

Chapter 4

The Practice of Affirmative Action in Australia

I have little faith in laws. If too severe, they are broken, and with good reason. If too complicated, human ingenuity finds means to slip easily between the meshes of this trailing but fragile net.

(Hadrian, cited in Yourcenar, 1951: 121)

4.1 Introduction

The *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986* (the Act) represents an important public policy response to the perceived problem of unequal employment opportunities in Australia. As the Act was designed to allow considerable scope for organisations to comply with the legislation there has been a range of affirmative action policies implemented by organisations over the past ten years. Little empirical research has focused on the nature and range of the affirmative action policies implemented in Australia since the legislation was enacted in 1986. We know that compliance with the legislative requirement to report annually to the Affirmative Action Agency has been high. In the 1992-93 reporting period, 99 per cent of those companies required to report to the Agency did so (Affirmative Action Agency, 1993). What is less well-known is how organisations have complied with the legislative requirement to develop affirmative action programs; what types of policies have been implemented to facilitate women's employment opportunities and what common themes emerge from among the affirmative action policies companies have implemented. Importantly, is it possible to categorise policies into a framework which will then allow us to both understand and track changes in affirmative action policies in Australia?

In the following section, how organisations have complied with the affirmative action legislation is explored. In the absence of a commonly used framework for categorising affirmative action policies in Australia, a framework for categorising affirmative action policies suggested by Kanter (1976) is reviewed in section 4.3. A survey conducted of

policies suggested by Kanter (1976) is reviewed in section 4.3. A survey conducted of affirmative action coordinators in the private sector to seek external validation of the framework is detailed in sections 4.4 and 4.5. The findings of the survey and modification of the framework are discussed in sections 4.6 and 4.7. Finally, using the framework developed in the previous sections, a profile of the types of affirmative action policies organisations have executed over the period 1990/91 to 1992/93 is presented in section 4.8.

4.2 Compliance with the affirmative action legislation

As outlined in Chapter 2, the affirmative action legislation is administered by the Director of Affirmative Action and requires organisations to report to the Director annually, with an outline of their programs. As company structures can be complex, private sector employers can choose the form 'reporting units' take in reporting to the Agency. An employer may submit a report for a group of companies, a single company or a division within a company. There is no uniform 'reporting unit'. The Affirmative Action Agency noted there were 2311 'reporting units' covered by the legislation in 1991/1992 (Affirmative Action Agency, 1993).

The report format directs reporting units to outline what they have done in the previous year in relation to the eight steps of an affirmative action program contained in the legislation (see section 2.9 of this thesis). Although the eight steps require reporting units to set up processes for developing an affirmative action program, they also allow them the freedom to implement the legislation as they wish, according to their situation and needs (Braithwaite, 1992). Ratification of ILO Convention 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities, and its incorporation into the Industrial Relations Reform Act 1993, may have provided some external pressure for companies to include work and family entitlements in their conditions of employment (Cass, 1995a). As work and family policies tend to be associated with women, many organisations have included

As discussed in the introductory remarks to this chapter, the reporting rate of employers in the private sector has been very high. The number of units reporting to the Agency across the three Bands¹ and the response rate these represent can be seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Reporting rate of the private sector, 1992/93

<i>Band</i>	<i>Reporting Units</i>	<i>Number Reporting</i>	<i>Reporting Rate (%)</i>
1	689	689	100
2	275	275	100
3	1347	1324	99

A more comprehensive approach to measuring compliance with the legislation was developed by Braithwaite (1992). She defined two measures of compliance; procedural and substantive. The first, 'procedural' compliance, covers the extent to which a company implements the eight steps set out under legislation. The procedural compliance of companies can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Compliance with the eight steps, 1992/93

	<i>Compliance %</i>
Step 1 Issue a policy statement on affirmative action to all employees	92
Step 2 Confer responsibility for the program on a senior person(s)	96
Step 3 Consult with trade unions with members affected by the program	53
Step 4 Consult with employees, particularly women	79
Step 5 Establish and analyse the employment profile	100
Step 6 Review employment policies and practices	80
Step 7 Set objectives	72
Set forward estimates	39
Step 8 Monitor the program	79
Evaluate the program	73

Compliance across the eight steps varies somewhat. The highest rates of compliance were associated with Step 5, the development of an employment profile by gender and Step 2, appointing an affirmative action co-ordinator. The lowest rates of compliance were with Step 3, consulting with unions, and Step 7, the setting of forward estimates.

¹ Refer to section 2.10 for the definition of Bands.

The second dimension to compliance suggested by Braithwaite (1992) is ‘substantive’ compliance, which reflects the extent to which a company demonstrates:

an understanding of and commitment to the implementation of programs that would remove sex discrimination and improve employment opportunities for women in the workplace.

(Braithwaite, 1992: i)

To determine the extent to which substantive compliance with the legislation occurred, Braithwaite (1992) reviewed the performance of 153 companies reporting to the Agency. To operationalise the concept of substantive compliance, she developed a rating system based on the four categories described in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Levels of substantive compliance

<i>Category</i>		<i>Descriptor</i>	<i>Companies %</i>
<i>Least Compliant</i>	1	Companies doing minimum without demonstrating commitment to EEO	16
	2	Companies making some effort to comply without changing workplace practice in a significant way	43
	3	Companies meeting requirements to high level and recognising competitive advantage in some aspects of EEO practice	30
<i>Most Compliant</i>	4	Companies meeting requirements of legislation and introducing initiatives to improve women’s position in the workplace.	11

Source: Braithwaite, 1992.

In Braithwaite’s study, two independent judges reviewed the public reports of the 153 companies and assigned the companies to one of the four categories outlined in Table 4.3. Only 11 per cent of companies were placed in Category 4 (the category in which companies were considered to be making a substantial effort to improve employment opportunities for women). The remaining companies were considered to be somewhat less committed to implementing policies to improve women’s employment opportunities and so were assigned to Categories 3 and 2, which contained 30 per cent and 43 per cent of companies respectively. Sixteen per cent were considered to be demonstrating no real commitment to improving women’s employment opportunities and so were placed in Category 1 (Braithwaite, 1992: i).

While the division of compliance into four categories as Braithwaite (1992) has done may be criticised for being somewhat arbitrary (on what grounds were four categories deemed most appropriate?), it does represent a structure in which compliance can be understood. The categorisation of reports along these lines provides a qualitative index of organisational performance in the affirmative action domain.

Braithwaite's data indicated that procedural compliance has been greater than substantive compliance. Although most companies were following the letter of the law, as demonstrated by the high rates of procedural compliance, their commitment to the spirit of the law was less substantial. Braithwaite's findings would seem to support Burton's (1991) claim that Australian companies are opting for a short, rather than long, agenda to equal opportunities. This disparity in the extent to which companies are complying with the spirit of the legislation reflects a more general and common problem associated with implementing social policies. As Rossi and Freeman (1989: 120) point out:

There is general agreement that converting policies into viable interventions that correspond to the original intentions of the sponsors is the most difficult activity in the social program area.

While Braithwaite's (1992) study provides some insight into the actual nature of the compliance process, it does not detail the types of policies implemented under the auspices of affirmative action.

Little empirical research has been carried out which describes the types and incidence of affirmative action policies implemented by Australian organisations. Too often, affirmative action is treated under a generic heading; as though it were a homogeneous entity (Taylor-Carter *et al.*, 1995). The reality is that the flexible nature of the affirmative action legislation allows organisations to demonstrate their compliance through the implementation of a range of initiatives developed to suit their particular organisational and industrial climate.

There are many different forms affirmative action policies can take (Heilman, 1994). If we were to detail all the affirmative action policies implemented in Australia, the resulting profile would be large and unwieldy. While we cannot focus on all affirmative action policies at once, classification according to common elements can simplify complex reality sufficiently to allow us to make some sense of it (Bailey, 1994). In the remainder of this chapter, a framework for classifying the variety of affirmative action policies is presented (and refined). The purpose of this framework is to enhance our understanding of the form compliance with the affirmative action legislation has taken; what types of affirmative action policies have been implemented by organisations and what of their incidence?²

4.3 Kanter's classification scheme

As Bailey (1994: 12) argues, classifying entities into types is 'the premier descriptive tool'. Classifying affirmative action policies into a small number of categories containing similar policies may simplify the complex reality of the practice of affirmative action sufficiently to allow us to analyse it. While there does not appear to be such a system of classification in common use in the literature concerning affirmative action in Australia, one means for classifying affirmative action policies was put forward by Kanter (1976). From her experiences as both a researcher and as a consultant to organisations advising on the implementation of affirmative action programs in the US, Kanter (1976) identified three broad approaches or models to affirmative action. 'Temperamental', 'role related' and 'social structural' were the labels Kanter assigned to these three models, each of which represents a different set of underlying assumptions about the causes of the inequality in the workplace and, consequently, the kinds of intervention (that is, the types of affirmative action policies) recommended to bring about change. These three models correspond, approximately,

² Throughout the thesis I use the nomenclature of policies and programs. The distinction I make is that policies represent individual strategies while a program is the overall approach taken to affirmative action.

to concern with the individual, role and organisational levels as determinants of social life (Kanter, 1976).

4.3.1 The temperamental model

According to Kanter (1976), the temperamental model appeared to be the most common approach to investigating why women continued to be excluded from the upper ranks of management in the US in the 1970s. The focus of the temperamental model concerns women's character and personality; in particular, their 'deficiencies'. The popularity of this model was, according to Kanter (1976: 283), driven by the 'American tendency to seek explanations for social phenomena in the individual'. Kanter (1976: 283) maintained that the assumptions underlying this model can be summarised as:

women differ from men in their character, temperament, attitudes, self-esteem, language, gestures and interpersonal orientation, whether by nature, early socialisation, or accumulated learning as a result of coping with an inferior position.

According to Kanter (1976), this model assumes that not being like men disadvantages women in the work environment. To overcome such disadvantage, the interventions associated with this model are generally of a remedial nature; that is, they seek to compensate for women's 'deficiencies' (Kanter, 1976: 284). This model assumes that women participating in the work force, at whatever level, are not correctly 'socialised' for the demands of the organisational world. Some of the purported 'defects' of women perceived by those subscribing to the temperamental model are: temperaments unsuited to management tasks; poor self-esteem; and different attitudes to work than men (Kanter, 1976; Kelly, 1991). Consequently, women need to participate in compensatory programs that will help them overcome alleged character defects impeding their effectiveness in the work situation. For instance, those who perceive women as being too timid would recommend they attend assertiveness training workshops. For those subscribing to the temperamental model remedial programs are considered particularly critical for women entering occupations traditionally dominated by men, as it is in those

areas that women's 'deficiencies' most stand out, as 'men are the standard for whatever women do' (Marshall, 1986:42; Crawford, 1995).

Kanter (1976) maintained that such corrective programs do not necessarily aim to make women more like men (although some certainly do aspire to this). Rather, they target skills and knowledge areas in which women are perceived to be deficient. These programs tend to be based on the assumption that women's motivation and temperament are the major reinforcers of occupational segregation and so actions taken to compensate for these are expected to break down the barriers women face in the workplace.

Kanter (1976) was critical of the translation of the temperamental model of research into specific interventions. First, she argued that there was no evidence that compensatory training programs had any real impact on the structures of organisations. She saw a real danger in too much attention being focused on women-centred policies as it may then appear that progress was being made, when in reality the structures would remain as they always had been. Second, she expressed concern that this model of research and intervention reinforced the traditional stereotypes that men set the standard for organisational success and that women are deficient and in need of compensatory assistance. A substantial literature has since developed critiquing interventions designed to assist women become more like men (see for instance Game, 1984; Hunter, 1992; Crawford, 1995; Cameron, 1996; Kaplan, 1996). So while this model was popular in the 1970s, there has been considerable criticism levelled at it more recently on the basis that it fails to grasp the complexity of systemic discrimination.

