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The Ineffectiveness of Employment Equity Programs in Canada

by

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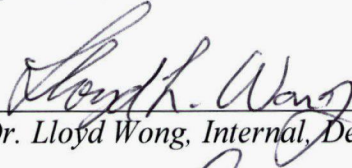DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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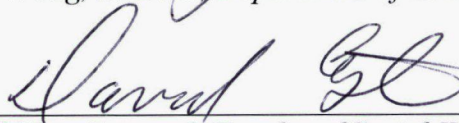UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

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Canada" submitted by Raheela Mohamed Manji in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

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Abstract

Since the inception of the Employment Equity Act in 1986 and its subsequent revision in 1996, numerous quantitative studies have accessed the Act's ineffectiveness, but limited qualitative research has been performed. This thesis utilizes qualitative interviews with employers who work directly with Employment Equity initiatives in order to gain their insights on the successes and weaknesses that they have in delivering such initiatives. In addition, this thesis gives voice to visible minority women, the group that has had the least success under the Act. These women provide insights into the experiences that visible minority women have in federally regulated workplaces with hiring, occupational mobility, multiple forms of discrimination, and social networking. The aim of this thesis is to shed light on the inconsistencies in the delivery of Employment Equity initiatives and to outline the prevalence of discrimination, in order to make policy recommendations to improve employment outcomes for designated groups.

Acknowledgements

I would like to first and foremost provide my utmost gratitude to my supervisor and mentor Dr. Amal Madibbo, who not only encouraged me to pursue a graduate degree in Sociology, but who has provided me guidance and support at every step of the way. My beloved Papa, thank you for giving me so much love, and for encouraging me to fulfill my potential. I only wish you were here today to celebrate this accomplishment with me. To the loved ones who are here with me, I would like to thank you for your unconditional support throughout my journey. To my wonderful friends, thank you for sharing in my accomplishments, but also being there for me during my difficulties. Finally, to my professors and colleagues, thank you for giving me a life changing experience that I will continue to learn from in the years to come.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Canadian society, although generally viewed as egalitarian, has had a history and present of discriminatory behaviours towards individuals with certain characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, and gender. Individuals with a different skin colour than the normative whites were and still are subject to many cruelties, from forced labour and internment camps to denial of citizenship based on "undesired characteristics." Many thought that extremes in the negative treatment seem to have decreased, as Canada has sanctioned the Multiculturalism Act (1971) to ensure the equal treatment of all citizens. However, in some domains, such as employment, specific groups in Canadian society remain far from equal from the dominant white majority. Within the employment realm, many have continued to face marginalization pertaining to income and/or occupational mobility. A major source of these inequalities, similar to in the past, has been discrimination.

In order to combat discriminatory treatment in Canadian workplaces, the federal government of Canada formally legislated the Employment Equity Act in 1986 (Açogs, 2002). This legislation was meant to ensure equality and equal representation of designated group members in federally regulated workplaces. These designated group members included women, visible minorities, Aboriginals, and the disabled. In 1995, the Act was revised due to concerns surrounding effectiveness (Açogs, 2002). The stated purpose of the Employment Equity Act (1995, c. 44) is as follows:

The purpose of this Act is to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences.

At present, it has been 15 years since the revision of the Employment Equity Act, and studies have shown that little improvement has been made. In terms of the severity of unequal treatment faced in Canadian workplaces, one group has stood out to researchers: visible minority women. This group of women has faced barriers in obtaining employment, mobility, and also show exceptionally large income gaps (Ambwani & Dyke, 2007).

The majority of scholarly research done on the ineffectiveness of Employment Equity has been quantitative, focusing on the measureable differences, such as representation and income levels (Pendakur & Pendakur, 2002; Leck, St. Onge, & Lalancette, 1995). According to Bakan and Kobayashi (2000), "The experience of implementing policy[1], including addressing the barriers to effective implementation, cannot be gleaned from published statistics" (pg. 5). There have been few qualitative studies that target the experiences of employers involved in the implementation of Employment Equity

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[1] The term policy/policies in this study refers to the individual initiatives that each specific organization has developed with respect to Employment Equity and should not be confused with government directives. Several Canadian provinces (not including Alberta) have opted for having Employment Equity policies which are varied and dependent on the provincial government in that province. Therefore, this thesis focuses solely on the federal Employment Equity legislation, and should not be confused with any provincial undertakings.

programs. Furthermore, the studies that have been done are in only certain contexts, examples being community colleges and the federal public sector (Jacobs, 2009; Wallace 2000). Additionally, there have been few research studies done on Employment Equity specifically in the province of Alberta. One notable study that took place within Alberta examined the reasons that white employers in the federal public service refused to acknowledge the existence of racism in the workplace (Khan, 2008).

Therefore, this thesis seeks to accomplish two goals. First, since there is limited qualitative research on Employment Equity, there is an uncertainty as to how federally regulated organizations in the federal public, non-profit, and private sectors approach Employment Equity initiatives. Therefore, the task at hand is to uncover how such organizations go about achieving adequate representation levels, by talking to employers who are involved in the implementation of Employment Equity initiatives. By speaking with these individuals, I will also uncover the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to implementing Employment Equity from those who are directly involved and have extensive knowledge of the Act. The second goal of this research is to give a voice to visible minority women who are employed in federally regulated workplaces. The perceptions of these women in terms of hiring and occupational mobility will be examined, as well as their experiences, if any, with discrimination. The extent of the knowledge that each of these women has about Employment Equity will also be examined. Therefore, this research will explore the perceptions and experiences of employers and visible minority women in federally regulated workplaces in Calgary, Alberta.

In order to appropriately capture the scope of this problem, two frameworks will be utilized to guide this thesis: Anti-Racism theory and Social Capital theory. Anti-Racism theory conceptualizes the disadvantages that visible minority women face in society as a product of the intersections of identities. Examples of these identities include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. Proponents of this framework argue that women who encounter these intersections of identity can be socially disadvantaged, especially in the workplace, due to a racialized and gendered labour system (Bonacich, Alimahomed, & Wilson, 2008). They further contend that there is a normative principle of "whiteness" operating in Canadian society, which places these women at a disadvantage (Reitman, 2006). My work will explore if having intersections of identity has an effect on the employment experiences of women in federally regulated workplaces, and if they believe that their skills are being valued. In addition, this thesis will examine the thoughts and perceptions that employers in federally regulated workplaces have about discrimination.

Social Capital theory proposes that the cultural capital that an individual has, such as credentials and skills, should translate into economic gains (Jenkins, 2002). However, Social Capital theorists argue that the cultural capital of some individuals in society is undervalued, and they are in turn systematically denied of their rightful economic gains (Moore, 2008). Social Capital theory is also informative to this research as it incorporates the aspect of networking, which is used by many to gain employment (York & Cornwell, 2008), including the visible minority women interviewed in this study. Additionally, Social Capital theory provides an understanding of how employers may come to make hiring and promotion decisions. Taken together, the Anti-Racism and Social Capital frameworks

provide a unique contribution to the understanding of the experiences of employers and visible minority women in federally regulated workplaces.

The methodological underpinnings of this research are qualitative, with interviews being the method of data collection. Because this topic is complex in nature, a qualitative approach needed to understand the full complexity of the issues. As the majority of the literature on Employment Equity is quantitative, there is a need to shift the focus off measureable differences, and to create the space to discuss real experiences. By exploring the first hand experiences of those with expertise with Employment Equity initiatives or those who are employed in federally regulated organizations, appropriate policy recommendations can be made.

The first chapter consists of the introduction of this thesis. Chapter two will be an in-depth literature review. It will explore the changing trends of immigration to Canada, labour force inequalities for immigrant and non-immigrant visible minorities, the importance of minorities in the Canadian labour force, an overview of the Employment Equity Act, studies on the effectiveness of the Act, explanations of the failures of the Act, and the solutions that have been proposed. The third chapter will include an explanation of the Anti-Racism and Social Capital theoretical frameworks, and their contributions to this thesis. Chapter four will focus on the qualitative methodological approach used in this study and will include a brief introduction to each of the participants interviewed in this research. Chapter five will be an in-depth analysis of the interviews with the employers. The major themes of this chapter that will be analyzed are the prior training that was

involved prior to working with Employment Equity, their role with Employment Equity, their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses that their organization has in delivering initiatives, as well as their individual perceptions on hiring and discrimination. The sixth chapter will observe the experiences of the visible minority women in federally regulated workplaces, and the themes that will be explored are the knowledge of Employment Equity, perceptions on hiring, mobility, and representation, as well as experiences with discrimination. Finally, the seventh chapter will include the limitations, relevant policy recommendations, and conclusions of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter will consist of an in-depth literature review on a number of issues

surrounding equality in Canadian society. The chapter will begin with an outline of the

changing trends of immigration to Canada, followed by conceptualizations of

multiculturalism and systemic discrimination. Next, the importance of visible minorities in

the Canadian workforce will be discussed. This will be followed by a review of literature

pertaining to inequalities in the labour force for three groups including visible minorities in

general, immigrants, and visible minority women specifically.

The chapter will then shift focus to an explanation of specific legislations that have

been introduced to combat inequality and discrimination in Canadian society such as the

Canadian Human Rights Act, the Employment Equity Act, and the Federal Contractors

Program. This will be followed by a review of studies that have been conducted

specifically to assess the effectiveness of the Employment Equity Act, followed by

explanations to account for the failures of the Act. The chapter will conclude with an

overview of the potential solutions to address the shortcomings of the Employment Equity

Act.

Changing Trends in Immigration to Canada

The term visible minorities, which originated fairly recently in Canada, refers to

people who are either Canadian or foreign born, and are people of colour (Samuel &

Basavarajappa, 2006). According to these authors, over the last four decades, Canadian society has been becoming increasingly diverse, with large numbers of visible minority immigrants entering the country. However, prior to the 1960's, Canadian immigration policies were discriminatory on the basis of race as immigrants for the most part originated from 'traditional' or European countries. In the 1960's and 1970's, these immigration policies were revised to discount the importance of race and national origin and emphasize qualities such as educational attainments and skills. From this point on, immigrants to Canada largely came from "non-traditional" sources such as Africa, the Far East, and Asia. In the 1990's, visible minorities accounted for 73% of all immigrants to Canada (Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006, pg. 244). This indicates that Canadian society is becoming highly pluralistic, and visible minorities are accounting for larger proportions of the population than ever before. In 2006, visible minorities accounted for approximately 16.2% of the total population in Canada. 75% of immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006 were visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2008). The visible minority population is expected to double by 2017, whereas the rest of the Canadian population is only expected to increase in numbers from 1% to 7% (Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006, pg. 247).

Interestingly, Samuel and Basavarajappa (2006) noted that between 1991 and 2001, the visible minority population increased by about 58%, whereas the growth rate for the total population only increased by about 10% (pg. 243). In order to give recognition of the growing plurality among its citizens, as well as to combat the forces of discrimination and pave the way for equality, the Canadian government enacted the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971.

Multiculturalism and Systemic Discrimination

Since the introduction of the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971, Canadian society has largely been viewed as one that is pluralistic, endorsing equality among all citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity. Fleras and Elliot (2002) stated that multiculturalism itself is subject to many conceptualizations. One conceptualization is that multiculturalism is an empirical fact, which demonstrates that the numbers of visible minorities in different areas of Canada have been increasing. Accordingly, the "old" Canada was predominantly white, fundamentally ethnocentric, and carried highly Anglo-Saxon, ethnocentric values, while the "new" Canada is composed of many non-European immigrants. Another conceptualization is the use of multiculturalism in practice, which entails that minority groups be free of discrimination and exploitation by the majority, as well as preserve their cultural heritage without losing their rights as citizens (Fleras & Elliot, 2002). It has become increasingly clear that since the introduction of this policy, equality has yet to be achieved for all citizens, and discrimination is still a prominent factor in Canadian society.

Discrimination can be conceptualized as the positive or negative treatment of individuals based on factors such as race, gender, class, and ability, with membership in these groups defining the treatment of its members, rather than individual merit (Marger, 2006). Systemic discrimination is a specific type of discrimination that appears within organizations and institutions. In terms of employment, this type of discrimination can present itself in many forms, including access to employment, job assignment, terms and conditions, training and development, compensation, promotion, performance appraisal,

quality of work life, work-family relationships, and termination (Agoçs, 2002). This is alarming, considering the fact that this type of discrimination can resonate across so many aspects related to employment. Discrimination leads to the underutilization of individuals in the workforce, failing to recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities of certain people (Blakely & Harvey, 1988). Systemic discrimination in employment has existed and been recognized in Canada for many years; however, measures such as The Canadian Human Right Act and The Employment Equity Act that will be examined in this thesis have been taken to eradicate it.

Importance of Visible Minorities in the Labour Force

The visible minority population in Canada has been younger relative to the non-visible minority population (Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006). In 2001, 89% of visible minority immigrants were between the working ages of 15 and 64 (*Ibid*, 2006, pg. 244). 58% of visible minorities who were of working age had a post-secondary degree, compared to 43% of the total Canadian population (*Ibid*, 2006, pg. 246). Upon entering Canada, nearly half of all visible minority immigrants were between 20 and 39 years of age, which is considered the prime working age (*Ibid*, 2006, pg. 244). Samuel and Basavarajappa (2005) contend that immigrants have bolstered and sustained the Canadian work force, as they were responsible for 70% of the growth in the labour force in the 1990's (pg. 247). The authors described how the knowledge based sector of the economy is growing, which likely will lead to skill shortages. It was projected that by 2011, there could be a shortage of 100 000 nurses and 30 000 university faculty members, and that immigration was the

solution to manage these shortages (*Ibid,* 2006, pg. 247). Also, it was predicted that by

2017, for every 100 visible minorities who leave the labour force, there would be 142 old

enough to enter the labour force (*Ibid,* 2006, pg. 248). For every 100 non-visible minorities

leaving the labour force, there will only be 75 ready to enter the labour force (*Ibid,* 2006,

pg. 248). Therefore, the annual growth rate of the visible minority population in the labour

force would be excessively large.

Inequalities in the Labour Force

Visible Minorities

Samuel and Basavarajappa (2005) contend that visible minorities have been

polarized into two segments in the workforce. The primary segment was characterized by

"stable, high skilled, better paying jobs with advancement possibilities which is mostly

professional; and a secondary segment with insecure, low skilled, poorly paying "dead end"

jobs" (pg. 260). Although visible minorities are found in the primary sector, they are often

not paid equitably and face barriers in upward mobility. Therefore, visible minorities are

likely to hit the "glass ceiling" in employment and will find it difficult to enter into higher

positions of authority within companies. In terms of the secondary segment, there has been

little chance for improvement, and it has been found that the longer a visible minority

individual remains in this segment, the less likely it would be for them to gain access to

professional jobs (Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2005). It can be argued that there is a vast

underutilization of the skills in the secondary segment as many of the visible minorities in

this sector are likely to have a post secondary education. It has been estimated that the foreign credentials of 340 000 individuals are not recognized in Canada, and they are most likely to have come from China, India, the Philippines, and Guyana (Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2005). This is indicative of the persistent inequalities and barriers in employment that are faced by visible minorities in Canadian society.

Immigrants

Since the majority of visible minorities in Canadian society are foreign born, it is necessary to examine the trends in the labour market surrounding immigrants. Reitz (2007) provided an amalgamation of the various studies surrounding immigrants' employment success in Canada from 1970 until the early 2000's. He contends that although these findings are rudimentary and somewhat confusing due to the differing criteria used in studies, they are still indicative of the declining position of immigrants in employment. Additionally, Reitz (2007) presented the findings of studies done on entry-level earnings and initial employment rates of immigrants. He stated that in the late 1970's, immigrant men earned about 13% less than their native-born counterparts (*Ibid*, 2007, pg. 40). Immigrants entering Canada in the late 1990's had earnings that were 28% percent below native-born individuals, which indicated a drop in earnings of about 15% between the late 1970's and 1990's (*Ibid*, 2007, pg. 40). Immigrant women had negative earnings differentials of about 20% between the late 1970's and early 1990's, however; this went down to 11% by the late 1990's (*Ibid*, 2007, pg. 40). Because immigrants in the 1970's were composed largely of the family class, it is problematic that now, with education and

skills as a main criteria, that both male and female immigrant earnings have declined. These findings are suggestive of the inequalities that exist in Canadian employment.

Reitz (2007) argued that because of the devaluation of immigrants' experience and credentials, they often end up in occupations requiring the least amount of skills. He found that between 1991 and 2001, one in four immigrants who hold a university degree were working at a job requiring no more than a high school level of education. Even more problematic is the fact that these individuals were earning significantly less than native-born Canadians who were in the same occupations (*Ibid,* 2007, pg. 42). This had in turn led to lower incomes, higher poverty rates, low rates of home ownership, and lower standards of living among immigrants. It has been found that the incidence of poverty among visible minorities in 2001 was approximately 26% and is growing, regardless of educational level, age, and knowledge of official languages, while the national average was only 12.9% (Samuel & Basavarajappa, 2006, pg. 262). Therefore, even if a visible minority has a high level of education and is able to communicate effectively in the national languages, they are not guaranteed to have a job matching their educational level and an income able to sustain their living. Discouragingly, Picot and Hou have found that these low levels of income persist regardless of the number of years of Canadian working experience, unless one has had over twenty years of Canadian experience (as cited in Reitz, 2007, pg. 42). It is illogical to believe that twenty years of Canadian experience is a necessary requirement to eradicate oneself from conditions of poverty, and this finding is highly suggestive of the magnitude of the inequalities that exist.

Reitz (2007) contended that some of the negative impacts on immigrant earnings were due to business cycle effects. More specifically, some of the negative impacts on immigrant entry earnings in the early 1980's and early 1990's could have been attributable to the periods of economic recession. However, the earnings gap in the late 1990's for immigrants was over twice of what it was in the late 1970's, despite a strong economy. Therefore, business cycles are having less of an impact on immigrant earnings, and there has been a downward trend in earnings, especially for immigrant women. Reitz (2007) demonstrated that in the early 1980's, employment rates for immigrant women were only 4% less than for native-born women, and 10% less by the early 1990's (*Ibid,* 2007, pg. 42). By 1996, immigrant employment rates were 20% less than Canadian born women, even though the demand for labour was becoming increasingly stronger (*Ibid,* 2007, pg. 42). Consequently, it appears that inequalities are worsening, and even in times where employers are able to utilize immigrant skills, they are opting not to do so.

Another aspect that shows inequalities toward immigrants in the labour market is the comparison of immigrants with new native-born labour market entrants. Beaudry and Green (1998) have found that the earnings of all labour market entrants have been falling over the past few decades, and Green and Worswick (2004) stated that the experience of new immigrant entrants into the Canadian labour market have similar experiences to those of young-native born workers. Therefore, these authors argued that the explanation of this trend lies in the processes that occur in the labour market more generally, and not processes that are specific to immigrants. Another point of examination was the rising levels of education among immigrants and the native-born workforce. The introduction of the points

based system of immigration in 1967 accompanied a larger influx of skilled immigrants, which should have in theory increased these immigrants' earnings. In the 1970's, there was a large number of family class and refugee status immigrants, which likely, or at least in theory, had a negative impact on immigrant earnings. However, by the 1990's, the numbers of educated immigrants rose dramatically.

From the 1970's onwards, the educational levels of the native-born population were rapidly increasing because of the public investment in education. This rise in educational levels among the native-born population could explain a quarter of the earnings gap between the late 1970's and late 1980's. Even though immigrants have increasing levels of education, Reitz (2007) pointed out that the 'returns' or value of their education is regarded as significantly less than Canadian born individuals. Because the levels of education of the native-born population are rising, and immigrant education is being devalued, the rising standard of native-born education is having a stronger negative impact on immigrants. Interestingly, Ferrer and Riddell (2004) noted that "although the value of years of education is less for immigrants, the "sheepskin effect" – the value of completing a degree – is not less" (as cited in Reitz, 2007, pg. 51). Therefore, if individuals wish to immigrate to Canada, they are expected to invest time and money abroad in order to do so. However, as soon as they step onto Canadian soil, the value of their education is limited or non-existent, which signifies the ongoing discrimination against immigrants. Reitz (2007) maintained that because immigrant education is devalued, they have reduced access to "knowledge occupations," which are highly skilled positions, where a large proportion of workers have a university level education, which leads to decreased earnings. Even when immigrants are

able to enter into knowledge based industries; they often encounter the 'glass ceiling effect,' and thus are seldom able to get into top management positions. In addition, immigrants working in the knowledge sector earn 12% to 16% less than native-born individuals in the same positions and similar levels of education (*Ibid,* 2007, pg. 52). Again, this is problematic as there are likely to be marked skill shortages in knowledge occupations in the future. However, this figure is not as highly pronounced as in all other occupations, where immigrants have been found to earn about 25% to 34% less than all others (*Ibid,* 2007, pg. 52).

An additional explanation offered about the decline in earnings is the lowered value of immigrants' foreign experience. A study by Aydemir and Skuterud (2005) found that a quarter to a half of the decline in the net earnings of immigrants can be explained by the lowered value of foreign experience. Picot and Sweetman (2005) believe that this effect may be due to the rapid technological change that devalues the experiences obtained in Eastern European and Asian countries to Canada. Even if the value of experience in these countries is less, this does not explain why immigrants are not given the chance to gain Canadian experience, as they are often pushed into the secondary segment of employment.

Visible Minority Women

According to Ambwani and Dyke (2007), research on immigrant women has suggested that their earnings have not been improving. On the contrary, earnings for this group have actually been deteriorating. Visible minority women, both immigrant and

Canadian born, make up a significant proportion of the Canadian workforce. Women

themselves account for approximately 46.7%, and of this percentage, 14% are visible

minorities (*Ibid,* 2007, pg. 143). Visible minority women in the Canadian workforce have

different characteristics than non-visible minority women. These characteristics include

being younger, more educated, and having a slight advantage in terms of having advanced

degrees. However, they are less likely to be employed, and are typically paid less than the

majority, who are white women. Ambwani and Dyke (2007) contend that although a

number of different explanations have been offered to explain the wage gap, they do not

fully explain the problem.

The first explanation incorporated human capital theory, which stated that

inequalities are a direct result of the application of universalistic criteria to groups, such as

education and previous experience. Therefore, proponents of this perspective would argue

that differences in wages occur because minority women are lacking in these criterion.

However, studies based on American data have shown that factors such as race and gender

explain wage differences "beyond human capital differences at all levels of occupational

hierarchies to warrant scepticism regarding the application of universalistic criteria"

(Ambwani & Dyke, 2007, pg. 145). If one were to apply this to the Canadian case, where

visible minority women display higher levels of education, this theory would fall through.

