	<p>Disability Discrimination</p> <p>Perceptions of whether people are discriminated against because of their disability or handicap.</p>

1.4 Small Units Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (SUEOCS)

1.4.1 Standard MEOCS Factors Included in SUEOCS

Factor No.	Factor Description
6	<p>Commitment (to the organization).</p> <p>Do respondents identify with and want to remain a part of the organization to which they are assigned?</p>
7	<p>Perceived Work Group Effectiveness.</p> <p>To what degree is the respondent's unit perceived to be productive and effective in accomplishing its mission?</p>
8	<p>Job Satisfaction.</p> <p>How satisfied is the respondent with his or her current job?</p>
12	<p>Overall EO Climate.</p>

1.4.2 New EO Factors Included in SUEOCS

Factor No.	Factor Description
24	<p>Personal Sexist Attitudes and Beliefs of the Respondent.</p> <p>To what degree do respondents hold sexist views of women in the Service?</p>
25	<p>Belief in the Existence of "Reverse" Discrimination Within the Unit.</p> <p>Do respondents believe women and minorities might receive unfair advantages over white men in the unit?</p>
26	<p>Belief in the Existence of Unit-Based Differential Command Behavior Toward Women and Minorities.</p> <p>To what degree does the command foster an atmosphere of discrimination?</p>
27	<p>Belief in the Existence of Racist Attitudes in the Unit.</p> <p>Do members in the unit (other than the respondent) hold racist <u>attitudes</u>?</p>
28	<p>Personal Attitude Toward Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Programs and Training.</p> <p>Do respondents personally support standard EO approaches and programs?</p>
29	<p>Belief in the Existence of Racist Behaviors Within the Unit.</p> <p>Do members in the unit (other than the respondent) display racist/sexist <u>behaviors</u>?</p>
30	<p>Belief in the Unit's Acceptance of Diversity.</p> <p>Is the unit (or would it be) a place where minorities and women are accepted as full members?</p>
31	<p>Personal Feelings Regarding Verbal Abuse of Women and Minorities.</p> <p>Are respondents personally offended by racist/sexist jokes, slurs, etc.?</p>

Appendix 3

Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) to Social Atmosphere at Work Survey (SAWS) Factor & Item Adjustment Record

MEOCS core 12 factors	Treatment	End Factor Composition
1. Sexual Harassment and (Sex) Discrimination.	Include but combine with factors 4 & 9.	MEOCS/SAWS
2. Differential Command Behavior toward Minorities.	Translate to management /staff hierarchy	MEOCS/SAWS
3. Positive Equal Opportunity Behaviors.	Translate to perceived equal opportunity policy action – evidence of policy in practice	MEOCS/SAWS
4. Racist/Sexist Behaviors.	Include but combine with factors 1 & 9	MEOCS/SAWS
5. "Reverse" Discrimination (I)	Include but combine with factor 10.	MEOCS/SAWS
6. Commitment.	Exclude – replace with UK version.	UK measure substituted
7. Perceived Work Group Effectiveness	Include	MEOCS
8. Job Satisfaction.	Exclude – replace with UK version	UK measure substituted
9. Discrimination Against Minorities and Women.	Combine with factors 1 & 4	MEOCS/SAWS
10. "Reverse" Discrimination (II).	Combine with factor 5	MEOCS/SAWS
11. Attitudes Toward Racial Separatism.	Replace with opinion of EO grouping practice or mixing work & friends? – add to MEOCS-LITE factor 13	MEOCS/SAWS
12. Overall EO Climate.	Include.	MEOCS

Appendix 4

Social Atmosphere at Work Survey Composition

1 ESTABLISHED SCALES

1.1 Composite Questionnaire Items and Scale Reliability for Established Scales

Scale name	Composite questionnaire item nos.	Scale treatment & reliability
Organisational commitment	$(1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9) / 9$	Alpha = .7862 High score = high commitment Survey items nos. 2, 3 & 7 reverse scored.
Workgroup effectiveness	$(10 + 11 + 12 + 13 + 14) / 5$	Alpha = .8315 High score = high effectiveness No items were reverse scored.
Organisational egalitarianism	$(15 + 16 + 17 + 18 + 19 + 20 + 21 + 22) / 8$	Alpha = .8339 High score = high egalitarianism Survey items nos. 18, 20 & 21 reverse scored.
Equity sensitivity	Entitled category variables: 27a, 28b, 29a, 30b & 31a	Alpha = .7347
	Benevolent category variables: 27b, 28a, 29b, 30a & 31b	Alpha = .7331
	High score = benevolent, medium score = equity sensitive & low score = entitled	

2 NEW SCALES

2.1 Equal Opportunity Climate Sub-Scales

2.1.1 Composite Questionnaire Items and Scale Reliability for New Sub-Scales

Scale name	Composite survey item nos.	Alpha
Sex discrimination	$(32 + 34 + 37 + 41 + 44 + 45) / 6$.8406
Race discrimination	$(42 + 46 + 52 + 55 + 57) / 5$.8648
Overt discrimination	$(35 + 36 + 38 + 43 + 48 + 50 + 56 + 59) / 8$.8490
Global discrimination	$(40 + 53 + 54 + 58) / 4$.8264
Age discrimination	$(33 + 47) / 2$.9007
Sexual orientation discrimination	$(49 + 51) / 2$.8837