4.3.2 The role related model

The second research model identified by Kanter (1976) was labelled 'role related'. This model cites the division of labour between women and men, particularly in the context of the family, as the reason for women being found in relatively lower positions in the

traditional perceptions of appropriate roles for women and men, both in terms of the segregation of occupations within paid employment and the segregation of house work. The research and interventions of this type divert attention away from the world of work towards the limitations the division of labour in the family places on female and male roles. Intervention strategies associated with this model are often oriented toward changing the individual's role perceptions; how they conceive of appropriate roles for women and men and how household responsibilities should be divided. According to Kanter (1976), in the US in the 1970s, a common role related intervention addressed the education system. Programs were developed both at the upper levels, but also in early childhood education, that aimed at assisting women conceive of their roles differently; 'to see that they can manage dual roles and to prepare them to deal with conflicts assumed to result' (Kanter, 1976: 285).

Kanter (1976) argued that organisations can also take actions based on this model. For instance, implementing policies which make it easier for women to juggle both family and work roles, such as child care, part-time work, flexible working hours and job sharing are all examples of interventions that are, Kanter maintained, driven by the role related model.

While recognising the importance of challenging traditional stereotypes about appropriate roles for women and men and the division of responsibilities in the household, Kanter (1976) was not uncritical of this approach as a means of improving employment opportunities for women. In the first instance, she claimed the role related model focused too little attention on the workplace. She noted that a number of women enter paid employment unencumbered by family responsibilities, but their employment status is often no better than women with family responsibilities. As well, she argued that research and interventions associated with this model too often treated the organisational world as though it were homogeneous. Such research did not differentiate between the work situations or family situations of women and so interventions flowing from it had, according to Kanter (1976: 286) an 'overly global

organisational world as though it were homogeneous. Such research did not differentiate between the work situations or family situations of women and so interventions flowing from it had, according to Kanter (1976: 286) an 'overly global quality' and may not address the particular situations of individual women. Further criticisms of this model concerns the implicit assumption that women would be responsible for the role changes. Few interventions were designed to assist men change their role orientations. Moreover, efforts to attract women into non-traditional careers have been criticised because of the 'male as norm' standard they imply (Marshall, 1984).

4.3.3 The social structural model

The third model Kanter identified as shaping affirmative action policies is the social structural model. Kanter (1976) claimed that this model made fewer assumptions about the nature or roles of women and attacked the work situation directly. Social structural research is, according to Kanter (1976), concerned with the nature of organisational structures and the organisation of work, rather than individuals or roles. Kanter (1977) provided one of the most thorough studies of this type in her book *Men and Women of the Corporation*. Kanter's (1976: 287) analysis of the company Indsco led her to conclude that:

a number of structural and situational variables are more important determinants of the organisational behaviour of women (and men) than sex differences or global social roles.

According to the social structural model, the behaviour of women and men observed in organisations is reasonably predictable given the employment processes, dominance structures and sex ratios within and across hierarchical levels in organisations. These factors are, claimed Kanter (1976), important determinants of the level of motivation a woman feels towards her work, whether or not she will appear competent, confident and promotable, how productive she can be and whether or not she can be an effective leader. According to Kanter (1977) when women are trapped in positions with little opportunity to advance (which is symptomatic of many traditional female occupations),

this has ramifications for their experience of work. Behaviour that is often characterised as ‘typically feminine’ — low aspirations, lack of commitment, disengagement and an emphasis on social relations — can be understood with reference to the opportunity structures available to women within organisations (Kanter, 1977).

When writing about the social structural model in the mid-1970s, Kanter (1976) noted that in comparison to the research and interventions associated with the previous two models, investigation and intervention in the social structural domain had been minimal.

Ten years after her analysis of Indsco was published, Kanter (1987:14) provided a general review of organisations and reiterated her original conclusion that

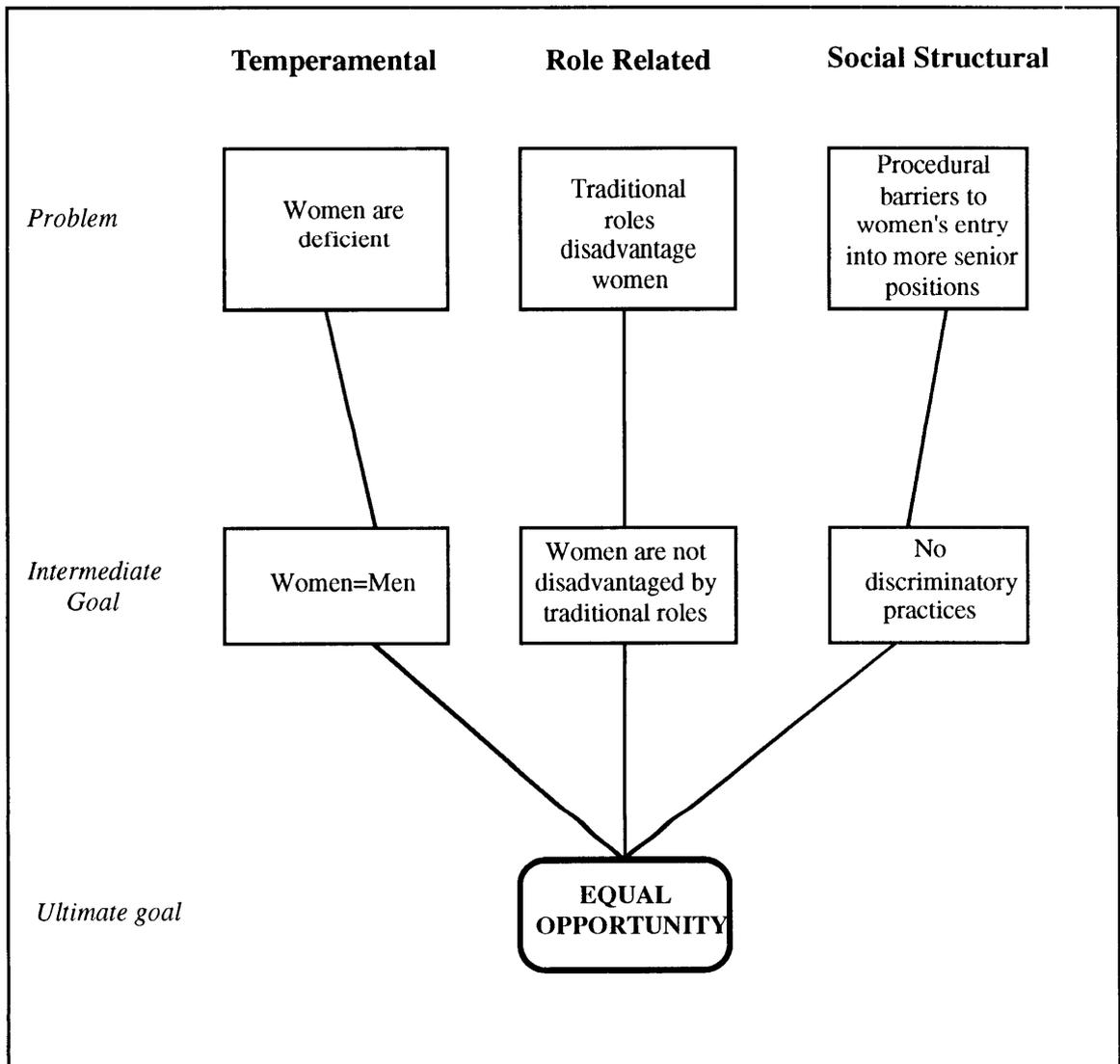
observed differences in the behaviour — and success — of women and men had more to do with what they were handed by the organisation than with inherent differences in ability or drive.

The social structural model with its recognition of institutional bias, in her view, represented the most effective means of addressing the problems of occupational segregation, and in particular, the lack of women in management positions.

According to this model, intervention policies should focus on an organisation's own practices. For instance, Kanter suggests that attempts to reduce the biases inherent in selection and promotion processes fall into the ‘social structural’ realm. Increasing the general training opportunities to previously disadvantaged groups (as opposed to the remedial training suggested under the ‘temperamental’ model) would also be an example of the social structural approach.

Each of Kanter’s models has very different assumptions about the causes of inequality and the steps necessary to redress the unequal status of women and men in the paid work force. To clarify the distinctions between the models, I have developed a diagrammatic presentation of the three models detailed by Kanter (1976) which can be seen in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Kanter's Models



4.4. Are Kanter's models relevant to Australia in the 1990s?

As with any effort to reduce complex reality to more comprehensible proportions, it is unlikely that Kanter's scheme for categorising affirmative action policies into similar groupings could fully capture the richness and complexity of all the affirmative action policies implemented in the US in the 1970s. It did, however, represent one means of grouping similar policies together; of bringing order to the complex reality of the practice of affirmative action (Bailey, 1994).

Some support for the distinctions Kanter (1976) made between affirmative action policies is found in the similar, if broader, distinction between gender-centred and organisation-structure affirmative action policies made by Bell and Nkomo (1992) and Fagenson (1993). The gender-centred perspective is very similar to Kanter's 'temperamental' category. According to Bell and Nkomo (1992), efforts to improve women's employment opportunities under this approach are based on the assumption that women do not possess the skills or behavioural characteristics to perform competently in the workplace. Likewise, the organisation-structure perspective bears a strong similarity to Kanter's 'social structural' category. This perspective identifies structural elements, 'such as job recruitment and entry, job assignment, relationships between formal and informal groups, training and promotion and reward systems' (Bell & Nkomo, 1992: 237) as constraining women's entrance to, and advancement in, the workplace.

It is important to recognise that any classification scheme is somewhat arbitrary, especially in the number of categories used (Mintzberg, 1989). Any such scheme is to some extent the invention of the classifier and so exists as much for convenience of understanding as to represent some scientific truth (Mintzberg, 1989). The value of any classification scheme depends, then, on how much it assists in the understanding of the phenomena under study.

The question driving the study reported here was whether the schemes suggested by Kanter (1976) or Bell and Nkomo (1992) could facilitate an understanding of the practice of affirmative action in Australia the 1990s? While there are clear similarities between the two schemes, it would seem that Kanter's three models for categorisation (temperamental, role related and social structural) may better differentiate the diversity of affirmative action policies implemented in Australia than the two categories (gender-centred and organisation-structure) of Bell and Nkomo (1992). There have been some developments in the Australian context which have provided some impetus for policies that seem to be consistent with Kanter's role related category. Ratification by Australia

of ILO 156, *Workers with Family Responsibilities*, has meant there is some external pressure for organisations to implement initiatives designed to accommodate work and family responsibilities (Kramar, 1993). Policies concerning the provision of child care, flexible working arrangements and employee relocation policies, while not widespread, have been part of changes in the Australian industrial relations system, particularly award restructuring (Cass, 1995b).

Another element suggesting the greater relevance of Kanter's three categories concerns the efforts made at the 'macro' level to challenge individuals' role perceptions. For instance, Education and Employment and Training Programs in the National Plan of Action² have included efforts to prompt women to enter non-traditional occupations by encouraging them to enrol in non-traditional courses. Such initiatives included a policy to increase the proportion of women in non-traditional courses (other than engineering) to at least 40 per cent by 1995 and a policy to increase the proportion of women in engineering courses to 15 per cent by 1995 (OSW, 1990).

Other initiatives which could be argued to be reflecting a role related orientation include the *Tradeswomen on the Move* program, sponsored by the Australian government. The purpose of the program was to provide 'girls with role models and information on the range of training opportunities' (OSW, 1989: 15) with the objective of increasing the number of girls who apply for non-traditional apprenticeships.

The Office of the Status of Women (OSW) has also been involved in efforts to effect role changes. The OSW has developed a range of educational materials designed to encourage families to consider a more equitable division of domestic responsibilities. The materials, for distribution through community service organisations and education providers include videos such as 'Another Tuesday Night' and 'On Any Wednesday', both of which deal with how families can learn to resolve conflict around the issue of sharing the responsibility for child care and the household.