Thus, human capital theory fails in adequately explaining the wage gap. Another proposed

explanation of the wage gap is the screening hypothesis, which holds that the earnings of an

individual are only partially related to the productivity level of that individual. With

employers having no knowledge of the productivity of an individual, they may use

characteristics such as education or experience as 'cues' of the potential productivity of that person.

Therefore, when all else is equal, employers may use factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, or culture as the determining factor of productivity. This is problematic as it can lead to a devaluing of wages of individuals based on biases and stereotypes, rather than actual productivity. This hypothesis could partially explain the position of visible minority women, who may be stereotyped based on both gender and race, which would reduce a woman's 'value.' However, the authors note that there has been insufficient research conducted to make a conclusive argument for this claim. Another proposed explanation incorporated the extension of gender theory. Gender theory posits that if an employer has an inherent dislike towards female employees, he or she will seek some sort of reimbursement for hiring a female worker. The theory has been extended to account for the position of visible minority women; it suggests that if an employer has a dislike for females as well as a specific minority group, they will seek compensation both on the lines of gender and ethnicity. Studies that have been done using this theoretical framework have found that professional coloured women face a number of barriers in the workforce, including prejudices and stereotypes, a lack of mentors, a lack in access to informal social networks, and reduced numbers of high visibility assignments. Ambwani and Dyke (2007) contend that the wage devaluation of visible minorities is also a contributing factor in the wage gap. This explanation has two components, the first being that there is an economic vulnerability of many female minorities, which hinders their ability to negotiate fair wages and working conditions. Secondly, minorities and immigrants are generally regarded by

mainstream society as being of a lower status than the dominant group; therefore, occupations which have higher numbers of these groups are generally seen as having less prestige.

Ambwani and Dyke (2007) have suggested a number of impacts that occur as a result of occupational segregation, which exists when "workers are assigned to different jobs on the basis of non-productivity factors" (pg. 146). An impact of occupational segregation is that specific groups will perceive that their human capital investments are not resulting in reasonable returns, and therefore, they will be less likely to invest in human capital. Thus, visible minority women are more likely to be segregated, both by choice and discrimination, into jobs that are of lower value to organizations. Therefore, this occupational segregation will serve to perpetuate stereotypes about the abilities of visible minority women. In addition, it will set the example for other visible minority women that there is no point in trying to obtain better employment as it would be hopeless to do so.

Federal Legislation

In 1977, the Canadian Human Rights Act was legislated in order to prevent discriminatory practices based on "race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, or conviction of an offence in which pardon has been granted" (Department of Justice Canada, 2009). The Canadian Human Rights Commission, which is enforced by the Canadian Human Rights Act, was created in order to serve a variety of functions, including the development of educational programs

that foster public understanding, sponsoring research programs, and reviewing regulations and laws that have been enacted by parliament (Department of Justice Canada, 2009). Concurrently, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal was also used with the purpose of ensuring that the Canadian Human Rights Act was employed, holding courtroom hearings in order to investigate claims regarding discriminatory practices, with potential penalties for the accused.

Agoçs (2002) stated that in the 1980's, debates surrounding inequalities that were faced among specific groups heightened dramatically. She contends that pressure from the public, along with research evidence and case law, led to the federal government instituting the Employment Equity Act in 1986, which applied to all federally regulated industries. Federally regulated industries involve only a small portion of the Canadian workplaces which had 100 or more employees, examples including banks, transportation companies, and airlines. Many organizations, which include nearly all retailers and manufacturing companies, were and are still not covered under the Act. This Act was aimed at four specific groups (designated groups) that were found to be especially marginalized in the population, which included racial/ethnic minorities, women of any race or ethnicity, the disabled, and Aboriginals. The stated purpose of the Act was to:

> Achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible

minorities by giving effect to the principle that Employment Equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences. (Department of Justice Canada, 2009).

This Act has four main criteria for assessment, which include ensuring numerical representation of designated groups that reflects availability in the labour market, removal of discriminatory barriers in organizational decision making processes, fostering a workplace culture of inclusion, and enhancing equality of results that is measured in terms of salary and decision making power (Agoçs, 2002).

The major difference between the earlier legislated Canadian Human Rights Act and the Employment Equity Act is that while the former is driven by individual complaints after acts of discrimination have taken place, the latter requires that employers in federal organizations with greater than 100 employees are required to take preventative anti-discriminatory measures (Agoçs, 2002). Mentzer (2002) argued that this Act only applied to individuals who are in highly visible jobs that are regarded as "federal responsibilities," and in total this only covers a small portion of employed Canadians. If the Act is only in fact affecting those who are in highly visible jobs, it is likely that there are a number of Canadians that are still suffering the effects of discrimination in employment, yet have virtually no protection against it.

The Federal Contractors Program was also introduced in 1986, and was different from the Employment Equity Act in that it applied to all provincially regulated employers with a national workforce in Canada of 100 or more employees. More specifically, this

program applies to contractors, that receive federal goods or services contracts of $200 000 or more. The goal of this program was to maintain standards of equity in these workplaces, and employers regulated under the Federal Contractors Program were required to adhere to the same general principles of the Employment Equity Act, and if they did not do so, the penalty was the potential loss of bids on further federal government contracts (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2003).

In 1996, both the Employment Equity Act and the Federal Contractors Program were revised with several changes due to concerns surrounding ineffectiveness of the Act and its outcomes. The first change was that the coverage of employers was expanded to include the federal public service, commissions and agencies, the RCMP, Canadian Forces, and the Canadian Security Intelligence Services (Agoçs, 2002). A second change was that employers were now required to develop Employment Equity plans, which were to state the policies and practices that organizations would undergo to create an equitable representation of the four designated groups (Mentzer, 2002). Another highly important change was that employers were now subject to compliance audits by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (Agoçs, 2002). These compliance reports were crucial, as it was becoming increasingly apparent that employers were not taking the Act seriously. Because these reports were now published, and because there was potential repercussions for non-compliance, there was reason for employers to adhere to the principles of the Act. The major difference with respect to the Employment Equity Act and the Federal Contractors Program was that while the former was expected to submit equity plans and reports to the Department of Human Resources, the latter was not (Agoçs, 2002). The fact that those

employers regulated under the Federal Contactors program do not have to submit equity plans to an extent implies that these employers are perhaps more likely to get away with acts of discrimination. Finally, employers were now required to consult and collaborate with employee representatives (Agoçs, 2002). This meant that administering Employment Equity policies was taking a step away from being a top-down approach, and that other members in organizations had some potential input in the administration of the policies.

The Employment Equity Act (1996) ensures that unnecessary demands are not made among employers and that the quality of employees is retained. For example, the Act states that employers are not required to "take a particular measure to implement Employment Equity where taking that measure would cause undue hardship to the employer" (Department of Justice Canada, 2009). Employers also do not have to engage in promoting individuals who do not meet the qualifications or merit necessary for the work to be performed, and they are also not required to create new positions in their workforce. These processes, had they been used properly, could maintain the integrity of the Canadian workforce, and subsequently improve the positions of marginalized members of society. However, as demonstrated in the following sections, no significant change in improving the positions of marginalized has occurred in the years since the introduction and revision of the Employment Equity Act.

Measuring Change

There are a few general methods in which researchers have assessed the effectiveness of the Employment Equity Act. The first method is to analyze whether or not the incomes of the four designated groups have changed over time in comparison to the advantaged groups. Secondly, another indicator of change is whether or not members of designated groups have gained representation in upper level and managerial positions. A final method is where numbers of the designated groups in an organization are compared to availability in the workforce.

With regard to the first method, Leck, St. Onge, and Lalancette (1995) investigated whether organizations that were subject to the Employment Equity Act were succeeding in closing the wage gaps between the dominant and designated group members. They posited that white men generally experience advantages with respect to hiring and promotion practices. Therefore, they argued that if the Employment Equity Act was in fact achieving success, the designated group members should have the same earnings potential as their white male colleagues. Their first major finding was that since the implementation of the act, the wage gap was decreasing between white men and all of the designated groups in the mid to lower salary range. A second, disconcerting finding was that the wage gap actually increased in the higher salary ranges since the implementation of the Employment Equity Act. Thirdly, they found that the wage gap is decreasing most quickly for white, non-disabled women. Finally, they illustrated that the wage gap was actually widening for the women in the other disadvantaged groups (Leck, St. Onge, & Lanlancette, 1995).

Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that visible minority women and women with disabilities are actually suffering more than white able women, and the Employment Equity Act has not helped in improving their situation. One obvious disadvantage to the study presented is that it did not distinguish between Canadian born and immigrant visible minorities. There are major differences between the two groups as immigrants could be experiencing differentials in earnings due to factors such as language or accent, non recognition of credentials, and a loss of work related networks.

Pendakur and Pendakur (2002) examined the changing trends in salaries among visible minorities and Aboriginals between 1971 and 1996, using three cycles of Canadian census data. The results for aboriginal women were bleak, as they in 1971 earned 20% less than their white female counterparts, improved slightly in the 1980's, and again nearly reached the 20% point once again in the 1990's (*Ibid*, 2002, pg. 8). Aboriginal men, through all of the census years, earned approximately half of their white male counterparts. The results for visible minority women indicate that in 1971, they surprisingly earned more than their white female counterparts. By 1986, they were earning the same as white females, and in 1996, were earning significantly less. Visible minority men, from 1971 to 1996, were experiencing lower wages than their white male counterparts, and their wages have been steadily decreasing. Considering the fact that all of the individuals in this study were Canadian born, it is perplexing that their positions are worsening. Visible minorities who were born in Canada are by no means lacking "Canadian experience" or suffering a loss of credentials, therefore, it is likely that discrimination is still playing a role, perhaps even stronger, than it was previously. It is also perplexing that the wages of the individuals

in this study dropped in the 1990's, which was after the implementation of the Employment Equity Act and the Federal Contractors Program. Again, this is likely due to the existence of discrimination, as well as the fact that these policies have been insufficiently implemented.

Finally, with respect to individuals with disabilities, England (2003) suggested that individuals with disabilities are at least twice as likely to suffer from poverty, and that those who are in paid work are often ghettoized into low status and low paid jobs. England (2003) conducted her study on the "big six" Canadian banks in order to assess whether or not the position of disabled individuals has changed since the implementation of the Employment Equity Act in 1986. Discouragingly, she found that the numerical representation of disabled individuals in these banks was the same in 2001 as it was in 1987. Therefore, the picture of Employment Equity for those with disabilities remains particularly disconcerting.

The second method to investigate the successfulness of the Employment Equity Act is to examine the representation of members of the designated groups in senior management positions (Agoçs, 2002). This author found that the representation of white women in senior management increased by approximately 10% (*Ibid*, 2002, pg. 269). Visible minority men gained an increase in representation, albeit far below their availability; however, visible minority women did not. There was no difference in the numbers of aboriginals in senior management positions between 1987 and 1996. For men with disabilities, there was an increase and then a decrease in representation, while women

with disabilities did not achieve any increase (Agoçs, 2002). The fact that the representation of white women in senior management positions is increasing, but the wage gap at that level is also increasing, raises some serious concerns. This implies that even if designated group members gain entry into higher level positions of employment, there is no guarantee that they will be paid equally to their white male counterpart. Therefore, this implies that the work that is done by these designated group members is still being recognized as unequal to white males, and therefore, discrimination against them will continue to exist, and the Employment Equity programs are still not being utilized to their full potential.

With respect to the third and final method, Busby (2006) presented findings that were specifically focused on the representation of women since the implementation of the Act. Between 1987 and 2001, women's representation increased by about 3.9% to about 44.8%, which represented 96.6% of their labour market availability (*Ibid,* 2006, pg. 52). In the public sector, the representation of women rose from 42.4% in 1987 to 51.5% in 2001 (*Ibid,* 2006, pg. 8). She notes that the representation of women continues to be in positions that have generally been dominated by females, such as clerical and administrative occupations. However, there has been some improvement in terms of the representation in management and professional positions. Busby (2006) contends that although some of the findings of these results indicate success; they should be read with caution. She contends that it is difficult to tell whether or not the improvements have been due to the legislation itself. In addition, there has been little to no improvement in the other designated groups, as well as a lack of cross referencing between women who belong to more than one of the

groups. Therefore, Busby (2006) argues that this increased representation should be viewed as a starting point of change rather than a measure of success.

Explaining the Failure

There have been a number of reasons posited as to why the Employment Equity Act has achieved limited success to date. Some critics point to the Act itself, and argue that it is not stringent enough. For example, Lum (1995) argued that the reliance on data collection as an essential policy lever is the essential weakness of the Act. Along the same lines, Agoçs (2002) shows that the government has also lacked in its stringency, as there has been limited follow up of employers who have not been following the premises of the Act. Further, even if there is a follow up and an organization has been found to not follow the act, there have been virtually no repercussions placed against them. Therefore, Agoçs (2002) argues that there has been a gap between policy and practice, and that the lack of political will by the government to enforce its mandates has been a factor of the lack of successfulness of the Employment Equity Act. According to Busby (2006), the main focus of the Act still remains to be reporting rather than achieving. For example, the failure to submit an annual report is subject to a maximum penalty of $50 000, yet, when organizations submit this report and are found to not having achieved equalities in employment, there is no penalty. This indicates that the current focus of the Act is flawed, and that the real underlying problem of discrimination is not being adequately addressed.

Falkenberg and Boland (1997) contended that while Employment Equity calls for a modest reform in practice of the existing structure of organizations in society, it brings about significant debates, as well as a disconcerting amount of resistance. The authors argued that there is no middle ground with respect to Employment Equity; either one firmly believes in its implementation, or one is adamantly opposed to it. Since the introduction of the Employment Equity Act in Canada, there has been much media, academic, and business attention devoted to the issue, much of it being negative. The main criticisms put forward by the opponents of these groups is that equity policies abandon the principles of individual rights and merit, by assisting in the advancement of some groups over others (Falkenberg & Boland, 1997). This is likely due to the highly politicized debates surrounding affirmative action in the United States; however, many fail to recognize that there are some major differences between Employment Equity and affirmative action, such as the fact that Employment Equity does not use a system of quotas. Affirmative action is concerned primarily with improving numbers and representation through targeted hiring, in many cases disregarding merit, while Employment Equity is focused on eliminating barriers and discrimination in the workplace (Agoçs, 1996). Affirmative action programs provided no resources for disadvantaged groups in the United States once they were recruiting into employment positions, leaving them vulnerable to negative treatment (Agoçs, 1996).

Falkenberg and Boland (1997) stated that those who criticize the Act are mistaken, as there is no disregard for merit in Employment Equity, and that reverse discrimination has not been an outcome of equity policies in Canada, nor have the costs of doing business increased. In addition, the media often refers to minorities who have achieved higher

positions as being stigmatized. The authors noted that one of the opponents' chief

arguments is that equity policies are based on quotas, which will lead to a decline in

occupational and professional standards, as well as the overall competitiveness of Canadian

Business. Falkenberg and Boland (1997) maintained that this belief is misguided, as the

Canadian government has not required quotas; rather, numerical targets have been

projected that reflect the composition of certain organizations. It can be argued that the fact

that these misguided notions are so commonly believed is problematic, as it could lead to

employers being less likely to adhere to the premises of the Employment Equity Act.

Therefore, these misunderstandings that were created by the media have likely been a factor

in the lack of implementation and political will surrounding the legislation.

A specific example of the politics surrounding Employment Equity concerns the

introduction and repeal of provincial Employment Equity legislation in Ontario within a

period of less than two years. In 1994, the New Democratic Party governing party

provincially legislated Employment Equity as a proactive solution to ensuring equality in

every workplace in the broader public section, which included municipalities, school

boards, universities, hospitals, and so on (Bakan & Kobayashi, 2000). This legislation did

not include the imposition of quotas, and much like the federal legislation, it required

employers to submit Employment Equity plans. In order to ensure compliance and have an

effective system of monitoring and enforcement, an Employment Equity Tribunal was

created. However, the introduction of this provincial legislation heightened the already

existing backlash against Employment Equity. Soon after gaining power, the Progressive

Conservative Party majority government has introduced Bill 8, the Job Quotas Repeal Act

(1995) that was intended to "restore merit-based employment practices in Ontario" (Bakan and Kobayashi, 2000, pg. 28). It is indicative from the title that the Progressive Conservative party drew upon the common misconceptions regarding Employment Equity, using the rhetoric of "quotas" and "restoring merit" in order to sway the public. According to Bakan and Kobayashi (2000), this title "reflected a profound ideological rejection not only to the enactment of Employment Equity in Ontario, but also the general assumptions regarding systemic oppression which supports the policies" (pg. 28).

The Progressive Conservative party repealed the Act retroactively, ordering all information in the order of reports about Employment Equity that were gathered to be destroyed. This led to the advocates of Employment Equity to retreat in fear of severe ideological and political backlash (Bakan and Kobayashi, 2007). Therefore, Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) argued that not only was this an outright challenge to the notion of historical or systemic oppression, but it had a profound effect in creating an increasingly negative view of the federal Employment Equity legislation. The provincial legislation could have been a major positive step towards reaching equality for the marginalized groups in society in a much broader scope; however, its ideological politicization likely contributed to reinforcing the misconceptions regarding Employment Equity.

Busby (2006) found that there have been extensive differences in the levels of awareness and understanding of the common terms and approaches of Employment Equity and she explained that this "indicates the importance of well-resourced education programmes as a means of supplementing and supporting affirmative action legislation,

particularly when used as a top-down policy instrument" (pg. 54). The author attributed the weaknesses in the enforcement of the act as due to a lacking investment in the resources necessary to follow up on this enforcement. Therefore, there needs to be a significant investment in auditing and record keeping processes so that the data obtained can be used in a meaningful way. This investment, Busby (2006) argued, would lead to a deeper understanding of the root causes of discrimination, as it would allow for cross-referencing between groups to identify multiple discriminations. Investments of this type would be essential for aiding in the improvement of the many women who are facing 'double jeopardies' in Canadian society.

Each organization subject to the Employment Equity Act is required by law to submit an Employment Equity Program (EEP) to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Leck and Saunders (1996) posited that the characteristics of Employment Equity Plans themselves have a significant bearing on their successfulness. They developed three scales measuring different dimensions of EEPs in correlation with their effectiveness. The first scale, EEP formalization, measured the presence of specific goals, timetables, plans, and audits. A second scale, EEP comprehensiveness, measured whether EEPs were focused on activities such as recruitment, selection, and promotion. EEP support, the final scale, measured whether or not an EEP was supported by upper management. Correlations between representation indicators and EEP characteristics showed that those EEPs which were more formalized were correlated with increased representation of visible minorities. EEP comprehensiveness and EEP support were not significantly important indicators of representation. Leck and Saunders (1996) argued that the most significant message that

should be taken away from their study is that EEPs can in fact be successful, given that they have the right characteristics.

Therefore, it can be argued that the EEPs that have been created so far have not had the right ingredients, and that employers should take measures to have formalized Employment Equity programs in order to assure their effectiveness. However, it can also be argued that employers may not have sufficient knowledge to create and implement effective EEPs, and are therefore in need of more assistance from the government to do so. Therefore, this study will examine what is involved for employers in terms of the processes and work involved in the implementation of EEP in order to investigate additional factors that result in the failure of EEPs.

Addressing the Shortcomings

Falkenberg and Boland (1997) have proposed a number of possible solutions to the issue of failed Employment Equity policies. The first solution is an increase in government intervention which would include the creation of incentives for those achieving equity and punishment for those organizations that do not achieve the mandates of the Act (Falkenberg & Boland, 1997). Another form of intervention could be to impose quotas on organizations to ensure numerical representation of the designated groups. Busby (2006) contends that quotas should be a solution, as numerical targets have not proved to have been an effective means of eliminating inequalities in employment, as well as the fact that there has been too much of an emphasis on inputs and processes rather than results. However, Falkenberg and

Boland (1997) believed that this is not the best possible solution, and could lead to a greater

public backlash against the policies. It can be argued that although quotas may lead to a

backlash, it does not mean that such measures need not be taken. The Employment Equity

Act (1986, 1995) was legislated some twenty-three years ago, yet no significant progress

has been made; therefore, a strong argument could be made for implementing a quota

system. Another approach could be to encourage self-regulating systems by organizations

with a moderating role from the government (Falkenberg & Boland, 1997). This

moderated self-regulation would include organizations creating EEPs that are most

conducive to fostering growth for their specific circumstances. They would also have to

create an annual report, which the government would then review.

In order for the moderated self-regulating approach to work, Falkenberg and Boland

(1997) outlined a number of steps that need to be taken by organizations. Firstly, each

organization must make their current beliefs and perceptions surrounding equality in their

workplace environment clear. It is also crucial that employees in an organization realize

that the implementation of Employment Equity is based strictly on merit, and not on a

quota system. Since there exists such misunderstanding with respect to the misconceptions

regarding Employment Equity in general, it seems that this step could have a more

educational purpose for the population as a whole, because the message would likely be

spread. Another step would include, as mentioned above, creating EEPs that are tailored

to the needs of an individual firm. Finally, Falkenberg and Boland (1997) believed that it is

important to have all employees involved in the creation of EEPs, not just those in higher

positions. This is a crucial step, as the more educated all employees are above the EEPs, the more likely they are to be accepting of them.

Another possible solution is the legislation of Employment Equity under the Human Rights Acts of the provinces and territories in Canada (Mentzer, 2002); however, Ontario and British Columbia are the only two provinces in which this has been attempted. In Ontario, as mentioned earlier, the legislation was overturned within two years of its implementation. The provincial legislation seemed promising as it extended the coverage of the Act to federally regulated institutions with more than 10 employees as well as private institutions with more than 50 employees (Mentzer, 2002).

Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) firmly believed that training programs, at all level of the workplace are necessary to ensure the successfulness of Employment Equity programs. To date, only in British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia are there training programs, and only in Nova Scotia are these programs mandatory. Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) provided several recommendations for these training programs. First, they believed that there should be a national collaboration of Employment Equity training standards. Next, training programs should be created in accordance with the socio-political context of a particular region, and should cover all aspects of workplace relations. Finally, they also recommended that training programs should be directed at not just employers, but all levels of the workplace, in order to deal with the backlash phenomenon and reverse some of the negative misconceptions and regarding Employment Equity (Bakan & Kobayashi, 2000). The vital importance of training programs, for all members of federally regulated

workplaces, will become a major theme of this thesis. The importance of educating the Canadian workforce on matter surrounding equity in the workplace cannot be understated, as a true understanding of Employment Equity needs to be fostered among those in charge of delivering Employment Equity initiatives, as well as those directly affected by these initiatives.

