

FIELD VALIDATION OF THE
MILITARY EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CLIMATE SURVEY (MEOCS)

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Abstract

The present study reports field validation results for the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS). A preliminary version of MEOCS (Landis, Fisher, & Dansby, 1988) was modified and validated using a sample of 1650 military personnel representing all military Services and key racial/ethnic/gender groups. Data were gathered at six sites reflecting geographic and mission heterogeneity. Five factors were identified using factor analysis: Sexual Harassment, Differential Command Behaviors, Positive Equal Opportunity (EO) Behaviors, Overt Racist/Sexist Behaviors, and "Reverse" Discrimination. Factor reliabilities ranged from .50 to .90. Predicted factor score differences between racial/ethnic/gender groups were interpreted as validating MEOCS. Additional comparisons based on subscales from other instruments included in the survey package (modified Racial Attitudes and Perceptions Survey; job satisfaction and commitment items; perceived work group effectiveness) further validated MEOCS. MEOCS will be available for command use in assessing EO climate.

A significant amount of research has been conducted on organizational effectiveness, organizational climate, and related constructs. However, relatively little research has been directed toward equal opportunity (EO) climate within organizations. Some have pointed to the impact of civil liberties climate on organizational outcomes (Scheinfield & Zalkind, 1987) and the effect of organizational climate on EO and affirmative action (Sargent, 1978), but the personal and organizational influences of EO climate remain largely unexplored.

Landis, Fisher, and Dansby (1988) reported the construction and preliminary validation of an EO climate assessment instrument designed for use in military organizations. This instrument, now known as the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS), is based on a view of EO climate which emphasizes expectations by individuals within an organization that opportunities, responsibilities, and rewards will be apportioned based on individual merit rather than race, gender, religious, or other irrelevant factors. Individual perceptions of EO climate, whether valid or not, are perceived as influencing responses to the military environment, job performance, commitment to the military, and, ultimately, unit effectiveness (Landis, Fisher, & Dansby, 1988).

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The impact of EO climate may be extensive in organizations. At the very least, an "atmosphere of discrimination" serves as a basis for legal action (under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) by individuals against the organization (Baxter, 1985; Laurent, 1987). Bowers (1975) found a negative relationship between organizational climate and felt discrimination; however, work by Parker (1974) and Pecorella (1975) suggests the relationship may be keyed to interpersonal interactions within particular work groups. Griesemer (1980) found significant correlations between racial climate and unit effectiveness.

Other researchers have demonstrated consistent differences between racial, gender, and officer/enlisted groups in perceptions of EO and organizational climate. Brown, Nordlie, and Thomas (1977) found significant differences between whites and blacks in how they viewed the "race problem" in the Army. Spicher (1980) demonstrated that Air Force men perceived a significantly more favorable organizational climate than military women; similarly, officers perceived the climate more favorably than enlisted members. A survey conducted by the Army also showed differences between minorities and whites and between enlisted members and officers on items dealing with EO (Soldiers Report IV, 1986).

Reported differences in perceptions of men and women, minorities and whites, and officers and enlisted members should obtain in a valid measurement of EO climate. The purpose of the present study was to further develop the factor structure of MEOCS and to validate the instrument based on these predictions.

Method

Five military sites were initially selected for the validation study, based on the following criteria: all military Services (including the Coast Guard) must be represented; each site must have representative numbers of female and minority members; the total group must reflect a variety of missions and geographic locations; one site must be overseas. An additional site was added from the Air Force because of its convenience, wide representation of military women, and suitability for testing administration procedures. The sites were not selected to be representative of the Services, but to provide locations where a wide demographic range of military personnel could be accessed directly in on-site survey administrations and interviews.

Military members at each site were selected according to a purposive stratified sample reflecting racial/ethnic, gender, and officer or enlisted categories. Among the 1650 respondents, Service representation ranged from 97 (Coast Guard) to 607 (Air Force). All major combinations (i.e., black/white, male/female, and officer/enlisted) were represented by at least 200 respondents, with the exceptions of white female officers (109), black female officers (37), and black male officers (80). The lower incidence of these groups was due to their sparse representation in the Services (white women comprise 11.5% of military officers; black women, 1.5%; and black men, 5.1% [Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, June 1989]).

A team of researchers reflecting racial/ethnic and gender diversity administered the 157-item survey on site in a group setting. Respondents rated 88 MEOCS items on a scale of 1 to 5, according to their estimation of

the likelihood listed behaviors (critical incidents) may have occurred at their duty location during the last 30 days. The survey package also included 12 items measuring commitment to the Service, 5 job satisfaction items, 6 items assessing perceived work group effectiveness (sources for these items are described in Landis, Fisher, & Dansby, 1988), 27 items adapted from the Racial Attitudes and Perceptions Survey (RAPS; Hiet et al., 1978), several demographic items, and global items asking whether the respondents perceived they had been victims of discrimination. After each administration a random sample of the group was asked to remain and respond to a structured interview concerning the readability of the survey and its perceived validity for the stated purpose. Questionnaires and computer-scorable answer sheets were collected by the researchers after each administration.