² The National Plan of Action is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

To ascertain whether Kanter's three models for categorisation of affirmative action policies had any relevance to the practice of affirmative action in Australia in the 1990s, it seemed appropriate to confer with those working in the field; that is, affirmative action coordinators. Did they see any validity in Kanter's scheme as a means of capturing the essential features of affirmative action as it is practised in Australia in the 1990s? In effect, I was seeking some form of external validity to determine whether Kanter's scheme 'made sense'.

The first issue to address in seeking to determine whether affirmative action coordinators see some value in Kanter's classification scheme was with whom to confer? As discussed in section 4.2, the Agency identified 2311 relevant private sector reporting units for the period 1991/92. Conceivably, there could be 2311 affirmative action coordinators nominated in Step 2 of the public reports who could be canvassed for their opinions. However, many of those nominated as affirmative action coordinators in the public reports are that by name only. Those with the title of 'affirmative action coordinator' in organisations in which there is no commitment to the principles of affirmative action, or in which no affirmative action policies have been implemented in the workplace, may be less likely to be aware of the issues surrounding affirmative action. Rather than conferring with all the affirmative action coordinators nominated in the public reports, a survey was conducted of the members of the NSW and Victorian Private Sector EEO Practitioners' Associations.

These persons, by seeking membership of a professional association concerned with equal employment opportunities, were assumed to be generally better informed about affirmative action (that is, to have a greater understanding of the intent of the affirmative action legislation and a keener awareness of affirmative action policies) than the total population of affirmative action coordinators. This assumption seems reasonable given that members would be exposed to formal presentations about relevant issues at their Association meetings and would receive information concerning affirmative action through Association newsletters and information papers. They would

also benefit from the informal exchange about their own experiences which would occur between members at both formal meetings and social functions organised by the Association.

There were 75 registered members of the NSW Private Sector EO Practitioners' Association and 65 registered members of the Victorian Private Sector EO Practitioners' Association at the time the survey reported here was carried out (February 1994).

4.5 The questionnaire

Both management committees of the Associations were concerned with maintaining the confidentiality of their membership lists. As such, the only option available for surveying the members which guaranteed their anonymity was to develop a mail-out survey that could be distributed through the Associations, with the responses being returned to me directly. Although mail-out surveys have their drawbacks in terms of low response rates (Yammarino *et al.*, 1991; Singleton *et al.*, 1993), this could not be avoided. As the identities of respondents were unknown to me, it was not possible to follow up non-respondents directly. To maximise response rates, a letter from the Association secretariat urging members to respond to the survey accompanied the questionnaires. Response rates tend to be higher if the costs to respondents of participating are minimised (Heberlein & Baumgartner, 1978), so the questionnaires included reply-paid return envelopes. To further increase the response rate, a letter was sent to all the members (via the Associations) two weeks after they had received the questionnaire, once again urging them to respond. Finally, a reminder appeared in the Victorian Association's newsletter two months later requesting practitioners to return the questionnaire if they had not already done so.

As the questionnaires were to be self-administered, considerable effort went in to making them as easy to follow as possible. This was also seen as a means of maximising the response rates. De Vaus (1986: 70) stresses the importance of

concentrating on 'clarity and simplicity' in developing self-administered questionnaires as the researcher is not there to clarify any confusion the respondent may encounter when completing the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was made up of two parts. The first part contained a brief description of each of Kanter's categories — temperamental, role related and social structural. The category labels described by Kanter were not used in order to minimise the effect of these value-laden terms. Rather, these categories were described as 'Category a', 'Category b' and 'Category c' respectively. Considerable effort was taken to ensure the words describing each of the models were as neutral and non-judgmental as possible. In addition to the three categories, a 'don't know' category was included so respondents were not forced to choose between the other three.

The second part of the questionnaire contained the affirmative action policies for categorisation by the sample population. These policies were drawn directly from the public reports submitted to the Affirmative Action Agency for the period 1991/92. Having reviewed the more than 500 policies contained in the sample reports, the 57 policies included in the questionnaire were selected because they represented a cross-section of the policies contained in the public reports. Policies were included until there were clear repetitions.

An initial pilot survey was carried out on ten university colleagues, who were generally unfamiliar with affirmative action. The purpose of this pilot survey was to determine whether the instructions were clear and respondents were able to complete the questionnaire. Their comments were incorporated into the survey before the second pilot survey was conducted. As respondents in pilot surveys should be as similar as possible to those in the main survey (Oppenheim, 1992), a second pilot survey was run using affirmative action coordinators. This second pilot survey went to seven members of the management committee of the Victorian Private Sector EEO Association and the President of the NSW Association. The purpose of this survey was to, once again, ensure the instructions were clear and respondents were able to complete the

questionnaire. The comments from the second pilot survey were then incorporated into the final version of the survey questionnaire.

The anonymity of final survey responses meant that I was unable to check on the consistency of respondents' responses by, for instance, correlating their responses from one time period to another. Instead, I had to rely on internal checks to gauge the reliability of respondents' categorisation. This is possible through reviewing the consistency of a person's response on an item compared to other items (item-item correlations) (De Vaus, 1986). There were two such internal checks included in the survey.

See Appendix 1a for a copy of the survey and Appendix 1b for more detail on the internal checks included in the survey.

4.5.1 The response rate

Of the 140 members making up the NSW and Victorian Private Sector EO Practitioners' Associations, six were identified as members of both Associations, reducing the total survey population to 134. One questionnaire was returned unanswered as the member to whom it had been sent was an academic with an interest in EO issues who belonged to the NSW Association for research purposes. As such, she felt she was not truly representative of the target group. The effective population was thus reduced to 133. Because the membership lists of the Associations were the basis for the mail-outs, there could well have been some incorrect or out-of-date addresses which may have reduced the population further. This is a problem of mailing lists that cannot be avoided (Singleton *et al.*, 1993).

In the letter introducing the survey, respondents were advised that the survey could take them up to 30 minutes to complete. As the purpose of the survey was to determine how well Kanter's (1976) three model framework categorised affirmative action policies in Australia in the 1990s, respondents were introduced to the framework in the instructions accompanying the questionnaire and then asked to apply the framework to the 57

policies³. Respondents were required to commit a significant amount of time and mental energy to complete the survey. Completed surveys were received from 53 respondents, which represents a 40 per cent response rate. While this was a reasonably good response rate for a time-consuming mail survey (Singleton *et al.*, 1993), bias will occur due to response selectivity. There may be differences in the perspectives of respondents and non-respondents (Singleton *et al.*, 1993). It may be that those who found categorisation ‘too hard’ elected not to complete the survey.

4.6 Affirmative action policies in Australia

A measure of whether Kanter’s categories adequately captured the types of policies implemented in Australia was the level of agreement respondents achieved in their allocation of the policies across the three models described in the questionnaire.

The first point to note in the survey responses was the relative infrequency of the ‘don’t know’ response (Category d). With 53 responses and 57 policies, if respondents had not felt comfortable with the categories, there was a possibility of 3021 ‘don’t knows’. Only 170 instances (six per cent) ‘don’t knows’ were recorded. Although there were 32 respondents who used ‘don’t know’ at least once, there were only three respondents who used it for more than 10 policies — one of whom used it 35 times (21 per cent of the ‘don’t knows’). This respondent’s pattern of categorisation was noticeably different to the others, with the vast majority of respondents generally able to place policies in either Category a, b or c. While this respondent could be considered an outlier, their responses were included in the data.

Approximately 80 per cent of respondents saw a policy encompassing more than one category. Only 11 of the 53 respondents (20 per cent) did not place at least one policy in more than one category. Those policies respondents placed in more than one category are discussed in more detail in the following section.

³ Respondents were not told the source of the categories.

The initial analysis of responses indicated that two thirds (38) of the policies for which more than 75 per cent of respondents agreed could be placed in a particular category — a, b or c. This high level of agreement among respondents as to which category these 38 policies could be placed in, suggests the categories identified by Kanter adequately captured the nature of these policies. There were six out of the 57 policies (11 per cent) categorised by respondents as Category a, the category corresponding to Kanter’s ‘temperamental’ category. These six policies are listed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Temperamental (Category a) policies

<i>Policy</i>
3. Workshops and seminars which give particular emphasis to the problems women encounter in the business community.
4. Developed local Management Development program aimed specifically at women below a certain level in a bid to ‘fast track’ their development as managers.
6. Networking process been maintained to help discuss and address women’s issues.
19. Image and communication seminar for women which focused on how to present a professional image in the workplace.
23. Sessions for females only to discuss how their goals are being achieved in the workplace.
50. Formal mentoring system for women employees introduced.

It would appear that what each of these policies has in common is the specific reference they make to the particular problems women face in the workplace and helping them to deal with them.

Ten policies (18 per cent) were placed in Category b (which corresponds to Kanter’s ‘role related’ category) by more than 75 per cent of respondents. These 10 policies are detailed in Table 4.5.

The common theme apparent in these policies is the recognition by employers of family roles in employees’ lives that need to be catered for by the company and adjustments made in the workplace to allow for the competing roles. These policies appear to be responses by companies to assist in balancing work and family needs.

Table 4.5: Role related (Category b) policies

<i>Policy</i>
7. Increased part-time employment opportunities to allow employees to combine paid employment with home maker activities.
10. Specific attention given to leave arrangements, working time arrangements and application of benefits whilst on maternity leave.
13. Family, sick and paternity leave policies introduced. Employees now have days recorded as sick leave or leave to take care of a child, partner, dependent, rather than accumulate credits per annum.
18. Child care booklet now used to advise staff of options when applying for maternity leave.
28. Efforts made to ensure training sessions held in work hours.
31. Revision of child care policy involved extension to all staff of existing facility for the payment of child care expenses by sacrifice of pre-tax salary.
35. Consultation with Council, State and Federal government about the joint funding by the company and the Council of a child care centre.
41. Relocation program for families moving from Newcastle to Melbourne.
49. Guidelines to Working at Home were produced, marking the formal introduction of flexible working practices in the company.
57. A new award includes a clause covering hours of work which will give greater flexibility and be 'family friendly' to majority of employees.

Twenty two policies (39 per cent) were placed in Category c (Kanter's 'social structural' category) by more than 75 per cent of respondents. The 22 policies respondents categorised as 'social structural' policies can be seen in Table 4.6.

To gauge the reliability of respondents' categorisation, an 'equivalence estimate' was built into the survey (Singleton *et al.*, 1992). Two alternate forms of a policy, chosen to be as similar as possible, were included in the questionnaire. Policies 3 and 19 were included in the survey as part of the check of the internal consistency of respondents' categorisation as both were about seminars for women and were very similar. Forty nine out of the 53 respondents (92 per cent) placed these policies in the same category. This very high level of agreement would suggest that respondents were defining the policies consistently and dependably (Singleton *et al.*, 1993). A further check on the consistency of respondents' categorisation concerned policies 17 and 32, both of which related to the company's sexual harassment policy. In this case, 52 of the 53 respondents (98 per cent) placed these policies in the same category. This very high level of agreement also suggests respondents were defining policies consistently. (See Appendix 1b).

Table 4.6: Social structural (Category c) policies

<i>Policy</i>
1. Internal vacancies advertised and women encouraged to apply.
2. Graduate development program reviewed to ensure individual merit is the primary consideration in offering sponsorship.
16. All in-house publications have been designed to ensure equitable representation of women.
17. A formal policy with regard to sexual harassment has been designed and communicated to all staff.
24. Those involved in remuneration review process have been trained to be conscious of avoiding gender bias.
25. EEO complaints procedures distributed and posted on bulletin boards.
32. Distribution of sexual harassment posters for noticeboards.
33. Analysis of training levy allocation has led to policy that all employees receive 5 days of training per annum.
37. Company adopted set of operating guidelines to ensure any factory modifications or design/installation of new equipment will not require any employee to lift greater than 16kg.
38. New induction program outlines commitment to EO and intolerance of any forms of harassment or discrimination.
39. All vacancies advertised internally first ensuring all employees given equal opportunity to gain promotions and transfers within the company.
40. Annual staff review system in place, whereby staff are encouraged to state career path and at same time encouraged to pursue training.
42. Succession plans reviewed to ensure no bias in identifying potential successors.
43. Recruitment practices reviewed and altered to ensure a woman interviewer on panel.
46. Introduced improved psychological assessments for incoming staff at all levels, to improve the 'job fit'.
47. Staff appraisal system now places much greater emphasis on comprehensive list of competencies against which to assess performance and identifying training and development needs.
48. Salary system now combines clerical/secretarial support staff into management and professional pay scales.
51. Enterprise agreements in major manufacturing sites emphasised commitment to skills acquisition and career paths to all employees.
52. Clear guidelines established for approval of company assistance for employees returning to study so that applications could be assessed solely on their merit.
54. Aiming to achieve gender balance when positions become vacant.
55. 'Targeted selection' courses to ensure recruitment and selection process free of discriminatory practices.
56. Major review of administrative and clerical functions, leading to a significant number of reclassifications of women employees.

