PERCEPTIONS REGARDING WORKPLACE OPPORTUNITY MODELS BY AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS: AN EXPLORATORY SYMLOG ANALYSIS[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differing perceptions of Africans and African–Americans toward eight different approaches to workplace opportunities that were placed in a continuum within the established inclusion–exclusion construct. The opportunity structures that were placed in an ordered hierarchy were inclusion, diversity, mentorship, merit, equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, discrimination, and preferential treatment. The individual and organizational values that underlie these opportunity structures were based on research related to acceptance and support for values underlying fairness and equity (inclusion) and the rejection of values opposing fairness and equity (exclusion) in the U.S. value system.

The perceptions of native-born African-Americans and African immigrants toward these eight opportunity structures were assessed using the SYMLOG rating system. Shifting demographics in the U.S. and several cultural and socio-political factors have led to Africans and African Americans increasingly viewing themselves as separate social identity groups. The findings of this exploratory study indicate greater differences in perception of legally mandated and socio-political opportunity approaches compared to legally prohibited and traditional opportunity structures. The results are discussed with respect to implications for public policy issues and directions for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Fairness and equity values are deeply rooted in the U.S. value system (Deutsch 1975, 1985; Kleugel and Smith 1986; Leventhal 1980; Mor Barak 2005). However, these values do not always translate into workplace opportunities for all applicants and employees of organizations (Johnston and Packer 1987). A plethora of workplace opportunity structures (WOS) influence workplace success across the entire range of employment activities and issues -- such as recruitment, deployment, retention, development, upward mobility, and financial rewards. Whaley and Ford (2007) conducted a SYMLOG study that measured the differing perceptions of whites and African-Americans regarding four WOS: merit, mentorship, affirmative action, and workplace preferences that were based on factors unrelated to race and gender such as seniority, veteran status, and physical ability. They found that each opportunity structure had differing possibilities for success in the workplace and had different levels of support in the U.S. value system among the identity groups related to fairness and equity. Mor Barak (2005) indicated "inclusion" has strong support based on fairness and equity values while "exclusion" is usually rejected based on opposition to fairness and equity across cultures.

Workplace diversity programs (WDP) are one method used by organizations to make the workplace opportunities "fair for all." According to Mor Barak (2005), a review of the business, organization and human resource literature produced three types of diversity definitions: (a) narrow category-based (e.g., gender, race or ethic differences; see Ford 1996; Ford and Whaley 2005), (b) broad category-based (e.g., including such variables as marital status), and (c) conceptual rule (e.g., variety of perspectives, perceptions and actions) that can be either mandated or voluntary. This WDP umbrella includes a large number of WOS ranging from compliance-oriented laws and regulations and equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action (AAP) programs on the one hand to more voluntary opportunity approaches such as merit and mentorship programs. While compliance oriented programs are mandated by either laws, executive or court

orders, organizations have begun to implement voluntary WDP based on the assumption that the primary beneficiaries of such programs (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities and women) will provide the organization with a competitive advantage (Cox and Blake 1991; Cox 1991; R. Thomas 1990).

Voluntary WDP have been expanded to include differences based social identity related to factors such as sexual orientation and management and personality style that are more inclusive, and all supposedly contribute to the norms, values, and overall culture of the organization. Mor Barak (2005) places these WDP in a hierarchical continuum related to an Inclusion–Exclusion construct. Other studies indicate the categories of WOS and WDP overlap (Thomas 1990; Thomas and Ely 1996). However, both WOS and WDP are affected by employees' perceptions of social justice that are related to implementation of the opportunity structures and the degree of reinforcement of relevant public policy.

Few studies exist that examine the perceptions of the immigrant population, and fewer yet examine the perceptions of the African immigrant population. This study contributes to the existing literature by comparing the perceptions of favorableness toward eight different opportunity structures by one under researched identity group, African immigrants, with the perceptions of African–Americans and whites and by comparing each opportunity structure to accepted effectiveness norms established by the SYMLOG research literature. This report proceeds in several sections. First, an overview of the pertinent research, federal laws, and public perception related to each of the eight WOS will be reviewed by placing them into four hierarchical categories ranging from exclusion to inclusion values: (1) legally prohibited opportunity structures, (2) legally mandated opportunity structures, (3) traditional opportunity structures, and (4) socio-political opportunity structures. Next, the impact of social justice concepts on the success of opportunity structures is discussed. Third, a brief overview of the SYMLOG measurement system is provided before the discussion of the research approach, research questions examined, and results. Lastly, implications of the findings from this exploratory study are discussed together with limitations and areas for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW: WORKPLACE OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

Legally Prohibited Opportunity Structures

The discrimination and preferential treatment WOS were placed together in this category since they are viewed least favorably across cultures, by U.S. society as a whole, and are prohibited by most U.S. laws. That is, over the years, federal laws, executive orders and court cases based on the U.S. Constitution have made discrimination both illegal and inconsistent

with public policy. The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination in housing, education, employment, public accommodations and receipt of federal funds. Bennett- Alexander and Hartman (2004) argue that Title VII of Civil Rights Act of 1964 defines both discrimination and preferential treatment and is the most important piece of legislation that helped to shape employment and social policy in the U.S. There are five protected categories, namely, race, color, gender, national origin, and religion. Additionally, federal employment laws prohibit discrimination based on age, sex, pregnancy, childbirth, and disability. Some states add legal coverage based on privacy, sexual orientation, and harassment (Bennett-Alexander and Hartman 2004).

Some employment areas are not covered by law and some individuals, groups, and organizations are afforded "preferential treatment." For example, employees of organizations with less than fifteen employees, members of Communist organizations, employees of employers not engaged in interstate commerce, non-U.S. citizens employed outside the U.S., and employees of religious organizations hired to perform work connected to religious activities are exempt from Title VII. Businesses operated on or around Native American reservations are allowed to give preferential treatment to Native Americans (Bennett-Alexander and Hartman 2004). The general perception of preferential treatment is negative yet mixed when subjects are asked about preferential treatment for their own group, and discrimination is uniformly perceived as negative (Malos 2000).

Legally Mandated Opportunity Structures

Equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action are placed in the same WOS category because they are required by laws and executive order and are perceived more favorably than the legally prohibited WOS. Equal Employment Opportunity laws underlie most U.S. employment laws and these laws are generally supported because they are perceived to not favor any demographic group and include most demographic groups (Bennett-Alexander and Hartman 2004). However, California and several other states have begun to make state and local affirmative action illegal, and they have experimented with other criteria to address under-representation of legally protected groups.