2.2 Equal Opportunity Climate Composite Scale

2.2.1 Equal Opportunity Climate Scale Composite Sub-Scales and Reliability

Constituent sub-scales	Alpha
$(\text{Sex discrimination score} + \text{race discrimination score} + \text{overt discrimination score} + \text{global discrimination score} + \text{age discrimination score} + \text{sexual orientation score}) / 6$	0.8933

SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE SURVEY FOR COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS

Appendix 5

Human Factors Group, CoA, Cranfield University

EXPLANATION

Aim

This survey is being conducted to assess the social atmosphere in your organisation and to compare this with individual job attitudes such as job satisfaction.

Information gathered will be used as part of a doctoral research programme concerned with how we perceive our working environment. It is not intended as a comparative measure of your organisation.

Authorisation

Your organisation has agreed to this survey being distributed.

Participation

Response to this survey is voluntary however your response is needed to ensure the validity of the survey. We very much appreciate your participation.

Confidentiality

Do not give your name. All information provided by respondents is **anonymous** and will be treated **confidentially**. The averaged data will be used for analysing the relationship between job attitudes (e.g. job satisfaction) and social climate. No individual responses will be identified, so please feel free to answer honestly.

Definition of language used

This survey includes a section about whether you think you have equal opportunity at work. We are aware that this can be a sensitive issue for many people, particularly where using the correct language is concerned. Since we do not wish to offend anybody we have decided to use the terms **“minority”** / **“majority”** rather than “black” / “white” or “Asian” / “Black” / “White” etc.

In presentation terms, this means we won't list out every possible ethnic or racial category or combination every time we ask something about race issues. In practical terms, this means you can decide for yourself whether you belong to an ethnic minority group in your organisation or not.

“Minority” will usually be referring to a person's colour. However by using “minority” / “majority”, it may also include, for example, an Irish, Scottish or Welsh person working with predominantly English colleagues who might feel that they are treated differently because of their nationality.

This definition is in line with the Race Relations Act (1976), which covers discrimination on the grounds of a person's “race, colour, nationality – including citizenship – or ethnic or national origins, and groups defined by reference to these grounds.” We hope that you find this definition acceptable.

Completing the survey

Please answer every item. There are no right or wrong answers but please answer honestly and try to be as accurate as you can.

Completing the survey will take 20 minutes or less.

After completing the survey, please use the FREEPOST envelope provided to return it to us.

Part 1

EXPLANATION

Part 1 of this survey is about the effectiveness of your work group (all persons who report to the same supervisor that you do). To indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements given below,

PLEASE UNDERLINE THE ANSWER OPTION THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.

1. My work group always gets maximum output from available resources (e.g., personnel and materials).

1 = *Totally disagree* with the statement
 2 = *Moderately disagree* with the statement
 3 = *Neither agree or disagree* with the statement
 4 = *Moderately agree* with the statement
 5 = *Totally agree* with the statement

2. My work group's performance in comparison to similar work groups is very high.

1 = *Totally disagree* with the statement
 2 = *Moderately disagree* with the statement
 3 = *Neither agree or disagree* with the statement
 4 = *Moderately agree* with the statement
 5 = *Totally agree* with the statement

3. The amount of output of my work group is very high.

1 = *Totally disagree* with the statement
 2 = *Moderately disagree* with the statement
 3 = *Neither agree or disagree* with the statement
 4 = *Moderately agree* with the statement
 5 = *Totally agree* with the statement

4. The quality of output of my work group is very high.

1 = *Totally disagree* with the statement
 2 = *Moderately disagree* with the statement
 3 = *Neither agree or disagree* with the statement
 4 = *Moderately agree* with the statement
 5 = *Totally agree* with the statement

5. When high priority work arises, such as tight deadlines, the people in my work group do an outstanding job in handling these situations.

1 = *Totally disagree* with the statement
 2 = *Moderately disagree* with the statement
 3 = *Neither agree or disagree* with the statement
 4 = *Moderately agree* with the statement
 5 = *Totally agree* with the statement

Part 2

EXPLANATION

The questions in Part 2 (below) ask what kind of relationship you would ideally like to have with *any* organisation for which you might work.

Each question has two answer options, A and B. For each question distribute a total of 10 points between A and B, so that:

$$A + B = 10 \text{ points}$$

Give the most points to the option that is most like you and the fewest points to the option that is least like you. Allocate the points as you wish. You may give each option 5 points, or 0 to one and 10 to the other if you like.

PLEASE ENTER THE POINTS YOU HAVE ALLOCATED IN THE BOX NEXT TO EACH ANSWER OPTION.

6. It would be more important for me to:

A	Get something from the organisation.	
B	Give something to the organisation.	