Results

The MEOCS portion of the questionnaire was factor analyzed using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Five primary factors were identified, accounting for a total of 83.2% of the variance. The factors are listed in Table 1, along with their psychometric properties.

Table 1
MEOCS Factor Structure

Factor	No. of Items	Eigenvalue	% of Var.	Alpha
I. Sexual Harassment	21	20.93	58.0	.93
II. Differential Command Behaviors	11	4.85	13.0	.90
III. Positive EO Behaviors	8	1.85	5.0	.77
IV. Overt Racist/Sexist Behaviors	6	1.54	4.3	.68
V. "Reverse" Discrimination	4	1.03	2.9	.50

Table 2 presents a summary of significant factor score differences between various racial/ethnic, gender, and personnel category groups.

Commitment to the Service scores were higher for whites than blacks ($F[1,1623] = 10.78, p < .01$); for males than females ($F[1,1623] = 5.01, p < .05$); and for officers than enlisted members ($F[1,1623] = 20.92, p < .0001$). Officers scored higher than enlisted members on job satisfaction ($F[1,1623] = 15.85, p < .0001$). Whites rated their work groups higher in effectiveness than did blacks ($F[1,1623] = 10.56, p < .01$); officers rated work group effectiveness higher than enlisted members did ($F[1,1623] = 22.88, p < .0001$).

On the RAPS portion, blacks perceived more discrimination against minorities than did whites ($F[1,1623] = 369.99, p < .0001$); women more than men ($F[1,1623] = 56.26, p < .0001$); and black officers than black enlisted, while the reverse was true for whites ($F[1,1623] = 12.80, p < .05$). On the RAPS "Reverse" Discrimination factor, males perceived greater occurrence than did females ($F[1,1623] = 10.90, p < .001$); whites perceived more than blacks ($F[1,1623] = 45.85, p < .0001$); and black officers perceived more than black enlisted, while the reverse was true for whites ($F[1,1623] = 8.99, p < .01$).

On a third RAPS factor, males agreed more than females that the races should be kept separate ($F[1,1623] = 10.99, p < .001$), and blacks agreed more than whites that the races should be separated ($F[1,1623] = 10.20, p < .01$).

Table 2
Significant MEOCS Factor Score Differences

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Significant Differences</u>
I	Women perceived more sexual harassment behaviors occur than did men ($F[1,1623] = 39.62, p < .0001$); blacks perceived greater occurrence than whites ($F[1,1623] = 28.39, p < .0001$); black officers perceived greater occurrence than black enlisted, but white enlisted perceived greater occurrence than white officers ($F[1,1623] = 8.19, p < .01$).
II	Women perceived greater occurrence of differential command EO behaviors than did men ($F[1,1623] = 21.54, p < .0001$); blacks perceived greater occurrence than whites ($F[1,1623] = 241.78, p < .0001$); black officers perceived greater occurrence than black enlisted, but white enlisted perceived greater occurrence than white officers ($F[1,1623] = 5.39, p < .05$).
III	Whites perceived greater occurrence of positive EO behaviors than did blacks ($F[1,1623] = 72.37, p < .0001$); officers perceived greater occurrence than enlisted ($F[1,1623] = 21.11, p < .0001$).
IV	Blacks perceived greater occurrence of racist/sexist behaviors than did whites ($F[1,1623] = 13.81, p < .001$); white enlisted perceived greater occurrence than officers ($F[1,1623] = 5.17, p < .05$).
V	Males perceived greater occurrence of "reverse" discrimination behaviors than did females ($F[1,1623] = 6.45, p < .01$).

Discussion

The results are interpreted to support the use of MEOCS as a measure of EO climate. The psychometric properties are generally considered acceptable; however, additional items will be generated in an attempt to improve the reliability of Factor V, "Reverse" Discrimination, because of the relatively low alpha value (.50). The general pattern of results shows the predicted agreement between MEOCS and other instruments. As predicted, there were significant differences in how males and females, minorities and whites, and officers and enlisted members viewed discriminatory behaviors. Comparisons between RAPS results and MEOCS results also support the construct validity of MEOCS.

The MEOCS is undergoing final revisions to reduce the number of items and improve the reliability of Factor V. The survey will be available for administration within military commands on a by-request basis. Plans are being developed for administering MEOCS to a normative probability sample from each Service. Finally, MEOCS is being used to assess the impact of EO climate on mission effectiveness, as indicated in Landis, Fisher, & Dansby (1988).

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