There were another 19 policies (33 per cent) where there was no clear consensus among respondents as to which of the three categories the policies belonged. This uncertainty about how to categorise the policies is also seen in a comparison of the number of

respondents who identified more than one category in any of these policies and the number who did so for the relatively 'clear' policies. The 'clear' policies had, on average, only eight respondents (15 per cent) who identified there were elements of more than one category in a policy. In contrast, these 'unclear' policies had, on average, 14 respondents (26 per cent) who identified more than one category in the remaining 19 policies.

While it seems the respondents agreed that a significant percentage (67%) of the affirmative action policies could be categorised by Kanter's scheme, it seems the scheme did not adequately categorise all the policies implemented in Australia under the auspices of affirmative action. The question arose, then, of whether there were other ways of categorising which better captured the diversity of policies than the three model description of Kanter (1976).

4.7 Multidimensional scaling of policies

Multidimensional scaling (MDS) is a useful tool which can be used to uncover previously undetected patterns in data (Kruskal & Wish, 1978; Schiffman *et al.*, 1981, Borg & Lingoes, 1987). The techniques used in MDS use proximities among any kind of objects as the basic input for analysis. Proximities are numbers which represent how similar or different two objects are considered to be. The output of MDS is a spatial representation of the points, very much like a map. Each point in the 'map' represents an object. As Kruskal and Wish (1978: 7) maintain, '(t)his configuration reflects the 'hidden structure' in the data and often makes the data much easier to comprehend'.

To determine if there were other categories which could be used to describe those affirmative action policies not adequately captured by Kanter's three category model, MDS was applied to the full set of 53 responses via ALSCAL (Alternating Least Squares Scaling) (Cooksey, 1993; Davison, 1983). A matrix of proximities was derived by counting the number of times each pair of policies was put into the same category by respondents. This matrix denoted how many times the policies were perceived to be

more similar to each other than to those in other categories by respondents. The matrix was entered into the SPSS ALSCAL procedure for MDS. Not knowing, *a priori*, how many categories, if any, may emerge from the data, solutions for two to five dimensions were obtained.

To determine the number of dimensions to interpret, Kruskal's STRESS measure (Kruskal and Wish, 1978) was employed. This measure is a goodness-of-fit index which ranges from 0 to 1. The closer the STRESS value is to 0, the greater the degree of fit between the estimated Euclidean co-ordinate configuration and the actual proximity values (Cooksey, 1993). The level of dimensionality chosen can be based on a number of criteria, such as 'the magnitude of stress, the point of diminishing returns (higher number of dimensions yields only a small reduction in stress), and interpretability' (Cooksey, 1993: 33). The values for STRESS for the two- to five-dimensional MDS solutions were, respectively, 0.132, 0.079, 0.068 and 0.057. In this analysis, the three dimension solution appeared to best capture the multidimensional space of the affirmative action policies. At the three dimension level, there was a STRESS value of 0.079 and the net gains in fit began to decline after the three dimension solution⁴. Importantly, as seen in Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, the three dimensions are interpretable in light of Kanter's categories. The natural groupings that fell out of the MDS in the three dimension solution provided some reinforcement of the categories outlined by Kanter (1976), as well as suggesting some additional categories. See Appendix 2 for the MDS coordinates of the policies and a complete list of the policies contained in the groups described in the following paragraphs.

In Figure 4.2, the separation of policies, that is, the physical distancing of policies along the horizontal axis which I have labelled INDIVIDUAL, appears to be differentiating between two groups of policies. The first group contains policies which seem to be focusing on addressing particular problems the individual may face (inward-looking policies) (T₁), and policies concerning how the individual relates to others, with

⁴ That is, the difference between 0.132 and 0.079 is larger than the differences between 0.079 and 0.068 and 0.068 and 0.057.

particular emphasis on balancing work and family (R₁). It seems this dimension (INDIVIDUAL) is affirming the separateness of the 'temperamental' and 'role related' categories suggested by Kanter (1976). As well, some of the policies which respondents did not agree could be readily categorised are now grouped with each of these categories. For instance, associated with policies categorised as 'role related' by respondents are two other policies which did not generate such a high level of agreement:

30. Staff vacancy notices sent out to women on maternity leave;
53. Changes to flexible remuneration policy for senior employees to include the opportunity to pay child care fees, school fees and aged care fees from pre-tax dollars.

As the policies respondents placed in the 'role related' category all concerned family roles in some way, that these two policies should be associated with the role related category would appear to be consistent with the category. A re-examination of the frequency counts for these two policies showed that 49 per cent of respondents placed Policy 30 (staff vacancies) in the 'role related' category, and 45 per cent placed it in the 'social structural' category. Although the policy concerned women on maternity leave (which suggests why there were a high number of respondents labelling it as 'role related'), it seems other respondents may have viewed the policy as changing the company's process of advertising positions, and so labelled it 'social structural'.

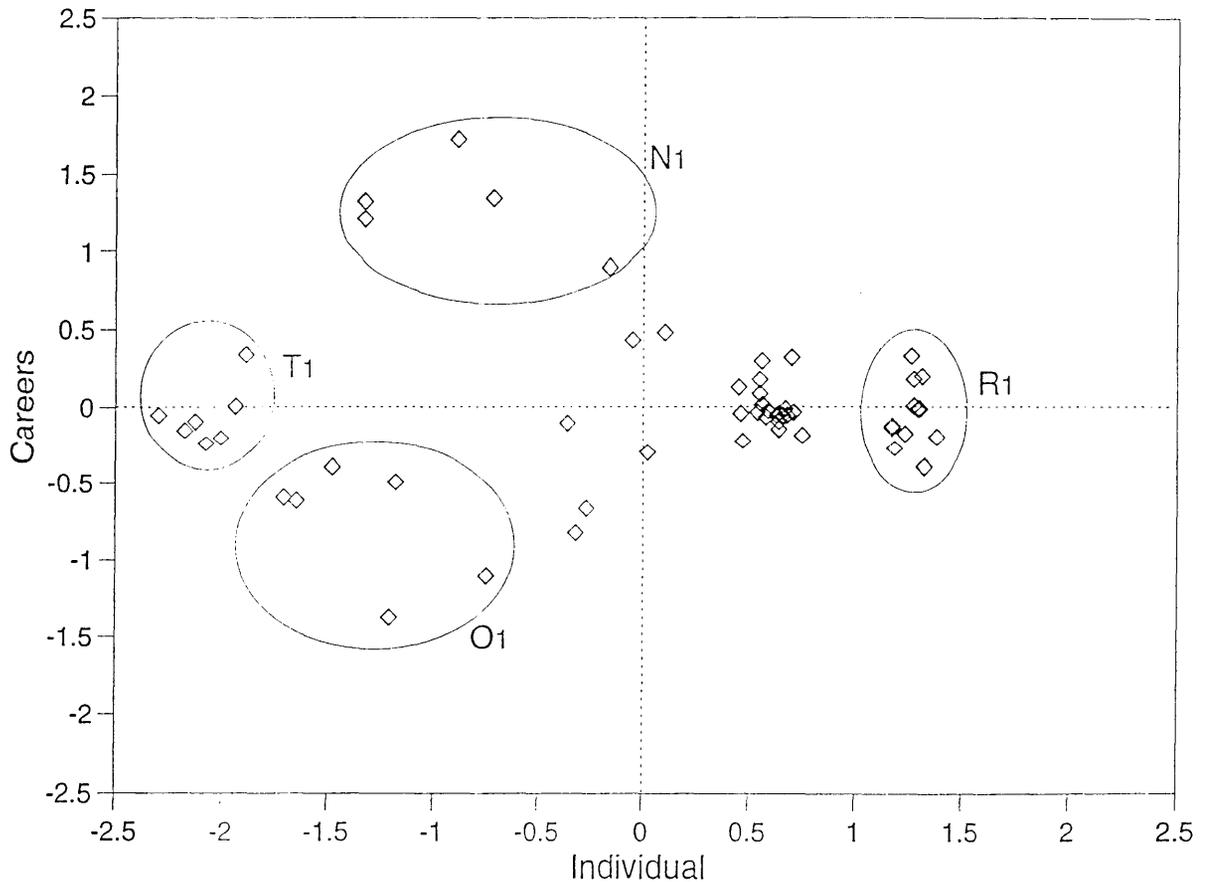
For policy 53 (flexible remuneration), 66 per cent of respondents saw it as 'role related', and 26 per cent saw it as 'social structural'. Once again, it seems that some respondents were focusing on the changes made to the company's processes, in this case remuneration processes, while others appeared to be focusing on the 'role related' nature of the change, that is, that the changes were somehow tied up with family responsibilities.

With respect to the seven policies contained in group T₁ in Figure 4.2, six are the policies which were generally agreed by respondents to be 'temperamental' policies

(that is, Policies 3, 4, 6, 19, 23 and 50). The other policy was not so easily interpreted from the initial analysis. This policy is:

11. Secretarial Improvement Group to develop secretarial role within the department and to enhance team work, team spirit and commitment.

Figure 4.2: MDS — Individual and Careers



A revisiting of the frequency count for this policy provided some insight into why it may be associated with the ‘temperamental’ category. For this policy (Secretarial Improvement Group) a majority of respondents placed it in the ‘temperamental’ category (64 per cent). In contrast, some respondents apparently focused on what this meant for the company in terms of changes in processes, so placed it in the ‘social structural’ category (23 per cent of respondents). As well, policy 11 was one of the few policies for which respondents registered a ‘don’t know’ (13 per cent). The ‘don’t know’ responses may reflect the fact this policy did not contain the words women or

females in the label, as do the other policies in the ‘temperamental’ category. The policy is aimed at secretaries. It could be argued that the gendered nature of this occupation (Pringle, 1989) would imply it was a policy addressing women, but because it was not named as such, there appears to be some difficulty for respondents as to whether it can be neatly categorised.

It is the vertical axis, however, that provides the most interesting insights into the policies. This axis labelled CAREERS seems to be distinguishing two groups. One group, N₁, (non-traditional careers), is made up of the following five policies:

9. Ongoing effort to attract women into seagoing careers eg large posters of women working on vessels;
15. Company sponsored Women in Management unit produced for Year 11 students;
22. Sponsorship of Women in Engineering program at University of Wollongong;
27. Revision of apprenticeship brochure to encourage girls to apply; and
36. Personnel officer encouraged female students at local schools to pursue careers in technology, engineering and computing.

As mentioned previously, only four policies were placed in the ‘don’t know’ category by more than ten respondents. These four policies (Policies 9, 15, 22, 36) are all contained in this grouping. In reviewing these policies, the common theme emerging is the notion of encouraging girls/women to think about careers traditionally dominated by men. Women are specifically mentioned in the policies, and so these policies could be argued to have some overlap with the ‘temperamental’ policies. They are not, however, targeting women’s problems in the workplace as such. Rather, they are trying to promote the breaking down of the gendered nature of some occupations. Although respondents could not agree on a specific category in which the policies could be placed, they did see a similarity amongst these policies. This overlap is reinforced by the placement of the group N₁ to the left of the vertical axis, tending towards the temperamental group T₁.