All of the recommendations mentioned above are sound, and this thesis will make use of some of the suggestions that are relevant to the current study. Additionally, possible recommendations based on the issues described in this thesis will also be made.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

This chapter will consist of an overview of the two theories that were used to guide this research: Anti-Racism and Social Capital. The chapter will begin with an overview of the objectives of the Anti-Racism and an explanation of the importance and saliency of race within this framework. This will be followed by a discussion of the issues of democratic racism and "colour blindness" in Canadian society. Next will be a description of the process of racialization and its effects on subordinate groups. The section on Anti-Racism will conclude with an explanation of the normativity of whiteness in Canadian society and how this may lead to a sense of white privilege.

The focus of this chapter will then shift focus to the Social Capital framework. Firstly, conceptualizations of the two main types of capital discussed in the Social Capital literature: economic and symbolic will be explored. This will lead into a discussion on the misrecognition of symbolic capital and its relation to "symbolic violence." Next will be a discussion of the various conceptualizations of the term social capital itself and how it operates in the lives of individuals. This will be followed by an overview of the importance of social networks, followed by issues surrounding trust. The chapter will conclude by providing an argument for the utility of the combination of the Anti-Racism and Social Capital pedagogies.

Anti-Racism

The Anti-Racism framework examines the role of social institutions in producing and reproducing power imbalances (Dei, 1999). This framework acknowledges the role that the state plays in managing the concerns of the oppressed groups, and how it fails to address the underlying causes of discrimination, which thereby reinforces the status quo (James, 2003). Anti-Racism can also be conceptualized as an "educational and political action-oriented strategy for institutional and systemic change to address racism and the interlocking system of social oppression" (Dei, 1996, pg. 25). Anti-Racism theory concerns itself with investigating a number of issues, including the process of articulating social difference, the significance of personal experience and knowledge, how differentials of power and privilege operate in society, the importance of global political economic issues, and mechanisms for engaging in social change (George, 2000).

Calliste (1996) argued that in the Anti-Racism discourse, race in itself is not meant to be the priority among the markers of oppression; rather, it is a fundamental organizing principle of contemporary social life. Therefore, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, age, and other classifiers interact to influence a workers' location in class relations (Dua, 2007). A fundamental concept within this theoretical orientation is one of 'difference' which is a site of power and oppression, but can also be a site of possibility, allowing individuals to work with their experiences and engage in critical self-reflection to take collective political action in order to achieve social equities (Madibbo, 2006). Therefore,

members of oppressed groups must realize their positions of marginalization, and take an active role in eliminating the disadvantages that they face in society.

When it comes to racism within Canada, studies have shown that many Canadians still hold racially intolerant attitudes (Galabuzi, 2006). Due to the fact that Canada is a democratic society, often times, the holders of these attitudes themselves believe them to be unacceptable. In order to justify these attitudes, many have developed the ideology of democratic racism, which serves to "demonstrate continuing faith in the principles of an egalitarian society while at the same time undermining and sabotaging those ideals" (Galabuzi, 2006, pg. 51). Frances and Tator (2006) described democratic racism as an ideology which continues the practice of two contradictory ideals; egalitarianism and non-egalitarianism. Egalitarian ideals include those which endorse liberal values including justice and equality, whereas non-egalitarian ideals encourage negative feeling towards visible minorities, thereby encouraging discriminatory treatment. Many believe that Canadian society is "colour blind," where race does not play a role in the outcomes of individuals, however, Dei (2000) argued that this belief is indeed denying the existence of racism which "provides an excuse for complacency or the outright dismantling of anti-racism programs and initiatives (pg.26). Furthermore, the belief in "colour blindess" only serves to reinforce the normativity and dominance of the white majority. While the practices of democratic racism and the belief in "colour blindness" are pervasive amongst all sectors of society, including the school system, the media, arts/culture, and social/healthcare systems, of particular interest in this thesis is how these practices have led to the inequalities that exist for visible minority women in the Canadian workforce.

The Employment Equity Act has been a direct response by the Canadian government to manage the claims made by marginalized groups about inequity in terms of wages and hiring practices in employment. However, this Act has done little to address the issue of why racism and discrimination still persist in Canadian society; rather, it accepts them as facts that need to be dealt with. In addition, the fact that there still is limited follow up and repercussions for employers not abiding by the terms of the Employment Equity Act further reinforces the status quo. It has become increasingly apparent that women of colour in the workforce are facing not only a racialized labour system, but also a gendered labour system (Bonacich, Alimahomed & Wilson, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the situation of these women through the lens of an Anti-Racism theoretical orientation.

Proponents of Anti-Racism theory have conceptualized racialization as the process whereby racial attributes or meanings are grafted onto previously non-racial situations (Omi & Winant, 1994), which has the ability to transform the previously fluid category of racial identity into a fixed category (McDonnell, de Lourenço, 2009). According to Vidal-Ortiz (2004), racialization is in itself a process of social inequalities, as it "locates such experiences as having originated in the perception of otherness imposed by the hierarchal/racial/social order" (pg. 187). Although this author's focus was on the United States, the argument that certain racial groups are in positions of authority and superiority can be applied in the Canadian context. Racialization is a historically specific process, and can affect racial groups in different ways, depending on their ascribed status position, which can fall into the category of dominant or subordinate. It is often the case that those with a white or European background are classified as the dominant group, being found at

the top of the social hierarchy, while individuals of colour are deemed subordinate, and are often times at the bottom. Racialization has the ability to insert racial groups into an ethno-racial hierarchy, which in turn influences the "social mobility, access to societal rewards and resources, and the overall quality of life" (pg. 239) of ethnic and/or racial group members (McDonnell & de Lourenço, 2009).

By placing group members into this racial hierarchy, which is based on stereotypes, individuals may be given a "false identity" from which they may attempt, but be unable to escape. This phenomenon is problematic, as it creates a group persona, limiting the possibility that each member of a racial group will be judged according to their individual personality and attributes. According to Bonacich, Alimahomed and Wilson (2008), one of the main purposes of this process is to exploit the labour of subordinate racialized groups in order to maximize profit. This is a form of systemic discrimination, whereby racism seeps into institutional practices (Doane, 2006). In terms of the Canadian situation, it appears as though the processes of racialization are taking place as visible minority groups are generally suffering from substantial differences in wages in comparison to their white counterparts. With respect to hiring practices, it is evident that visible minorities have a more difficult time entering into professional and managerial occupations, thereby reinforcing their subordinate position within the workforce. Many workplaces in Canadian society still demonstrate a racialized hierarchy, whereby the top positions are held by members of the white majority, and entry level and/or undesirable positions are being dominated by visible minorities.

Anti-Racism theory focuses on the way that whiteness draws power from a normative characterization (Reitman, 2006). Therefore, whiteness can be conceptualized as a dynamic cultural production that can perform differently in diverse global, national, and local context. Whiteness can also be thought of as a "fluid set of knowledges and practices that simultaneously produce identifications with and are imperfectly reiterated by bodies, especially 'white' bodies with important consequences for life, opportunity, and psychic security" (McDonald, 2009, pg.9). Therefore, this universal attribution of whiteness as being "normative" leads to the creation of a category of the "other" which consists of non-white individuals. Even the term multicultural is becoming increasingly racialized in Canadian society (Taylor, 2006), as the word often provokes images of a visible minority immigrant, who is fundamentally different than his or her white counterpart. The differences in employment practices towards visible minorities as a result of these "differences" are highly problematic, especially in a pluralistic society such as Canada, as they lead to a sense of "white privilege." It is likely that many employers believe that visible minorities are not capable or deserving of higher positions of employment and higher salaries. Therefore, they may not take the issue of Employment Equity seriously and may be reluctant to proceed with its implementation.

Social Capital Theory

Another framework which is useful in the study of inequality in employment is Social Capital theory. Pierre Bourdieau, the name most often associated with this theory, believed that there were two main forms of capital, which were economic and symbolic

(Moore, 2008). Economic capital applied strictly to monetary gains and profit, whereas symbolic capital included a number of sub-forms of capital, such as cultural capital. Cultural capital consists of all the knowledge, languages, skills, and qualifications that a particular member of society may possess, which are usually products of socialization and schooling (Jenkins, 2002). The function of cultural capital is mainly understood in its relation to the labour market, as it should theoretically facilitate the conversion of education and skills into economic capital by guaranteeing a certain monetary value for a certain institutional level of achievement (Jenkins, 2002). However, this is not always the case, as often times there is a systematic denial of symbolic capital being transubstantiated into types of economic capital (Moore, 2008). Bourdieau termed this systematic denial to be misrecognition, which was basically the ineffective conversion of cultural capital to economic capital that in turn created hierarchies of discrimination He believed that this misrecognition was a form of "symbolic violence:"

> The [symbolic] "violence" reflects the fact that relationships within fields and their hierarchies of value are in reality purely arbitrary rather than being grounded in intrinsically worthwhile and superior principles radically detached from the this-worldly instrumentalism and materialism of mercantile exchange. The legitimations of the system of social domination and subordination constituted within and through these symbolic relations are ultimately based on "interest." (Moore, 2008, p. 104)

The statement above powerfully describes what has been the employment situation for many Canadians, especially those who have emigrated from what were previously known

as non-preferred countries. There has been a lack of recognition of foreign credentials, which leads to a limited transmission of their cultural capital into monetary gains. This has a profoundly negative effect, as often times these immigrants are forced into menial jobs, and conditions of poverty. More discouragingly, visible minorities who are Canadian born and have received Canadian education are not seeing these credentials being translated into equitable forms of employment. This emphasizes the point made by Bourdieau, that there is a form of "symbolic violence" operating against visible minorities in Canadian society which is based on the interests of the dominant class.

Social Capital theory posits that the relationships with others and ties to certain social networks, both formal and informal, can provide access to valuable resources and valuable social domains (York & Cornwell, 2008). The term social capital itself has been subject to a variety of conceptualizations; in simple terms, it can be thought of as the features of an individual's social network or relationships that provide potential access to certain resources (York & Cornwell, 2008). Loury, one of the first theorists to conceptualize what is known as social capital today although he did not specifically use the term, argued that 'social capital' is gained through the social relations that an individual is engaged in during the process of socialization (as cited in Barbieri, 2006). This 'social capital' is gained through social interactions with other members of a particular society, and these interactions are highly dependent on the social class in which an individual was raised. Thus, it could be inferred that since immigrants have not been socialized in Canadian society, they are in this sense lacking social capital that would be valuable in a Canadian context.

Bourdieau eventually defined the term social capital as "a social mechanism – founded on the resources derived from the possession by a social actor of relations of mutual knowledge and recognition – which intervenes in the interplay between the social origin of individuals and the amount of human capital that they possess" (as cited in Barbieri, 2006, p. 683). Bourdieau believed that social capital had an amplifying effect, in that it had the ability to reinforce the effects of class and education. Along these lines, the human capital that one possesses in terms of education and experience cannot fully provide an individual with success in employment. Therefore, social capital theorists would contend that the combination of devalued human capital and the lack of appropriate social capital lead to immigrants having an especially disadvantaged and vulnerable position in the Canadian labour market.

Others have examined the related notion of status attainment, which operationalized individual social resources into 'micro' terms. Although this micro approach did not use the term 'social capital,' it was related as it "analyzed the modalities and mechanisms by which individual purposive, stable relations produce social effects" (Barbieri, 2003, p. 683). Coleman defined social capital in micro terms as being formed by elements that are typical to relational systems, such as having social contacts and interactions, as well as by institutional systems, such as socialization and reciprocation (Barbieri, 2003). According to Coleman, once these elements are activated, the production of resources based on trust and reciprocity are a likely outcome, which can be economically productive. However, this capital cannot be utilized at any time, rather, "it is a 'specific' resource that may prove useful for instrumental action only under specific conditions"

(Barbieri, 2003, p. 684). Barbieri (2003) added to this point by stating that social capital is an investment for which an individual might expect some type of 'return.' These returns may be in the form of a profit, gain, and social income taking the form of recognition, which consists of consideration and reputation. The connections that are developed as a result of social capital can lead to an increase in status attainment, as well as increasing the chances of success with instrumental actions, such as obtaining employment (York & Cornwell, 2008).

Barbieri (2003) suggested three ways in which social capital can manifest itself in the lives of individuals. Firstly, social capital can act as an informational resource in which individuals can learn about opportunities, for example, job availabilities. Secondly, social capital has the ability to act as a resource of influence in order to help individuals attain personal goals that may not otherwise be available to them. An example of this could be a personal recommendation that allows an individual to be considered for a position of employment. Finally, social capital may act as a resource of socialization and recognition. It does so by passing on to individuals the values, behavioural standards, social competences, the system of reciprocal expectations, and the role obligations of a particular community. Therefore, this process connects individuals to social groups and enables them to conform to that group's expectations.

Social networks are regarded by Social Capital theorists to be highly important in finding employment. Those who are new to Canada generally do not have the same access to social capital as native born Canadians, as they often leave behind their social networks,

social support, and other social relations that would assist them in acquiring information (Nakhaie, 2008). Therefore, the fact that there already exists systemic discrimination in workplace institutions, coupled with the fact that new immigrants are lacking in social capital, puts them at a significant disadvantage when trying to enter and move up in the Canadian workforce. Even immigrants who have been in Canada for some time may be at a disadvantage, as these networks are difficult to establish, and often take years to build.

A final topic that has been discussed by Social Capital theorists which is significant to the employment situations of visible minorities in the Canadian workforce is networks of trust. There are macro levels of trust, which foster democratic governance, as well as micro levels of trust, which at an interpersonal level may "foster cooperation and beneficial competition necessary for a viable and innovative civil society" (Häkli, 2009, p. 15). It is likely the case that dominant members of society may not understand the practices of a visible minority group that are different from their own. This can lead to feelings of mistrust of visible minority groups, which in turn have an effect on their economic positions in society. This mistrust can occur at the macro level, for example, the non-recognition of foreign credentials, which systematically inhibits visible minority immigrants from obtaining certain positions of employment. At the micro level, mistrust at the interpersonal level in workplaces can reduce the number of social contacts an individual may have, and in turn have a negative effect on their occupational mobility.

Unique Contribution

Taken together, the Anti-Racism and Social Capital frameworks provide a unique understanding of the ineffectiveness of Employment Equity in the Canadian context. Anti-Racism theory focuses on the causes and effects of discrimination, mostly pertaining to the relationship between dominant and oppressed groups in society in general and in the workplace. Social Capital theory, which discusses forms of capital, and social networks and ties, provides an understanding of how immigrants' entrance into employment and occupational mobility is hindered in the Canadian workforce. These two theories complement one another, as Anti-Racism discusses the process of racialization, where visible minorities are artificially placed into an ethno/racial hierarchy, and Social Capital demonstrates how the assets of these individuals are subsequently devalued. Therefore, these theories together can provide insight as to why discrimination occurs in the first place, as well as some of the more covert processes that are sometimes neglected, but required to have mobility in Canadian workplaces.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will begin with an overview of the qualitative methodological orientation and its relevance to the current study. Next will be a discussion of qualitative interviews, which was the specific qualitative research method used in this study. The following sections will include explorations of the issues of generalizability, sampling, and trustworthiness in qualitative research. This will be followed by a discussion of the potential limitations of qualitative research methods.

This chapter will then shift focus to issues pertaining to the current study, starting with the recruitment of participants. Next will be a summary of the characteristics of the samples of both the employers and visible minority women, including a brief introduction to each of the participants. The topic of the role of the researcher in qualitative researcher and how it impacted the current study will then be discussed. The chapter will then include a synopsis of the data analysis procedure that is employed in this study. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an outline of the ethical procedures that were adhered to in this study.

Data Source

In this study, a qualitative methodological approach is employed in order to address the posed research questions. Much of the prior research on the outcomes of the Employment Equity legislation has been quantitative in nature. The issue of the

ineffectiveness of Employment Equity policies is complex as there are many factors that play a role in this problem, for which quantitative methods can only provide a limited understanding. Quantitative approaches have generally focused on measureable attributes such as income differentials and proportions of individuals in employment positions. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the importance of using a qualitative methodology lies in the fact that it "provides a sense of vision, where it is that the analyst wants to go with the research ... the techniques and the procedures (method), on the other hand, furnish the means for bringing that vision to reality" (pg. 8). Qualitative research methods are useful because they provide data that are rich in descriptions, ideal for investigating topics and issues that are complex in nature (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998). Therefore, the type of qualitative research method that is chosen depends on the nature of the research questions. A qualitative approach was useful to answer the research questions of this study in that it provided accounts from those individuals who directly work with the Employment Equity programs as well as from those who are affected by the legislation.

The specific research method utilized in this study was open ended, in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview is a narrative based interview technique which is not highly structured, thereby allowing the interviewee to determine the structure of the interview (Scheibelhofer, 2008). These interviews allow the informants to construct a rich and detailed version of reality through their interactions with the researcher (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Bodgan and Biklen (1998) contended that the open-ended nature of these interviews will allow the participants to describe their experiences from their own frame of reference, where they are free to express their thoughts about particular issues, rather from

one structured by prearranged questions. Encouraging the participant to give in-depth answers implies that an answer will go beyond superficiality, allowing the researcher to piece together the information that they receive in a meaningful way (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). According to Scheibelhofer (2008), in-depth interviews are "meant to capture the respondents' perceptions and perspectives such that the researcher can reconstruct meanings attributed to experiences and events" (pg. 405).

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) argued that interviews contain the repositories of facts and the details of the interviewee's experience, but in certain situations, where the material of the interview is sensitive, this information may be difficult to obtain. For instance, the current study questions if visible minority females have experienced discrimination against them in their workplace, which is a relatively sensitive topic. Researchers must overcome these types of difficulties by being weary of how they formulate the interview questions, and by providing "an atmosphere conducive to open and undistorted communication between the interviewer and respondent" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, pg. 8). Therefore, the task of the researcher is to pose questions in a non-threatening and non-biased manner, in order to maximize the detail and credibility of the answers.

The style of the interviews followed a general interview guide approach, whereby the researcher brings a checklist of topics or general questions to channel the discussion (Patton, 1990). Other questions asked were structured around the answers that the participants gave. Thus, each interview was enlightening in the sense that it allowed each participant to provide me with unique experiences that were related to the topics that I

brought in to discuss. At the end of each interview, I provided my interviewees the time to bring up any other thoughts or to ask any questions they may have had. Interestingly, many of the participants gave lengthy responses to questions that I had previously asked in the interview that they originally gave quite brief responses to, especially with respect to discriminatory practices that they have suffered from in the workplace.

A total of five interviews were carried out with employers in federally regulated industries who occupied various positions, including human resource managers, directors, and educators, who were involved in the implementation of Employment Equity programs and policies. Two were employed in the federal public sector, one in the non-profit sector, and two were from the private sector. Questions directed towards employers included their pre-requisite training, understanding of, their role with, and length of time working with Employment Equity initiatives, as well as the types of Employment Equity programs that they worked with. They were also asked questions about perceptions of discrimination in their workplaces, including whether or not it exists, and their beliefs as to why it may exist (See Appendix A).

Thirteen interviews were carried out with visible minority women who work in federally regulated companies. Nine of these women were employed in the federal public sector, one from a non-profit organization, and three were from the private sector. These women were questioned on the length of time that they had been employed in their workplaces, the difficulty level in obtaining their positions, and their perceptions of hiring, mobility, and discrimination in their workplaces (See Appendix A). Many of these women

have suffered from discriminatory practices in the workplace, and having them account for these experiences allowed me to gain a thorough understanding of the experiences within their workplaces.

Generalizability

A central debate in the qualitative methodological literature is the generalizability of qualitative data. Generalizability can be defined as the extension of results of a particular study to a broader group of people, and is usually conceptualized in a quantitative sense as being achieved by random sampling methods (Collinridge & Gantt, 2008). According to Collinridge and Gantt (2008), there are a number of ways to understand generalizability that are not limited to probability sampling models. One of these understandings is analytic generalization, whereby the researcher makes reasoned judgements on whether the findings in one study can be used as a channel for understanding what may occur in another situation. This approach "relies on assertational logic whereby researchers point out similarities (and differences) between situations and draw on relevant theoretical frameworks for interpretive understanding to support their generalization claims" (Collinridge & Gantt, 2008, pg. 392). Within the context of this thesis, the use of the Anti-Racism and Social Capital frameworks allowed me to make generalizations to the sample of participants in this study.

In addition, Collinridge and Gantt (2008) asserted that a number of other criteria should be taken into consideration when determining the generalizability of a study,

including the use of case studies, whether a study builds on existing theoretical concepts through comprehensive literature reviews, the use of theory-based sampling procedures, whether or not well-defined data analysis procedures were employed, clearly defining how the findings apply in other contexts, and the integration of results into the existing research. The above criterion is not employed in this study as the goal was not on generalizing the findings to all federally regulated organizations, rather, only to the sample of participants in this particular study.

Sampling

The sampling foundation for this thesis was theoretical sampling, which can be defined as selecting groups or categories to study based on their relevance to the research questions of the study, the theory utilized, and the explanation or account which is to be developed (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008). Silverman and Marvasti (2008) maintained that the goal of theoretical sampling is to construct a sample which is meaningful theoretically because it builds on criteria that allow a researcher to develop and/or test a theory or explanation. Further, they argue that the objective or theoretical sampling is to follow a theoretical logic, where the issue is not to generalize the results of qualitative studies to populations, but rather to theoretical propositions. The goal of the current study was to explore the experiences of both employers and visible minority women in federally regulated workplaces and to integrate these experiences into the broader theoretical frameworks employed in this study.

Trustworthiness

Many argue that a central issue in maintaining the accountability in qualitative studies is that the researcher must take into account the trustworthiness of the data. Padgett (2008) contended that trustworthy research is conducted fairly and ethically, and in which the findings demonstrate the experiences of the respondents as closely as possible. She argues that there are three potential threats to trustworthiness including researcher biases, reactivity, and respondent biases.

Reactivity refers to the effects that researcher's presence may have on the participants' beliefs and behaviours. In order to control for this potential problems, I attempted to make the respondents feel as comfortable as possible, allowing them to chose the venue for the interview. Additionally, I tried to keep the perceived power differential between [delete 'between'] that can exist between a researcher and participants to a minimum.

