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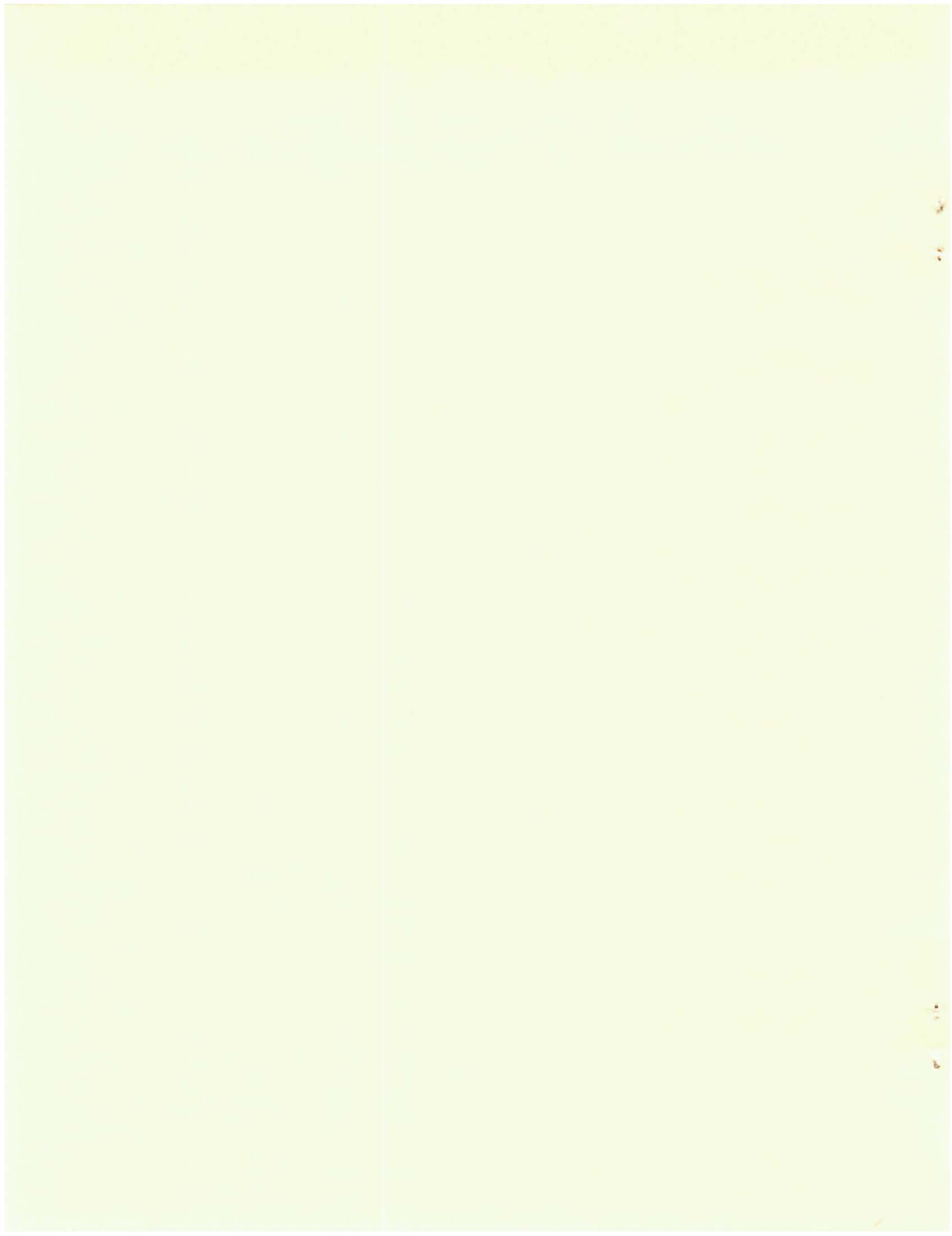
MEASURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CLIMATE IN ORGANIZATIONS: DEVELOPMENT OF SCALES TO EVALUATE THE ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY

by

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Summer 1994





REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

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| 1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank) | | 2. REPORT DATE September 1994 | 3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final -- June - August 1994 | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Measuring Equal Opportunity Climate in Organizations: Development of Scales to Evaluate the Acceptance of Diversity. | | | 5. FUNDING NUMBERS GN00014-90-J-1422 | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) Robert E. Niebuhr | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER RSP-94-5 | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Directorate of Research Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Patrick Air Force Base, Florida 32925-3399 | | | | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Office of Naval Research 800 N. Quincy Street Arlington, Virginia 22302 | | | 10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER | |
| 11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | |
| 12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for publication release; distribution unlimited. | | | 12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE | |
| 13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This study describes the effort to produce measuring scales for evaluating discriminatory climates due to race, gender, age, religion, and disability. Factor analysis was used in the study, providing six distinct factors with reliabilities ranging from .67 to .89. | | | | |
| 14. SUBJECT TERMS discrimination, measurement | | | 15. NUMBER OF PAGES | |
| | | | 16. PRICE CODE | |
| 17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified | 18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified | 19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified | 20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited | |

ABSTRACT

This study describes the effort to produce measuring scales for evaluating discriminatory climates due to race, gender, age, religion, and disability. Factor analysis was used in the study, providing six distinct factors with reliabilities ranging from .67 to .89.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military services, or the Department of Defense.