The discussion of Kanter's 'role related' model in section 4.2 does include reference to policies oriented toward changing the individual's role perceptions. Respondents, however, seemed to distinguish between the 'role related' policies aimed at assisting employees to cope with their work and family roles and those seeking to break down the gendered nature of some occupations. This would suggest that two subcategories for the 'role related' model need to be added to Kanter's scheme — one that contains work and family policies (R_1) and one that contains policies concerning non-traditional careers for women (N_1).

The other group, O_1 (opportunities), contains six policies:

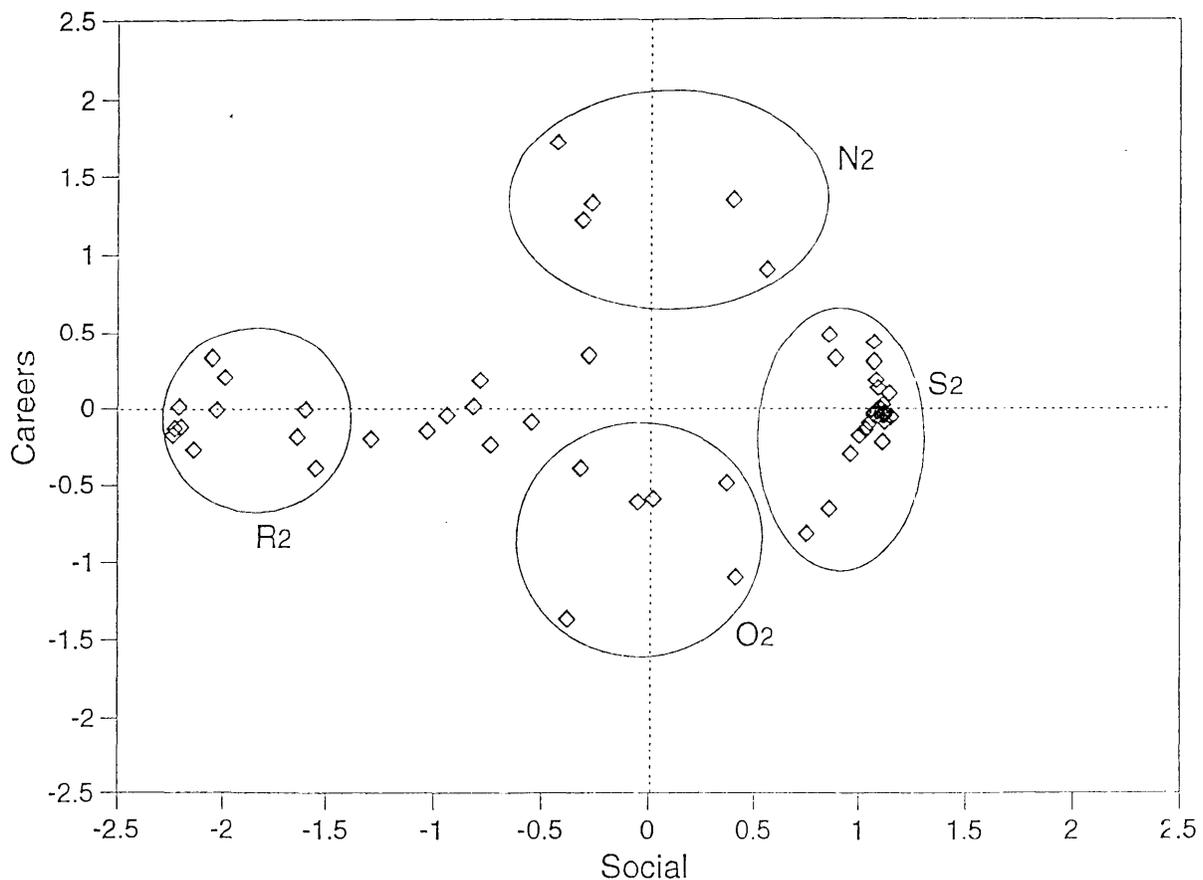
5. Career counselling available one day a week and career development workshops conducted throughout year.
8. Career development courses aimed to provide participants with a variety of tools to manage their own careers and outline career options both within and outside the business units.
12. Efforts taken to make women cross-train in positions.
21. Program for secretarial staff to increase technical/professional skill bases.
26. Company continued to encourage females to seek out higher skilled jobs and facilitated this process by continuing to make training readily available.
29. Female employees are actively encouraged to participate in workplace committees.

The distinction that can be made between these six policies (O_1) and those contained in the previous group could be that, whereas the first five policies (N_1) concerned non-traditional careers for women, these six policies were targeted more towards enhancing women's opportunities within the careers in which they are currently found. There appears to be a future orientation in N_1 compared to the present orientation of O_1 . A review of the frequency counts found that respondents were fairly evenly divided between placing the policies in the 'temperamental' and 'social structural' categories. Yes, the policies were specifically aimed at women and yes, the policies required some action by the organisations — but, in the eyes of respondents, it seems that neither of these categories by themselves adequately captured the essence of these policies. It seems that an additional category representing these career 'opportunities' policies, O_1 ,

may be necessary to enhance Kanter's scheme. Rather than a three category model, a four category model may better represent the diversity of affirmative action policies.

As Kruskal's STRESS values suggested a three dimension solution best captured the multidimensional space for the affirmative action policies, in Figure 4.3 the third dimension (SOCIAL) is depicted. The horizontal axis labelled SOCIAL appears to separate policies on the basis of social influences. The group R₂ includes policies concerned with balancing work and family (for example, Policy 7, 'increased part-time employment opportunities to allow employees to combine paid employment with home maker activities'), while the group S₂ is concerned with efforts to remove biases within the organisation which reflect traditional roles for women and men (for example, Policy 14, 'women actively recruited for positions previously exclusively held by men').

Figure 4.3: MDS — Social and Careers



An interesting feature of the group R₂ is that it reinforces the categorisation of 'role related' policies along the work and family lines evident in the group R₁ in Figure 4.2. The group S₂ is made up of 27 policies, 22 of which were clearly categorised as 'social structural' by the vast majority of respondents. The other five policies included in S₂ are:

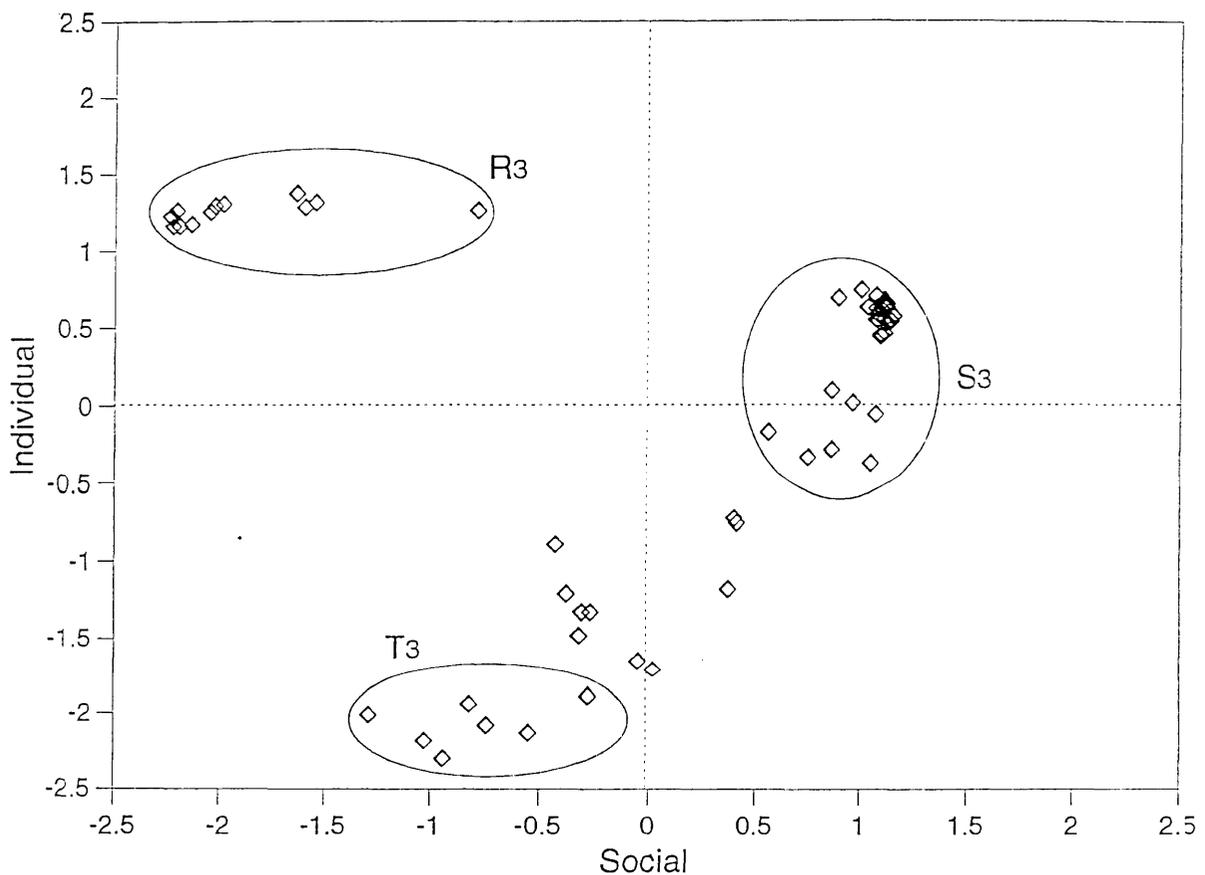
14. Women actively recruited for positions previously exclusively held by men.
20. Particular attention focused on training and skill formation opportunities for lower paid workers.
34. Create career paths for females by restructuring work areas.
44. Training needs analysis done for training opportunities for secretarial staff.
45. Management development program at tertiary institution extended to women.

The frequency counts obtained from the initial analysis of responses for these five policies indicate that the majority of respondents felt these policies reflected changes in organisational processes and so placed them in the 'social structural' (74, 62, 68, 59 and 62 per cent respectively). It seemed that others, however, tended to focus on the application of the processes to women and so placed them in the 'temperamental' category, while a small number of respondents just didn't know how to place them. It would seem that as most respondents agreed it was fundamentally a process change that was occurring in each of these policies, then the types of policies could be grouped with the 'social structural' policies. The overlap between these five policies was also evident in the frequency of a second category nominated by respondents for each of these policies. There were over 20 per cent of respondents nominating a second category for each policy.

The vertical axis in Figure 4.3 which I have labelled CAREERS distinguishes between the groupings of non-traditional careers (N₂) and opportunities (O₂). These groupings are identical to the groups N₁ and O₁ emerging from the CAREERS dimension in Figure 4.2.

In Figure 4.4, the SOCIAL and INDIVIDUAL dimensions of the MDS are presented in relation to each other. As in Figure 4.3 the horizontal axis SOCIAL distinguishes between the ‘role related’ (R₃) and ‘social structural’ (S₃) categories. Similarly, the vertical axis INDIVIDUAL reinforces the distinction between the ‘temperamental’ (T₃) and ‘role related’ (R₃) policies seen in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.4: MDS — Social and Individual



While Kanter’s categorisation of affirmative action policies as temperamental, role related and social structural may have captured the essential features of affirmative action as practised in the US in the 1970s, it seems it does not adequately reflect the diversity of affirmative action policies in Australia nearly twenty years later. The responses from affirmative action coordinators suggest the categorisation should be extended to include sub-categorisation of the role related categorisation (into policies concerning balancing work and family and those concerning non-traditional careers)

and the addition of an ‘opportunities’ category (representing efforts to enhance opportunities for women within their present careers). In Figure 4.5, a diagrammatic representation of the extended categorisation scheme which emerged in Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 can be seen. The key features are that the role related category is divided into two sub-categories (work and family and non-traditional careers) and a new category, opportunities, has been added.