7. It would be more important for me to:

A	Help others	
B	Watch out for my own good	

8. I would be more concerned about:

A	What I received from the organisation.	
B	What I contributed to the organisation.	

9. The hard work I do should:

A	Benefit the organisation.	
B	Benefit me.	

10. My personal philosophy in dealing with the organisation would be:

A	If I don't look out for myself, nobody else will.	
B	It's better for me to give than to receive.	

Part 3

EXPLANATION

Part 3 is about how people are treated in your organisation. We need to gauge the *potential* frequency of certain kinds of actions. We have produced a list of actions and we ask that you estimate the *chances* that the action occurred *in your organisation* during the last month.

RATE THE LIKELIHOOD OF EACH ACTION, EVEN IF YOU HAVE NOT PERSONALLY OBSERVED OR EXPERIENCED IT,

We only want your opinion on the chances – or probability – that the actions **COULD** have happened during the last month in your organisation.

Please use the following scales to make your judgements for this section:

- 1 = There is *almost no chance* that the action occurred.
- 2 = There is a *small chance* that the action occurred.
- 3 = There is a *moderate chance* that the action occurred.
- 4 = There is a *reasonably high chance* that the action occurred.
- 5 = There is a *very high chance* that the action occurred.

EXAMPLE: IF, IN YOUR OPINION, THERE IS A VERY HIGH CHANCE THAT "A MALE GAVE A 'WOLF WHISTLE' TO A FEMALE," YOU WOULD ASSIGN A "5" TO THAT ACTION.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ANSWER OPTION THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.

<i>1 = Almost no chance</i>	<i>2 = Small chance</i>	<i>3 = Moderate chance</i>	<i>4 = Reasonably high chance</i>	<i>5 = Very high chance</i>
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11.	When a woman complained of sexual harassment to her supervisor, (s)he told her, "You're being too sensitive."	1	2	3	4	5
12.	An older individual did not get the same career enhancing opportunities (such as training or professional development) as a younger individual because of their age.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	A woman who complained of sexual harassment was not recommended for promotion.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Offensive racial/ethnic names were frequently heard.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	A man made lewd remarks about women.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	When a female member of staff was promoted, a male peer made the comment, "I wonder who she slept with to get promoted so fast."	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Jokes about women were frequently heard.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Majority males act as though stereotypes about minorities and women are true (for example, "Blacks are lazy").	1	2	3	4	5
19.	An attractive woman was assigned to escort visiting male officials around because, "We need someone nice looking to show them around."	1	2	3	4	5

<i>1 = Almost no chance</i>	<i>2 = Small chance</i>	<i>3 = Moderate chance</i>	<i>4 = Reasonably high chance</i>	<i>5 = Very high chance</i>
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20.	An appraisal of a minority worker focused on the lack of opportunity elsewhere but for a majority worker, it focused on promotion.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Racial/ethnic jokes were frequently heard.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	A woman was asked to take notes and provide refreshments at staff meetings even though such duties were not part of her job assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	A qualified woman with small children was denied a promotion while a man with small children was given the promotion.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	A supervisor frequently reprimanded employees of one racial or ethnic group but rarely reprimanded employees of other racial or ethnic groups.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	A person was discriminated against in promotion or recruitment because of their age.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	A majority person told several jokes about minorities.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Sexually oriented jokes and remarks were commonly heard in the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	A majority supervisor made demeaning comments about minority workers.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	The term "dyke" (meaning lesbian), referring to a particular woman, was overheard in a conversation between organisation personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	A minority member of staff was assigned less desirable job conditions (location, equipment, tasks, etc.) than a majority member of staff.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Majority supervisors in charge of minority employees doubt the minorities' abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	A majority male did not show proper respect for minorities or women with higher positions.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	A supervisor gave a minority employee a severe punishment for a minor error. A majority employee who committed the same offence was given a less severe punishment.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Sexually oriented materials (pictures, screen-savers, calenders, etc.) were commonly visible in the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	While giving a presentation, the presenter took more time to answer questions from majority people than from minority people.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	A majority male was not willing to accept criticism from a minority or woman.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	A group of personnel made reference to an ethnic group other than their own using insulting ethnic names.	1	2	3	4	5

Part 4

EXPLANATION

Part 4 concerns the equality of people in your organisation. It contains eight statements. For each statement, decide whether it is definitely true, mostly true, mostly false or definitely false., then circle the alternative you have selected.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your replies will be strictly confidential so give your honest opinion on each statement. Please do not discuss your answers with other people. It is your honest opinion which matters. Do not miss any questions out.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ANSWER OPTION THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.

38. It is important here to be in the right club or group

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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39. Personality and pull are more important than competence in getting on here

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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40. Family, social or financial status are necessary elements for advancement or success here

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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41. There are no favourites in this place – everybody gets treated alike

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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42. Anyone who knows the right people here can get a better break

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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43. Everybody has the same opportunity to make good, in this company

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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44. As long as you are good at your job you'll get ahead here

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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45. If your face fits you're all right here

1 = definitely true	2 = mostly true	3 = unsure	4 = mostly false	5 = definitely false
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Part 5

EXPLANATION

Part 5 is about being a member of your organisation. Some people feel themselves to be just an employee, there to do a job of work, while others feel more personally involved in the organisation they work for.