Affirmative action programs have become the most divisive and hotly debated of any opportunity structure primarily because many oppose such programs and believe they violate norms of procedural fairness and meritocracy (Astin 1993; Kravitz 1995; Peterson 1994; Terpstra 1995; Tierney 1997). Opponents of such programs argue these violations occur because identity group characteristics such as race and gender are given preference in decisions about the allocation of opportunities over other job related cri-

teria such as qualifications and merit (Kossek and Zonia 1993). However, proponents of affirmative action measures argue that the idea that opportunities can and should be distributed according to strictly neutral, task-defined, criteria of merit is a myth and only serves to reinforce and obscure continuing privilege for the already privileged applicants (Kerchis and Young 1995).

Traditional Opportunity Structures

Mentorship and merit are included in the same WOS because they are the most popular traditional opportunity structures used by employers today. Nair (2005) defines mentorship and argues that formal systems of mentorship are designed by organizations to have more senior and experienced employees help less experienced employees through gaps in their knowledge about formal items such as company goals and policies and informal items such as organizational culture. Much of the mentoring literature admonishes career-minded individuals to "get themselves a mentor" in order to get ahead in their careers and in their organizations (cf. Kram 1985; D. Thomas 1990, 1993; Fagenson 1989). Little opposition, if any, is voiced if someone gets ahead based on having connections and on whom they know -- which is the case in mentoring relationships. Additionally, few objections are raised concerning other non-merit-based practices in organizations such as the application of seniority and/or legacy preferences in the allocation of opportunities, which themselves represent "special" forms of preferential treatment. Neither seniority nor legacy has as a first consideration the *performance* of the applicant, which would be the case if *merit* were the primary consideration.

Meritocracy, according to Kleugel and Smith (1986), means that people should succeed in life through ability and hard work, not on who they are or whom they know. Whaley and Ford (2007) reported that merit and mentorship WOS either overlapped or were perceived similarly by black and white respondents. In addition, mentorship was viewed more favorably than merit by both social identity groups. Further, this study indicated merit and mentorship WOS were viewed more favorably, compared to legally mandated and legally prohibited WOS, by both whites and African-Americans.

Socio-political Opportunity Structures

Diversity and Inclusion are included in the same WOS category because they are linked together across many studies and are viewed more favorably than any other category (cf. Kravitz et al 1997; Malos 2000). Harvey and Allard (2005) reported that the most commonly used methods to define diversity are through demographic and psychographic variables. However, other researchers such as Cox and Beale (1997) define diversity as being
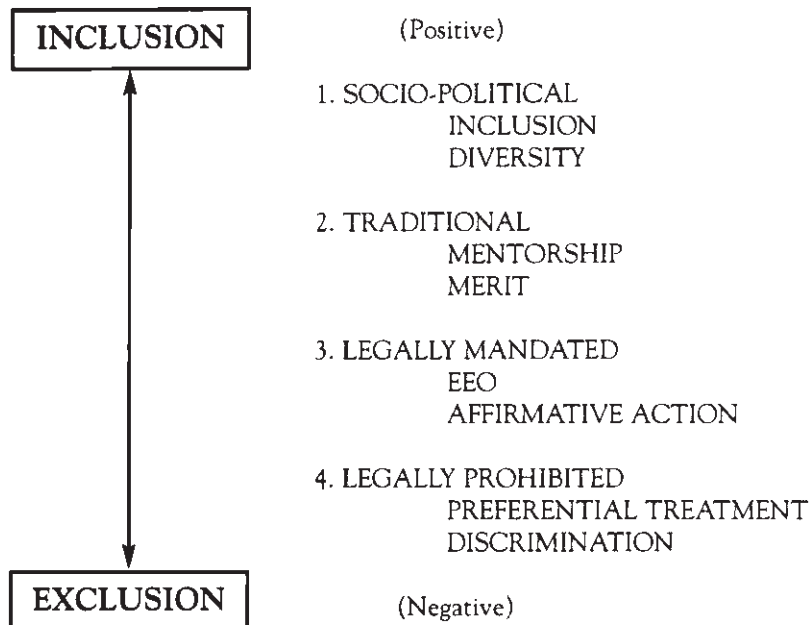
inclusive, by stating that it encompasses "a mix of people in one social system who have distinctly different socially relevant group affiliations" (p. 1). Thus, this latter approach goes beyond the legally protected groups and multi-cultural identity and includes differences based on socio-economic characteristics, personality, and management style.

Miller and Katz (1995, 2002) advocate the development of high performing, inclusive organizations that utilize diversity as a source of added value – a resource critical to an organization's success. Inclusive organizations "seek out the opinions, needs, and contributions of others, are authentically interested in other racial and cultural groups, anticipate the needs of different groups of employees, and establish progressive policies and procedures to meet those needs" (Williams 2001, p. 182). Mor Barak (2005) suggests that diversity is defined differently across cultures and countries; however, diversity and inclusion are correlated but perceptions differ by demographic group, most notably, white males, white females and minorities.

Favorableness of Opportunity Structures

A review of the literature indicates several continuum models were based on an Inclusion-Exclusion construct (Cho and Mor Barak 2004; Mor Barak, Findler and Wind 2003; Mor Barak and Cherin 1998). Social Identity Theory is often applied to diversity matters. Tajfel and Turner (1979 1986) indicated the central idea of social identity theory is that people desire to be in groups with positive identities (Inclusion) and reject those they perceive as different (Exclusion). Inclusion–Exclusion has been linked to job opportunities and career advancement in work organizations (Morrison and Von Glinow 1990; O'Leary and Ickovics 1992). Mor Barak's (2005) assessment instruments for measuring inclusion – exclusion perceptions and identity perceptions have been shown to be related to organization outcomes such as retention, job satisfaction, job performance and commitment as well as individual perceptions such as lower stress, more fairness and social support. Although diversity groupings vary from one country and culture to another, the common factor that transcends nation boundaries is social exclusion in the workplace (Mor Barak, Findler and Wind 2001). The Perception Continuum Model of Opportunity Structures, ordered from Inclusion to Exclusion, was developed for the present study and is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
CONTINUUM MODEL OF OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES
(Based on Literature Review) *

| INCLUSION | (Positive) |

1. SOCIO-POLITICAL
        INCLUSION
        DIVERSITY

2. TRADITIONAL
        MENTORSHIP
        MERIT

3. LEGALLY MANDATED
        EEO
        AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

4. LEGALLY PROHIBITED
        PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT
        DISCRIMINATION

| EXCLUSION | (Negative) |

*Note: The literature supports the continuum model of inclusion concepts. However, different identity groups within the U.S. public view the meaning and order of these concepts differently.