Research biases occur when the interpretations of the data are clouded by preconceptions or personal opinions that the researcher may hold. Posing leading questions, choosing informants which are congruent with the researcher's worldviews, and ignoring data that does not resonate with the researchers views are all examples of researcher biases. In terms of the questions, I tried to frame them in such a way that I did not elicit any particular responses from the respondents. Due to the ethical guidelines, I was unable to contact any of my participants directly; therefore, the problem of choosing informants that resonated with my worldview was eliminated. In terms of the data that

were presented in the analysis of this thesis, I attempted to integrate the responses of all of the participants, regardless of whether or not they supported the theoretical frameworks.

Finally, respondent bias may emerge when the respondents' subjectivity comes under question due to situations such as respondents withholding information or lying. Because of the sensitive nature of the topics discussed in this thesis, such as racism and discrimination, it is expected that there may have been some hesitation from the respondents to discuss their experiences. By reiterating to the respondents the anonymity of their identities, I believe that some of the potential respondent biases may have been eliminated.

Limitations

Although qualitative methods can provide rich and meaningful data, they do have limitations. Willig (2008) asserted that qualitative research is concerned with providing meanings and interpretations to complex social processes. Ideally, qualitative researchers should remain neutral in their research, leaving behind preconceptions and expectations. However, there is always a possibility that the researcher may unknowingly contaminate their data (Willig, 2008). Therefore, it is imperative that researchers be particularly cognisant of the potential biases that they may bring into their research.

Due to the small sample sizes that are often the characteristic of qualitative studies, the researcher is not usually able identify cause and effect relationships (Willig, 2008). Additionally, claims about trends, regularities, and distributions in a population cannot be

made. Likewise, qualitative studies cannot provide predictions, as the focus is on description and explanation. Finally, an additional limited is that the comparability of qualitative findings, even when dealing with the same subject matter, is not always possible (Willig, 2008).

Recruitment

The participants in this study were recruited through an indirect snowball sampling method. I was not able to contact any of my participants directly due to ethical guidelines. Therefore, a recruitment notice had to be distributed by a third party to suitable candidates, and it was up to those candidates to contact the researcher if they had an interest in participating. This method quickly became problematic, as due to the sensitive nature of the research, it was difficult to find participants, or even get in contact with members of these workplaces that were willing to distribute the recruitment notice. Originally, I tried to contact individuals by a general phone line from the list of workplaces published in the Employment Equity Annual Reports; however, I found it quite difficult to access any members of those organizations that would be willing to speak with me. Therefore, I was limited to workplaces in which I, or my social contacts, could distribute the recruitment notice. As a visible minority woman, I had access to certain members of my community who work at various organizations to help with recruiting participants.

All of the interviews were conducted in the city of Calgary, and the interviews ranged from twenty minutes to one hour in length. I gave the opportunity to the

participants to choose the location of the interviews, which most times were either in a private room at their workplace, or a coffee shop. One interview was conducted in a participant's home, and one in a seating area of a leisure court. Each of the interviews was audio recorded. The participants were given the opportunity to choose appropriate pseudonyms, and most of them did so. For the remaining participants, I chose the pseudonyms.

The Sample

The sensitive nature of this research topic did not allow me to have strict criteria for both the employers and the visible minority women. In general participants were between twenty-five and fifty-eight years of age, and had been at their companies for various amounts of time, with varying levels of education, immigration statuses, and ethnic/racial backgrounds.

The sample of employers that I obtained consisted of four females and one male. The employers ranged between thirty-eight and fifty-eight years of age. I would have liked to have had additional male professionals to interview; however, I did not achieve this goal. Four of the employers interviewed in this study were white, and one was a visible minority. One of the employers was born abroad, while the other four were Canadian born. The sample was highly overrepresented with individuals who have obtained post-secondary education. This is probably due to the nature of the positions that these individuals occupied, and the continuing emphasis that our society is placing on education. These

individuals had varying lengths of time working with Employment Equity, ranging from a few months to many years. A brief introduction to each of these participants is below:

Ruth, a 58 year old female, has been working for the Government of Canada since 1982. She received her certification at a Canadian college. She has been working directly with Employment Equity for about 10 years.

Katie, a 38 year old female, has been working for a non-profit organization for approximately (6 months). She has however, worked with Employment Equity programs in her previous positions in the private sector for the last 3 to 4 years. She has a BA from a Canadian university as well as a business certification.

Lily, a 46 year old female, obtained her university degree (BA) from a Canadian university, as well as her HR designation. She has been working for the banking sector for about 11 years. She has been in a management position for about 3 years, where she deals directly with Employment Equity programs.

Cassidy is a 39 year old female who holds a BA from a Canadian University. She began working for the government in the early 1990's, but terminated her employment in between to pursue other endeavours. She has since resumed her employment at the government of Canada, for a total of 8 years worked.

Alex, the only male participants in this study, who is 38 years of age, obtained his BA from an Eastern Canadian University. He has been working in the airline sector

for a few years, but has only been working on Employment Equity initiatives for about one year.

The sample of visible minority women ranged from twenty-five to forty-six years of age. Most of the participants have obtained their full post-secondary education in Canada. Some participants were educated in their home country, yet upgraded upon arrival in Canada. Only one foreign born participant did not acquire additional Canadian education. Three of the women were ethnically Asian, eight were Southeast Asian, and two were Black. About half of these participants were born in Canada, and the other half were born in various places, including the Philippines, East Africa, India, and Vietnam. An introduction to each of these participants is provided below:

Salma is a 34 year old woman who was born in Canada. She holds BSC from a Canadian University, as well as some education in a Master's program, which she started, but did not finish. She has been working for a sector in the Federal Government of Canada for approximately 8 years.

Neha is a 31 year old female who was born in Southeast Asia and moved to Canada about two decades ago. She holds a post-secondary degree (BA) which she obtained from a Canadian university. Neha has been working for a sector in the Federal Government of Canada for 4 years.

Farida , a 25 year old female, was born in East Africa and moved to Canada approximately 20 years ago. She obtained her post-secondary degree (BA) from a Canadian university, and has been working for a not-profit agency for one year.

Delores is a 28 year old black woman, who was born in Canada. She obtained her post-secondary degree (BA) from a Canadian University, and has been working for the government for approximately 7 years.

52 year old Arusha was born in East Africa, and arrived in Canada in the mid 1970's. Her college education was obtained in East Africa (which was unrelated to her employment in Canada), although she did take a few courses related to her current work at a Canadian college. She works in the private sector for a banking company, which is where she has been for the past 32 years.

Miranda, a 25 year old black Canadian-born woman, obtained her post-secondary business education at a Canadian college. She has been working at the government for 2 years.

Valorie is a 25 year old female, who was born in East Asia. She has been in Canada for almost 20 years, and has obtained her BA from a Canadian university. She has been working for the government for 2 years.

Ranita, a 30 year old East Indian female, was born in Canada, and has obtained her post-secondary (BA) at a Canadian university. She has been working for the government for approximately 5 years.

Soraya, a 45 year old female, was born in East Africa and moved to Canada in the mid 1970's. She obtained her education at a Canadian college, and has been working for the government of Canada for about 13 years.

Marta, a 46 year old female, was born in the Philippines. She moved to Canada 17 years ago, and obtained her business diploma from her home country. She has been working for the banking sector for a total of 14 years.

Radha is a 26 year old female who was born in Canada, and obtained her business education at a Canadian college. She has been working in the private sector for a major airline for approximately one year.

Sumita, a 29 year old female, was born in India, and obtained her education in business at a Canadian college. She has been a contract worker with the government for almost one year.

Afroza, a 39 year old female, was born in East Africa, and has obtained her University degree (BA) and her business diploma from Canadian post-secondary institutions. She has been a contract employee with the government for about one year.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher undoubtedly has a significant role in the research process. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2003), the researcher must have prior knowledge when studying racialized groups, as upon entering the field, we "find ourselves at the intersection of social class, gender, race, and other subjective sensibilities .... we must take the subject to have a biography that is socially and historically mediated, and proceed accordingly" (pg. 147). Therefore, in the current study, it was especially important that I

understood the processes of racialization that occur in society before conducting interviews with the respondents. As a visible minority female myself, I feel that I was able to elicit information from the participants that a Caucasian may not have been able to. On some level, I believe that the participants were able to identify with me as I was also a minority, and more openly discuss the plights that they themselves as minorities may have encountered in the workplace. However, although I was aware of this fact, it was also important for me to keep logical distance, and allow the participants to open up to me without biasing the interview by providing my own experiences, or other potential examples.

Data Analysis

Boyatzis (1998) described three strategies described by qualitative researchers to develop a thematic code from the data, including theory driven coding, prior data/research driven coding, and inductive/data driven coding. It is important to note that these approaches are not mutually exclusive; rather, they can be conceptualized as falling on a continuum. I utilized an inductive approach for this study, in which the codes were constructed inductively from the raw data, and as Boyatzis (1998) explained, "it is the task of the researcher to interpret the meaning after obtaining findings and to construct a theory after the discovery of results" (pg. 30). Although the theories themselves were not constructed, the content of the interviews used in this study were used to further the understanding of existing theoretical concepts, and attribute meanings to the perspectives and experiences of both the employers and visible minority women in this study. A central

component of data driven coding is that "previously silenced voices or perspectives inherent in the information can be brought forward and recognized" (Boyatzis, 1998, pg. 30). This statement resonates with the one of the main objectives of the Anti-Racism approach, which is to give a voice to members of oppressed groups, which in the context of this study were visible minority women.

I transcribed each interview in the study, and only I had access to these transcriptions. In order to analyze the data, I did not employ the use of any transcription or analyzing software. I found that the themes were quite evident, and I could code and index them manually. I began the analyzing process by first highlighting my interviews in different colours according to themes. I then compiled separate documents with the narratives from the interviews according to these themes. I then proceeded to break down these major themes into subthemes, and then created a general summary of these themes that I could refer to when structuring the data analysis.

Ethics

Prior to collecting data, ethics approval was obtained from the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB). The CFREB required a copy of the consent form and the recruitment notice that was going to be distributed to participants in the study. Upon obtaining ethics approval, the recruitment notice was immediately distributed to individuals in federally regulated workplaces. I provided the consent form to participants who contacted me to show interest in the study. Since the context of this research was

somewhat sensitive to some participants, as they were members of large organizations

within which they would not want to jeopardize their positions, I reiterated several times on

the consent form and during the interviews that their identities would remain confidential.

Due to the sensitive nature of the information provided in the interviews, it was important

to reiterate to respondents during the interview session that their true identities would

remain completely confidential, as well as the names of their organizations. In addition, I

provided them the option to choose their own pseudonyms, and made it clear that the

names of the organizations they were employed with, as well as non-relevant characteristics

would be altered. In addition, I emphasized the fact that participants were able to refuse to

answer questions that they are uncomfortable with, as well as withdraw from the study if

they so wished.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PERSPECTIVES OF EMPLOYERS

Introduction

Previous studies that have focused on the ineffectiveness of Employment Equity have primarily been quantitative in nature and placed emphasis on the levels of representation of the designated groups in federally regulated workplaces. While these studies were important in demonstrating that Employment Equity Act has yet to achieve its full potential, they fail to account for the individual differences across these organizations. Each organization has discretion in terms of which Employment Equity initiatives they will undertake. Therefore, to explore the effectiveness of Employment Equity, it is important to gain insightful information from those who are directly involved in creating and/or administering Employment Equity initiatives. Knowing the specificities of each organization can ultimately allow for more sound policy recommendations to be made.

This chapter will explore four aspects surrounding Employment Equity for each of the five employers. The first aspect includes the type of training and education that they have received in order to work with positions relating to Employment Equity prior to working with the legislation. Secondly, the specific role of each employer with respect to Employment Equity, including the delivery of Employment Equity initiatives will be explored. Also included in this section will be the employers' perceptions of success and areas of improvement in Employment Equity and how Employment Equity programs (or related programs) are delivered. The final aspect that will be addressed is each of the

employer's beliefs about discrimination, in terms of whether they believe it exists in their organizations, and if so, the reasons that they believe discrimination exist.

Prerequisite Training

In order to deal with the complex issue of equity in the workplace, it is necessary to have background training about the Employment Equity Act, as well as on the barriers and forms of discrimination that members of marginalized group may encounter in the workplace. In addition, it would be necessary to acknowledge these issues when dealing with the measures that are used to combat discrimination, such as the Employment Equity Act.

Three of the five employers that were interviewed had knowledge about the Employment Equity Act through schooling, while receiving human resources (HR) designations. The employer who did not have an official HR designation had many years of experience in the private sector and in the community dealing with measures to combat discrimination in the workplace, although she did not specifically work with the Employment Equity Act. One employer did not have any knowledge or experience in Employment Equity prior to becoming responsible for Employment Equity initiatives.

Although education and/or experience were cited by all employers as the main reason they were chosen for their positions, there were varying levels of training offered to them. Ruth, who works for the federal government, stated that in order to work in her position, participation in a national training program was a requirement. According to Ruth, this training program delivered extensive information about Employment Equity:

> We did I think a four week or three week program and it certainly went into the history of how the Employment Equity Act was established in Canada and all the subsequent sort of benchmark milestones for equity in this country. And the training at that time was to look at umm, how you promote the program, how do you develop awareness with the public, how you umm, assess programs that are internal to the clients, that are responsible to us which are the federal contr-uhh, the federal, legislated federal employees.

The training that Ruth received was well rounded, as it not only covered the history behind the Act and how programs should be developed in the workplace, but also how to foster the general public's understanding of the Act, which has been lacking. Cassidy, prior to entering her position, had an extensive background knowledge and experience in dealing with issues surrounding racism and discrimination in Canadian society. Katie, who works for a non-profit organization, did not have much training with respect to Employment Equity from her company. She stated that knowledge about the Act was a professional requirement and part of the code of ethics, and therefore a pre-requisite to obtaining her position. Lily, who works for the private sector, also stated that it was her level of experience and knowledge of her organization that helped her obtain her role with Employment Equity. Finally, Alex, who also works in the private sector, had no experience or training at all before taking over the Employment Equity duties in his company.

Role of the Employers/Delivery of Employment Equity Initiatives

Over the course of conducting the interviews, I came to learn that the method in which Employment Equity programs are structured in the various federally regulated

industries were quite diverse, as well as the way that they are communicated to their employees. Often times, Employment Equity is masked under diversity training initiatives.

In the federal public sector, the main focus with Employment Equity appears to be maintaining adequate levels of representation of the four designated groups. Ruth, an employer for the federal public sector, described having dual roles with respect to her work with Employment Equity, with small portion of her duties including having to sit on an internal committee to develop programs. Interestingly, she mentioned that these programs were initially created only because the federal public sector was going to be audited. The major portion of her work was the development of a complex statistical program, which Ruth commended, as it has the ability to identify gaps by occupation as well as region. Once the results are obtained from the statistical analyses, a hiring recruitment is targeted toward the underrepresented group in a particular position/occupation. Ruth describes the process below:

> Ruth: Umm, let's say ... we're doing a recruitment for geologists to work with oceans or something like that, then, and we knew that they were primarily white males.
>
> Raheela: Mmm hmm.
>
> Ruth: They could run statistics to say that, they do comparative statistics to what's available in the public arena. So they would tell us that there are availability of 203 visible minority, umm, geologists, did I say geologists, yeah-
>
> Raheela: Mmm hmm.
>
> Ruth: And some, there's 28 men, 38 women, whatever, and so what we would say to them , you need to recruit from those pools. Those people are available to you,

so you have to recruit those pools. So then they have to set up a program to try and access those people in that area. It's all based on you're umm, what they call a census metropolitan area, so we can do it all the way down to Calgary. So I could look for an administrator, someone that would identify through, and it's all done through your tax forms, income, or the census data, so then when you fill that out and you say you're an administrator, a public administrator or whatever, so then when we're recruiting, we would know how many people are out there, available to us. And we do it with ... every occupation.

Raheela: And how often do you do this?

Ruth: We do it every 3 years. So we know, and what it is though for us, is to identify gaps. So let's say that in labour ... we want to include more aboriginal people into our program, so when we're recruiting we can do specific recruitment for Aboriginals for certain occup-, whatever occupations we want, right.

It is important to note that although these recruitments are targeted towards specific groups, they are still merit-based. Importantly, Ruth pointed out that as the positions for targeted hiring are made available, so are several other positions of the same level, in order to maintain a fair competition for all, while still attempting to increase representation.

Cassidy, another federal public service employer, described her duties as being mainly an educator, providing individuals with the best practices around Employment Equity and accommodation. One of her main tasks was to facilitate learning between employers, and to encourage networking between employers and the four designated groups. Therefore, Cassidy's belief was that communication was highly important, and she described some of the flaws that exist with purely relying on statistical analyses to promote equality in the workplace. She commented on the absence of communication surrounding Employment Equity:

I think that there isn't enough being discussed about Employment Equity. I think that many people know about it, umm, but generally you know that check box that you check off when you umm, umm, when you apply for a job and also on an annual basis, when there is this self-identification survey, so again, umm, you know the federal government is trying to keep a tab on you know, how many visible minorities they have in different categories, so. But it's optional.

Cassidy highlights the issues that have been observed in the past by those who have critiqued the implementation of the Employment Equity Act. Firstly, she pinpoints the major flaw in the collection of data, which is the voluntary self-identification survey. If employees are not made aware of how such information is used, and if they have misconceptions about Employment Equity, they may be reluctant to identify themselves to be a member of a designated group. This will result in inaccurate data which can have the negative effect of potentially underestimating the representation of designated group members across occupational levels. Another problem she discusses is the lack of communication about Employment Equity:

Because [Employment Equity] is not being discussed enough I think what happens is there is a lot of umm, misunderstanding about what Employment Equity is about. And so some people are weary about checking out good thing or a bad thing for them to do that. And also, umm, the, the staff who are not visible minorities could construe this umm, legislation, as, as being reverse discrimination. And I've actually heard that, umm, couple of occasions uh, where you know people don't quite understand why, umm, Employment Equity exists, umm, uh, a sense of unfairness about the purpose of Employment Equity.

This lack of communication is problematic as it could potentially harbour feelings of resentment between white and visible minority employees. Individuals may perceive that visible minorities are attaining benefits based on the premise of their skin colour only, rather than on the basis of their merit. The reasoning that she provides for this lack of

communications is that the staff are not being provided the time for training, informal and/or formal discussions, and the fact that it is not "visibly promoted by management." Proponents of the Anti-Racism pedagogy have argued that societal institutions fail to interrogate the underlying causes of discrimination and fail to challenge systemic discrimination unless they are pressured into doing so. Therefore, these institutions tend to give off the appearance of change, while at the same time reproducing the status quo (Calliste, 1996). There are Employment Equity Programs in this organization which gives off an appearance of change, yet there is no medium given by management to discuss important issues and misunderstandings about these programs. The final issue that Cassidy alluded to was that of misunderstandings surrounding diversity:

> People talking about you know, well you know, I'm Ukrainian, and there, we, we don't have Ukrainian days in Canada ... But we have Asian Heritage Month, we have African Day, we've got Black History Month ....We celebrate this in the workplace, but why don't we celebrate Ukrainian Day in the workplace .... so there's definitely ... a lack of communications and the, and the lack of understanding and tolerance about these different, uhh, formal vs. informal, uhh, ways where diversity is promoted. So yeah, I, I definitely think that we're lacking ... not just administration and front level positions, but it's also on the management level.

Although the celebratory occasions to which she was referring to are due recognitions of groups that have been and still are marginalized in Canadian society, it is understandable how others would feel excluded. Group members whose traditions are not celebrated may feel left out or ignored, and in order to combat this feeling, it is necessary to celebrate other traditions in the workplace, or to properly explain the significance of the traditions that are

celebrated. There needs to be a sense of inclusion among all members of the workplace, as Cassidy describes below:

> It's almost like, OK … am I being encouraged to talk about my diversity, you know, about what's different about me, and why it's an asset, right? And when I talk about that, I'm really talking about making sure that the workplace is truly inclusive, right? And it's truly inclusive for all, not just for people who are, are racially diverse or who look different, but that it's truly inclusive for the person who said, he's Ukrainian, as well, they have to feel like they're part of the workplace. Because once we are celebrating Asian Heritage Month, and we are not including them, we, we miss the point. When we, when we celebrate umm, the Muslim faith and we talk about it, but we don't talk about Christianity, we miss the point. We're excluding people at the expense of inclusion.

A note of caution that should be made about Cassidy's statement is the assumption that by fostering understanding about one faith, we are excluding another, especially with regards to Christianity and Islam. Christianity, in Canadian society is pervasive, while the Islamic faith is arguably less understood. While the purpose of diversity training is to promote inclusion, a main objective is to foster an understanding and to provide a voice as well as recognition to groups that have previously been excluded from equal opportunities in Canadian society. By promoting understanding a lesser recognized faith; employee relations may be improved and there may be less misunderstanding of those who have had limited contact with members of this faith. The problem of misunderstanding due to fear was a reoccurring theme in the interviews, and further discussions of this issue will appear in later chapters. Therefore, the reasons surrounding the emphasis on certain groups should be communicated to employees so that individuals do not feel a sense of exclusion.

Katie, in the non-profit sector, described the duties required of her with respect to

Employment Equity as to manage diversity training programs. She suggested several times

during the interview that diversity was embedded within the organization she worked for,

and that the organization heavily emphasized the understanding of diversity. Katie

described the mandatory diversity training programs that were required for all employees:

> Raheela: OK. Umm, do any employees within [this organization] do you, do
> you provide training for them, or like diversity awareness weeks, or?
>
> Katie: Oh yes. We actually have here a very very ... proactive team of
> individuals that actually umm, first of all we are, you know, we need to adhere by
> standards that are set out by the Canadian Accreditation council, as well as our own
> standard procedures, here, our policies rather ... part of the mandatory requirements
> for everyone is to have minimum hours for diversity training ... cultural diversity
> training, and then, on top of that, they have to have a certain number of hours for
> aboriginal training. Umm, again, all of that increased awareness in differences, so.
>
> Raheela: Can you describe to me a little bit about the diversity program, and
> how they are?
>
> Katie: Well, diversity programs, like the ones that we actually have as
> mandatory training requirements ... some of it is formalized training we're
> enlabouring in people who facilitate diversity training sessions. Some of it
> is, you know, actually perpetrated by the individual themselves by way of, if
> there's some kind of cultural event that's going on, they will attend it, they
> will write a report on it, and then submit it. So a lot of it is actually ... is at
> the accountability of the individual, which I think is fabulous, because then ... they
> know that they need to have certain numbers of hours, and they actually get to pick
> and choose, you know, what matches with their schedule

It is apparent that this particular organization provides a heavy emphasis on issues

surrounding diversity, which is definitely lacking in the federal public sector. However,

there are some potential issues that could surround this respondent's insistence that her

organization was very equal because of the embedded diversity. Firstly, if those in management positions believe that their organization has reached levels of equality, it begs the question of what information is being relayed in the diversity training programs. If this information is based on differences such as cultural practices, foods, and languages, the same criticisms could be raised to these programs that were brought against the Multiculturalism Act. Critics of the Multiculturalism Act contend that this policy is somewhat of a façade, endorsing superficial equality and pluralism by focusing on the differences noted above, yet not recognizing the problematic inequalities that exist between different racial and ethnic groups in Canadian society (Fleras & Elliot, 2002). This focus on superficial differences risks the point surrounding Employment Equity being missed, as it does not address the pervasive problem of inequality in terms of opportunities in the workplaces.