The following statements express what people might feel about themselves as members of the their organisation. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by UNDERLINING ONE OF THE ALTERNATIVES which follow each statment.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your replies will be confidential so give *your* honest opinion on each one of the statements. Please do not discuss your answers with other people. It is *your* opinion which matters. Even though it may be hard to decide, be sure not to miss any questions out. Thank you.

46. I am quite proud to be able to tell people who it is I work for.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

47. I sometimes feel like leaving this employment for good.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

48. I'm not willing to put myself out just to help the organisation.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

49. Even if the firm were not doing too well financially, I would be reluctant to change to another employer.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

50. I feel myself to be a part of the organisation.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

51. In my work I like to feel I am making some effort not just for myself but for the organisation as well.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

52. The offer of a bit more money with another employer would not seriously make me think of changing my job.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

53. I would not recommend a close friend to join our staff.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

54. To know that my own work had made a contribution to the good of the organisation would please me.

- 1 = No, I strongly disagree
- 2 = No, I disagree quite a lot
- 3 = No, I disagree just a little
- 4 = I'm not sure
- 5 = Yes, I agree just a little
- 6 = Yes, I agree quite a lot
- 7 = Yes, I strongly agree

Part 6

INSTRUCTIONS

Part 6 is comprised of a few general statements about you and organisation. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. Your replies will be confidential so give *your* honest opinion on each one of the statements. Please do not discuss your answers with other people. It is *your* opinion which matters.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ANSWER OPTION THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.

55. I personally would rate the level of equal opportunity in this organisation:

<i>1 = Very poor</i>	<i>2 = Poor</i>	<i>3 = About average</i>	<i>4 = Good</i>	<i>5 = Very good</i>
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56. Most people would rate the level of equal opportunity in this organisation:

<i>1 = Very poor</i>	<i>2 = Poor</i>	<i>3 = About average</i>	<i>4 = Good</i>	<i>5 = Very good</i>
----------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------	----------------------

57. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?

<i>1 = Very dissatisfied</i>	<i>2 = Moderately dissatisfied</i>	<i>3 = Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied</i>	<i>4 = Quite satisfied</i>	<i>5 = Very satisfied</i>
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58. For some time, I have been considering changing employers.

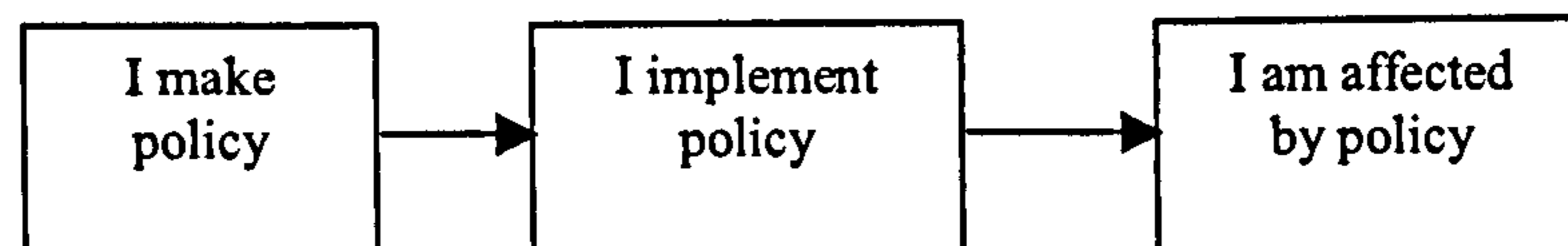
<i>1 = I completely agree</i>	<i>2 = I mostly agree</i>	<i>3 = I neither agree or disagree</i>	<i>4 = I mostly disagree</i>	<i>5 = I completely disagree</i>
-------------------------------	---------------------------	--	------------------------------	----------------------------------

59. Which statement most clearly reflects your feelings about your future (the next 12 months) at this organisation?

<i>1 = I definitely will leave</i>	<i>2 = I probably will leave</i>	<i>3 = I am uncertain about my future here</i>	<i>4 = I probably will not leave</i>	<i>5 = I definitely will not leave</i>
------------------------------------	----------------------------------	--	--------------------------------------	--

60. Which one of the boxes below best represents your level of involvement with equal opportunities in your organisation?

Please CIRCLE ONE box only.



Part 7

In this final section, please tell us some things about yourself. This information will be used for statistical analysis only. *No attempt will be made to identify you.*

PLEASE UNDERLINE THE MOST APPROPRIATE ANSWER OPTION.

61. I am:

- 1 = Female
- 2 = Male

62. My age in years is:

years

63. Did you attend university as part of your education?

- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No

64. My racial/ethnic group is:

- 1 = White English
- 2 = White Irish/Scottish/Welsh
- 3 = Black Caribbean
- 4 = Black African
- 5 = Black - Other
- 6 = Indian
- 7 = Pakistani
- 8 = Bangladeshi
- 9 = Chinese
- 10 = Asian - Other
- 11 = Mixed Ethnic Origin
- 12 = Other

The next four questions ask about your personal experience of unfair discrimination at work.