The literature supports the notion of an ordered hierarchy of items within the Inclusion-Exclusion construct. Figure 1 suggests the eight opportunity structures enjoy differing levels of support within the Inclusion-Exclusion model. . According to Mor Barak (2005), discrimination and preferential treatment is on one end on their Diversity Perception Scale while diversity and inclusion is on the other end and mentorship is in the middle. Harvey and Allard (2005) report the major diversity approaches can be divided into three categories: affirmative action, valuing diversity, and diversity management, and they contend that affirmative action is perceived less favorably and is less effective than the other two voluntary approaches. Proponents of economic marketplace approaches to workplace diversity such as merit and voluntary socio-political approaches such as inclusion alike, argue these

approaches are more favorably perceived than either legally mandated or legally prohibited opportunity structures (cf. Malos 2000). Therefore, research findings support the position placement of the legally prohibited and legally mandated opportunity structures in the Continuum model in Figure 1.

The Perceived Favorableness Continuum of Opportunity Structures Model shown in Figure 1 suggests that the most favorable perceptions of opportunity structures among U.S. citizens in general are the two socio-political constructs, diversity and inclusion, and the least favorable perceptions are the two legally prohibited constructs, preferential treatment and discrimination. The model indicates traditional opportunity structures are perceived more favorably than the legally mandated opportunity structures. Nair (2005) suggests that both merit and mentorship assist modern organizations to build "human capital" as a competitive advantage through the efficient use of all available resources. Ford and Whaley's (2005) SYMLOG-based study reported results that indicated that mentorship and legacy opportunity structures were closer to the effectiveness norm than merit and affirmative action, respectively, for both pro and anti-affirmative action respondents. Overall, the literature supports this continuum model of inclusion concepts.

SYMLOG System Overview
Before describing the research methodology for the study, we provide a brief overview of the SYMLOG rating system that was used. SYMLOG research draws on "field theory" in which values, behaviors, and other factors affect each other in the social- psychological field. Several factors in the social-psychological field reinforce each other to provide a "unified" organizational experience while other factors are in opposition, producing "polarization." The name "SYMLOG" is an acronym for (1) Systematic, (2) Multiple Level, (3) Observation of Groups (Bales and Cohen 1979). The SYMLOG space can be represented in terms of three dimensions: *Values on Dominance vs. Submissiveness (U-D), Values on Friendliness vs. Unfriendliness (P-N), and Values on Acceptance vs. Non-acceptance of the Task Orientation of Authority (F-B)* (Bales 1970; Bales and Cohen 1979; Bales 1988; Bales and Koenigs 1992). The SYMLOG values questionnaire is composed of 26 items that each represents a different combination of these three dimensions. The rating items are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

SYMLOG RESEARCH SUMMARY

SYMLOG
CONSULTING GROUP

A. Values which CONTRIBUTE to effective teamwork:

2	UP	Popularity and social success, being liked and admired
3	UPF	Active teamwork toward common goals, organizational unity
4	UF	Efficiency, strong impartial management
8	UB	Having a good time, releasing tension, relaxing control
9	UPB	Protecting less able members, providing help when needed
10	P	Equality, democratic participation in decision making
11	PF	Responsible idealism, collaborative work
16	B	Change to new procedures, different values, creativity
17	PB	Friendship, mutual pleasure, recreation
18	DP	Trust in the goodness of others
19	DPF	Dedication, faithfulness, loyalty to the organization
20	DF	Obedience to the chain of command, complying with authority
21	DNF	Self-sacrifice if necessary to reach organizational goals

B. Values which are NECESSARY sometimes, but dangerous to teamwork

1	U	Individual financial success, personal prominence and power
5	UNF	Active reinforcement of authority, rules, and regulations
6	UN	Tough-minded, self-oriented assertiveness
12	F	Conservative, established, "correct" ways of doing things
13	NF	Restraining individual desires for organizational goals

C. Values which almost always INTERFERE with teamwork

7	UNB	Rugged, self-oriented individualism, resistance to authority
14	N	Self-protection, self-interest first, self-sufficiency
15	NB	Rejection of established procedures, rejection of conformity
22	DN	Passive rejection of popularity, going it alone
23	DNB	Admission of failure, withdrawal of effort
24	DB	Passive non-cooperation with authority
25	DPB	Quiet contentment, taking it easy
26	D	Giving up personal needs and desires, passivity

SYMLOG rating data can be displayed and reported in a number of different formats. The Frequency Bargraph format is used in the present study. Research data collected by the SYMLOG consulting Group from hundreds of thousands of respondents across multiple organizational settings and cultural contexts summarizes research data collected from hundreds of thousands of respondents across multiple organizational settings and cultural contexts has been summarized in a reference image known as the *most effective profile (mep)* image, which is the location in SYMLOG space of the value position, derived from thousands of ratings of effective management, of effective leadership and of experiences with effective teams. *Mep* represents a balance between the three SYMLOG dimensions and was found to be optimal for the American business culture. In SYMLOG terms, the field location for the *mep* reference image is 2.7U 6.7P 6.4F (cf. Bales 1999; Kelly and Duran 1985). This location is often compared to the field location of images of people or concepts that are rated in SYMLOG studies through the mechanism of computing the Euclidean distance between *mep* and other images.

The frequency bargraph shows the average ratings received by an individual, a group, or a concept, for each of the 26 rating items. Figure 3 presents the Reference Bargraph for the Most Effective Profile (*mep*) image. The zigzag line in Figure 3 shows the "ideal" frequencies associated with each of the 26 SYMLOG values needed for effective organizational functioning and are represented by a bar extending along the continuum of "Rarely," "Sometimes," and "Often." Located next to the number for each rating item is a one to three letter code representing the combination of SYMLOG dimensions for that item. For example, item 1 is coded "U" for Upward, indicating that it is intended to measure only the Upward (i.e., Dominant) direction. Item 2 combines two directions -- "U" for Upward and "P" for Positive (i.e., Friendly). Item 3 combines three directions with the addition of "F" for Forward (i.e., accepting established authority). The remainder of the codes for all the rating items indicates various combinations of Upward or Downward, Positive or Negative, and Forward or Backward positions in the value field.