Figure 4.5: Types of affirmative action policies in Australia

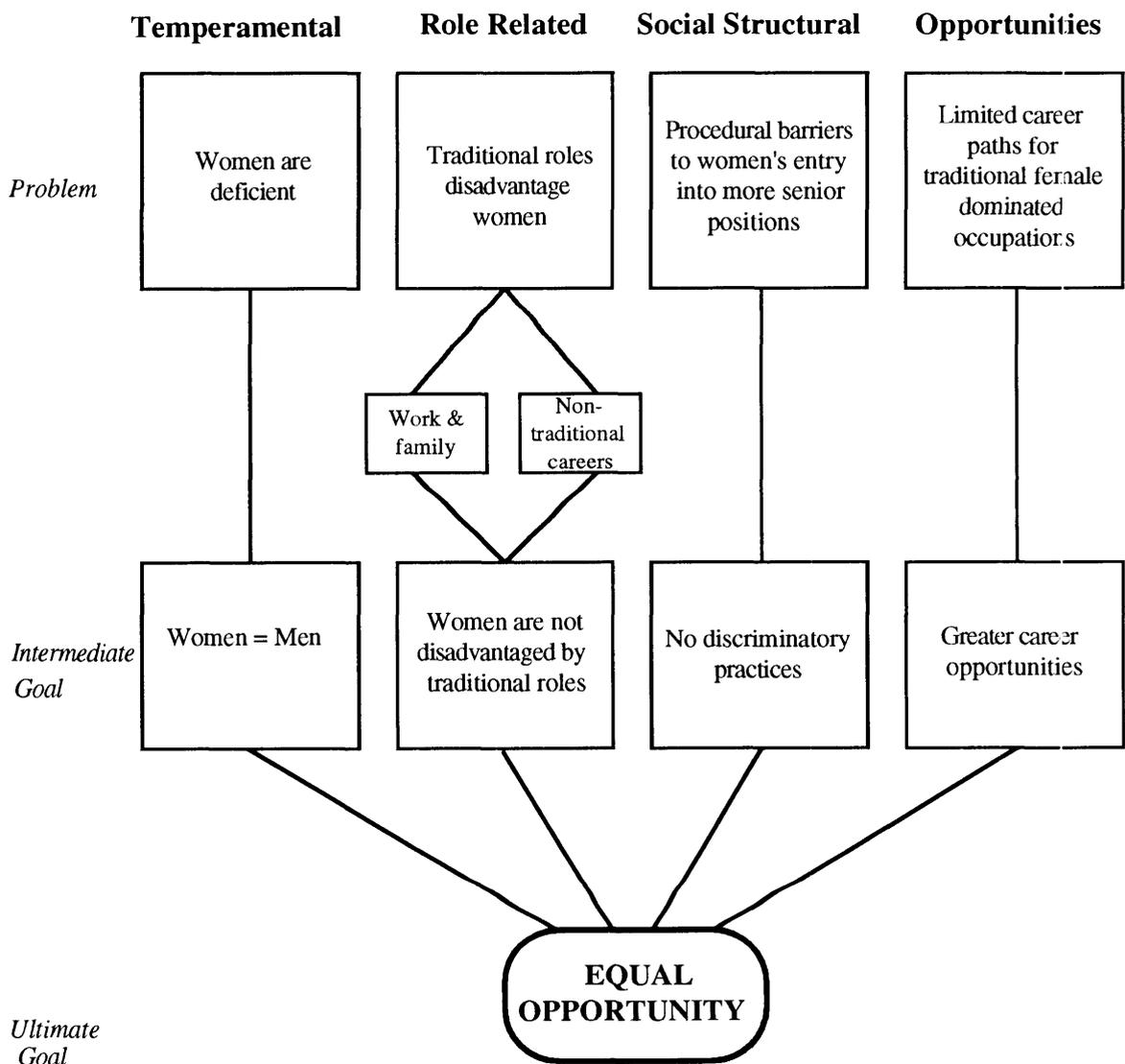


Table 4.7: Categorisation of Policies

Temperamental	Role Related — Work & family	Social Structural	Opportunities
<p>3. Workshops and seminars which give particular emphasis to the problems women encounter in the business community.</p> <p>4. Developed local Management Development program aimed specifically at women below a certain level in a bid to 'fast track' their development as managers.</p> <p>6. Networking process been maintained to help discuss and address women's issues.</p> <p>19. Image and communication seminar for women which focused on how to present a professional image in the workplace.</p> <p>23. Sessions for females only to discuss how their goals are being achieved in the workplace.</p> <p>50. Formal mentoring system for women employees introduced.</p> <p>11. Secretarial Improvement Group to develop secretarial role within the department and to enhance team work, team spirit and commitment.</p> <p>12. Efforts taken to make women cross-train in positions.</p>	<p>7. Increased part-time employment opportunities to allow employees to combine paid employment with home maker activities.</p> <p>10. Specific attention given to leave arrangements, working time arrangements and application of benefits whilst on maternity leave.</p> <p>13. Family, sick and paternity leave policies introduced. Employees now have days recorded as sick leave or leave to take care of a child, partner, dependent, rather than accumulate credits per annum.</p> <p>18. Child care booklet now used to advise staff of options when applying for maternity leave.</p> <p>28. Efforts made to ensure training sessions held in work hours.</p> <p>31. Revision of child care policy involved extension to all staff of existing facility for the payment of child care expenses by sacrifice of pre-tax salary.</p> <p>35. Consultation with Council, State and Federal government about the joint funding by the company and the Council of a child care centre.</p> <p>41. Relocation program for families moving from Newcastle to Melbourne.</p> <p>49. Guidelines to Working at Home were produced, marking the formal introduction of flexible working practices in the company.</p> <p>57. A new award includes a clause covering hours of work which will give greater flexibility and be "family friendly" to majority of employees.</p> <p>30. Staff vacancy notices sent out to women on maternity leave;</p> <p>53. Changes to flexible remuneration policy for senior employees to include the opportunity to pay child care fees, school fees and aged care fees from pre-tax dollars</p>	<p>1. Internal vacancies advertised and women encouraged to apply.</p> <p>2. Graduate development program reviewed to ensure individual merit is the primary consideration in offering sponsorship.</p> <p>16. All in-house publications have been designed to ensure equitable representation of women.</p> <p>17. A formal policy with regard to sexual harassment has been designed and communicated to all staff.</p> <p>24. Those involved in remuneration review process have been trained to be conscious of avoiding gender bias.</p> <p>25. EEO complaints procedures distributed and posted on bulletin boards.</p> <p>32. Distribution of sexual harassment posters for noticeboards.</p> <p>33. Analysis of training levy allocation has led to policy that all employees receive 5 days of training per annum.</p> <p>37. Company adopted set of operating guidelines to ensure any factory modifications or design/installation of new equipment will not require any employee to lift greater than 16kg.</p> <p>38. New induction program outlines commitment to EO and intolerance of any forms of harassment or discrimination.</p> <p>39. All vacancies advertised internally first ensuring all employees given equal opportunity to gain promotions and transfers within the company.</p> <p>40. Annual staff review system in place, whereby staff are encouraged to state career path and at same time encouraged to pursue training.</p> <p>42. Succession plans reviewed to ensure no bias in identifying potential successors.</p> <p>43. Recruitment practices reviewed and altered to ensure a woman interviewee on panel.</p>	<p>5. Career counselling available one day a week and career development workshops conducted throughout year.</p> <p>8. Career development courses aimed to provide participants with a variety of tools to manage their own careers and outline career options both within and outside the business units.</p> <p>21. Program for secretarial staff to increase technical/professional skill bases.</p> <p>26. Company continued to encourage females to seek out higher skilled jobs and facilitated this process by continuing to make training readily available.</p> <p>29. Female employees are actively encouraged to participate in workplace committees.</p>

Table 4.7: Categorisation of Policies (contd)

Temperamental	Role Related — Non-traditional	Social Structural	Opportunities
	<p>9. Ongoing effort to attract women into seagoing careers eg large posters of women working on vessels;</p> <p>15. Company sponsored Women in Management unit produced for Year 11 students;</p> <p>22. Sponsorship of Women in Engineering program at University of Wollongong;</p> <p>27. Revision of apprenticeship brochure to encourage girls to apply; and</p> <p>36. Personnel officer encouraged female students at local schools to pursue careers in technology, engineering and computing.</p>	<p>46. Introduced improved psychological assessments for incoming staff at all levels, to improve the “job fit”.</p> <p>47. Staff appraisal system now places much greater emphasis on comprehensive list of competencies against which to assess performance and identifying training and development needs.</p> <p>48. Salary system now combines clerical/secretarial support staff into management and professional pay scales.</p> <p>51. Enterprise agreements in major manufacturing sites emphasised commitment to skills acquisition and career paths to all employees.</p> <p>52. Clear guidelines established for approval of company assistance for employees returning to study so that applications could be assessed solely on their merit.</p> <p>54. Aiming to achieve gender balance when positions become vacant.</p> <p>55. “Targeted selection” courses to ensure recruitment and selection process free of discriminatory practices.</p> <p>56. Major review of administrative and clerical functions, leading to a significant number of reclassifications of women employees.</p> <p>20. Particular attention focused on training and skill formation opportunities for lower paid workers.</p> <p>44. Training needs analysis done for training opportunities for secretarial staff.</p> <p>45. Management development program at tertiary institution extended to women.</p> <p>14. Women actively recruited for positions previously exclusively held by men.</p> <p>34. Create career paths for females by restructuring work areas.</p>	

In Table 4.7, the types of policies included in each of the categories are presented. While there may be differences between individual policies in each of the categories, the similarities between the policies in each category appear to the respondent population (that is, the affirmative action coordinators) to be more salient than the differences.

I am not suggesting this amended scheme for categorising affirmative action policies is without problems. All classification schemes have their limitations (Bailey, 1994). No classification scheme which seeks to reduce such a diverse range of policies to simpler groupings will capture the complexity of the specific policies or the different motivators driving the choice of particular policies. There are clearly a variety of policies contained within each of the five categories. The scheme does, however, provide one means of describing affirmative action policies which may enhance our understanding of affirmative action as it is practised in Australia in the 1990s. The scheme makes it explicit that affirmative action policies are not homogeneous; that a range of policies are contained within affirmative action is evident from the categorisation scheme presented above.

4.8 Categorising affirmative action policies in Australia

To describe the types of affirmative action policies being practised in Australia in terms of the categories described above entailed revisiting the public reports submitted to the Affirmative Action Agency. A complete analysis of the affirmative action policies would have required reviewing the more than two thousand reports submitted to the Agency. In view of the large population, one feasible approach to reviewing the nature of the affirmative action policies was to focus on a sample of reports. From Braithwaite's work on substantive compliance (see section 4.2 of this thesis) and discussions with staff from the Agency familiar with the annual reports submitted by organisations, it seemed that only a relatively small percentage of the eligible business units were, in fact, reporting real program development. Rather than reviewing all the

public reports for 1990/1991 to 1992/93, a purposeful sampling approach (Singleton *et al.*, 1993) was taken to select information-rich reports to review. Information-rich in this case was defined as those reports identified as containing some indication of the development of the reporting unit's affirmative action programs.

A rating system was developed by the staff of the Affirmative Action Agency for assessing a company's performance in each of the eight steps of the legislation. This assessment scheme appeared to be a useful means of identifying companies which were reporting some efforts to comply with the spirit of the legislation. According to this definitions-based rating system, performance is determined from the responses to each of the steps contained in the public reports and whether mention is made of specific policies. If the business unit meets specific criteria for each step it is coded as 'Good Step X' by the Agency. For example, if the employer meets all three (3) of the following criteria for Step 1:

The employer has indicated that:

- the business unit has issued an affirmative action policy statement to all employees;
- the affirmative action policy statement includes at least three of the following: reference to the legislative requirements of the Act; nominates a responsible officer; states a commitment to the principles of affirmative action for women; outlines strategies for action in the affirmative action program; and seeks support from all staff in implementing the affirmative action program;
- the policy has been distributed in at least 2 of the following ways: newsletter/bulletin/pamphlet; memo/newsletter; notice boards; via supervisors or section heads; included in induction program; with pay slip or salary advice;

and

- a copy of the policy statement is provided,

the business unit is coded as a 'Good Step 1' by the Agency. A similar set of criteria hold for the other seven steps. A rating of 'Good Overall Example' is given to those companies that meet the following criteria:

- the report contains the employment profile;
- the employer has ticked the YES boxes (including YES SOME/ALL BOXES) for all of the 8 steps (only 7 steps if the report indicates there is no union presence on site);
- the report has been coded 'Good Step' for at least 3 steps.