65. I have personally experienced (not necessarily at this organisation) an incident of discrimination based on my race, sex, age, disability, religion, nationality, colour, sexuality, or sexual harassment.

- 1 = Yes.
- 2 = No.

67. I was satisfied with the outcome of that complaint.

- 1 = Yes.
- 2 = No.
- 3 = Not applicable

66. I filed a complaint about the incident.

- 1 = Yes.
- 2 = No.
- 3 = Not applicable.

68. Do you know anybody personally (not necessarily at this organisation) who has experienced an incident of discrimination at work?

- 1 = Yes.
- 2 = No.

Of those people with whom you interact routinely on your job:

69. Approximately what percentage are females?

%

70. Approximately what percentage are minority (i.e. black and Asian people)?

%

71. Approximately what percentage are older than age 40?

%

	%
	%
	%

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

PLEASE USE THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO RETURN YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE.

«Title» «FirstName» «LastName»
«JobTitle»
«Company»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«City»
«PostalCode»

Fax +44 (0) 1234 750192
Tel + 44 (0) 1234 750111
Extension: 5100
Internet e-mail: siobhan-omalley@msn.com
r.asch@cranfield.ac.uk

Date

Dear «Title» «LastName»

I am currently researching for my PhD in Applied Psychology at Cranfield University. The costs and benefits of workforce diversity, at both an organisational and individual level, form the basis of my doctoral research programme. To complete this research I now require a large sample of people in industry, at all levels, willing to take a few minutes of their time to complete a carefully designed questionnaire.

I am asking several companies such as yours to take part in this new and important research. As an individual or a member of an organisation already committed to equal opportunity, you are obviously aware that harnessing the full potential of all employees can play an essential part in competitive advantage. Starting from that premise, this research investigates how the social environment at work is perceived by employees and measures the impact of those perceptions on organisational variables. I hope that the findings of this research will allow organisations to make profitable decisions about how they structure their workforce and design their policies in the future.

I have attached an outline of the study I wish to carry out and endeavoured to explain its rationale as succinctly as possible. I would like to stress that it is not intended to pass any judgement on the efficacy of your organisation or individual staff members. The sole intention is to build psychological theory from which companies such as yours can make practical benefits. Ideally I would like to survey a fairly large group of employees from your company who are representative of all levels. Total anonymity and confidentiality for all participants is guaranteed.

I would very much like for this project to be of mutual benefit wherever possible and would welcome the opportunity of discussing this research and its implications with you. I will therefore telephone you, if I may, within the next few days to discuss the possibility of including your staff in this study.

If you would like any further information, I can be contacted via email: siobhan-omalley@msn.com, or by telephone: 01943 604654. My supervisor at Cranfield University, Dr. Rachel Asch, would also be happy to clarify any queries you may have. Telephone 01234 750111, please ask for Human Factors Group ext. 5100.

I look forward to speaking with you, and thank you for taking the time to read this letter and its attachment.

Yours sincerely

Siobhan O'Malley

Appendix 7

The Social Atmosphere at Work Survey - The Study In Brief

Background Information

This survey forms the final stage of a PhD research project concerned with how the social environment in a workplace impacts on individual and organisational variables. A particular focus of this research is how equality of opportunity (EO) may be good for business.

An impressive array of organisational and individual benefits is often claimed to result from improving the social environment in the workplace by investing in EO. Reputed benefits include increased job satisfaction, organisational commitment, efficiency and reduced staff turnover levels. The evidence to support such claims however is not so impressive. That a competitive edge can be gained through the successful management of employees has been clearly demonstrated but the influence of equality of opportunity and workforce diversity upon this success lies largely undocumented.

The lack of supporting evidence may be due to the difficulties inherent to researching this area. Separating out variables that are associated purely with equality of opportunity may be scientifically desirable but the sheer number of confounding variables make it practicably impossible. Traditional research methods simply cannot cope with the complexity of the issues involved.

Alternatively, the lack of validated evidence might suggest that the relationships between workplace environment and organisational competitiveness simply do not exist. Many people fervently believe that equal opportunity does not make good business sense, even if they would argue for it on moral grounds. Certainly the major motivation for many employers interest in EO appears to be avoiding the costs associated with discrimination.

I believe it is vitally important for employers, managers, consultants, trainers and academics alike to better understand the processes involved. Designing or implementing EO policies for organisations without knowing the likely impact can be a damaging and expensive exercise.

The initial stages of the research project applied qualitative research methods to identify the factors influencing organisational and individual behaviours in the workplace, firstly with a sample of the general working population and secondly with a sample of an EO expert population.

This final stage of the research project is a carefully designed and piloted survey questionnaire. Its purpose is to measure the impact of the perceived social atmosphere at work may have on organisational and individual behaviours, such as intent to quit and job satisfaction.

Of course, each organisation and individual is unique but there may be consistent patterns, which would be helpful in predicting the effect of workplace environment on organisational behaviour.