Figure 3

Figure 3
SYMLOG Bargraph
with Most Effective Profile (*mep*)

Key		
○	Items that Contribute to teamwork	
△	Items that are Necessary sometimes, but dangerous for teamwork	
■	Items that Interfere with teamwork	

Descriptive Items		Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1	U	Individual financial success, personal prominence and power		
2	UP	Popularity and social success, being liked and admired		
3	UPF	Active teamwork toward common goals, organizational unity		
4	UF	Efficiency, strong impartial management		
5	UNF	Active reinforcement of authority, rules, and regulations		
6	UN	Tough-minded, self-oriented assertiveness		
7	UNB	Rugged, self-oriented individualism, resistance to authority		
8	UB	Having a good time, releasing tension, relaxing control		
9	UPB	Protecting less able members, providing help when needed		
10	P	Equality, democratic participation in decision making		
11	PF	Responsible idealism, collaborative work		
12	F	Conservative, established, "correct" ways of doing things		
13	NF	Restraining individual desires for organizational goals		
14	N	Self-protection, self-interest first, self-sufficiency		
15	NB	Rejection of established procedures, rejection of conformity		
16	B	Change to new procedures, different values, creativity		
17	PB	Friendship, mutual pleasure, recreation		
18	DP	Trust in the goodness of others		
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20	DF	Obedience to the chain of command, complying with authority		
21	DNF	Self-sacrifice if necessary to reach organizational goals		
22	DN	Passive rejection of popularity, going it alone		
23	DNB	Admission of failure, withdrawal of effort		
24	DB	Passive non-cooperation with authority		
25	DPB	Quiet contentment, taking it easy		
26	D	Giving up personal needs and desires, passivity		

Source: © 1998 SYMLOG Consulting Group. Used with permission.

The SYMLOG system places different "weights" on each item for purposes of assessing effectiveness. In the context of teamwork, some values are seen to contribute to effective teamwork, some may be necessary sometimes but dangerous, and still others almost always interfere with teamwork. In Figure 3, the items in each category are printed in different fonts: *italic* for contribute, normal for necessary, and **bold** for interfere. As noted previously, the *mep* image location and values profile bargraph frequencies served as reference points against which the present study's results were compared.

Methodology
Sample

Fifty-two respondents volunteered to participate in the study. Each participant was asked to provide their race or ethnic background, gender, age, major in school, job title and years of work experience, citizenship, and country of origin. All respondents were a convenience sample of working professionals in the local area and students. The students were enrolled in either undergraduate or graduate management courses at a large public university in northern California. Twenty-one individuals identified themselves as either an African immigrant or African-American and thirty–one indivduals identified themselves as white. Sixty percent of the African immigrants were from the eastern region Africa and the balance of the immigrant respondents were scattered across a number of countries but mostly located in the west African region of the continent. The average age of the undergraduates was 26 years, the average age of the graduate students was 35 years, and the average age of non-student working professionals was 42 years. The respondents were evenly distributed based on gender.

Our primary interest in this exploratory study is comparisons in perceptions of the African immigrants and African-American respondents. They are placed in the same racial category for purposes of reporting employment statistics to the U.S. government (U.S. Federal Register 2005). However, the growth in the number of African immigrants and the differences in cultural experiences between people from African countries and African-Americans suggests different social identity groups and differences in perceptions toward U.S. employment practices such as WOS and WDP and associated public policies. The white identity group provides a different sample for use as a *baseline* group to which the immigrants' perceptions can also be compared.

Data Collection

Each respondent was provided a handout that explained how to rate the eight opportunity structures on the SYMLOG rating form. The words, "perceptions" and "opportunity structures" were not used in the instructions, but

the instructions reinforced the study's focus on these ideas by using the words "impressions" and "concepts." Respondents were asked to rate the eight opportunity structures in terms of the frequencies with which the 26 SYMLOG values were reflected in the behavior of individuals, groups, and organizations when they used each of the eight approaches. There were three response categories: Rarely, Sometimes, and Often.

Research Questions

Based on SYMLOG measurement system research and norms for the distribution of resources and opportunities in organizations, coupled with the differential support for or against certain opportunity structures by different subgroups of organizational members, several research questions were generated for examination in the study:

1. Are there differences in how the values underlying the eight opportunity concepts are perceived based on citizenship and in relation to the "optimum values frequencies (see Figure 3)?

2. Are there differences in how the eight opportunity concepts are perceived by African immigrants, African-Americans and whites relative to the location in SYMLOG space of their images with respect to:

    (a) Euclidean distance from the *mep* norm,

    (b) Forward vs backward location in SYMLOG space (task-authority orientation),

    (c) Upward vs downward location in SYMLOG space (dominance orientation),

    (d) positive vs. negative location in SYMLOG space (friendliness orientation)?

The outcomes for Research Question #1 were assessed by comparing the values frequencies for the eight opportunity concepts to the zigzag line in Figure 3 (*mep* profile). The outcomes for Research Question #2 were assessed in two steps. First, the final field locations of the eight opportunity concepts in SYMLOG space were determined and the proximity of the opportunity structure concept images to the "reference" SYMLOG image, *mep*, were derived by computing the Euclidean distance between the opportunity concept image and *mep*. The Euclidean distance between two images can be computed using the following formula (cf. Kelly and Duran 1985):

$$DIST_{ab} = SQRT \, (((UD)_a - (UD)_b)^2 + ((PN)_a - (PN)b)^2 + ((FB)_a - (FB)_b)^2)$$

where $DIST_{ab}$ equals the Euclidean distance between Image A and Image B, and UD, PN, and FB equal the final field locations of the image on these SYMLOG dimensions. The "significance" of the Euclidean distance will be determined by comparing the resulting distances to estimates of significant Euclidean distances reported in the literature. For example, Kelly and Duran

(1985: 190), in a study that examined group cohesion within high and low performing groups, observed that an optimal level of cohesion was one in which the groups exhibited average interpersonal Euclidean distances ranging from 3.5 to 5.9 SYMLOG scale units. Groups with very high distance scores did not perform well. Applying this result to the present study, as a "rule of thumb," it could be assumed that images with distances greater than or equal to 6.0 Euclidean distance scale units have significantly different locations in SYMLOG space. Images with distances less than 6.0 scale units can be considered close enough in their locations to be similar in meaning and interpretation in a "general" sense (e.g., values, effectiveness and favorableness). After determining the proximity of the opportunity concepts to *mep*, the final field locations were further examined to determine which images were higher on the three values dimensions (P/N, F/B, U/D) of SYM-LOG for African immigrants, whites and African-Americans.

Results

The SYMLOG research reports assist researchers to interpret SYM-LOG-based results visually, heuristically, and statistically. For example, the closer the final field location of any image or item measured to the ideal location (*mep*), the more effective the image is perceived to be in terms of teamwork, leadership, management, and organizational functioning. Table 1 presents the final field locations for the eight opportunity structures and two primary demographic subgroups of interest in the study. Since the *mep* can be represented on the SYMLOG bargraphs as the zig-zag line connecting the "optimal" frequencies of all twenty-six SYMLOG values items (see Figure 3), the farther an item frequency on a particular value is located from the zig-zag line, whether over or under the "optimal" frequency, the more significant is that item. A complete bar indicating the maximum frequency allowed for any SYMLOG value contains 33 spaces evenly divided between the three response frequencies of Rarely, Sometimes, and Often. When the average over all respondents on a particular value falls five or more spaces below or beyond the "optimal" frequency, this would represent a statistically significant difference at $p < .05$ (Bales and Cohen 1979; Bales 1999).