The fact that a large proportion of the training in this organization is the attendance of a cultural event could be interpreted as a superficial type of diversity training. Katie, in fact, described having diversity within the organization as being a "double edged sword, because it is accepted as who we are." She describes that although having diversity is positive, it may also not be monitored effectively. As diversity itself is not a true indicator of equality in the workplace, it is important that workplace relations are monitored, to ensure that all individuals are being treated fairly and with respect. A major strength of the organization was that it reached out to their employees through conversation and focus groups, and that they used this input to shape their policies and practices, as well as to help

them in administering Employment Equity. This aspect is vitally important, so that the employees have some role in structuring the Employment Equity initiatives in workplaces.

Lily, who is in an upper management position at a major Canadian bank, described her role with respect to Employment Equity as encompassing many duties. These duties included managing diversity through many programs, the communication of Employment Equity initiatives, the compliance/reporting of Employment Equity, statistical reporting, recruiting external consultants, and support with recruitment activities. Akin to the federal public sector, there are extensive statistical programs in place that track the representation of the designated groups, and according to Lily, they are exceeding the labour market availability for each group. In addition, she, as well as others, are required to maintain and revise an Employment Equity plan so that it is up to date. This workplace requires that employees fill out mandatory Employment Equity surveys so that representation may be tracked. Again, there is the problem of self-identification that could arise with these surveys, as well as the fact that 10% of employees are not completing the survey. However, she noted that it is possible that Employment Equity is not being communicated effectively to employees:

> And so, sometimes it's really hard to umm, you get lost in all the messages, and so sometimes I think uhh, we could do a better job of helping employees really understand what Employment Equity is the fact that our survey is completed by 90% of employees, indicates that we are getting the message through. Sometimes I wonder if there is a really full understanding of what Employment Equity is or if they're just filling out the survey, and it's hard to tell.

According to Lily, most of the information about Employment Equity is delivered to employees by use of email. Therefore, it is highly likely that the message is not being relayed effectively. She mentioned in the interview that she believes that online Employment Equity training, delivered online and in small chunks, would be potentially beneficial to employees. Because of the ease of online training, it would be beneficial to apply this approach as an introductory educational tool in the federal public sector, in order to foster the understanding of Employment Equity. Although this approach lacks a communicative or interactive dimension, it would still bring some awareness about Employment Equity to employees in the federal government. In addition, Lily outlined the major programs that have been implemented that are related to Employment Equity, including diversity in leadership programs with specific emphasis on the designated groups. These programs are excellent in the sense that they not only provide information on diversity, but also provide training about how these groups can apply these resources in higher level positions.

Alex, who has only been working with Employment Equity in his organization for the past year, described it as a "hot potato item," as it intersects many different areas of the organization, and there is often uncertainly about which sector of the organization should be in charge of Employment Equity initiatives. He did indicate that he is attempting to bring the Employment Equity piece together in his organization, because of the value that he views in it:

> It's a big one ... I think we have to recognize that umm, there's opportunity
> for improvement as it relates to the individuals across the designated groups that

are within the organization ... I think there's some, you know, community responsibility that comes into play.

The notion of community responsibility is an important mindset to have when dealing with any measures to improve equality in the workplace. It is vital that all members of the organization, and especially those working with Employment Equity initiatives, understand the broader message of the Act, which is to provide a more equal environment in society in general. Alex further explains:

> Would I be able to sit here and say that it's going to make us a more efficient organization? I'm not sure I could say that, but, I don't think that you could say regardless of, what we're focusing on hiring right, so to me it's around that social responsibility piece, it's around, ensuring that the individuals who work for [us], they have a, they have community involvement within the organization as well.

Interestingly, Alex does not necessarily believe that Employment Equity itself will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of the organization, but there needs to be a social responsibility among members of the organization to ensure participation of all groups. However, as of yet, this organization has an Employment Equity policy, but no specific programs. Therefore, his role with Employment Equity has mainly been on the compliance side, dealing with the audit numbers. He described how the company is now aiming towards having built programs by the end of the year; however, this is a complicated process:

> A program has to have a full, I guess a full life cycle, in the sense that we should be responsible for looking at what our representation numbers should look like through the hiring process, in promotion, in termination, across the four designated groups, and looking at that information, looking at the numbers and analyzing those, that should then help you establish the kind of programs that you need, and how you potentially work with the different parts of the business units to help drive

representation in different ways, so I don't think there's actually a one size fits all program across an organization .... my personal style is to say let's, if we're going to build it, and we're going to spend the time on it, let's build it right the first time and make sure that it's going to work.

Alex brought up a valid point with respect to Employment Equity programs in that they need to be adapted to different areas of organizations. For example, the representation strategies that are used for entry level positions may not be effective in ensuring representation in senior management positions. Therefore, it is imperative that those working with Employment Equity take these complex issues into consideration when building programs. When asked about whether or not he feels that the organization is successful with Employment Equity, Alex responded that they had been "lucky," in the sense that they have an open culture in the organization. However, he contended that members of an organization cannot rely on luck to carry them along:

> We don't have the barriers or the systemic barriers that are in place that I think other organizations might feel a challenge by, so that's the good news, it a certainly alleviates a lot of the challenges, but it's, you know, it's the it's the, the smaller pieces of the puzzle, those are the areas that we're not doing as good in, and that's the stuff that we need to have in place that gives us a you know, repeatable successful program year over year ... and not rely on that luck component.

Again, Alex emphasized the importance of having Employment Equity programs. In addition he argued for more qualitative approaches, meaning introducing programs that shift the focus away from statistics, onto more communicative techniques. Alex believed that there is a need to focus on two major points. Firstly, training needs to be introduced, especially to those working with Employment Equity, as he found himself having to learn the ropes without much help, unless he actively sought it out. Secondly, there needs to be

more of a qualitative approach to managing Employment Equity, and not so much of an

emphasis on numbers and statistics. In some of Alex's concluding remarks, he pointed out

the major concern with statistics:

> Having spent the last year going through some of the audit processes, and, and
> getting up to speed on just the reporting, it's so numbers intensive, and I've worked
> with numbers long enough to know that you can find gaps in the numbers that can
> work to your advantage, if you know how to do it properly, and I'd say in some
> ways, HRSDC[2] is setting it up so that you can find gaps in numbers, because it
> doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out, if I don't report this as a national
> number, if I report it as a local number, I'm going to get away with it, even though I
> know I'm hiring across that nationally, so, there's little things like that I say, by
> focusing so much, and forcing the organizations to focus so much on just the
> numbers, but they're not necessarily helping the organizations to develop the kind
> of programs that show that there can be success.

The above narrative is disturbing as it highlights the fact that organizations can manipulate

numbers in order to appear as if they are achieving representation. This statement brings us

full circle back to those who manage the Employment Equity Act. If the methods of

reporting themselves are flawed, and the government itself allows for these practices to

occur, does the Employment Equity Act solve the problem of inequalities that exist in our

society, or to simply continue to mask them? Alex rightly concluded with the adage, "If

you put lipstick on a pig, it is still a pig."

Discrimination

Each of the employers was questioned on a number of points surrounding

discrimination in the workplace, including whether or not they believe it exists or has

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[2] HRSDC (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) is one of the bodies that collect Employment Equity data from federally regulated industries.

existed, the changes to the situation, why they believe it exists or existed, and how the problem of discrimination can be overcome. Interestingly, each of the participants had differing, but insightful views on this issue.

Ruth, when questioned about whether or not discrimination exists, recalled that it has existed in the federal government; however, the situation has been improving. Ruth mentioned that she had only noticed gender discrimination, not other forms:

> I think it exists, and I would say it exists more for umm, what I see is male female discrimination, gender discrimination. Because I truly believe that umm, and it's, but it has improved. I would say it's improved considerably, and, with that, umm, and when we sort of talk about that in a general sense, my feeling is it was always there was preferential treatment given to white males, always, over very talented, umm, males of, visible minority males, and white females, aboriginal females, or anyone of any other group.

The above narrative is interesting, because although Ruth stated that she had only witnessed discrimination based on gender, her reference to "white males" as the preferentially treated group implies otherwise. This privileged treatment is at the expense of all females and non-white males, which is indicative of both gender and racial discrimination. If males of colour and Aboriginal males were being treated equivocally to white males, it could be argued that this situation is reflecting gender discrimination only; however, this particular situation indicates that there were intersections of both gender and racial discrimination.

Ruth indicated that the situation has now changed (only in a matter of five years or so), and there are many women, including visible minority women, who are in higher

positions. Her reasoning for this change dealt with the change of male views about working for the government:

> Often, males umm, except in certain areas do not choose the government as a career. And because we've been through a huge economic, umm, we have a huge positive economic climate, males were not attracted, of any group. Now I see more interest in males, males coming in .... I guess my point is that what happens is, you have to have a pool to develop ... because I've worked with external clients, in engineering companies, and they had a very small number of females that were in the running, OK, for some of the more senior positions, like promotions, right. And as soon as that pool seemed to get to a certain mass, they were able to move up easier, so partially, I think it's when umm, sort of the thinking around equity, umm, when you look at it in a very basic way, the more you have of certain groups, the better chance those groups have of getting success.

Ruth's statement is somewhat disconcerting, as she implied that it was not the attitude of male superiority that necessarily changed, nor was this change due to Employment Equity policies. Rather, the change was due to the fact that males were becoming less attracted to work in the government. On the other hand, she mentioned that this new entry of women into positions of authority led them to be "embracing" of everyone in the workplace, meaning that these individuals would try to also bring up other women, regardless of their physical characteristics. However, Ruth noted a serious problem with this trend: homogeneity. In the context of Ruth's statements, homogeneity is the practice of hiring individuals who the recruiter (any person who is in charge of hiring) can identify with. This identification is primarily based on skin colour, and secondly based on perceived commonalities based on appearance. Ruth description of this problem is as follows:

Ruth: You hire who you want, or who's like you. So then, that's another problem, so then our other groups are disadvantaged because you get one group sort of dominating.

Raheela: When you say umm, why do you think that we tend to hire, like in homogenous groups?

Ruth: Because we feel more comfortable with people that are just like us.

Raheela: Why do you think that is?

Ruth: In [long pause], why do we do that?

Raheela: Do you think that there's a sense of fear, or?

Ruth: I don't think it's that, it's easy, I don't think it's that people actually think it through that well. I'll give you an example ... I worked with a company, an external company ... doing an Employment Equity audit on them. And I had a meeting and I walked into the room, and it was, happened to be an HR group, and I walked into the room and the head of the HR group was a, you know, late 30's or early 40's blonde female in a navy suit, everyone else was the same. So the first thing I said to them, I said, so I just wanna bring this to your attention ... But I said when I come in there, every one of you looks the same. And so then, if you had been the senior woman, if you had been a male, I guarantee that if you had been a male, there would have been a larger group of males in here as well. But it's interesting because .... females tend to criticize, that men get all of the promotions, but when they get in there, it is sometimes a knee jerk reaction, and they bring all of their own types in there.

Ruth has a very interesting, yet concerning explanation of why people tend to hire those who are similar to them, one aspect being in Ruth's statement that "in their hearts, or in their souls, feel more comfortable with people, they can make a general statement in their own minds that they have a connection with this person ... because of the clothes they are wearing, they appreciate their style." Therefore, this implies that individuals are making hiring decisions based on *perceived* differences, not necessarily based on merit, or what value that individual may bring to the company itself. Therefore, not only are minorities,

who are already perceived as being different at risk to these biases, but those minority women who have outright markers of difference (i.e. wearing a hijab) are at an even greater risk for being judged based on their appearances. In accordance with the discourses on Anti-Racism, whiteness draws power from normative characterizations (Reitman, 2006). It can be argued that the majority of individuals in control of making hiring decisions in Canadian workplaces are white, and they may be drawing upon these normative characterizations to make such decisions.

Beyond skin colour and physical characteristics, other problems surrounding hiring based on similar characteristics could arise. For example, if the recruiter had to choose between an immigrant visible minority with an accent versus a Canadian born minority with the same qualifications, it could be argued that the recruiter may choose the Canadian born candidate, because they believe this candidate to be more like themselves. This would be a perceived difference, as the recruiter at that stage may not have enough knowledge to come to this conclusion, and these processes could lead to the exclusion of minority immigrants from employment. Ruth's final opinion was that the solution to the problem appears quite simple, "You change that by having different relationships with all kinds of different people, so that when you look at the person there, you move beyond that physical, what they look like, to understanding about capabilities of human beings, it goes pretty basic in my opinion," yet whether or not it can be achieved under current conditions remains questionable. Without the proper education and training of individuals in workplaces about diversity and the inequalities faced by certain groups, it is unlikely that unfair hiring procedures will be eradicated.

Cassidy, unlike Ruth, did not hesitate to state from the beginning that she has no doubt that discriminatory treatment towards racial minorities has existed, and still exists in the federal public sector, along with most other workplaces in Canadian society. She highlights one of the main problems surrounding Employment Equity that arose in a conversation she had with a male colleague:

> [The male colleague's] point was that ... we should not be hiring visible minorities just because they are visible minorities, and that is not fair for people like himself, who are not visible minorities, to have equal access to employment. And again, it was around the lack of understanding of what the Employment Equity legislation was all about. The lack of understanding that at the end of the day it's still based on merit.

Cassidy believes that in the federal public sector, there is a lack of understanding about the premise behind Employment Equity which is furthering misunderstandings about such initiatives. She stated that this belief relevant to the unfairness of Employment Equity was not uncommon. As stated in the research context chapter, this concern was echoed by Falkenberg and Boland (1997) in their discussions of the ineffectiveness of the Employment Equity Act. Therefore, this is likely fostering the beliefs that minorities in the workplace are unsuited for their positions, which can reproduce cycles of discrimination and extend these problems to relationships between employees at similar levels. Cassidy remarked that compared to the numbers of visible minority applications, the success rate in hiring is still quite low, and that there are still issues with representation in the federal public service. Further, Cassidy noted that there were no documents that she had seen that made a clear distinction between Affirmative Action and Employment Equity, and that she had heard people misusing the word quota, and even for herself, Employment Equity was

something that she had to learn. Again, because there is a lack of discussion about Employment Equity, there are limited opportunities to correct the misguided beliefs of individuals in the workplace. Thus, opportunities for discussion, in forms such as workshops, information sessions, or focus groups, are vitally important to the understanding of Employment Equity and the success of Employment Equity programs.

Although Katie pointed out that her not-profit organization maintained a culture of diversity, and that her company was representative of the designated groups at all levels of employment, she did hold the belief that discrimination does still exist, with the assumption that "people are people," and that there are many factors that can predetermine people's tendencies towards racist or discriminatory practices. Before examining these factors, it is important to note that Katie's beliefs about discrimination stem from her experiences in the private sector, not her current organization. Katie noted that one of the most important factors in determining racist tendencies is having a certain level of education. While it was unclear from the interview as to what Katie defined as the levels of education required to determine whether or not individuals will have racist tendencies, it could be argued that those with a post secondary education are more likely to have been exposed to not only different groups of people, but also certain classes that may address inequality in societies. The other main factor was fear, which Katie described below:

> I was bringing in a whole bunch of temporary foreign workers to alleviate the labour crunch .... there's a lot of fear right, and if you don't understand something, you fear it. And so, with that, you know, how we tended to mitigate that in terms of, umm, discrimination in the workplace, was to actually have communication and say OK, this is the reason why they're here, do not fear for your jobs, they are not here to take your jobs. They are here to actually help you.

Although Katie's example dealt with an organization independent of this analysis where she previously worked, the points that she raised, when applied to federally regulated industries, or any other workplaces for that matter, can be quite informative. With the increasing numbers of visible minority immigrants entering Canada and the Canadian workforce, it is likely that native born Canadians increasingly have feelings of insecurity regarding employment. As Katie stated, this fear is not necessarily to do with the characteristics of the people themselves, rather, "when change happens, and certainly, that kind of magnitude, a lot of people just tend to fear what strikes home, you know. If you lose your job you can't provide for your family, and that was you know, the main factor I think is a discriminatory kind of sentiment." Katie's statements may be reflective of the levels of trust that are discussed in the Social Capital framework. This fear and possible mistrust of the temporary foreign workers removes the possibility of "the cooperation and beneficial competition" (Häkli, 2009, p. 15) that has the ability to improve Canadian society.

According to Katie, the way to overcome this fear was through education and similarly, federally regulated industries have a similar need to educate and communicate to their employees the reasons for implementing the Employment Equity Act, and that visible minorities are Canadian citizens, who are working in these organizations to help these industries prosper. It is especially important for organizations, even if they believe that they have achieved equality, to realize that there may be individuals in their organization that may still not be aware of the inequalities that exist in Canadian workplaces.

Lily, an employer in the banking sector, when questioned on whether or not discrimination exists in her organization contended that it is still pervasive in all sectors. However, she mentioned that her organization has taken major steps in eliminating discrimination, and a key aspect of this consists of the feedback that is received from employees:

> So while the Employment Equity survey doesn't ask about satisfaction, and doesn't ask about specifically about discrimination, we have other ways of giving employees a voice. So we do focus groups, we have umm, an employees ombuds offices that is completely confidential and arms length from anybody else in the bank, so that .... employees who umm, are having difficulty in the workplace can call, and get some guidance and advice ... they would certainly get, if there were umm, significant, if they were getting a lot of calls about discrimination, or anything like that, they would certainly highlight that, umm, without talking about individual cases.

Focus groups are an excellent way to facilitate discussion of experiences or problems in the workplace, provided that there is a knowledgeable mediator present that can address any concerns. The ombuds office is also an essential resource for employees to voice their concerns or to deal with cases of perceived or existent discrimination. Lily noted that for the most part, individuals approach their HR representative to voice any specific concerns about discrimination, however, if they are not comfortable doing so (or have an issue with that person), they have the option of contacting the ombuds office for advice. The process of formalizing a complaint and the resources that employees have to voice their experiences in the workplace was a significant theme in the interviews with visible minority women, and will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

Alex provided an interesting take on how discrimination may rear its head in the airline company that he works for:

> I think there's probably individuals, I think organizationally I'd say no, but I think there's in crept perceptions, that's probably the better way of putting it .... an individual would say I'm not discriminatory against bringing in an individual, a person with a disability on board, onto my team ... I wouldn't have a problem hiring them; I just don't think they could do the job.

This quote raises a few problematic points. Firstly, it would likely be difficult to establish a claim of discrimination, even if it truly existed, because it is based on individual perceptions of a situation. For example, an employer could argue that a designated group member only perceives a certain act or a denial of advancement as being due to their race, whereas the group member may view the situation differently. It has been argued that the objective standards which are used to evaluate whether a claim of discrimination is true are lacking, as "judgements of personal discrimination are uncertain, subjective, and susceptible to human error, and prone to dispute" (Major & Kaiser, 2008, pg. 285-286). Therefore, if claims of discrimination are interpreted as being due to the target individual's perception of the situation, it is likely that they will gain retribution for their claims. Furthermore, publicly claiming an act of discrimination can place the target individual in a situation which can be interpersonally costly, which may deter these individuals from bringing forth a claim. Secondly, because discrimination is occurring at the individual level and not the organizational level, it is probably operating more covertly, especially if it goes unreported.

Alex contended that the way to deal with these problems is to attempt to change perceptions through programs, especially at the organizational level, which would help to bypass any individual acts of discrimination. Nonetheless, if an employee does feel like they are suffering from discriminatory acts, there are several resources that they have to deal with the problem including an HR advisor or third party members of a specific program that is designed to give employees a voice. They also have the option, which is rarely used, to bypass these two routes, and discuss their situation directly to a board, which will initiate the process of submitting reports until the situation is resolved.

Conclusion

It appears that the methods in which the employers that were interviewed in which they learned about or were trained with Employment Equity were varied. Some employers began receiving their knowledge through schooling, while others had hands on experience within their organizations. One employer in the private sector had no experience or knowledge of Employment Equity prior to being placed in his role. Interestingly, each of the employers had different roles with Employment Equity, as each organization had different (and sometimes overlapping) methods of delivering the initiatives. These initiatives ranged from a pure emphasis on statistical representation, having employees fill out voluntary self-identification surveys which questioned their experiences in the workplace, to educating employees about diversity. Each of these approaches had their individual concerns, which could become quite problematic. For instance, an employer in the private sector noted that statistics could be altered to make an organization look more

favourable. An employer in the federal public service raised specific concerns about voluntary self-identification surveys within her organization. Firstly, much of the Employment Equity data are collected through voluntary self-identification surveys, which without proper communication, could be misconstrued by employees, potentially leading to misconceptions about the legislation. Therefore, it appears that employers are both varied in terms of the education and training on Employment Equity, but also in the manner in which their organizations choose to deliver Employment Equity initiatives.

In terms of discrimination, each employer believed that it has or does still exist in their organizations. One employer in the federal public service contended that discrimination was due to "homogeneity," or individuals hiring those who displayed characteristics that were most like themselves (i.e. skin colour, accent). She also noted that the situation for women in her organization has been improving, not necessarily because of Employment Equity policies, but rather because of males leaving the federal public sector. In the non-profit sector, the employer does believe that discrimination exists, but contends that it does not exist in her workplace. She believes that diversity is "embedded" in her workplace, which could be problematic, as she could be having a blind eye to problems that may exist. Another interesting point that was brought up in the discussions surrounding discrimination was the fine line between perception and discrimination, which could make it difficult for individuals suffering from discrimination to formalize a complaint.