What the study involves

The study will involve the random selection of employees who will be asked to complete a questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is attached for your information. Completion of the questionnaire will be done with complete anonymity to participants and confidentiality is assured. No participating companies will be identified in the presentation of results.

All potential participants will be given a package containing the questionnaire and a cover letter (which gives full instructions and a brief outline of the study) and a freepost return envelope. Administration of the questionnaires would be done in agreement with the company but it is anticipated that this procedure would involve no more than handing out the sealed packages which respondents could take away to complete in their own time. Completed questionnaires can be returned directly to the researcher in the freepost envelopes provided.

This research is bound by Cranfield University's Ethics Committee. I would be happy to discuss any concerns you may have about ethics or confidentiality.

Participants

Ideally, participants would be a representative cross-section of all members of the participating organisation. This means that men and women, white people and black people, younger staff and older staff and from all levels of the organisation would be represented.

All participation would be voluntary and as complete anonymity and confidentiality is assured, it is hoped as many people as possible will respond to the questionnaire, and indeed, feel they are able to do so honestly.

Participating organisations

I wish to obtain data samples large enough to investigate whether particular groups of people within one organisation (i.e. people working under the same policy conditions) perceive their working environment differently. The results can then be compared across different organisations, or possibly between units of the same organisation, to see if the emergent patterns hold true across companies or if they are specific to that organisation. However, as stated above, results will not be related to any individual organisation.

Depending on the size of the organisations involved, it is hoped that each would yield between 200 and 500 participants. In order to achieve these figures I would need to actually survey more employees to allow for those who do not respond.

It may be possible to give participating organisations some feedback from the data pertaining to their organisation although this will have implications for confidentiality and anonymity. I would be happy to discuss this possibility with you.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS ATTACHMENT. I DO HOPE
YOU WILL FEEL ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS IMPORTANT RESEARCH.**

THE SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE AT WORK SURVEY

Human Factors Group, CoA, Cranfield University

Appendix 8

Part 1 – Organisational Commitment

EXPLANATION

Part 1 is about being a member of your organisation. Some people feel themselves to be just an employee, there to do a job of work, while others feel more personally involved in the organisation they work for.

The following 9 statements express what people might feel about themselves as members of the their organisation. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by

TICKING THE ANSWER OPTION THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your replies will be absolutely confidential, so give your honest opinion on each one of the statements. Please do not discuss your answers with other people. It is your opinion that matters. Even though it may be hard to decide, be sure not to miss any questions out. Thank you.

1) No, I strongly disagree	2) No, I disagree quite a lot	3) No, I disagree just a little	4) I'm not sure	5) Yes, I agree just a little	6) Yes, I agree quite a lot	7) Yes, I strongly agree		
1.	I am quite proud to be able to tell people whom it is I work for.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I sometimes feel like leaving this employment for good.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I'm not willing to put myself out just to help the organisation.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Even if the firm were not doing too well financially, I would be reluctant to change to another employer.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	I feel myself to be a part of the organisation.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
6.	In my work I like to feel I am making some effort not just for myself but for the organisation as well.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The offer of a bit more money with another employer would not seriously make me think of changing my job.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I would not recommend a close friend to join our staff.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
9.	To know that my own work had made a contribution to the good of the organisation would please me.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>

ALL RESPONSES ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS.

Part 2 – Work Group Effectiveness

EXPLANATION

Part 2 is about the effectiveness of your work group (all persons who report to the same supervisor that you do). Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements given below by **TICKING THE ANSWER OPTION THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.**

1) Totally disagree	2) Moderately disagree	3) Neither agree nor disagree	4) Moderately agree	5) Totally agree		
10.	My work group always gets maximum output from available resources (e.g., personnel and materials).	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
11.	My work group's performance in comparison to similar work groups is very high.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
12.	The amount of output of my work group is very high.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
13.	The quality of output of my work group is very high.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
14.	When high priority work arises, such as tight deadlines, the people in my work group do an outstanding job in handling these situations.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Part 3 – Organisational Equality

EXPLANATION

Part 3 concerns the equality of people in your organisation. For each statement, decide whether it is definitely true, mostly true, mostly false or definitely false, then **TICK THE ANSWER OPTION YOU HAVE SELECTED.**

There are no right or wrong answers, so please give your honest opinion.

Please note: This answer scale runs from 1 = DEFINITELY TRUE to 5 = DEFINITELY FALSE.

1) Definitely true	2) Mostly true	3) Unsure	4) Mostly false	5) Definitely false		
15.	It is important here to be in the right club or group.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Personality and influence are more important than competence in getting on here.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Family, social or financial status are necessary elements for advancement or success here.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
18.	There are no favourites in this place – everybody gets treated alike.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Anyone who knows the right people here can get a better break.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Everybody has the same opportunity to make good, in this company.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
21.	As long as you are good at your job you'll get ahead here.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
22.	If your face fits you're all right here.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

	1) Definitely true	2) Mostly true	3) Unsure	4) Mostly false	5) Definitely false			
23.	My organisation has a very clear equal opportunity policy.			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
24.	I am fully familiar with my organisation's equal opportunity policy.			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
25.	An equal opportunity policy is necessary for an organisation to ensure equality for everybody.			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
26.	That my manager makes sure people are treated fairly is more important than any equal opportunity policy.			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Part 4 – Individual Equity

EXPLANATION

The questions in Part 4 (below) ask what kind of relationship you would ideally like to have with any organisation for which you might work.