Figures 2 and 3 both showed which SYMLOG values contribute to teamwork and which items did not contribute to teamwork. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between the values displayed in Figure 2 and the data provided in Table 1. Furthermore, the Euclidean distance is an accepted method to measure the distance of any image from the *mep* location in SYMLOG space. The closer the "distance" of an item to the *mep* location, the more that item is seen as favorable and effective. Although field diagram representations of the results are not provided here, we do provide in Table 2 the findings for Euclidean distances in an array that aligns

the eight WOS across African-Americans, African immigrants and whites in our study. Since the eight WOS were presented in Figure 1 in terms of a favorableness hierarchy, the smaller the Euclidean distance, the more favorable the image was perceived. The findings for each research question are discussed in turn below.

Table 1

SYMLOG DIMENSION FINAL LOCATIONS

INCLUSION		African-American	African Immigrant
	1.INS	2.9U 6.6P 3.4F (1)	1.2U 1.5P 0.1F (5)*
	2.DIV	1.0U 4.8P 0.3B (2)	4.0U 5.2P 4.4F (2)
	3.MTS	3.3U 4.0P 2.8F (3)	1.5U 3.2P 3.2F (4)
	4.MRT	2.4U 0.7P 3.8F (6)	0.9U 0.1P 5.6F (6)
	5.EEO	2.9U 3.4P 1.2F (4)	2.9U 6.1P 3.8F (1)
	6.AAP	2.5U 2.4P 1.3F (5)	2.8U 4.4P 2.2F (3)
	7.PTP	0.4U 1.8N 1.6B (7)	0.6D 0.1N 0.9B (7)
EXCLUSION	8.DIS	1.1U 6.0N 0.1F (8)	0.2D 3.4N 3.1B (8)

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent rank ordering on Inclusion-Exclusion continuum based on SYMLOG final location on the PN Dimension.

Table 2

Euclidean Distances between SYMLOG *mep* and Opportunity Structure
Images by Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Racial/Ethnic		Opportunity Structure Images						
Subgroup	INS	DIV	MTS	MRT	EEO	AAP	PTP	DIS
White	4.08	3.78	1.96	4.14	4.17	8.37*	13.22*	14.95*
African American	3.01	7.17*	4.54	6.54*	6.16*	6.67*	11.90*	14.27*
African Immigrant	8.30*	2.82	4.89	6.89*	2.68	4.79	10.51*	4.16*

* Euclidean distance represents a significant difference between location of indicated image
and *mep* at p < .05 level. Final location for *mep* used in computing Euclidean distances was
2.7U 6.7P 6.4F.

Research Question 1

This research question was posed to examine what differences occurred,
if any, in perceptions of the underlying values associated with the eight
opportunity structures across the three identity groups in the study. These
differences in perceptions regarding the eight opportunity structures were
assessed by noting how close each group's averaged responses for the 26 rat-
ing values followed the ideal zigzag line on the SYMLOG bargraph. Since
the primary focus of the research question was the comparison between
African-American and African immigrants, the results are presented in a
series of stacked bargraphs in Figures 4 – 7 for these two groups. These fig-
ures depict the group average frequency on each SYMLOG value for each
identity group for the indicated opportunity structure concepts and provide
a comparison between the two opportunities approaches depicted on the
bargraph.

Figure 4 presents the results for the two legally mandated opportunity
structures, EEO and AAP. Figure 5 presents the results for the two tradition-
al opportunity structures, merit and mentorship. Figure 6 presents the results
for the two socio-political opportunity structures, diversity, and inclusion.

Finally, Figure 7 presents the results for the two legally prohibited opportunity structures, preferential treatment, and discrimination.

Figure 4

Figure 4
Identity Group Comparisons of Legally Mandated Opportunity Structures: EEO vs AAP American Immigrants (I), vs African Americans (A)

Figure 5

Figure 5
Identity Group Comparisons of Traditional
Opportunity Structures: MRT vs MTS
American Immigrants (I), vs African Americans (A)

	KEY	
Merit (MRT)		▭
Mentorship (MTS)		▭
Optimum location for most effective teamwork		◆—

| RARELY | SOMETIMES | OFTEN |

No.	Code	Description
1	U	Individual financial success, personal prominence and power
2	UP	Popularity and social success, being liked and admired
3	UPF	Active teamwork toward common goals, organizational unity
4	UF	Efficiency, strong impartial management
5	UNF	Active reinforcement of authority, rules, and regulations
6	UN	Tough-minded, self-oriented assertiveness
7	UNB	Rugged, self-oriented individualism, resistance to authority
8	UB	Having a good time, releasing tension, relaxing control
9	UPB	Protecting less able members, providing help when needed
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11	PF	Responsible idealism, collaborative work
12	F	Conservative, established, "correct" ways of doing things
13	NF	Restraining individual desires for organizational goals
14	N	Self-protection, self-interest first, self-sufficiency
15	NB	Rejection of established procedures, rejection of conformity
16	B	Change to new procedures, different values, creativity
17	PB	Friendship, mutual pleasure, recreation
18	DP	Trust in the goodness of others
19	DPF	Dedication, faithfulness, loyalty to the organization
20	DF	Obedience to the chain of command, complying with authority
21	DNF	Self-sacrifice if necessary to reach organizational goals
22	DN	Passive rejection of popularity, going it alone
23	DNB	Admission of failure, withdrawal of effort
24	DB	Passive non-cooperation with authority
25	DPB	Quiet contentment, taking it easy
26	D	Giving up personal needs and desires, passivity

Figure 6

Figure 6
Identity Group Comparisons of Socio-Political Opportunity Structures: DIV vs INS
American Immigrants (I), vs African Americans (A)

KEY
Diversity (DIV)
Inclusion (INS)
Optimum location for most effective teamwork

RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN

#		
1	U	Individual financial success, personal prominence and power
2	UP	Popularity and social success, being liked and admired
3	UPF	Active teamwork toward common goals, organizational unity
4	UF	Efficiency, strong impartial management
5	UNF	Active reinforcement of authority, rules, and regulations
6	UN	Tough-minded, self-oriented assertiveness
7	UNB	Rugged, self-oriented individualism, resistance to authority
8	UB	Having a good time, releasing tension, relaxing control
9	UPB	Protecting less able members, providing help when needed
10	P	Equality, democratic participation in decision making
11	PF	Responsible idealism, collaborative work
12	F	Conservative, established, "correct" ways of doing things
13	NF	Restraining individual desires for organizational goals
14	N	Self-protection, self-interest first, self-sufficiency
15	NB	Rejection of established procedures, rejection of conformity
16	B	Change to new procedures, different values, creativity
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21	DNF	Self-sacrifice if necessary to reach organizational goals
22	DN	Passive rejection of popularity, going it alone
23	DNB	Admission of failure, withdrawal of effort
24	DB	Passive non-cooperation with authority
25	DPB	Quiet contentment, taking it easy
26	D	Giving up personal needs and desires, passivity