Measuring Equal Opportunity Climate in Organizations: Development of Scales to Evaluate The Acceptance of Diversity

There has been ample evidence that workgroup relationships and experiences have a considerable impact on individual and group outcomes such as motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, group cohesion, and job performance (Cameron & Freeman, 1991; Meyer & Allen, 1988; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Staw, 1991). It is also apparent that team-based work structures are becoming more widely used as organizations seek to improve creativity, encourage organizational citizenship behaviors, and increase work quality and employee productivity (Cook & Kernagan, 1987; Goodman, Devandas, & Hughson, 1988; Kanter, 1988; Organ & Konovsky, 1989; Worchel, Wood, & Simpson, 1992). While team-based approaches may result in both attitudinal and behavioral benefits, the growing cultural diversity of the workplace (e.g., age, gender, and race) adds a challenging component to the team-approach movement (Overman, 1991).

The focus of the research presented in this study was to develop a multidimensional instrument to measure the workgroup climate for the acceptance of diversity and to use the instrument in a pilot test to examine the relationship between these dimensions and workgroup outcomes.

Initial work in military settings has indicated there are significant negative relationships between both racial and sexual discriminatory behaviors and individual satisfaction, work group effectiveness, and organization commitment (Landis & Dansby, 1990). This study extends that research effort by adding scales which seek to measure discrimination due to age, religious background, and disability.

While it is apparent that workgroup heterogeneity may negatively affect group development, cohesion, and performance (McGrath, 1984; Staw, 1991; Zander, 1980), the picture is somewhat complex given research which indicates that this composition diversity may be helpful in solving more difficult, highly uncertain problems (Janis, 1972; Schwenk, 1983).

Method

Subjects

The data for this study consisted of responses from 310 subjects in a state government agency who voluntarily completed a questionnaire on workgroup behaviors. A response rate of 82% was obtained, primarily because the organizational members were also involved in a "cultural diversity" training program during the administration. The survey items developed in the first study will be used in an experimental administration of the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS).

Measures

Equal Opportunity Climate. The Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS) (Landis & Dansby, 1990) instrument was modified for a non-military setting. Revised versions of the original factor-analyzed dimensions of the MEOCS provided measures with ten items each concerning racial discrimination, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment. Additionally, 10-item scales were created for age discrimination, religious discrimination, and discrimination against the disabled.

Results

An initial factor-analysis provided evidence of the 6 factors and a reliability analysis of the top five loaded items in each factor produced Cronbach alphas ranging from .72 to .88. In order to incorporate these six scales into the experimental civilian population MEOCS survey, each of the scales was reduced from five items to three items. Table 1 provides a list of these scale items. Table 2 gives the alphas from the reliability analysis of the revised scales and provides the intercorrelations among the scales for the government agency data.

Table 1

PROPOSED SURVEY ITEMS FOR CIVILIAN MEOCS

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

1. A majority race/ethnic group worker was selected for a prestigious assignment over a minority worker who was equally, if not slightly better, qualified.
2. A minority worker was assigned less desirable job aspects (location, equipment, tasks, etc.) than a majority race/ethnic group worker.
3. A reasonable portion of the workforce is made up of minority employees.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. Sexually oriented materials (magazines, letters, pictures, etc.) are common in the workplace.
2. Females here have to put up with uninvited sexually suggestive looks or gestures.
3. Sexually oriented jokes and remarks are common in the workplace.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION

1. In meetings, usually the men are called upon to speak first.
2. A qualified female with small children was denied a promotion while a man with small children was given the promotion.
3. It seems as if females are not treated as seriously as males regarding career decisions.

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

1. A well-qualified person might be denied a job if the supervisor does not like the religious beliefs of the person.
2. Supervisors seem to favor those workers who are of the same religious beliefs as they are.
3. Favoritism is shown toward workers who are members of certain religious groups.

AGE DISCRIMINATION

1. A younger person was selected for a prestigious assignment over an older person who was equally, if not slightly better, qualified.
2. A young supervisor did not recommend promotion for a qualified older worker.
3. It seems as if older individuals just do not get the same opportunities here as do younger individuals.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DISABLED

1. Disabled workers don't seem to have the same opportunities as non-disabled workers.
2. A supervisor did not appoint a qualified disabled worker to a new position, but instead appointed a less qualified non-disabled worker.
3. A career opportunity speech to a disabled worker focused on the lack of opportunity elsewhere; to others, it emphasized promotion.