Each question has two answer options, A and B. For each question distribute a total of 10 points between A and B, so that $A + B = 10$ points. Give the most points to the option that is most like you and the fewest points to the option that is least like you. Allocate the points as you wish. You may give each option 5 points, or 0 to one and 10 to the other if you like.

PLEASE WRITE THE NUMBER OF POINTS YOU HAVE ALLOCATED FOR EACH OPTION IN THE BOX PROVIDED.

For example:

e.g.	<i>It would be more important for me to:</i>	A	<i>Offer a cup of tea to business visitors.</i>	3
		B	<i>Offer a glass of whisky to business visitors.</i>	7

27.	It would be more important for me to:	A	Get something from the organisation.	
		B	Give something to the organisation.	
28.	It would be more important for me to:	A	Help others.	
		B	Watch out for my own good.	
29.	I would be more concerned about:	A	What I received from the organisation.	
		B	What I contributed to the organisation.	
30.	The hard work I do should:	A	Benefit the organisation.	
		B	Benefit me.	
31.	My personal philosophy in dealing with the organisation would be:	A	If I don't look out for myself, nobody else will.	
		B	It's better for me to give than to receive.	

Please check that your answers for $A + B = 10$ points for survey items 27 to 31. Thank you.

Part 5 – Equal Opportunity Climate

EXPLANATION

Part 5 is about how people are treated in your organisation. It is intended to gauge the potential frequency of certain kinds of actions. Below is a list of actions and you are asked to estimate the likelihood that the action might have occurred in your organisation during the last month.

**RATE THE LIKELIHOOD OF EACH ACTION,
EVEN IF YOU HAVE NOT PERSONALLY OBSERVED OR EXPERIENCED IT.**

EXAMPLE: If, in your opinion, there is a very high chance that "A male gave a 'wolf whistle' to a female," you would assign a "5" to that action.

PLEASE TICK THE ANSWER BOX THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.

Please note: In some cases, the groups (e.g., minorities, women) mentioned in the survey items may not be present in your work group. If this is the case, respond using your best judgement as to what would happen if the groups were present.

1) Almost no chance	2) Small chance	3) Moderate chance	4) Reasonably high chance	5) Very high chance	
32. When a woman complained of sexual harassment to her supervisor, (s)he told her, "You're being too sensitive."	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
33. An older individual did not get the same career enhancing opportunities (such as training or professional development) as a younger individual because of their age.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
34. A woman who complained of sexual harassment was not recommended for promotion.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
35. Offensive racial/ethnic names were frequently heard.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
36. A man made lewd remarks about women.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
37. When a female member of staff was promoted, a male peer made the comment, "I wonder who she slept with to get promoted so fast."	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
38. Jokes about women were frequently heard.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
39. Jokes about men were frequently heard.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
40. A majority male acted as though stereotypes about minorities and women were true (for example, "Blacks are lazy").	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
41. An attractive woman was assigned to escort visiting male officials around because, "We need someone nice looking to show them around."	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
42. An appraisal of a minority worker focused on the lack of opportunity elsewhere but for a majority worker, it focused on promotion.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
43. Racial/ethnic jokes were frequently heard.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

1) Almost no chance	2) Small chance	3) Moderate chance	4) Reasonably high chance	5) Very high chance	
44. A woman was asked to take notes and provide refreshments at staff meetings even though such duties were not part of her job assignment.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
45. A qualified woman with small children was denied a promotion while an equally qualified man with small children was given the promotion.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
46. A supervisor frequently reprimanded employees of one racial or ethnic group but rarely reprimanded employees of other racial or ethnic groups.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
47. A person was discriminated against in promotion or recruitment because of their age.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
48. A majority person told several jokes about minorities.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
49. Jokes and remarks about a person's sexual orientation were commonly heard in the workplace.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
50. A majority supervisor made demeaning comments about minority workers.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
51. The term "dyke" (meaning lesbian), referring to a particular woman, was overheard in a conversation between organisation personnel.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
52. A minority member of staff was assigned less desirable job conditions (location, equipment, tasks, etc.) than a majority member of staff.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
53. A majority supervisor in charge of minority employees doubted the minorities' abilities.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
54. A majority male did not show proper respect for minorities or women with higher positions.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
55. A supervisor gave a minority employee a severe punishment for a minor error. A majority employee who committed the same offence was given a less severe punishment.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
56. Sexually oriented materials (pictures, screen-savers, calendars, etc.) were commonly visible in the workplace.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
57. While giving a presentation, the presenter took more time to answer questions from majority people than from minority people.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
58. A majority male was not willing to accept criticism from a minority or woman.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
59. A group of personnel made reference to an ethnic group other than their own using insulting ethnic names.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
60. A female supervisor sexually harassed a male employee.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Part 6

INSTRUCTIONS

Part 6 is comprised of a few general statements about you and your organisation. Again, there are no right or wrong answers, just give your honest opinion on each one of the statements. Please do not discuss your answers with other people. It is your opinion that matters.