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Figure 7

Figure 7
Identity Group Comparisons of Legally Prohibited Opportunity Structures: PTP vs DIS
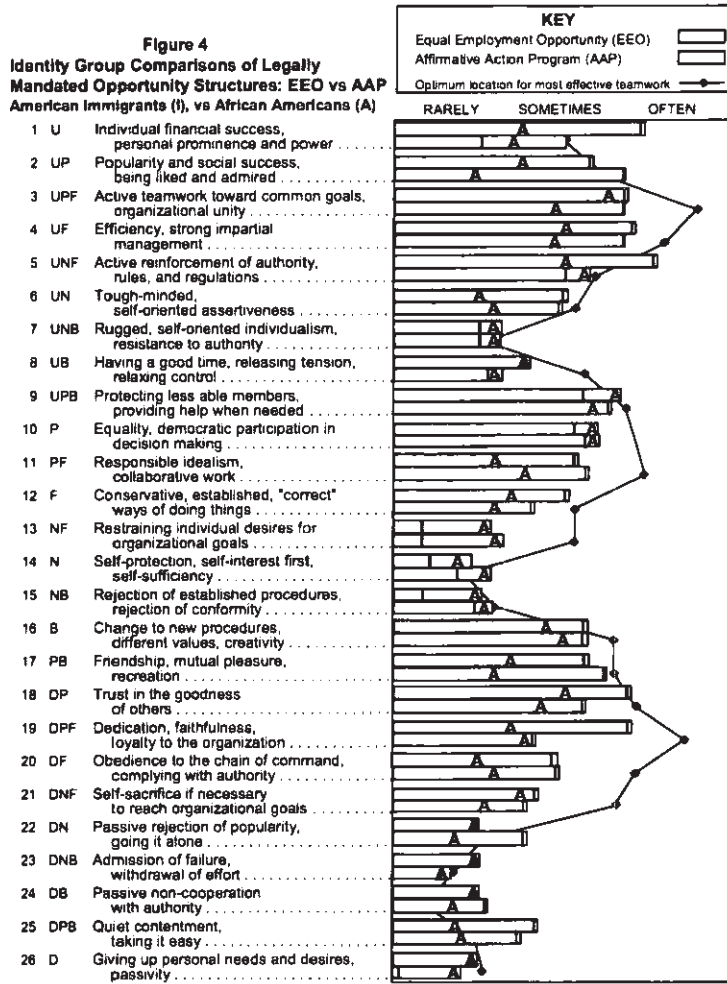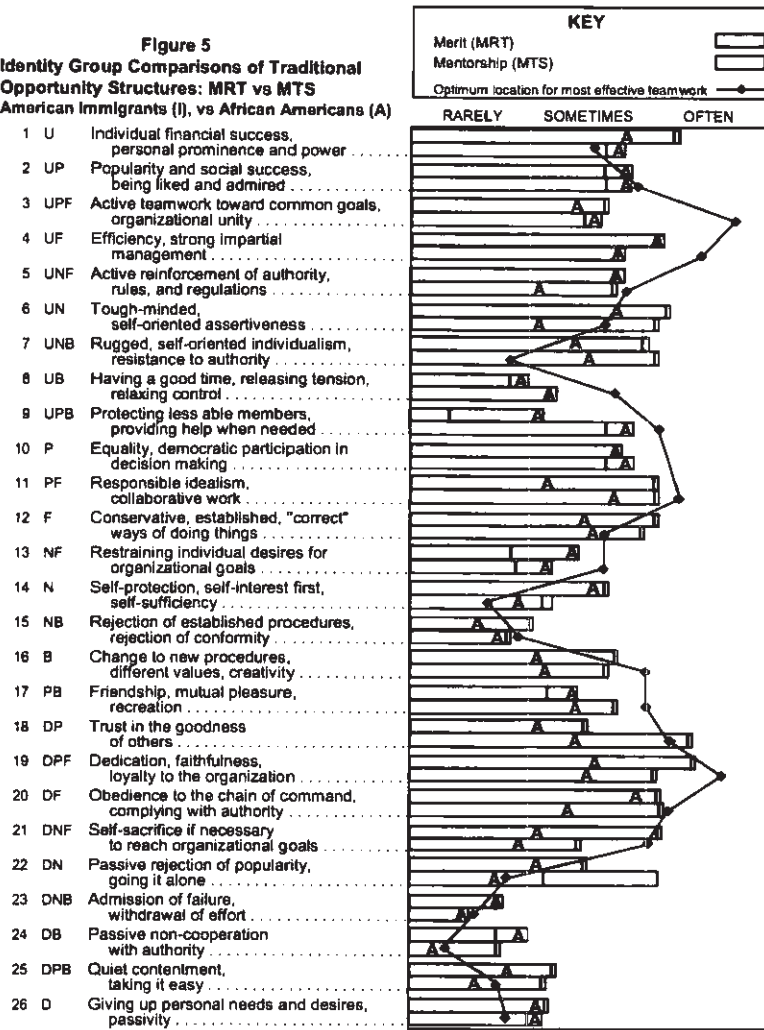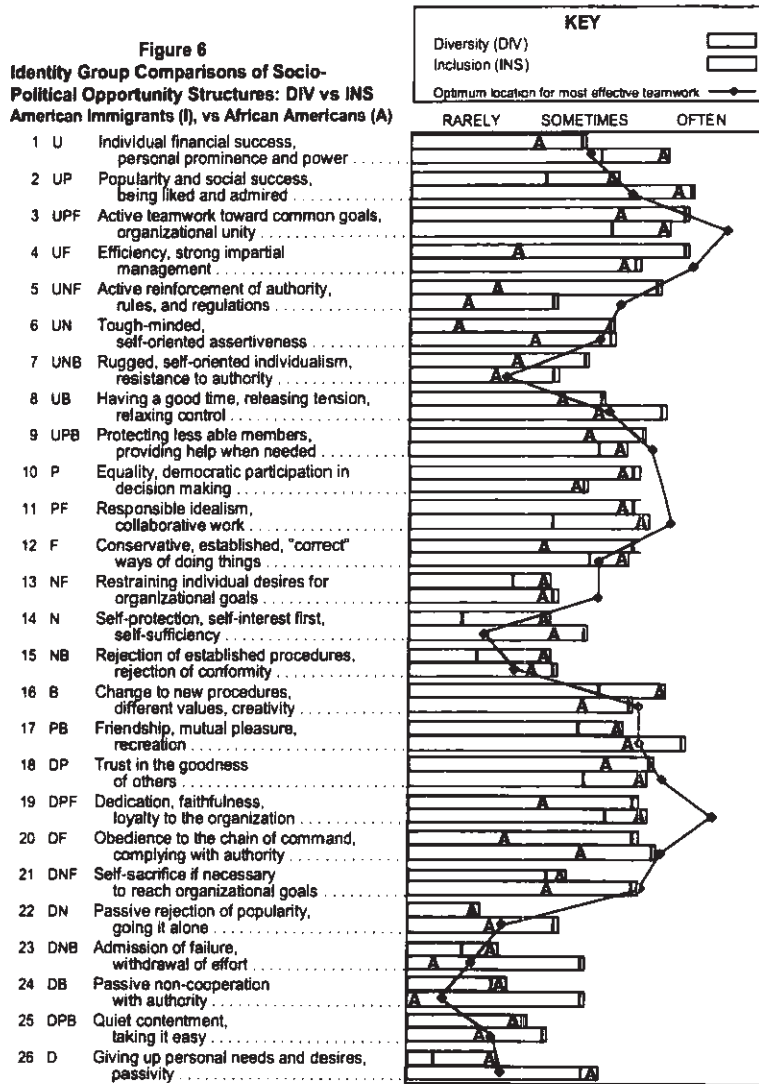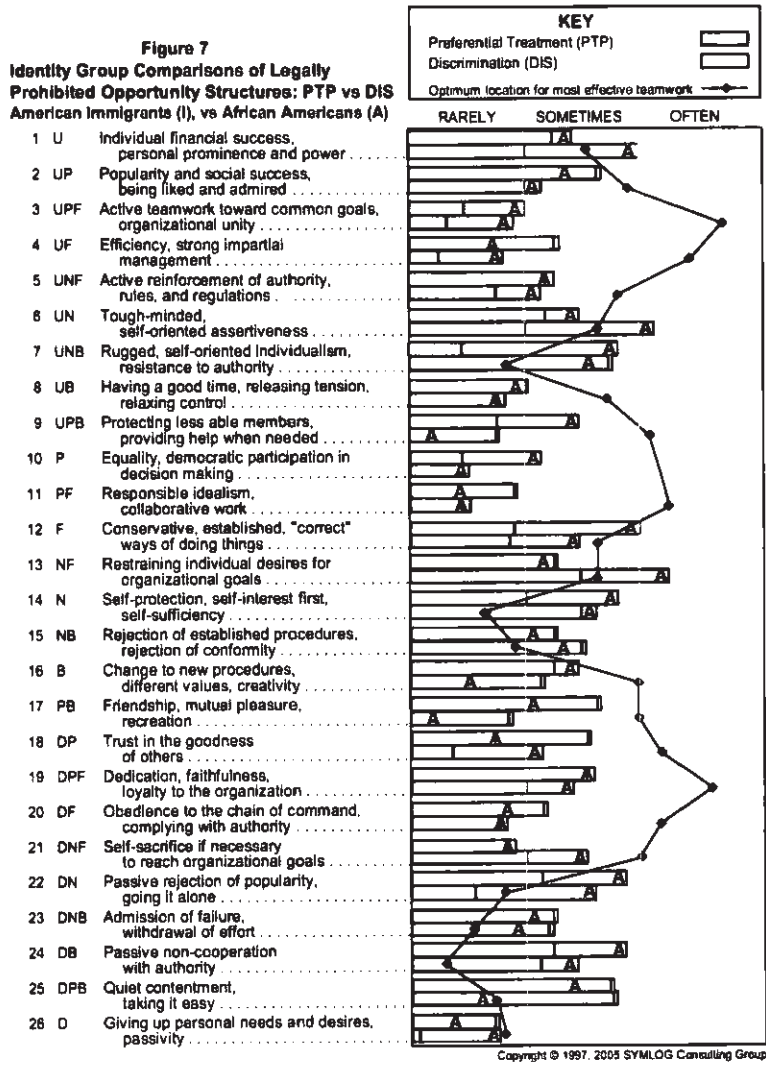American Immigrants (I), vs African Americans (A)