The inconsistencies among employers in terms of the education, training, and delivery of initiatives, coupled with the problematic existence of discriminatory practices

and the difficulty of filing complaints, indicate that Employment Equity initiatives are far

from reaching their full potential. Special measures need to be considered in order to

combat these problems, which will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER SIX: THE PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN

Introduction

According to Anti-Racism theorists, women of colour encounter multiple disadvantages in Western societies. These disadvantages are due to intersections of identity, including and not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, linguistic abilities, and sexuality, which emphasize the 'differences' between individuals in society (Galabuzi, 2006). Despite the emphasis on pluralism in Canadian society, studies have shown that visible minority women, both immigrant and Canadian born, experience large disadvantages in terms of income and representation in Canadian workplaces. This research project set out to give a voice to these women, allowing them to discuss their own perceptions of equality in federally regulated workplaces. The interviews with these women are unique; as they are employed in workplaces that are subject to comply with the federal Employment Equity Act. By depicting the experiences of these women, who are employed in organizations that are attempting to promote equality in the workplace, we can understand the pervasiveness of discrimination in Canadian society.

In shedding light on these experiences, visible minority women will be able to recognize that their perceived 'differences' are a site of oppression, hindering them from achieving equality in Canadian society. In turn, visible minority women should view these 'differences' as a site of possibility, where they can take collective action to move forward in bringing equality into Canadian society (Dei, 1999; Madibbo, 2006).

This chapter will discuss a number of themes involving visible minority women who are employed in federally regulated workplaces, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. First, there will be an exploration of the knowledge and understanding these women have regarding Employment Equity in their respective organizations, followed by an exploration of how the women obtained this knowledge. Next, the discussion will be directed towards the role, if any, that these women have with Employment Equity programs in their workplaces. Third, individual perceptions of hiring, mobility, and representation of minorities in the federally regulated workplaces will then be examined. This will be followed by an exploration of the women's individual experiences and a description of specific instances of discrimination and how they themselves, or others dealt with the issues of discrimination. There will also be an exposition of the theme of reinforced stereotypes by members of marginalized groups. The discussion will conclude with explaining how networking opportunities relate to hiring and occupational mobility and how networking can be especially difficult for those individuals not possessing socially desirable or favoured characteristics.

Knowledge/Understanding of Employment Equity

A surprising finding in this research was that out of the twelve visible minority women that were interviewed, very few even had a basic understanding of what Employment Equity is, or how their organization approaches Employment Equity initiatives. In most cases the knowledge was limited or almost nonexistent. Of those cases where there was some understanding of the equity initiatives, there still remained questions

regarding the communication to employees regarding Employment Equity. For those women who did have knowledge about Employment Equity, it was generally limited to the basic concept of "equality in the workplace." Interestingly, many of the women learned of Employment Equity either through schooling or through the application forms that they filled out during their employment. However, it is important to note that although some of the participants were not able to provide a conceptualization of Employment Equity, in later parts of the interviews they did indirectly refer to issues about Employment Equity. Most of the women interviewed were unsure of what their respective role was within the Employment Equity initiatives.

Out of the nine public service employees that were interviewed, only five could provide an explanation of what Employment Equity is, even though they may have heard or seen the term previously. For the most part, employees of the federal public service that had some knowledge of Employment Equity were aware that the main premise is equality. Ranita described Employment Equity as "a company or corporation's ability to hire employees with fairness and have, equal diverse population of different backgrounds ... I wouldn't even say religion plays in, just different backgrounds." A seasonal employee, Afroza, explained Employment Equity as a mechanism for "preventing any sort of discrimination in the workplace ... there's some sort of compliance that they need to do." Miranda described Employment Equity as "just basically equal opportunities for visible minorities working within any industry or sector." Valorie described Employment Equity as "I guess ... rules, and I guess guidelines that we follow, that kind of equal out, everybody ... it's in an organization, it's kind of the guidelines and the rules that you would follow to

kind of keep everybody equal." The most elaborate definition was given by Delores, described as follows:

> I think I have a very basic knowledge, just that hiring should be open to everyone, [to include] race, gender, all those things. And that certain positions are actually, when they're trying to promote umm, lets say like visible minorities or whatnot in government, that there's certain positions that are open specifically, like they'll say... they're strongly encouraged to apply and whatnot.

Delores also mentioned in her interview that individuals in her workplace, and in one specific incident, a manager, misrepresented Employment Equity to colleagues by using the term quota. Therefore, she demonstrated an understanding that Employment Equity was not equivalent to Affirmative Action. While each of above conceptualizations tap into some aspect of Employment Equity as it is intended in the federal public service, it appears that each only have knowledge on some pieces of the puzzle. For example, Miranda only referred to visible minorities, but made no mention to the other three designated groups that are covered under the Act. None of the women were able to describe the specific mechanisms through which Employment Equity is enacted in their organization. Therefore, there are significant gaps in the understanding of Employment Equity for each of the women.

Farida, the only employee in the non-profit sector, provided the following understanding of Employment Equity:

> It mostly has to do with providing minorities or immigrants with equal opportunity in the workplace and making sure that there is a promotion ... people being in certain places. So you know, you have a mixture of African Americans, of you know Aboriginals, of South Asians, of Caucasians, in the workplace ... not only in

front line or entry level, but also in management positions and senior management positions, and those kinds of things.

Although she left out the two designated groups of females and the disabled in her conceptualization, Farida had the correct idea of both equality and representation in positions at different levels in an organization. None of the three women working in the private sector had any knowledge about Employment Equity, or even the fact that it exists in their organizations. This finding makes sense as the employers in the private sector described how there were no specific programs having to do with Employment Equity that employees would be directly aware of, as in the federal public sector with targeted hiring. However, considering the fact that the employers suggested that there is communication about the policy itself over electronic mediums such as internal websites and email, it is apparent that these particular employees either did not pay attention to or retain the information about Employment Equity that was transmitted to them, or the information was not properly disseminated to them.

How Participants Obtained Their Knowledge Regarding Employment Equity

Another interesting point of discussion is the medium through which each of these women obtained their knowledge or understanding of Employment Equity. For the most part, verbal communication by the organization was not a major factor in the transmission of knowledge. Ranita in the federal public service indicated that the little she knew about Employment Equity was due to the fact that she had a colleague that she regularly communicated with that worked directly with Employment Equity initiatives. Afroza

attributed her knowledge of Employment Equity to working in an HR role previously in another federally regulated organization. Miranda provided some indication that some of her understanding of Employment Equity was obtained through her organization:

> I think just a little bit throughout school ... through just basic websites. Maybe a little bit through here. Like when you, whenever you apply for [a] competition process, that's one of the questions on our application forms, is, would you like to be considered under the Employment Equity Act, either for statistical purposes or as a point towards your application right.

However, the fact that this knowledge was of limited scope and appeared in an application form is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the form does not provide a sufficient understanding of the policy. There is a small section on each application form that questions whether or not the applicant is male or female, of Aboriginal descent, a visible minority, or a person with a disability, however, the only disclaimer given on some of the application forms is that "[the applicant's] voluntary response to the four questions below[3] will assist us in ensuring that Statistical Survey Operations (SSO) is fully representative of the public it serves" (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009). This does not appear to be an adequate explanation of the purpose for which this information is being collected

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[3] **1. Gender :** Women are members of a designated group under the *Employment Equity Act*. **2. Aboriginal Peoples:** An Aboriginal person is a North American Indian or a member of a First Nation, Métis, or Inuit. North American Indians or members of a First Nation include status, treaty or registered Indians, as well as non-status and non-registered Indians. If you are an Aboriginal person, please specify the group to which you belong: **3. Visible Minority :** A person in a visible minority group in Canada is someone (other than an Aboriginal person as defined above) who is non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour, regardless of place of birth. If you are a member of a visible minority group, please specify the group that best describes your origin: **4. Person with a disability:** A person with a disability has a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and 1. considers himself/herself to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or,
2. believes that an employer or potential employer is likely to consider him/her to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, and includes persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace. If you are a person with a disability, please specify your disability or disabilities (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

from applicants, and why it is important to the organization. Other forms have slightly

more elaborate explanations, claiming to use the Employment Equity data that are collected

for either "Statistical purposes related to Appointments and Workforce Representation" and

for "Appointment processes and statistical purposes related to Appointments and

Workforce Representation."[4]

A potential problem of inadequate explanations of the premises behind Employment

Equity is that an applicant that does not belong to one of the designated groups indicated on

the application may construe Employment Equity as reverse discrimination, as there is only

one line in the form that states "The Public Service of Canada is committed to selection

based on merit by ensuring full participation of the four groups designated in the

Employment Equity Act (EEA)" (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009). This

provides no reference to the historical disadvantage faced by these groups, and with Canada

boasting a multicultural and egalitarian society; it is likely that many individuals do not

even view these groups as disadvantaged. There is also no mention on the application that

there are multiple positions for the same positing, of which only some provide Employment

Equity consideration, as Ruth described in the previous chapter. In addition, there is no

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[4] **Statistical purposes related to Appointments and Workforce Representation:** By selecting this option you are consenting that your information may be used in reports, analysis and studies intended to: help the Public Service analyze information on applicants who belong to EE groups, to measure the success rate of EE groups through the appointment process, and monitor and report on the number of EE applicants and appointments; and report accurate information on the composition of the Public Service workforce, if you are appointed to the Public Service.
Appointment processes and statistical purposes related to Appointments and Workforce Representation: By selecting this option, you are consenting that your information may be used for: determining eligibility for appointment processes where belonging to an EE group is a requirement for submitting an application or where it may be used as a criterion in the screening or selection of candidates for appointment; and statistical purposes related to recruitment and workforce representation, as defined in Consent Option 1 above (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

indication that merit is still an imperative part of the hiring process. This can lead to the belief that members of these designated groups in the federal government were hired only due to their membership in those groups. Importantly, this conception is not only limited to those who are not members of those groups. Neha, who could not provide a conceptualization of Employment Equity, still described some of the processes related to Employment Equity with misunderstanding:

> I think some people do pay attention to [the emails] particularly people who have mixed racial backgrounds. Myself, I don't pay much attention to them ... why, because I really don't know what the tangible results of these activities are. I don't see a visible minority person in the upper management levels, maybe it's a self-defeatist attitude, but I understand what the purpose is. I think also think all races should be treated equally. If we are going to have something for every type of ethnicity, to make it fair, let's have everything, also the same thing for white people. To make it look fair. So it's not just for catering to somebody, it's not just done for the- so it looks better on paper, or it looks better optically, like let's make it fair for everyone ... these emails, I don't really pay much attention to them, and that's my reasoning why. I would like to participate more, but if it's just done for token appreciation then I would rather go hang out at Subway, honestly.

This excerpt exemplifies the risk involved in limited information being provided about the programs as the result is misconceptions followed by strong biases towards Employment Equity initiatives. The result in this case was a reduction in employee interest and enthusiasm in obtaining further information about the initiatives. This is problematic because follow up emails may be written to correct misconceptions or problems with an appearance of unfairness, yet the target of this communication is not interested in learning more. This idea supports the adage that a little knowledge can be dangerous. A primary danger may be the misunderstanding of objectives and the misuse of information being provided. The critical danger could be a complete lack of receptiveness to additional

clarifying information to the employee. Minority groups in general may also be misled by the limited information provided about Employment Equity. The response may be inflammatory as established by the excerpt above. Minorities may feel that their merit is being overlooked for their racial or ethnic background, the response being that they do not want a program that appears to non-minorities as supportive for an incompetent but inclusive and diverse workforce. Even more problematic were Neha's further comments:

> When I see those job posters eh, that say this job is only open to members of this Aboriginal group, or members of that visible minority group. It's embarrassing ... I know why it's there, but personally I just feel like God! I cringe, you know, like you're being singled out. And if you have to hire somebody just because of the job poster, it's almost insulting. Hire me because you like me, hire me because you want me, please don't hire me because the job poster said you had to hire me. And, I wouldn't apply, I have refused to apply [to] a couple [of] positions like that just based on, like how demeaning is this, so, does it make huge a difference? It probably makes a difference in the numbers, does it change people's attitudes. I think it builds more resentment.

Again, Neha is showing a misunderstanding of the meritocratic fundamentals of Employment Equity, as she is relating it to the principles behind Affirmative Action. If one employee in an organization has such strong negative views towards this policy, numerous individuals having these ideas can undoubtedly have an extremely negative effect on the application and acceptance of Employment Equity. Perhaps Neha's strong perceptions against Employment Equity are due to her belief that she may be ostracized or encounte a negative backlash from other employees for supporting Employment Equity. These comments illustrate the immense importance of the proper communication of the principles of Employment Equity, even very early on in the hiring process.

In the non-profit sector, Farida described her knowledge of Employment Equity as follows:

> I studied it in school a while ago, and I did read up on it ... we did have to like learn the Employment Equity policies around that, but they don't send out weekly emails, like this is your rights as a minority, this is what, what we believe that we should do for you, right. They don't do that. It is stated in the policy manual ... and the policy manual sits on the side in the office. And you come in on your first day and read it, and that's it .... I came in on my first day, and my first 8 hours were spent reading a policy manual front to back and it was 900 pages. [laughter]. And I was just sitting there with a big cup of coffee and like the manager would check in and be like "are you doing OK?" and I would be like, yeah, I'm doing OK. [mocking a yawn].

Farida's rendition of how employees in her organization learn about Employment Equity, although humorous, demonstrates a problem with how this knowledge is obtained. Many individuals would not be able to retain knowledge that they have read through a day of strenuous reading (if they had an attention span that allowed them to read 900 pages in 8 hours). Again, Employment Equity was introduced at the first stages of the process, but no real explanation is given by an individual in the organization to ensure that the information was properly transmitted and understood. Obtaining important information that is relevant to a company is not a "one time deal," as the retention of knowledge requires some sort of reinforcement or follow up, which could easily be done through a medium such as email. Due to the fact that none of the participants in the private sector were even aware that Employment Equity initiatives existed, they could not give an explanation of how they learned of such initiatives.

Role with Employment Equity

In the federal public sector, none of the women had any role with Employment Equity initiatives, and only one participant was aware that there were such opportunities to participate. Salma, in the public sector indicated that there are Employment Equity activities that take place, but within a different entity of her organization. Therefore, these activities would not be readily available for her to participate in. Salma indicated what the outcomes of these activities were:

> They kind of work in a silo, so you get what you get with regards to Employment Equity, is that, it's Employment Equity week and these are some facts, stuff pulled from the web, basically. You get information on how the agency is doing with regards to Employment Equity. So, some very simple stats that make the agency look good, obviously.

She further stated that there was a lack of passion from those involved in the initiatives, and that it is "one of those commitments that an organization has to do, it's just on the side of their desk kind of thing, it's something that they do to produce a report, or to produce result, rather than strive towards, or work for." It appears that the focus of this organization is again on statistics and numbers, rather than on involving employees and having real discussions. Other employees in the federal public service indicated that they periodically filled out surveys related to Employment Equity, which questioned them on their treatment in the workplace. The one participant in the non-profit sector, Farida, indicated that she did not have any role with Employment Equity initiatives.

Interestingly, Arusha, in the private sector, has had very positive experiences with optional questionnaires that she has had to fill out:

> We have a questionnaire. Maybe they don't call it Employment Equity, but we have a questionnaire that comes by every, every 3 months ... we have to fill it in ... and they do ask you, would you consider yourself a visible minority. Would you consider yourself a person with a disability .... then it asks, if you answered yes to that, it asks you further .... how are you treated, do you ever feel that you know, because of who you are you are not getting ahead and stuff .... then they compile the report and send it to the manager of that branch.

These questionnaires are optional and voluntary, and according to Arusha, the results of these surveys were mostly positive. She described the questionnaire as a medium for employees to discuss their concerns without actually speaking to the manger personally. In addition, the results of these surveys are formally presented to employees:

> If there is any gaps there, then they are corrected all the time. The manager doesn't wait for the result to come out and then say oh now I have to improve on this. But then my manager is a non-white as well. But when our report comes out, it comes out quarterly, it's very positive .... just yesterday she read another report, and it was 97% positive. And then there was this one person who had all kinds of comments on it. And even that one comment, that one that wasn't positive, she read out, and justified it. And that's what I found nice, that she didn't just dwell on the 97% that did so well ... and then you know she read it out, and she became, she became quite emotional about it because she tried to say that at no time would she have wanted the person to feel that way. And she said, you know, I don't know who wrote this, but my office is an open door policy, and please come and talk to me, I don't want you to feel that way. And she became quite emotional.

The fact that this manager did not only focus on the positive was a very important part of her organization for Arusha. It is important that managers present the results of these surveys to employees, and not only in a positive manner, so that they feel that their concerns are actually being addressed. This narrative indicates that when Employment Equity initiatives are applied by management and individual concerns are addressed, employees can have more positive views of their organizations.

Anti-Racism theorists have emphasized the importance of oppressed group members being given a voice in order to change their own realities (Dei, 2000). Even though it appears that the visible minority in this study are not being given sufficient opportunities to participate in Employment Equity initiatives, some of them were provided with the opportunities to voice their concerns through surveys. These women need to take advantage of this opportunity to voice their concerns while other mediums of expression remain limited.

Perceptions on Representation and Occupational Mobility

In terms of representation, many of the women, especially in the federal public service, did not find that there was an equal representation of minorities at the managerial level. However, many women believed that the hiring processes in their organizations were fair, and that there was simply a lack of availability of certain positions, such as supervisory and management positions.

Salma who has worked for the federal public service both in Ontario and Alberta for almost a decade, noticed marked differences in the representation of disadvantaged groups in the two regions, whereby she believes discrimination to be taking place:

> Within my organization, it's happened a lot, only when I came to Calgary, you could see a big difference, and I don't know if that is because of the population of visible minorities in Calgary. We don't have any disabled people, I don't think, working in the Calgary office ... there is a high proportion of women, compared to men ... there's no Aboriginals, that I know of, there might be some that self identify that I don't know, so it's apparent, the discrimination is apparent across the board, when you look around my office, I'm one of the, right now after eight years, I'm

one of the highest paid visible minority women in my office, and I would say that the other visible minority women are all at entry level positions at the very bottom.

Salma indicated that there are diversity differences in the two regions, as she did see a representation of designated group members in Ontario. The entirety of visible minority women in Salma's organization except for her remaining at the bottom of the totem pole highlights the fact that many visible minority women in the federal public service continue to remain at entry level positions. She explained that she does not "see them targeting staffing of higher level positions toward any of the Employment Equity groups, even though it is apparent that it is lacking in middle and upper management." Therefore, it appears that in this organization, Employment Equity standards are not being met at the management level.

In terms of representation of visible minorities in higher level positions in her workplace, Neha has found that "it's obvious that there isn't anybody up there." However, she could not infer as to why this was the case, but she did state that she felt that there may be a lack of "trust" in visible minorities. Neha's conceptualization of trust will be discussed further in the following section. This participant's general feeling though, was that her department is quite fair, and that if she would push for a promotion, she would definitely have managerial support.

Delores indicated that in her office, there was not a representation of minorities in higher level positions, which she attributed to the following reason:

> I think it is just because the process of the increasing diversity is relatively recent, so once those people leave, then I think there will be more opportunity for other

people to move up ... but, because I said like it's new, so you kind of have to prepare these people to become management so I think that's kind of the issue. And I know specifically, like, senior, senior management is all like white males, except for a few white females.

While Delores does indicate that there is a move in a positive direction, the problem lies in the fact that individuals will have to wait until people leave their positions in order to have opportunities to advance. The statement that there is no real availability of positions does not expunge the fact that minorities have been systematically kept out of these positions in the past, and that this behaviour may continue to occur in the future. Delores also made an important point that once individuals enter into entry level or administrative positions, even though they are over-qualified, they may find it difficult to advance from these positions. Social Capital theorists contend that cultural capital, in the form of skills and education, should translate into relatable forms of economic capital (Jenkins, 2002), however, the processes of misrecognition and symbolic violence (Moore, 2008) may be keeping visible minorities out of positions that they are qualified to work in. Therefore, it is even more important for minorities to be hired in positions for which they are qualified, or else possibly face yet another barrier in occupational mobility. Miranda, also did not see a representation of minorities in management, however, she too believed that this was due to a lack of availability of positions. Valorie on the other hand, has noticed a representation of visible minority employees in higher level positions, but not necessarily in management positions:

In higher level positions, yes, but in management, it doesn't come around very often ... like for example, you don't really see the higher, higher people, but when

you hear their names, you can either tell that they're [white] Canadian or French. I don't really know that there's lots of visible minorities.

Again, there is a lack of representation in upper positions. Valorie also believed that this was due to a lack of availability of positions, and for other reasons:

> Honestly, some of these people may not actually want it ... they might not actually even want to deal with it, or they might not have that kind of, personality style to actually to be managing a team. I think I would move up and advise, but not manage.

Even though this may be the case for Valorie personally, it would not be correct to assume that most minorities would not have the personality type to want to manage a team.

Ranita, as will be seen in the next section, has experienced and witnessed many accounts of discrimination, and has only once seen a minority in higher level positions. However, she expressed a very positive view of some of the managers that she has had in the federal public service. Ranita did stress that because there is a new generation entering the workforce, opportunities are changing:

> It's a different generation, so there could have been different opportunities. I know that their opportunities are much more different than our generation ... competitions for jobs were different when they were starting in the government. I think it's not so much an Employment Equity issue. I find that maybe within this organization in the government it's more of a personal thing. If you've got support behind you from a manager, or people that get along with you, you'll move up, but if you've got a manager that doesn't, isn't supportive, or you've got people that won't get along, they won't move them up. So I see that with the managers that are currently in there, is you can see that so and so doesn't get along with so and so, and that's when that person doesn't move up. So it's more of a personal issue, and that they know they can do that.

Ranita's description indicates that maintaining healthy relationships with management is vital in order to have opportunities for mobility. However, in cases where managers are unmindful of certain employees (as will be demonstrated with Salma's case), it is clear that problems may arise. Additionally, the decision of whether or not to hire or promote a certain employee should not be left up to a manager's personality; rather, sound guidelines should be in place to determine suitable candidates, as well as measures that ensure their proper implementation.

Interestingly, both Soraya and Afroza have seen a representation of minorities in higher level and management positions in the public sector. Afroza held the view that diversity; both in terms of lower level positions and management were predominant in her workplace. She also related her experience to working in the private sector, where she found that women could be seen in management positions, but rarely visible minorities.

In the non-profit sector, Farida emphasized that there was much diversity within her department, as she highlighted, "Look at our department. We have an African American, a South Asian, we have an Irish, we have a Dutch person, and we have a Ukrainian. That is pretty multicultural for you, right?" However, when questioned on whether such diversity existed in managerial positions, she noted that it did not as she saw a majority of Caucasians in that environment. This is indicative of the fact that higher representation levels at lower level positions may be creating the impression that workplaces are quite inclusive, when they may not actually be inclusive at all levels.