PLEASE TICK THE ANSWER OPTION THAT MOST CLOSELY MATCHES YOUR OPINION.

	1) Very poor	2) Poor	3) About average	4) Good	5) Very good		
61. I personally would rate the level of equal opportunity in this organisation as:							
			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
62. Most people would rate the level of equal opportunity in this organisation as:							
			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

	1) I completely disagree	2) I mostly disagree	3) I neither agree or disagree	4) I mostly agree	5) I completely agree		
63. I personally believe that equal opportunity in the work place is important.							
			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
64. I have not given equal opportunities at work much thought before completing this questionnaire.							
			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
65. For some time, I have been considering changing employers.							
			1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

	1) Very dissatisfied	2) Moderately dissatisfied	3) Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	4) Quite satisfied	5) Very satisfied			
66. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?								
				1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

	1) I definitely will not leave	2) I probably will not leave	3) I am uncertain about my future here	4) I probably will leave	5) I definitely will leave			
67. Which statement most clearly reflects your feelings about your future (the next 12 months) at this organisation?								
				1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

	1) I make policy	2) I implement policy	3) I am affected by policy	
68. Which statement best represents your level of involvement with equal opportunity policy (or equivalent)? (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY).				
		1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>

Part 7 – Demographic Information

In this final section, please tell us some things about yourself. This information will be used for statistical analysis only. *No attempt will be made to identify you.*

PLEASE TICK THE MOST APPROPRIATE ANSWER OPTION.

69. My sex is: Female Male
70. My age in years is: Years
71. Do you consider yourself to be a visible ethnic minority? No Yes
72. Did you attend university as part of your education? No Yes

- | | Black – African | Black – Caribbean | Black – Other | Bangladeshi | Chinese | Indian | Pakistani | Asian – Other | White – English | White – Irish/Scottish/Welsh | White – Other | Mixed ethnic origin | Other |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 67. My racial / ethnic group is: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Of those people with whom you interact routinely on your job:

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|
| 68. Approximately what percentage are females? | <input type="text"/> | % |
| 69. Approximately what percentage are minority (e.g. black and Asian people)? | <input type="text"/> | % |
| 70. Approximately what percentage are older than age 40? | <input type="text"/> | % |

The final four questions ask about your personal experience of unfair discrimination at work.

- | | 1) Yes | 2) No | 3) N/A |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 71. Do you feel that you have personally experienced unfair discrimination (not necessarily at this organisation) because of your race, sex, age, disability, religion, nationality, colour or sexuality? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 72. Did you make an official complaint about this discrimination.? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 73. Were you satisfied with the outcome of that complaint.? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 74. Do you know anybody personally (not necessarily at this organisation) who has experienced discrimination at work? | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> | |

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE.

PLEASE USE THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO RETURN YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

PLEASE READ THIS LETTER!

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE AT WORK SURVEY

Appendix 9

Dear Employee

AIM

This survey is being conducted to assess how the social atmosphere of work environments may relate to attitudes towards jobs. The study is part of my Ph.D. research at Cranfield University. It is not intended as an evaluation of you or your company.

To complete the study I require a large number of people in industry willing to take a few minutes of their time to complete the attached questionnaire.

COMPLETING THE SURVEY

The survey is made up of simple questions asking for your opinions about your work place. It takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Response to this survey is **voluntary, anonymous and confidential** however your response is needed to ensure the validity of the survey. Your organisation has kindly agreed to this survey being distributed but no individual responses will be identified. Questionnaires will be returned directly to me, so please feel free to answer honestly.

Part of this survey asks whether you think you have equal opportunity at work. These survey items use the terms "minority"/"majority" rather than using "black"/"white" or "Asian"/"Black"/"White" etc., to refer to racial or ethnic origin. "Minority" usually refers to a person's colour but it can also be used to describe white people who might feel they are treated differently because of their nationality. This definition is in line with the Race Relations Act (1976). I trust you find this definition appropriate and acceptable.

RETURNING THE SURVEY

Please check that you have answered all the questions and then seal it inside the FREEPOST ENVELOPE PROVIDED (no stamp needed). Don't forget to post it! It would be of real help for me to receive your response as soon as possible.

Should you have any queries I can be contacted on email: siobhan-omalley@msn.com, or you can leave a message at Cranfield University for me. Tel: 01234 750111 please ask for the Human Factors Group and my supervisor is Dr. Rachel Asch (ext. 5100).

Please remember there are no right or wrong answers, just personal experiences and opinions.

Your answers are very important and I really appreciate you taking the time to complete and return this questionnaire. My grateful thanks go to everyone who takes part in this survey.

Kind regards

Siobhan O'Malley