KEY
Preferential Treatment (PTP)
Discrimination (DIS)
Optimum location for most effective teamwork

RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN

#	Code	Description
1	U	Individual financial success, personal prominence and power
2	UP	Popularity and social success, being liked and admired
3	UPF	Active teamwork toward common goals, organizational unity
4	UF	Efficiency, strong impartial management
5	UNF	Active reinforcement of authority, rules, and regulations
6	UN	Tough-minded, self-oriented assertiveness
7	UNB	Rugged, self-oriented individualism, resistance to authority
8	UB	Having a good time, releasing tension, relaxing control
9	UPB	Protecting less able members, providing help when needed
10	P	Equality, democratic participation in decision making
11	PF	Responsible idealism, collaborative work
12	F	Conservative, established, "correct" ways of doing things
13	NF	Restraining individual desires for organizational goals
14	N	Self-protection, self-interest first, self-sufficiency
15	NB	Rejection of established procedures, rejection of conformity
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24	DB	Passive non-cooperation with authority
25	DPB	Quiet contentment, taking it easy
26	D	Giving up personal needs and desires, passivity

A visual inspection of Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7 shows that the ratings for the socio-political, traditional and legally mandated opportunity structures followed the zigzag (*mep*) line reasonably well in terms of closeness to the line. The ratings for legally prohibited opportunity structures followed the zigzag line the least. However, the pattern varies for African-Americans and African immigrant respondents in the study. In particular, the values perceived to underlie the legally mandated opportunity structures of EEO and Affirmative Action are closer to the *mep* norm for African immigrants than African-Americans. The differences were larger for EEO than AAP. A similar pattern emerged for about half of the values comparing merit and mentorship opportunity structures, whereby larger differences appeared to occur for the merit structure. Therefore, with respect to Research Question #1, we generally conclude that there are important differences in how the values underlying the different opportunity structure concepts were perceived by African-Americans and African immigrants.