In the private sector, Arusha, in her 32 years working for the banking sector, found that opportunities for mobility were very quick:

> It didn't take too long ... I would say in the first year when they recognized my ability. I was always encouraged to move up ... being very new to Canada, I was really scared to apply myself, so every time I moved up; it was my superiors or somebody else that recognized it. So I was really fortunate, I never had to fight for a position, so it was easy.

She mentioned that her supervisors and managers early on in her career were mostly white men, and now there is much noticeable diversity in management. Arusha recalled that when she was applying for jobs early on in her career, many employers were looking for "Canadian experience," which she does not believe is as common at present. However, contrary to Arusha's belief, Galabuzi (2006) has found that having "Canadian experience" is still a crucial factor for many immigrants who are trying to obtain employment. Arusha's opportunities for mobility came in the late 1970's and early 1980's, therefore, her success with occupational mobility cannot be attributed to the Employment Equity Act. Her mobility may be due to the fact that she entered Canada during a time of mass immigration, and in organizations such as the banking sector, individuals with certain ethnicities and language abilities may have been needed to serve the clientele. Additionaly, as Lily, an employer in the banking sector stated, much of the hiring done by her bank is based on the demographics of certain areas, so it is feasible to argue that her success in mobility of visible minorities could have been due to the needs of the organizations like this one. Marta, in the banking sector, also found that there was a fair mix in terms of diversity at the management level in her organization.

Radha, working for a major airline, felt that her organization was very diverse. In addition, she found that there are many women in managerial roles, but only in certain departments. For example, she stated that many women would not be found in the stereotypically male dominated areas such as the comptroller department and the finance department for the airline. Radha also mentioned that a woman would not be found as a partner, one of the highest ranking positions in the organization. As far as visible minorities in management, she had in her words "seen only a couple." In terms of mobility, she felt that she had moved up very quickly in the year that she had been working for the organization. Radha attributed her quick mobility to extensive experience in her field prior to working for this airline.

Perceptions on Discrimination in the Workplace

It is apparent that discrimination is something that has been commonly experienced by visible minority women in federally regulated workplaces. Although not all of the women who were interviewed actually experienced discrimination, many of the instances that were recollected by the women were somewhat disturbing.

When it comes to the federal public sector, Salma stated in her interview that she has both experienced discrimination and witnessed others' experiences in her current workplace. She felt that she was not treated fairly in terms of promotion, on the account of her skin colour:

> I was given all reason to believe that I would get the position, just because I had a lot of experience, I had the most experience out of any of the other candidates ... I

> felt that I should have been given a fair chance, and I do believe that has to do with gender or race, because the person who got it was a white male, and he had less experience than I did, he started in the agency around the time that I did ... he had experience, but he didn't have any experience doing the job. I did.

One interpretation of this occurrence is that a white male with less experience was chosen over a visible minority female with more experience. As Salma stated, she was an "administrative assistant with a degree, and if I had been a white male, I would not be in that position for long." Salma's over qualification for this position demonstrates the potential misrecognition of credentials that is discussed in the Social Capital framework. Anti-Racism theory purports that identity and the disadvantage stemming from such identity is not the product of one factor alone. It is a hybrid construct of gender and race, among other social factors. In this case, the employee that was denied advancement was both a woman and of East Indian descent, with more experience than her white male counterpart. Therefore, not only was Salma not chosen based on gender, she was likely not chosen also because of her status as a visible minority female. Salma stated that she felt invisible to her manager in the office, as he "never acknowledged my presence in the office .... his relationships were all with people that were Caucasian." This feeling of invisibility is problematic, as it implies that this manager was not paying attention to or refusing to acknowledge Salma's presence, as well as the skills and experience that she brought into the workplace. Salma further explained how she challenged the hiring process:

> I challenged the process, and there was a lot of other things that happened in that process that made me believe that it wasn't [fair], because some people were allowed to continue on through the process without meeting the screening criteria, and the way the competitions work in the government is that you have to meet the criteria at each stage, including screening, umm, the written exam, interviews, etc.

> As part of the challenge, I got to see all the documents and rating   guide, and spoke to the manager, and there were quite a number of things that were wrong with the process.

From Salma's comments, it is apparent that the promotion process was not carried out fairly, although she was not at liberty to provide information on the specifics of the process. In the end, nothing came out of Salma's attempts to challenge the hiring process. One can ponder the usefulness of screening criteria if it is not actually used in hiring processes.

Salma also recalled a more disturbing incident to which she was a witness, where discrimination moved beyond words:

> There have been cases of managers, there's one that's left that was blatantly discriminatory, and eventually she was accused of physical harassment, and therefore, was kind of pushed out the door. [The manager] had a visible minority as an employee, [the manager] was accused of physically harming her employee .... so that resulted in that manager, within, a few months, accepting another position in another organization. So nobody knows, I mean, I don't know what the reason was for her leaving, but, it was quite coincidental that it was following the employee filing in a harassment complaint to the union.

In this case, Salma was a witness to another female visible minority employee suffering from physical harm from a white female manager. What is concerning about this particular situation is the result of a formalized complaint was only a change in positions and not a termination of employment for this manager. This raises the question of what one actually has to do beyond physically harming another employee in the federal public sector to actually jeopardize their employment.

Delores did not feel that she had ever experienced discrimination herself, but was certain that it has existed in her workplace. She described an incident in which a visible minority co-worker was getting a photo taken by a manager for an identification card, which she described as inappropriate:

> He is taking her picture and he looked at it, and was like oh, we have to do it again. So, she took another picture, and then he's like ohhhh. And then she came, and was like, "what's, what's wrong with it?" Is it that bad? And he's like look, with the colour of your skin, you kind of look like a terrorist.

Delores explained how this employee felt uneasy with this incident, and approached the manager about her concerns about the comment, which he was unreceptive to, so therefore, the incident was brought up to a director, who told the employee that he would deal with the situation directly. Delores did not know the outcome of this incident, but it is apparent that these discriminatory comments were inappropriate and rattled the employee.

Neha recalled an instance in which a manager made some improper comments about a peaceful protest that was taking place outside a government building:

> There was a protest going on ... a few years ago from the Lebanese community, and they were just holding a protest. And, the first thing that came out of her mouth was, after she saw the protest going on...was [like] I hope they don't hold us hostage here. They were just holding a protest, and we live in a democratic country .... appreciate the fact that they are holding it peacefully. And the police aren't, they aren't nervous about it, so you shouldn't be either. Women like her are in the workplace, that have issues, or fear, or mistrust of brown people, and it's almost like they need to get a, they need to get to know you first. Before thinking you're even human.

This narrative demonstrates that stereotypically negative views about ethnic groups are being openly expressed in this workplace. The fact that Neha used such a strong phrase,

"before even thinking you're human," demonstrates the level of difference that white

majorities may perceive about racialized minorities in Canadian society. This statement is

congruent with the belief proposed by Anti-Racism theorists that race has the effect of

power in that it can foster the continuous production of racial subjects, which seeks to

maintain boundaries between socially created and hierarchical categories of bodies

(McDonald, 2009). It is important to note that other employees in the federal public service

outlined similar cases of stereotyping that illustrate racial discrimination, which reveals that

this practice is quite common. These situations illustrate how the integrity of those who are

deemed as different can be devalued, and, how individuals in the workplace can display

insensitive and ignorant attitudes.

Neha, who earlier expressed negative attitudes towards Employment Equity,

explained that she does believe that discrimination exists in Canadian workplaces.

Interestingly, she related the reality of discrimination as being due to patterns of fear:

> I think, for example if people see applicants with different sounding names, if
> they see a person walk in with a different skin colour, or a completely different
> appearance, or an accent, then I think the, that that person is automatically judged
> in a negative .... I think there are specific people who display, I think just patterns of
> fear .... it can be picked up through some non-verbal cues, the way that a person is
> addressed differently.

In the context of these statements, Neha is describing how visible minorities can be deemed

different than white Canadians, based on attributes such as style of dress or having an

accent. Neha's comments draw parallels to the notion of homogeneity that Ruth described

in the previous chapter. Ruth's described homogeneity as employers hiring individuals

who reminded them of themselves, examples being having a similar skin colour or accent.
In this context, Neha furthers our understanding of homogeneity in hiring by adding the
element of fear of the "other." In accordance with Neha's statement, there is the universal
attribution of "whiteness" operating, which is leading to the creation and fear of the
"other." (Retiman, 2006). In addition, as Delores indicated, it is difficult for individuals to
have mobility when they begin in these positions, and if they are being judged as
incompetent or inferior out of fear, this places visible minority women at an extreme
disadvantage. Neha further described a scenario in which a visible minority individual
could be addressed differently in the organization:

> I overhear a conversation when the person running the competition is going through
> the list of applicants, and they read through the names, and if there is foreign names
> on the list, they may say the name, they will pronounce the names with, with
> apprehension and fear, you know like, here is another brown person on the list, and
> the name, something like you know Pamela Smith will be on the list. Oh, Pamela
> Smith, you're hired! Maybe it's a joke ... and definitely it is just a light hearted
> joke, but why are you joking like that. You're joking like that because you're afraid
> of the foreign sounding name .... and they could be a totally nice person, they could
> be completely capable for the job, how do you know.

Although this excerpt describes a situation in which the response was meant to be
humorous, it exemplifies the fact that there are deep seeded issues that are prevalent in
society. The apprehensive response that was elicited at a very early stage in the hiring
process implies that there was a bias existing even before the employer had come into
contact with the applicant. This could be due to a number of factors, including fear and the
operation of "white privilege." This could potentially lead to unfair situations where
minorities are not afforded the opportunities to proceed to the interview phase based on

having an uncommon name. Ranita described another situation where questionable actions

were taking place in the workplace:

> If you work for the government, you work for the people. And if you have these views, and you're helping people with minority backgrounds, I can't imagine what kind of treatment they're getting. An example was ... you would see applications with let's say, a background, a name that you knew wasn't Canadian. Somehow they'd go missing, people would shred them, people wouldn't pay attention to them, and there was no, no method to ensure that these, these applications were getting through on time .... because the employees within the department were not doing their job fairly.

This narrative is particularly disturbing, as the processes in federal public offices can have a

major impact on a large portion of the population. The general public would likely have no

idea how their applications are being handled. Ranita attributed these behaviours to a lack

of managerial oversight; however, this is not an excuse for such questionable actions, as

these are potentially dangerous actions. One can imagine a parallel scenario in the

immigration sector where an application goes "missing." The behaviours of the employees

within different sectors can have life altering impacts for individuals who depend on the

fair procedures that take place in the immigration office.

Ranita provided many examples of questionable behaviours that she both

experienced and was witness to during her time with the federal public service. She

describes how discrimination became increasingly perceptible to her in the following

narrative:

> I never ever seen it or maybe had a blind-eye to it until recently ... and it was during that period where I saw a lot of maybe, actions that were going on, or things that were being said not only to, let's say, someone like me or other people of different backgrounds. There seemed to be a lot of racism, discrimination, and then when I

got the position .... the comments were made was it was because she's a woman with an ethnic minority that she got that opportunity, it had nothing to do with my qualifications.

Ranita, in this scenario, is describing her transition to a higher level position in a new government office. She described the comments as being made by older, white, female employees, which are perhaps not getting the same opportunities that younger employees are getting. These types of situations are especially problematic for younger visible minority female employees, who perhaps are being viewed as inexperienced because of their age, and unqualified because of their skin colour, as these women are not viewing these advancements as attributable to merit. It appears that Ranita has an additional disadvantage, which is her age in comparison to many of her white female colleagues. Therefore, not only are her qualifications undervalued because of her race, her skills are devalued further by her younger age. This scenario also fits with the notions presented by the Anti-Racism pedagogy, which states that women of colour are facing multiple disadvantages in the workplace such as age, in addition to race and gender. In order to address the problem, Ranita tried to take measures to resolve these misperceptions:

> My manager at the time, [I] explained [to her] what had happened, cause I was quite upset and she said to write a formal letter to their director and she would have it addressed, and from my understanding is they did address it. They tried to have a mediation, it, it was kind of a slap on the wrist and you can go back to what you're doing .... there were people who were left behind in that position that still had to put up with the discrimination ... we had all agreed we would never, ever, do it again. We would never take it forward. We would never bring it to a manager's attention. Just the fall out, the backlash, yeah, you're targeted as a shit disturber, you caused unnecessary problems for the department, maybe we're over sensitive, sometimes they think it, oh you're just being sensitive.

The method Ranita has described about how the problem was addressed is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it appears as if there are no real repercussions for employees who engage in discriminatory behaviours. Secondly, the individual who brought this claim forward was basically told to remain silent in the future, even though the problem could have worsened, as the guilty parties have suffered no repercussions and could essentially carry on with their behaviours. Thirdly, if management view these claims as unnecessary problems for the department, this would deter employees who face the discriminatory treatment again to speak up about it. Further, other minorities who encounter discrimination could keep quiet as they may believe that their claims will not be heard or dealt with.

Another scenario in which insensitive comments were noticed in the workplace by Ranita is shown in the following narrative:

> An Asian lady ... older, was kind of mocked for her, her Chinese background ... comments of ... what types of meat do you eat, I guess basically really, maybe racist comments were kind of put out to her, but they usually were headed towards people who didn't have a strong personality. And unfortunately for people who come from different ethnic backgrounds they tend to be less direct than I would say our generation.

Ranita, in this narrative, is referring to a few issues. Her description demonstrates an intersection of being a visible minority woman, and being of an older generation. It seems as though women who have these two identities are may be less likely to defend themselves against inappropriate comments. This might be occurring for two potential reasons, one of which may be ageism, where older members are treated as inferior in the workplace.

Another possible reason may be that senior members of the workplace may have entered the Canadian workforce at a time period when racist attitudes and behaviours were rampant, and they may have been socialized to accept these attitudes and comments as a way of life. This is an interesting paradox to the problem that younger visible minority women may encounter in their workplaces as it shows that age affects visible minority women and how they can be at a disadvantage for both being younger or older than their white colleagues.

In this last narrative from Ranita's interview, she describes the role that language has played in her workplace:

> There was an African American lady from Montreal who struggled with English; French was her primary language, which was fine, because she would deal with our French applications. And she was singled out, you know, we don't like her, we don't want to talk to her, kind of singled her out for that.

It appears that this individual has more than just her skin colour working against her, but also language. What is most interesting about this situation is that this individual is fluent in one of Canada's two official languages, French, yet is singled out for this reason. Further, Ranita indicated that this woman also had her appearance working against her, which is yet another jeopardy that could work against individuals in the workplace. Therefore, it appears that visible minority women working in the federal public service have encountered many forms of discrimination due to factors such as their non-Western names, race, age, appearance, and language.

As is the case in the federal public sector, discrimination in the non-profit sector also came from management. Farida, at first claimed that she had not encountered any discrimination or unfair treatment in her organization from management or from colleagues. However, during the course of the interview, she herself described an instance in which she felt that she was treated differently on the basis of her skin colour:

> I think sometimes I have to do work better than the rest because I feel like I have to outperform people just to make myself recognized .... because sometimes you're overlooked, as a minority. And it's a very different feeling. I didn't feel that before I worked, ever, and I was like you know, this racism crap, it doesn't exist ... and then I realized that in the workplace, it's a very different thing .... and it's, hard, and in the sense that sometimes, I did twice the work that my co-workers did, but often times, they'd get validated for it, and I wouldn't. And I'd be sitting there like hmm, interesting, right. Like, I just, I just saved the company's ass, excuse my language, and I'm not being recognized for it. This person lifted a box and they are, and it was something so trivial, right.

Firstly, it is important to examine Farida's use of the phrase "racism crap." It seems that until she was personally affected by racist attitudes, she did not believe that it existed. This is likely the sentiment held by many individuals who have not experienced discrimination, and hold on to the view that because Canada endorses a multicultural society, it is inherently equal. Farida's case is interesting, as it does not appear to be a blatant act of discrimination, but rather a subtle act in the non-recognition of her work. This is important as this non-recognition could lead to minority individuals not having the opportunities for mobility in organizations due to the fact that their hard work is not being taken into consideration. She also explained how when she did bring this issue up to the manager, that the situation took a turn for the worse, as Farida felt that her manager was tougher on her, and "[the manager] felt that I called her on the wrong account ... she tried to find points

against me ... she would try to find places that I would screw up .... I had to make sure that my T's were crossed and my I's were dotted, and I did everything properly." One could only imagine the immense pressure that an individual would have in their workplace if they felt that they were being intentionally targeted. Farida further described how she attempted to bring this issue up to a higher manager in her company, but was essentially given the run around:

> At first I just kind of rolled it off, but then there was a couple of instances where I felt that she really pointed the finger at me. And co-workers had done something equally, or more worse than mine. And so I said to myself, you know what this is very personal, it has to do with something very personal. So I actually went to her manager and her manager said I can't launch a grievance until you tell your manager that this is how you feel. And I said well I already told her. And she said, well I still can't tell her because you were arguing back and forth so you have to tell her in a calm, civil manner. And I go, well, it was a relatively calm, civil manner ... and she goes, not you have to talk to her again, and then if it doesn't work, I can, I can send it in. Right, so the grievance procedure was there in policy and on paper, but I don't know if it really existed.

Farida's general feeling was that this manager was attempting to brush off her problem, and that to continue the grievance process would not be worthwhile as she felt that she would not receive any "sense of justification or justice from it." Farida's experience highlights the fact that those who suffer from unfair treatment in the workplace and actually attempt to resolve the problem can be left with a sense of injustice. This could lead individuals to simply accepting the negative treatment, and not take actions which have only shown to worsen their situations.

Quite interestingly, participants who worked for the private sector generally found that they were encountering discrimination more so from colleagues and the public, rather

than from management, as is the case in the public sector. Afroza has experienced no instances of discrimination in the federal public sector; however, in her previous position in the banking sector, she feels that these negative behaviours are more prevalent. She expressed positive views towards senior management, but some resentment towards her colleagues:

> Senior management does promote the movement up, but it's sometimes your peers that hold you back ... I'd hate to say that was racism that comes into play, but discrimination does come into play at some level ... I worked more [than everyone else], my direct supervisor was quite discriminatory, whereas her supervisors, or her peers, which were senior management were very interested in upward mobility.

Within this organization, the promotion of minorities appears to be embraced by those in upper level management, but not those individuals that are close to them in ranking. Afroza believed that this is due to individuals in the private sector having a mentality of "them against the world and they do not want to see you promoted anywhere." It makes sense that this point of view is more prominent in the private sector, as job security and stability is less than what would be in the federal public sector. However, she is not quick to praise the upper management for their attitudes towards mobility, as she states that she is not sure "whether or not they are doing it out of the goodness of their heart, or whether they are doing it to get a statistical number up there." Further, when she raised this problem to management, she felt as if she was treated as the "bad person who tattled." Again, this portrays the fact that though avenues may be available if employees are experiencing unjust treatment in the workplace, these employees are not always encouraged to take advantage of them.

Arusha, in her many years with the banking sector, has had mainly positive experiences in her company. She stated that she has never been subject to discriminatory behaviours from management; however, she has felt this way with colleagues:

> I would say from management level, no. But sometimes from other staff it is there, because not everybody is very accepting. It's just that because from top down it's not there, it doesn't get anywhere, right. If any staff feel that way, really, they don't have a choice. They can feel that way, but it doesn't come out against you, just because they feel that way ... somebody [would] comment on a strange culture that you have, or a strange way of doing things. But uh, we have a wide diversity of people, so, it really, sometimes it's the whites that feel left out ... just a casual comment here or there ... more or less because of ignorance.

Arusha felt that although these comments were made in the workplace, that they did not have an impact since these comments were not made by management. However, having peers that make insensitive comments due to ignorance is not conducive to a healthy work environment. This participant even expressed the sentiment that she wished "they understood more," and she herself has actively taken a role to discuss and explain her culture to these colleagues. Still, not all minorities would feel comfortable enough to have these discussions with their peers, especially if they believe that they are being ridiculed. Additionally, these comments mirror negative stereotypes about visible minorities.

Marta, who also works in the banking sector, expressed the sentiment that she felt her workplace environment was very fair, and that she had heard no comments made by fellow employees. Importantly though, that did not mean that she was free from encountering prejudiced attitudes while she was on the job:

> You wouldn't believe how the clients, not the company itself, but the clients, they will tell you straight in your face that you shouldn't be sitting in that office. You shouldn't be sitting, I should be the one sitting in that office. And of course you

can't, excuse me? Yeah I should be the one, I don't know why are you sitting there. These are white people, same as my age. And it's like, in your position like being an employee, and that's a client, you can't say anything, all you can say is that, excuse me. It is, it is very hard, and in your mind, you just want to think, OK, then what is wrong here. Is it me, or you? So why are you not sitting in that office there?

This situation describes how pervasive discriminatory attitudes may be in Canadian society. To go as far as to tell any employee that they should not have a particular job, is telling as to the sentiment that many individuals might have towards visible minorities.

From these interviews, it is clear that discrimination still exists in the federal public sector, the non-profit sector, and the private sector. Discrimination from management appeared to be more pervasive the federal public service and the non-profit organization, while in the private sector, discrimination appeared to occur more from colleagues and the general public.

Networking

As discussed earlier, having positive interactions with management was viewed as very important by some of the women in order to have opportunities for advancement. In the majority of the interviews conducted, having social contacts of any type was very important for women in either learning about jobs within the organization, referrals, or in upward mobility.

Many of the women employed in the federal public sector stated that they had learned of the positions in their current organizations through individuals who were already

employed in those organizations. Ranita, Soraya, Sumita, Delores, and Miranda had learned

of their jobs through job posters that their contacts had given to them. Ranita also had a

former manager who "hunted her down" in order to apply for a position that became open,

and she described him as "the only one I ever know of that was really supportive, I think

his recommendation, and his strong support is what got me through. Had I not had that,

there would probably be not a good chance."

Miranda, who originally started off in a student position, stated that "if it wasn't for

my team leader and manager when I started my summer student job … [and] I guess maybe

make the right contacts to find out more about the student bridging program, I probably

wouldn't have had the opportunity and probably would have you know, like any other

person …. leave the summer job and then apply externally for new positions. But if it

wasn't for the internal process and me communicating my desire to find work, that would

be it."

For Delores, the initial position that she applied for was not posted externally, so

she would have never known about the position if she did not have the internal contact.

Delores also learned of another position that she applied for after already being employed

with the federal public service and described herself as "lucky" that she had those contacts.

Valorie described how she contacted a manager, who she did not even know to get into a

certain position:

> So I wrote to [the manager] and said to her I am interested in this … at first she said
> no there wasn't anything because you know, there was only one position, and but

then afterwards, one of the ladies had gone on leave, and then I took over the
position.