As well, there are a series of other key words defined by the Agency for coding organisations that are addressing specific issues. The key words of interest for identifying information-rich reports are:

- award restructuring
- EEO initiatives
- promotion of non-traditional work
- sexual harassment
- indirect discrimination
- training: affirmative action awareness
- training: women's access to training
- training: career planning for women
- Workers With Family Responsibilities (WWFR): child care
- WWFR: career breaks
- WWFR: remainder

Of the 2311 reports submitted for 1991/92, only 54 business units were coded as a 'Good Overall Example' by the Affirmative Action Agency. To extend the sample size I developed additional criteria for identifying companies which had made some effort to develop affirmative action programs. These criteria were:

- a) those organisations which were mentioned at least twice in the other key words (232 business units); and

- b) those organisations mentioned in the Affirmative Action Agency's Triple A List — an annual publication which identifies those companies implementing innovative affirmative action policies — for each of the years 1990, 1991 and 1992 (22 business units).

In total, 308 reports were identified by this criterion sampling approach as apparently implementing programs to facilitate women's employment opportunities in 1991/92. The affirmative action policies for these 308 companies contained in the public reports were then traced from 1990/91 through to 1992/93. As there were 20 reporting units which did not have a continuous record of reporting, these companies were omitted from the analysis. There may be a number of reasons for discontinuous reporting: the reporting unit has merged with another company, and a new 'unit' emerged; the reporting unit may have reduced its staff to less than 80 (the minimum for reporting purposes); the reporting unit may have gone out of business altogether.

Of the 288 reporting units for which the public reports could be traced from 1990/91 to 1992/93, 146 were from Band 1, 42 were from Band 2 and 100 were from Band 3. These 288 reporting units represent 12 per cent of the reports received for 1991/92. This is very similar to the 11 per cent of reports Braithwaite (1993) identified as from companies demonstrating substantive compliance with the legislation by introducing initiatives to improve women's position in the workplace (see section 4.2).

The affirmative action policies contained in the 288 reports were entered onto a database. Using the system of categorisation outlined in Table 4.7, all the policies were labelled as either temperamental (Temp), work and family (W&F), non-traditional (Non-trad), social structural (Soc struct) or opportunities (Opps) by the author. For validation purposes an independent judge also categorised the policies. The other judge was a colleague within the Department of Marketing and Management who was 'naive' in the sense that she did not have any prior experience with the affirmative action legislation or the categorisation scheme. She familiarised herself with the descriptors of

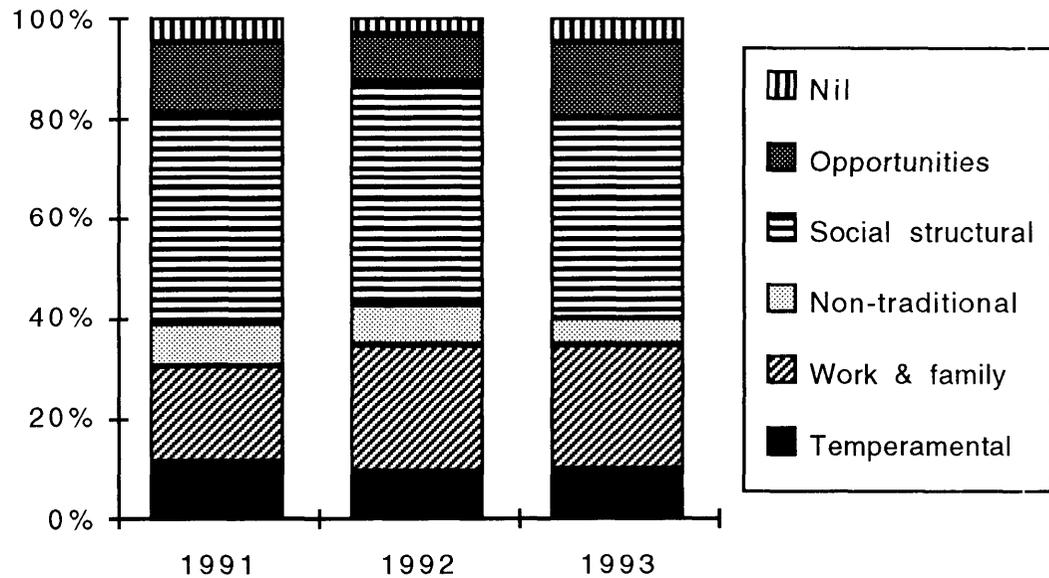
the categories and the categorisation outlined in Table 4.7 and sorted the affirmative action policies on the database accordingly.

The agreement rate between the two categorisations was 96 per cent for the 1990/91 categorisation, 91 per cent for the 1991/92 categorisation and 95 per cent for the 1992/93 categorisation. Differences in judgement primarily related to whether certain policies should be categorised as ‘opportunities’ or ‘temperamental’, because of the different emphasis being given to whether the policies specifically mentioned women and career development. In cases of disagreement, we discussed the reasons for our decisions and reached consensus. That these two categories, opportunities and temperamental, appeared to be somewhat related was also evident in the survey respondents’ categorisation (see section 4.7). The final categorisation can be seen in Table 4.8 (by number of policies) and Figure 4.6 (as percentages). As well, those reporting units indicating that nothing was being done in the affirmative action domain have also been included (Nil). The most common type of policies implemented were clearly the ‘social structural’ policies (42%). ‘Work & family’ policies were the next most commonly implemented (23%).

Table 4.8: Affirmative action policies, 1990/91 – 1992/93

	—Role related—					
	<i>Temp</i>	<i>W&F</i>	<i>Non-trad</i>	<i>Soc struct</i>	<i>Opps</i>	<i>Nil</i>
1990/91	60	103	45	227	76	24
1991/92	49	130	41	232	50	16
1992/93	52	132	28	212	83	23

Figure 4.6: Distribution of affirmative action policies, 1990/91 – 1992/93



An additional 25 reports were randomly selected from the public reports held by the Affirmative Action Agency. These reports were reviewed to check that the criteria for defining information-rich cases did not omit reports containing well-developed and/or innovative affirmative action programs. Of these 25 companies, 15 (64 per cent) reported having no affirmative action policies in place, and the other 10 companies (36 per cent) generally reported fewer policies than the business units identified as ‘good performers’ through the purposeful-sampling. As only seven per cent of the business units identified as ‘good performers’ reported having no affirmative action policies in place, this significantly higher level of inaction (64 per cent) of the randomly selected business units would seem to support the purposeful-sampling method employed. That is, I mined rich information.

Kanter’s observations of affirmative action practices in the US in the 1970s (Kanter, 1976) led her to conclude that the most prevalent model for addressing inequality of opportunity was the ‘temperamental’ model. There were, she argued, more affirmative

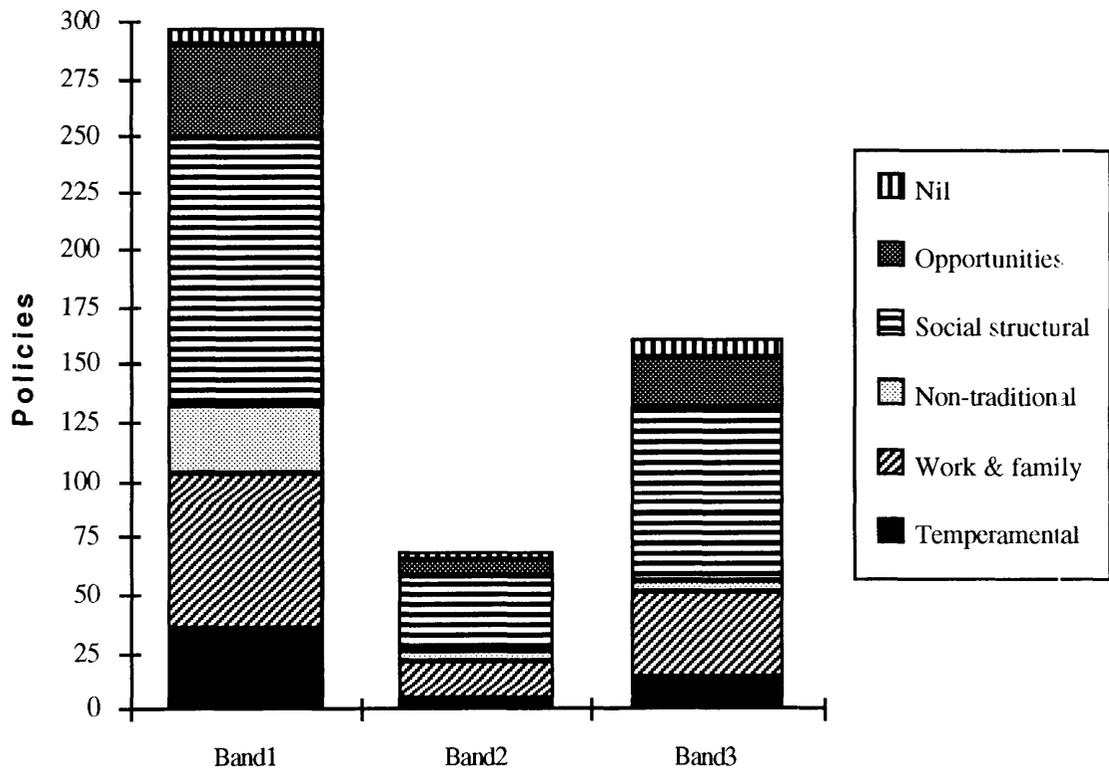
action policies designed to enhance women's skills than those designed to challenge the division of family responsibilities and traditional roles or to address employment practices within organisations. The categorisation of the affirmative action policies contained in the 288 reports would suggest this is not the case for Australian organisations in the 1990s. From Figure 4.6 (and Appendix 3) it is clear that 'social structural' and 'work & family' policies are more widespread across each Band than 'temperamental' policies.

That 'social structural' policies are the affirmative action policies most commonly implemented by Australian organisations may be understood with reference to the anti-discrimination legislation. The interaction of anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action legislation may explain the apparent popularity of social structural policies. It may be that the punitive aspects of the anti-discrimination legislation are driving companies' efforts to remove discriminatory barriers within their personnel processes — to tidy up their personnel policies — rather than compliance with the more pro-active, but comparatively 'toothless', nature of the affirmative action legislation.

The prevalence of 'work & family' policies may reflect the efforts by the Work & Family Unit within the Department of Industrial Relations and some unions and women's groups to encourage organisations to develop strategies to help employees balance work and family and the inclusion of such considerations in award restructuring. Some policies make a direct reference to the impact of awards (for example, Policy 57 is 'a new award includes a clause covering hours of work which will give greater flexibility and be 'family friendly' to majority of employees').

In Figure 4.7 the affirmative action policies by category have been averaged for the three years 1991–1993 across Bands (the actual number of policies in each category by Band can be seen in Appendix 3).

Figure 4.7: Average number of affirmative action policies by Band, 1991–1993



One noticeable difference across Bands is the greater frequency of the ‘non-traditional’ sub-category in larger companies (Band 1) relative to the smaller companies (Bands 2 and 3). This sub-category encompasses policies which seek to challenge traditionally held views in society about the appropriate roles for women and men (for example, Policy 36 is ‘personnel officer encouraged female students at local schools to pursue careers in technology, engineering and computing’). As these policies could be argued to be addressing deficiencies in the larger structure of society, rather than immediate problems of the organisation, it may not be surprising that larger companies, with their greater access to resources, are more active in this area than smaller companies.

What is not immediately apparent from Table 4.8 and Figure 4.7 is the fact that many organisations did not confine their affirmative action programs to only one category. Although some had policies from all the categories, it was more common to find that if

organisations appeared to implementing policies from more than one category, they were implementing both 'social structural' and 'work & family' policies.