Research Question 2

The SYMLOG dimension that relates most directly to "favorableness" is the friendliness (P/N) dimension. A visual inspection of the P/N data in Table 1 for African–Americans and African immigrants supports the notion of a hierarchy implicit in Research Question #2. It should be noted that African-Americans and African immigrants to the U.S. view the meaning and order of these concepts quite differently. Both African-Americans and African immigrants view the legally prohibited opportunity structures as the least favorable and the ordering of the other items in the continuum are "mixed." Consistent with the U.S. population at large, African-Americans view the socio-political opportunity structures of diversity and inclusion as most favorable and African immigrants view them less favorably, especially inclusion. African immigrants view the legally mandated opportunity structures very favorably and African-Americans view them in the middle of the favorable to unfavorable continuum.

Table 2 displays a matrix of the Euclidean distances for whites, African-Americans, and African immigrants for the eight opportunity structures. Since the rule of thumb for significant differences from *mep* is 6.0 SYMLOG scale units, it is noted that the legally prohibited opportunity structures are significantly different from *mep* for all three demographic groups. On the other hand, the mentorship opportunity structure is close to *mep* for all three groups. The hierarchy of distances from *mep* for the other WOS is mixed and varies the most for African immigrants. It is interesting to note that with the exception of inclusion and mentorship, African-American respondents view all the other six WOS as significantly distant from the *mep*. Legally mandated WOS are close to the *mep* for African immigrants and significantly dis-

tant from the *mep* for African American respondents. African-American respondents view the inclusion opportunity structure as close to the *mep* and view diversity as significantly distant from the *mep*, while African immigrant respondents rated these two WOS in the reverse manner. Therefore, the continuum model is supported for whites and African –Americans and partially supported for African immigrants.

Discussion

The present findings serve as an important source of validity for the use of SYMLOG theory in the context of WOS assessment. They lend support to the theoretical contention that individuals tend to polarize their social field into a group of "bad" and "good" images and this is reflected in the dispersion of the images in SYMLOG space for the different respondent groups. Using SYMLOG theory to study how respondents' racial/ethnic background and citizenship affect their perceptions of WOS has the advantage of studying perceptions of procedural justice approaches from the vantage point of a parsimonious theory that has been validated in the concept of studying images of organizational culture phenomena (see, e.g., Bachman 1988; Ford 1996; Whaley and Hare 1996). Further, the three SYMLOG dimensions have been shown to be consistent over time, culture, and situations (Polley, Hare, and Stone 1988; Bales and Isenberg 1980). This theoretical focus is important in view of the fact that psychometric research in this context has often been criticized of suffering from an atheoretical orientation that relies on a variety of dimensions that are empirically derived, through factor analytic procedures, from an assortment of scales (Nygren and Jones 1977; Herman 1986).

Several of the findings raise interesting questions for further contemplation. For example, what does it mean when the location of the AAP image is significantly distant from the *mep* image for U. S. citizen respondent groups in the present study, as well as the location of the merit image being significantly distant from *mep* for African-Americans in the present study? Does this signal a need for further education among underrepresented groups about the value of these two WOS in the organization's opportunity arsenal if these groups are ready to abandon affirmative action programs? Are these findings unique to California or does it represent a larger trend?

The study's findings also pointed out differences in perception of African immigrant and African-American respondents toward diversity programs vis-à-vis inclusion programs. African-Americans perceive diversity unfavorably while African immigrants perceive diversity favorably. African-Americans view legally mandated opportunity structures such as EEO and AAP unfavorably and African immigrants view them favorably. Perhaps this is consistent with many U.S. organizations changing the name of these

legally mandated programs from EEO and AAP to Diversity and the longer experience by African-Americans with these programs. Programs tend to mature and differentiate themselves over time and perhaps the recent African immigrants may have simply caught these programs at a more mature, differentiated and effective point in their life cycle. Adler (2002) indicates that most immigrants experience "culture shock" that makes them react favorably and then unfavorably to a new culture. A newspaper account by Isaac Olawale Albert (2002) in "Nigeria-Watchdog Goes Back to School" states, "it takes time to get to know someone of a different culture for diversity to work, otherwise culture shock happens, and prejudices are reinforced."

African immigrants perceived inclusion less favorably and significantly distant from the *mep*, while African –Americans viewed inclusion as close to the *mep*. Possibly this is merely a reflection of a different culture and time spent in the U.S. culture on the immigrants' part. As recent arrivals to the U.S., cultural differences for African immigrants may be clearer, and there has been less time for African immigrants than African-Americans to adapt to the U.S. country culture. Because mentorship programs have their advocates (cf. Thomas 1990, 1993), and because mentorship was also perceived close to *mep* in the present study, perhaps mentorship and inclusion opportunity structures represent the "common ground" upon which a more widely accepted public policy could be developed.

Study Limitations

The sample size of 52 is quite modest for generalizability of the research results. Respondents were all located in northern California and most African immigrant respondents were from east Africa. The African immigrant sample focused on east Africa and this does not capture the variability in social identity and perceptions country by country and by region within the African continent.

The focus of this exploratory study is based entirely on perceptions. However, a broader examination of relationships among demographic variables, WOS, public policy outcomes, and organizational success and related concepts should be undertaken in future studies incorporating both perceptual *and* behavioral data. Behavioral data would facilitate the testing of predictions regarding public policy implementation as well as individual and organizational performance.

Future Research Directions

The intent of this paper was to test the relationship between demographic variables and workplace opportunity structure perceptions and to address gaps in the research literature that would provide us and other diver-

sity scholars and researchers with useful ideas for developing a more comprehensive research framework encompassing relationships among WOS, organizational success, public policy outcomes, and social justice perceptions.

An important strength of the study was the use of the value based SYM-LOG measurement system to compare a wider range (eight) of opportunity structures than had been presented in other comparison studies. While use of the SYMLOG measurement system for rating the eight opportunity structures was a strength, additional research is desirable to arrive at the most defendable categories of opportunity structures in terms of both their statistical and practical significance. Perhaps future respondents in similar studies could be asked to identify the opportunity structures used in their respective organizations and indicate which structures were most effective in terms of social justice concepts and organizational results.

Since the literature review suggested that different cultures, races, ethnic groups and genders all tend to have different perceptions about all the diversity-related variables discussed, the generalizability of the present results would be enhanced by expanding the subgroup analysis in future studies. For example, male–female differences in perceptions could be examined as well as additional racial and ethnic group categories. Age group categories should be examined to ascertain whether differences in perception exist based on income distribution, job status, acculturation, or generational differences. In addition to the demographic differences between African immigrants and African-Americans, the African immigrant group needs to be further delineated and distinctions need to be made between the experiences of African immigrants from different countries and the length of time an immigrant has lived in the U.S.

These future research directions would allow future scholars and practitioners alike to better link research, policy, and implementation (Skedsvold and Manu 1996) in order to impact in a positive manner the effectiveness of real organizations.

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