This situation describes the importance that networking can potentially have in advancing
in the workplace. Salma, who moved from Ontario to Alberta, described the importance
that having social contacts were for this transition:

> Wanting to move to Calgary caused me to give up my job, unless I could make
> alternative arrangements, so I contacted several people. It took approximately 6-8
> weeks, but I contacted my old, the supervisor for the assignment, the supervisor's
> supervisor, kind of the manager level called his counterpart in Calgary, before
> finally a job offer was made, so I was lucky, otherwise I would have had to
> reapply ... and if that person did not have an opening then, it was only because of a
> recommendation from a high level manager, that liked me, and my work that I was
> able to get a position in Calgary.

It is apparent through this example that keeping positive relations and demonstrating a good
work ethic can provide opportunities when the need arises. In the non-profit sector, Farida
stated that she did not utilize social networking to obtain her position, and she did not
believe that it would help in entering into future positions. In the private sector, Arusha
had a relative that worked in the banking sector that recruited her through a referral
program, and Radha had a friend in the airline industry who also recruited her through a
referral program.

Unfortunately, there is a negative side to networking. There are situations when
members of cultural groups may feel as if they have to engage in activities in which they do
not feel comfortable, as Salma in the federal public sector explained:

> Perhaps one of the problems that I encountered in my most recent departments,
> there was a split divide between the types of personalities that existed, so in order to

have personal contacts, which is the question you're asking, you have to have, certain personality commonalties, so, you have to match other peoples personality and meet whatever need that they have. So the fact that I have a different, for example Myers-Briggs personality type, then the other individuals, made a very big difference in my opportunity to advance ... because I am an introvert, and I like to do things kind of individually, without having to be outwardly speaking all the time, whereas the other individuals umm that made, that came in later than I did at the same level and made it further, quicker.

Salma's statement parallels with the notions of homogeneity that have been brought up in many of the interviews. In order to advance, it appears that individuals need to have personalities that are akin to their colleagues, especially those in management. Therefore, those that advance would likely have the same personality traits and beliefs. She further discussed the problem:

[A] white female for example, had a different, completely different personality that met the personalities of the people who already existed there. So a very outgoing, good communicator, sensitive, interested in, you know personal chit chat ... whereas I'm all mostly about work, I like to get things done and find time to relax. In other words ... the difference between brown nosing, which is networking and associating, getting to know people on a personal level, even though you really have no interest in them, only for the sake of career advancement, whereas, I was not willing to do that. I came to work, to work, and not to build everlasting friendships for my own career development, if that makes any sense.

It seems as though the work that an employee does is not always the deciding factor in whether or not they advance, rather, it is the relationships that they build with individuals in the workplace. This problem is concerning for certain immigrants, who may not want to follow the existing social culture of the workplace. Salma also felt that her culture played a role in finding commonalities with her colleagues:

It's harder to find common things for example. Because of my culture for example I am not used to social drinking. Whereas, maybe the rest of them are, so they

would go out for drinks, you know, after work. So, I don't think that I should be denied opportunities because I don't interact in that way with them.

Salma illustrated an interesting dilemma. An individual, who does not drink, due to cultural or religious reasons, may automatically be stereotyped. If they do not express the reasons why they do not engage in this activity, they could be labelled as an introvert or uninterested in maintaining relationships. On the other hand, if this individual expressed that their cultural or religious beliefs frown upon such activities, they run the risk of being labelled as the "other." Therefore, by not engaging in normative activities, an individual could run the risk being seen as challenging the normative culture of "whiteness" that exists in the organization. Either way, Salma's comments demonstrate that maintaining relationships with colleagues, although it may be necessary for mobility, is not always clear cut.

Regardless of the fact that networking can be a difficult experience for some visible minority women, it appears to be an imperative factor in not only learning of job postings, but also for mobility within organizations. According to Social Capital theory the skills and credentials of visible minority women, especially those who were educated elsewhere, are undervalued (Moore, 2008). Therefore, in a society where discriminatory attitudes and behaviours are still operating, it is necessary for women to use social contacts as a form of capital, which will help them to advance in their careers.

Conclusion

The Anti-Racism and Social Capital lenses provide an important interpretative tool in this chapter to demonstrate the marginalized positions of female visible minority employees and to demonstrate the necessity and complexities of social networking. As shown in this chapter, the identities of these womn are often complex and not related to one point of reference, as a variety of factors such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, physical appearance, and age have affected their treatment in the workplace. Adding to these complexities are the existence and misunderstanding of Employment Equity initiatives, which places these women in an especially vulnerable position. In addition to racial and gender discrimination, ageism experienced by both the young or the old played an important part in how empowered that individual felt to stand up to negative treatment in the workplace. Though not all women experienced discrimination, there appeared to be a normative "whiteness" (McDonald, 2009) that was operating in these many of the organizations, which has led to some visible minority women being artificially labelled as the "other," which may be hindering their mobility. However, the experiences of these women have shown that often times, retaining the appropriate social contacts can improve the situation of these women, even at times where discriminatory behaviours remain pervasive.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter will begin by providing a brief summary of the findings of the interviews with first the employers, followed by the interviews with visible minority women in this thesis. Secondly, recommendations for diversity training programs will be provided. This will be followed by a discussion of the limitations of this thesis, along with the possible avenues for future research.

Three out of the five employers that were interviewed in this study had Employment Equity training through prior schooling, one employer trained on Employment Equity solely in the workplace, and one had no background or training at all on the subject. This inconsistency in knowledge and training indicates that it may be beneficial for organizations to implement some type of training for their employers to ensure the most efficient delivery of Employment Equity policies and programs. It can be argued that without the proper training, employers may be unequipped to administer these policies effectively, especially across different facets of an organization. It is important that the bodies that are in charge of regulating and collecting Employment Equity data provide the appropriate knowledgeable contacts to each federally regulated organization in order to assist with any Employment Equity issues that may arise.

In terms of the implementation of Employment Equity initiatives, it came to light how the major focus for the federal public service and the private sector is on statistical representation. While the statistical procedures that are in place for recruitment are sophisticated, there are issues that exist, including the fact that the collection of

Employment Equity data in the federal public service is based on voluntary self-identification, and the issue of the initial application forms not providing much of an explanation about why this information is important. The lack of discussion surrounding Employment Equity is leading to minorities themselves not understanding the purpose of the policy, and non-minorities construing the legislation as reverse discrimination. In order for employees to understand the barriers that the designated groups have faced in the workplace, I believe that it is necessary to present statistics that illustrate the extent of underrepresentation. It is crucial not only to communicate about Employment Equity to all levels of employees, but also to provide some sort of forum (e.g. focus group) for them to share their thought and feelings surrounding the legislation. It may even be beneficial to have designated groups members discuss any experiences they have had with discrimination, in order to demonstrate the effect of these behaviours in the workplace. Anti-Racism theorists have emphasized the significance of the discussion in fostering social change. However, it is important to have a mediator who is knowledgeable on the subject of Employment Equity to correct any misconceptions that may arise.

In the not-profit sector, the employer asserted that the manner in which her organization dealt with Employment Equity was through diversity training programs. These types of programs could be highly beneficial to all federally regulated organizations, provided that the information being relayed is appropriate. For instance, programs containing a heavy emphasis on differences concerning food, cultural traditions, or languages may only be addressing "superficial" differences. More substantive problems such as feelings of inequality or discrimination in the workplace would not be addressed if

these matters are not taken up in such programs. Dei (2000) argued that contemporary forms of racism celebrate culture and differences within oppressive contexts, and this rhetorical manipulation of difference fails to address fundamental questions of power. Thus, diversity training programs should provide some emphasis on "superficial" differences, but also bring to the forefront the inequalities (i.e. income gaps, representation in higher level positions) between minorities and majorities in the Canadian workforce. These programs can mitigate the misunderstandings about Employment Equity, and foster discussions between members of these organizations surrounding inequalities.

Each of the employers was well aware of the fact that discrimination is still pervasive in Canadian society, and either exists or has existed in their organizations. A first important theme that was raised pertained to issues of "homogeneity" in hiring, where individuals are more likely to hire those who resemble themselves racially, and a second theme was the difficulty in establishing the basis for a discriminatory claim as discrimination varies in accordance with perception. It can be argued that hiring decisions may be based on normative characteristics of "whiteness," as those responsible for making these decisions are most likely white individuals. If the current patterns of "homogeneity" in hiring continue, it is likely that claims of discrimination will not be brought to light, and the exclusion and hindrance of mobility for minorities will persist. Because of the fine line between perception and discrimination, it is likely that a claim made by a minority individual could be dismissed as a difference of perception, and the minority would be left with feelings of frustration. As we have observed, visible minority women do experience discrimination in the workplace, and some of these women attempted to make claims, but

they were often targets of unwanted scrutiny after doing so. Therefore, federally regulated organizations need to establish more objective criterion in order to evaluate claims of discrimination, instead of making these women targets for voicing their claims. Another reoccurring issue was that of fear and mistrust of visible minorities in the interviews with both groups of participants. Häkli (2009) argued that interpersonal trust is a vital component in fostering beneficial competition that is essential for a viable and innovative society. As demonstrated in the interviews, the patterns of mistrust and fear are persistent and having a negative impact on visible minorities. At the macro level, mistrust may be operating with the devaluation of the knowledge, experience, and credentials of visible minorities.

It was clear from this research that very few of the women interviewed in this study had a clear understanding of Employment Equity. Five out of the nine federal public service employees provided some conceptualization of the legislation; however, each explanation was very fragmented. Interestingly, these participants gained their knowledge of Employment Equity through application forms, a colleague who worked directly with the legislation, or for one participant, previously being in an HR role with another federally regulated organization. In the non-profit sector, the employee had some knowledge of Employment Equity which she gained through her post-secondary schooling. Not one employee in the private sector was knowledgeable about Employment Equity or even aware that it existed in their organizations. None of the women were able to describe how their organization approaches Employment Equity initiatives.

Most employees learned of Employment Equity mainly through the application forms, a colleague who worked directly with the legislation, or for one participant previously being in an HR role with another federally regulated organization. The issue of having the application form as the main source of information which was discussed at length in the previous chapter exemplifies the problems that can arise when information about this important legislation is not communicated to employees. Not only can non-designated group members construe Employment Equity as reverse discrimination, but as was depicted in the interview narratives, so can minorities themselves. Federally regulated organizations need to ensure that they are relaying information about Employment Equity to their employees in an appropriate manner, so that employees are at the least aware that such initiatives do exist in their organizations.

None of the visible minority female employees interviewed in this study had any participation with Employment Equity programs (if they existed) in their organizations. Employees in both the public and private sector alluded to filling out surveys as a possible way of participating with Employment Equity. In one private sector company, the results of these surveys are formally presented to employees, highlighting both the positive and negative results. The fact that this particular organization took the additional steps to present this information to its employees, even though it was not all positive, demonstrates a willingness to step forward and try to eliminate any barriers or problems that may exist in the workplace. It would be beneficial for the federal public service to present the results of these surveys to their employees in order to take the steps necessary to ensure equality in the workplace.

In order to discontinue the patterns of marginalization they are facing, visible minority women need to be given the space to become actively involved with the creation and administration of Employment Equity initiatives. It is likely that many of the individuals involved in the implementation of such initiatives have never experienced discriminatory treatment, and are therefore unaware of the true extent of these behaviours. Therefore, the input of visible minority women about the negative treatment that they have faced in the workplace can be used by employers to develop more suitable programs. As Dei (1999) and Madibbo (2006) have argued, individuals who experience disadvantages due to perceived 'differences' need to view their oppression as a site of possibility, where they can use the negative experiences that they have faced in order to foster change for all marginalized groups in society, if they have the support to do so. Additionally, Dei (2000) asserted that instead of denying race as meaningless, minorities must problematize and dissociate the negative and injurious meanings associated with race.

In terms of the representation of minorities in the federal public service, many of the employees contended that they did not see minorities in upper level or management positions. Therefore, if true equity is to be achieved in the workplace, there need to be steps that are taken to move minorities into these positions, instead of simply waiting until individuals leave those positions. In the non-profit sector, the employee found that her organization overall was quite diverse, but she views the majority of upper level and management positions to be occupied by Caucasians. The private sector was varied, with the airline employee only seeing a few visible minorities in managerial roles, while the banking sector employees stated that their organizations were diverse at all levels. This

may well be indicative of the success of Employment Equity initiatives in the banking

sector organizations, or it could potentially be due to the need for employees in the banking

sector to match with the demographic characteristics of the population. It is recommended

that federally regulated companies be allowed to create opportunities for the advancement

of designated group members, as it is illogical to wait for an indefinite amount of time for

such positions to become available.

One of the most disturbing findings was the extent to which acts of discrimination

were experienced or witnessed by the women interviewed in this study, especially in the

federal public sector. These experiences ranged from subtle or covert acts of

discrimination, where the women who were racialized felt invisible and that their work was

not recognized, to overt acts such as experiencing physical abuse from management. One

of the women accounted these behaviours as being due to individuals displaying "patterns

of fear" to those who are different from themselves. This parallels with the concept of

"homogeneity" in hiring. These notions of "homogeneity" and "fear" are problematic, as

they demonstrate that workplaces are not really inclusive, and if one does not fit the norm,

which can be argued to be "whiteness," they will be put at a disadvantage in the workplace

(Reitman, 2006). A major finding was that not only are visible minority women

experiencing unequal treatment due to their race and gender, but also their age and

language. In order to combat these problems, it is again imperative that all members of

these workplaces are enrolled in diversity training programs, which foster inclusion of all

people, regardless of background. Through these programs individuals may realize that

they have more commonalities than they might think, despite having superficial

differences, and can learn to respect these differences. In the banking sector, acts of discrimination were found to be from colleagues on the same level, and interestingly, from the general public. It could be argued that if diversity training was mandatory, the knowledge learned in these programs could be transmitted to the broader Canadian society, which could have an effect on how the general population views people of colour, and the pervasiveness of discrimination.

It is clear from the findings of this research that most of the visible minority women interviewed utilized some form of social networking in order to learn about their positions, or for upward mobility within their companies. At a time where visible minority women have not yet achieved levels of equality in the workplace, and organizations are unable to ensure equality through Employment Equity, it is necessary for these women to continue to utilize social networking to better their positions in the workforce. As the proponents of Social Capital theory have demonstrated, it is undeniable that the credentials and experience of visible minority women are undervalued (Moore, 2008). Therefore, visible minority women must use networking as a form of social capital that will enable them to move forward in a society where discrimination is still pervasive.

While the Employment Equity legislation has not reached its full potential, it has introduced the ability for change. It has given federally regulated organizations the opportunity to create special opportunities for qualified members of designated groups, in order to increase their representation in the Canadian workforce. There have also been introductions of diversity training programs to help diverse members in the workforce to

interact with one another positively. However, several problems illustrate the ineffectiveness of these programs. A major issue is that while there may be measures in place to incorporate designated group members initially, there are no measures in place to ensure that they experience occupational mobility in their workplaces. There has also been no uniformity in the implementation of these initiatives. Along these lines, there is limited interaction between organizations about how they effectively manage Employment Equity initiatives. Additionally, there are limited interactions within workplaces about the reasoning behind and necessity for Employment Equity initiatives. Further, many of the visible minority women in this study have experienced or been witness to discriminatory treatment, which suggests the vital need for the implementation diversity training programs.

The perspectives of the employers and visible minority women in this study provided for a unique and complementary analysis of Employment Equity issues in Canada. By bringing to light the methods by which different organizations approach Employment Equity initiatives, which is often through statistics alone, it is logical that most of the women in this study had limited knowledge about Employment Equity. This finding is problematic as some of the women who were interviewed misconstrued the principles behind the legislation, which emphasizes the need for employers to communicate about the legislation to all members of an organization. An interesting parallel in the findings on discrimination among both groups were the feelings of "fear" and "trust" of minorities in Canadian society. In terms of methods of dealing with discrimination, the employers described many avenues which employees of their organizations have available to them in order to solve these matters. However, the women in the study highlighted some of the

practical issues that may arise when trying to use these mediums to resolve their issues. Overall, it appears that there is some level of misunderstanding between these two groups, and fostering communication between employers and employees may be a reasonable solution for issues pertaining to Employment Equity in Canadian workplaces.

While this research was able to tap into the experiences of both employers and visible minority women working in federally regulated workplaces, it did have notable limitations. There were a vast number of companies, both in the public and private sector that were inaccessible. Therefore, the methods that these other organizations utilize in order to achieve their Employment Equity goals have not been examined. By doing future research that incorporates these companies, effective programs or initiatives may be uncovered that can be suggested as recommendations for all federally regulated industries. Further, since Employment Equity is not limited to the federal government, it would be beneficial to examine Employment Equity programs at the provincial level to gain additional insights into the most effective ways to introduce and maintain the effectiveness of the legislation at the provincial level. It would be also interesting to compare Employment Equity in Alberta to British Columbia, as they have the most provincially legislated Employment Equity to learn about successes and shortcomings.

Another limitation of this research was that it was limited to federally regulated workplaces, which only spans approximately 10% of all jobs in Canada. Consequently, the experiences of the majority of employers and employees in the Calgarian workforce are unaccounted for. Future research could focus on the programs, if any, that are undertaken

by organizations that are not subject to comply with the Employment Equity Act, to see if these organizations have special measures in place to ensure equality in the workplace.

Another issue pertained to the suggestion of incorporating diversity training programs. Without being able to physically monitor what is taking place in the programs that are being incorporated, it is difficult to make a recommendation for what methods are best to deliver this training. Future research should be conducted on the effectiveness of diversity training programs, by doing trial runs with different methods of delivery, such as online training, focus groups, information sessions, and workshops. Observations can be done and employee feedback could be gathered to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

Previous studies have attributed the failure of the Employment Equity Act to a number of factors, including the reliance on data as a policy lever (Lum, 1995), a lack of stringency (Agoçs, 2002), a focus on reporting rather than achieving (Busby, 2006), the politicization of Employment Equity (Falkenberg & Boland, 1997), and a lack of awareness (Busby, 2006). This thesis demonstrated that the reliance on data and a focus on reporting is still in fact a major problem. Interestingly, the lack of stringency in reporting Employment Equity data appears to be endorsed by the government, as it was uncovered that they encourage organizations to present statistics in a favourable light. Akin to previous studies, this thesis recommended that employees at all levels be involved in the creation and implementation of Employment Equity programs (Falkenberg & Boland, 1997). Many employees in federally regulated organizations are either directly or

indirectly affected by the Act, and therefore it is important that they participate in shaping Employment Equity programs. Another important recommendation that was made in previous research was to educate employees about Employment Equity and to have training programs (Falkenberg & Boland, 1997; Bakan & Kobayashi, 2000). This thesis emphasized these recommendations, and took them a step further.

Firstly, it was suggested that there be information delivered specifically about Employment Equity, in addition to diversity training programs. This thesis made clear that discrimination from management, colleagues, and the public is still prevalent in federally regulated workplaces, and therefore, training on matters of diversity is much needed. Finally, the participants in this study mentioned certain forms of training that could be catered to organizational needs, such as online training and focus groups that could be utilized by federally regulated organizations. I also made additional suggestions that arose directly out of the findings of this study. It was found that there may not be contacts and resources for employers who are working with Employment Equity initiatives, and these need to be readily available for the proper implementation of the initiatives. With respect to hiring and promotions, there need to be objective criteria to determine the qualification that individuals have for positions, as it was found that these decisions may rely on the personality types of those in charge of hiring. In terms of discrimination, it was suggested that there need be guidelines in order to evaluate claims of discrimination.

The Anti-Racism framework informed this research by drawing attention to the intersections of identity that visible minority women have that lead them to be racialized

and disadvantaged in Canadian workplaces. Further, the normative characteristic of "whiteness" that is described in Anti-Racism literature helped to explain the hiring practices of employers in federally regulated workplaces. Social Capital theory explained the undervaluation of cultural capital of certain members of the population, which leads to an inadequate conversion education and skills into economic gain. This theory also provided a suggestion for visible minority women; to utilize their social networks in order to learn of employment positions and to have mobility in the workplace while discriminatory behaviours are still prevalent. However, it is problematic that hiring decisions are still dependent on the individual personalities of management rather than strictly on objective criteria. Taken together, the Anti-Racism and Social Capital frameworks provided a significant contribution as the former described how certain individuals could be facing multiple forms of marginalization, while the latter explained the mechanism through which this occurs, as a way to cope with this marginalization and create opportunities mobility in the Canadian workforce. These theories, along with the qualitative methodology used proved to be sound for analyzing matters surrounding Employment Equity. Examining problematic issues in Canadian society, such as racialization and discrimination, help to unveil existing forms of marginalization in order to achieve true equity in Canadian society.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide – Employers

1. What is your job title?
2. Describe to me some of the duties that are included in your job?
3. Describe to me your understanding of Employment Equity (EE Act, EE policies/programs)?
4. Do you believe that discrimination exists or has existed in your workplace? If so, explain to me your understanding of the discrimination that is/was taking place.
5. What is your role in the company with respect to EE? Are you involved in the creation of specific EE programs, or is your role purely administrative?
6. Describe to me some of the general work or process that you go through in implementing EE policies/programs?
7. How successful do you think your company has been in effectively administering EE?
8. What are some of the strengths that you/your company have in administering EE?
9. What are some of the weaknesses that you/your company have in administering EE?
10. Other provinces provide training programs for creating/implementing EE policies in the workplace. Do you feel that your company would benefit from such programs?
11. Do you receive adequate external support with respect to EE? (Ex. Support from government?)
12. Are other employees in the company involved in creating/reviewing the programs that have been created?

Interview Guide – Visible Minority Women

1. How long have you been at this job?
2. Is this your first job within this company?
3. What is your job title?
4. Describe to me some of the duties that are included in your job?
5. What level of difficulty (easy, medium, hard) would you say you had in being hired for this job?
6. Have you been promoted since you have been hired?
7. Did you know someone at the company before you applied that assisted you in getting this position?
8. What is your knowledge of Employment Equity Act/Programs/Policies?
9. Do you or similar employees have any role in Employment Equity Programs?
10. What kind of discrimination do you believe exists in your workplace, if any exists at all?

11. Do you believe that you or those around you have suffered from discriminatory practices? If so, can you provide some examples?
12. Do you believe that you are being paid fairly for the work you do at your company?
13. Do you believe that the Employment Equity Programs have any effect on discrimination in your workplace?

APPENIX B: LEGEND

Legend

... – a few words deleted from narrative

.... – a few sentences/phrases deleted from narrative

[ ] – word or phrase added for clarification purposes or to demonstrate gestures