Table 2

Reliabilities and Intercorrelations Among Scales

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1. Gender Discrimination | (.79) | | | | | |
| 2. Racial Discrimination | .432** | (.77) | | | | |
| 3. Sexual Discrimination | .426** | .282** | (.77) | | | |
| 4. Age Discrimination | .429** | .366** | .302** | (.88) | | |
| 5. Religious Discrimination | .338** | .359** | .318** | .432** | (.89) | |
| 6. Discrimination against Disabled | .470** | .450** | .278** | .494** | .407** | (.84) |

Reliabilities in parentheses
** p > .001

In addition to adding the discriminatory climate items to the experimental MEOCS form, additional items were created to measure work unit demographic percentages based on gender, race, disability, and age.

Discussion

In expanding the MEOCS instrument to include other facets of potential discrimination, the new scales should provide a clearer picture of the culture of the organization with regard to the acceptance of diversity. The concern over "fairness" and "organizational citizenship behavior" in the literature (Moorman, 1991; Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994) would suggest that discriminatory climates in organizations would be detrimental to organizational functioning and performance.

One of the research limitations of the current MEOCS effort is the recognition that survey responses regarding group performance are self-report items from the same subjects evaluating the discriminatory climates. While the best solution to this common-method problem would be the inclusion of objective performance criteria, it is recognized that obtaining this information and making comparisons across units in an organization is extremely difficult. Consequently, a subjective evaluation form and instructions were created for the subjective rating and ranking of work units by upper-level administrators. The eight rating items correspond to the eight performance facets provided in the experimental survey which will be completed by the organizational members. The instructions and form are included in the Appendix.

Another limitation to the current MEOCS research has been the lack of longitudinal studies to examine the causal pattern existing between discriminatory climates and group/organizational outcomes. While the dynamics of personal changes within the military may place some restrictions on a longitudinal study, much could be gained by examining unit and organizational-level changes over time.

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Group Performance Evaluation

The following evaluations seek to provide information which will be used in a current research study. This data will be matched with the responses from other personnel provided in the Military Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (MEOCS). The responses will be treated as confidential information and none of the individual data supplied here will be revealed. The data you provide anonymously will be combined with other respondents' data and aggregated for comparison purposes in examining the relationships between discriminatory work climates and group outcomes. The first eight (8) items in the table examine various facets of performance and you are asked to rate these aspects on a 10-point scale ("1" being low, "10" being high). The last item provides a ranking procedure, requesting an overall relative evaluation of the groups from the group you perceive as "most productive" to the one you perceive as "least productive". While your awareness of the performance level of some groups may be more precise than it is of other groups, please provide the best evaluation you can of each group. An example evaluation is shown below:

Groups being rated

- 1 - Research division
- 2 - Field training unit
- 3 - Instructional unit
- 4 - Graphics department

Rating Scale (1 to 10)

- "1" - unacceptable performance
- "3" - below average performance
- "5" - average performance
- "7" - above average performance
- "10" - exceptional performance

| Performance | Group Being Rated | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 1. Amount of output | 8 | 6 | 7 | 4 | | | | | | |
| 2. Quality of output | 8 | 5 | 7 | 8 | | | | | | |
| 3. Reaction to changes, crises | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | | | | | | |
| 4. Use of available resources | 8 | 5 | 6 | 5 | | | | | | |
| 5. Performance compared to others | 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | | | | | | |
| 6. Satisfying customer/client needs | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 | | | | | | |
| 7. Degree of responsibility taken by work group members to improve work quality | 7 | 5 | 6 | 7 | | | | | | |
| 8. Strive for continuous improvement of work quality | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | | | | | | |
| RANKING EVALUATION: Compare all the groups being evaluated and rank them in terms of overall performance, the best group receiving a "1", the next best, a "2", ...continuing to the last work group. | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | | | | | | |

Group Performance Evaluation

[Location]

Groups being rated

- 1 -
- 2 -
- 3 -
- 4 -
- 5 -
- 6 -
- 7 -
- 8 -
- 9 -
- 10 -

Rating Scale (1 to 10)

- "1" - unacceptable performance
- "3" - below average performance
- "5" - average performance
- "7" - above average performance
- "10" - exceptional performance

| Performance | Group Being Rated | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 1. Amount of output | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Quality of output | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Reaction to changes, crises | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Use of available resources | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Performance compared to others | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Satisfying customer/client needs | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Degree of responsibility by work group members to improve work quality | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. Strive for continuous improvement of work quality | | | | | | | | | | |
| RANKING EVALUATION: Compare all the groups being evaluated and rank them in terms of overall performance, the best group receiving a "1", the next best, a "2", ...continuing to the last work group. | | | | | | | | | | |

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