It would seem that those responsible for implementing affirmative action policies in Australia do not necessarily subscribe to only one means of redressing inequality of opportunity. In Figure 4.1, the three categories of affirmative action policies suggested by Kanter (1976) ('temperamental', 'role related' and 'social structural') were presented in a unidimensional format, as though they were mutually exclusive. This analysis of the affirmative action policies implemented by a sample of Australian organisations since 1990/91 suggests that Kanter's scheme for classification should be expanded to include sub-categories of the role related policies ('work & family' and 'non-traditional') and another category of policies ('opportunities') if it is to better describe the practice of affirmative action in Australia in the 1990s (see Figure 4.5). Moreover, rather than a unidimensional representation, the analysis suggests the categories would be better viewed from a multidimensional perspective. Not only do organisations implement policies from more than one category, but affirmative action coordinators often see more than one type of category in a policy. An 'either/or' approach to describing the types of policies implemented by an organisation would appear to be too limiting. This system for categorising affirmative action policies provides a means of depicting the multiplicity of affirmative action. Importantly, the practice of affirmative action within organisations must be considered from a multi-dimensional, rather than a uni-dimensional, perspective.

4.9 Summary

The analysis of affirmative action presented in this chapter suggests that the practice of affirmative action in Australia in the 1990s is somewhat different to Kanter's (1976) description of affirmative action in the US in the 1970s. Rather than simply viewing women as deficient and trying to 'fix' them, as Kanter (1976) indicated was common in the US, Australian organisations apparently complying with the spirit of the legislation

seem to be perceiving the nature of the problem of inequality of opportunity as a more complex phenomenon requiring a greater diversity of responses.

From the review of policies implemented by seemingly 'good performers' in the affirmative action domain in Australia, the most commonly implemented policies appear to be those addressing the personnel practices within the organisation; that is, 'social structural' policies. It does appear, however, that some organisations apparently complying with the spirit of the legislation are not confining themselves to 'procedural clean-up' (social structural) policies. Policies are also being implemented which recognise the limitations family roles have placed on women in the past and efforts have been made to adapt work patterns to overcome these limitations. These 'work & family' policies are overwhelmingly targeted at women. Efforts have been made to expanding career opportunities in traditional 'female' jobs and some of the larger companies have sought to attract women to non-traditional careers. It seems that some companies, albeit a relatively small number, are trying to take on a 'longer agenda' to equal opportunities (Cockburn, 1989).

An important caveat to this analysis of affirmative action policies is that it concerns only 12 per cent of the reports submitted to the Affirmative Action Agency. Many other organisations are apparently doing little or nothing to comply with the spirit of the affirmative action legislation (Braithwaite, 1992). The analysis of the affirmative action policies contained in the reports of 25 randomly selected companies would seem to support this apparent inactivity.

How people 'see' the world very much influences the way in which they behave. It affects their personal decisions in terms of their own choices of how they behave and also influences their behaviour toward others (Thomas, 1951; Kast and Rosenzweig, 1985; Mullins, 1993). Employees' perceptions of how affirmative action policies are practised within their organisation have an important influence on their behavioural responses to affirmative action (Heilman, 1994). Having categorised the types of affirmative action policies being implemented in Australia and their relative prevalence,

it is appropriate to explore how those affected by the policies perceive them. Are there particular types of policies which are seen as more effective than others? Are there policies which are viewed more or less favourably by employees? Exploring such issues from the perspective of those who have experienced affirmative action — the insiders — may increase our knowledge base concerning the practical effects of particular types of affirmative action policies and may enhance implementation of affirmative action within organisations.

Chapter 5

Evaluating Affirmative Action Policies — The Issues

Equal employment opportunity for women refers to a situation in which 'women have fair and equal access to employment opportunities and benefits, and are not inhibited from taking up those opportunities and benefits through the operation of barriers' (Affirmative Action Agency, 1990: 83).

(Kramar, 1991: 61)

5.1 Introduction

Evaluation of public policies has become increasingly important for both justifying ongoing support for the policies and for identifying means of improving public policy (Ferguson, 1989); and the affirmative action legislation is no exception. Evaluation of the affirmative action legislation has taken on greater significance in light of the contention surrounding the requirement that private sector organisations develop and report on efforts to improve employment opportunities for women. While many of the evaluation efforts for affirmative action have tended to focus on quantitative changes to women's employment status, in this study an alternative approach is presented. This alternative approach seeks to build on the quantitative measures by including employees' perceptions of their work environment and affirmative action. The inclusion of these perceptions can add an important qualitative dimension to the debate about the effectiveness of affirmative action.

In this chapter, previous efforts to assess the impact of the affirmative action legislation are discussed as background for understanding the methods employed in this study. In the following section, the increasing pressure on government agencies in Australia to evaluate public policies and programs, with particular reference to the affirmative action legislation, is discussed. The ongoing debate concerning the use of quantitative versus qualitative methods in evaluations is briefly summarised in section 5.3. This debate provides a basis for understanding the evaluation processes employed in the Affirmative Action Agency's review of the affirmative action legislation.

The various evaluation projects used in reviewing the affirmative action legislation carried out under the auspices of the Affirmative Action Agency are summarised in section 5.4. In section 5.5 other, more general quantitative measures relating the socio-economic position of women to men, developed by the Office of the Status of Women (OSW, 1992), are briefly summarised and the limitations of these broad social measures as indicators of the 'effectiveness' of affirmative action programs are presented.

In sections 5.6 and 5.7, a comparison of employment statistics between organisations apparently complying with the spirit of the legislation and those apparently demonstrating less commitment is presented as an alternative quantitative approach to assessing the impact of affirmative action on women's employment status. No definitive conclusions about the impact of affirmative action on women's employment status can be drawn from the findings of this comparative analysis. In section 5.8, the relevance of exploring employees' perceptions of their work environments and the affirmative action policies implemented within their organisations is considered as an alternative approach to considering the effectiveness of affirmative action. While recognising the importance of monitoring women's status across a range of employment indicators, my study aimed to add to the information gained through these indicators by incorporating women's perceptions of affirmative action and their employment opportunities into the debate about affirmative action. In so doing, it sought to capture the multidimensionality of women's employment experiences.

5.2 Evaluation of the affirmative action legislation

By the mid-1980s, it was clear that evaluation of specific public policies or programs was becoming increasingly important for justifying ongoing support (summative evaluations) as well as providing information about how programs could be improved (formative evaluations) (Department of Finance, 1987; Ferguson, 1989). Within a year of the enactment of the Affirmative Action Act in 1986, the federal government had issued guidelines to assist government agencies in evaluating government programs, including advice that all government programs should be evaluated at least once every

three to five years, as part of the Financial Management Improvement Program (FMIP). The aim of the FMIP was to encourage government agencies to use their resources in a more efficient and effective manner. The FMIP sought to focus government agencies attention on 'the management of programs and the achievement of objectives rather than the administration of programs and control of resource inputs' (Department of Finance, 1987: iii).

In the development stages of the Affirmative Action Act, the architects of the legislation had recognised the movement in government circles towards ensuring evaluations were carried out on all government programs, particularly for programs which were considered somewhat controversial (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 1984a). In detailing the functions and powers of the Director of the Affirmative Action Agency, two evaluative functions were prescribed in the Act. These were:

10(1)(d) to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of affirmative action programs in achieving the purposes of this Act; ...and

10(1)(g) to review the effectiveness of this Act in achieving its purposes.

The question arises, of course, of how to operationalise 'effectiveness' in light of the goals stated in the legislation and the ongoing debate about what is meant by equality of opportunity (see Chapter 3). The legislation did not provide any guidance on how to monitor and evaluate the 'effectiveness' of particular affirmative action programs, nor did it suggest how the Agency should go about reviewing the 'effectiveness' of the Act in achieving its stated goals; that is, the removal of discriminatory barriers limiting women's employment opportunities and promoting equal opportunity for women in employment matters.

At a general level, the guidelines developed by the Department of Finance (1987) to assist government agencies to evaluate programs provide detail on a range of evaluation approaches which can be applied to program activities. An implicit assumption within the guidelines is a preference for quantitative rather than qualitative approaches to evaluation. In the next section, the debate surrounding these two approaches will be

reviewed as background for understanding the types of evaluation approaches recommended in the government guidelines for evaluation, and the approaches taken by the Affirmative Action Agency in carrying out its Effectiveness Review of the affirmative action legislation in 1992.

5.3 The quantitative vs qualitative debate

Evaluation research is the systematic application of social research procedures in assessing the conceptualisation of and design, implementation, and utility of social intervention programs.

(Rossi & Freeman, 1985: 19)

As Rossi and Freeman's definition of evaluation research suggests, there is no single approach which characterises 'evaluation' or 'evaluation research'. There are many different ways in which evaluation research can be carried out (Rossi & Freeman, 1985; Burstein & Freeman, 1985; Patton, 1987). An evaluation could emerge from a diverse range of activities — it may be a small, laboratory-like 'true' experiment, or a large scale national quasi-experiment, or it may be a time series analysis, or a monitoring process involving a sophisticated management information system, or it may involve data recorded by a small number of observers, or it may be an assessment that is based on unobtrusive data collection methods (Burstein & Freeman, 1985). Similarly, there is no single descriptor that sufficiently captures the term 'evaluator'. There are a diverse range of practitioners from varying disciplines, including sociology, education, health, criminal justice, statistics, economics, social psychology to name a few, who undertake evaluation research. Different practitioners can be evaluating the same phenomenon, but because of their particular disciplinary orientations, they may be adopting completely different methods to explore different aspects of the phenomenon (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991). Clearly then, the complex process of evaluation cannot be represented adequately by a single descriptor.

For each type of evaluation, both quantitative and qualitative, there is a common denominator; that is, any evaluation involves conversion of data into information to assist decision-making (Department of Finance, 1987). The judgement of what

legitimately makes up 'data', however, differs substantially across researchers and disciplines. With such a range of activities and researchers involved in evaluation research, it is not surprising that there has been considerable debate among practitioners as to the relative merits of the various approaches to evaluation research (Patton, 1978; Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Rossi & Freeman, 1985; Ferguson, 1989). One of the most common points of dispute among practitioners concerns the use of qualitative or quantitative methods in the evaluation process.

For quantitative methods, the focus is on measurement of phenomena while for qualitative methods, describing and understanding the phenomenon observed is the object (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). According to Patton (1980: 13):

Qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness and detail of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, require the use of standardised measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned.

Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. A strength of the quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the responses of a large number of people to a defined set of questions or issues, which facilitates comparison and statistical aggregation of the data (Patton, 1980). One is able then, to provide a broad, often generalised, set of findings in a concise fashion. How informative such aggregation may be is open to question. Cooksey and Gates (1995: 6) point out that research outcomes emerging from such methods tend to focus on the 'average person' or the 'average outcome':

(h)owever, the 'average' person or outcome is a myth — you may go a lifetime and never observe an entity whose scores on relevant behavioural dimensions take on the 'average' values. This, then, creates a problem for practice.

By and large, qualitative methods generate a vast amount of detailed information concerning a smaller number of cases, which means that our understanding of specific cases increases, but that the generality of the findings is reduced. In particular, qualitative methods can provide some notion of the depth and richness of the material

constituting the phenomenon under study, but they generally can not shed light on its relative frequency. Qualitative methods tend to be exploratory and may provide additional hypotheses for testing or act as a heuristic for further exploration.

Quantitative methods have traditionally tended to dominate evaluation research and, according to Bernstein and Freeman (1975), be more highly valued than qualitative methods. This is illustrated in a study by Bernstein and Freeman (1975) in which they carried out a meta-evaluation of 236 evaluation reports from a range of disciplines to determine the quality of evaluation research. Their rating scheme for assessing the quality of these reports clearly demonstrates a preference for quantitative methods. From their review, it seems that 'what emerges is a picture of high quality evaluation as complete quantitative data obtained through an experimental design and analysed with sophisticated statistical techniques' (Patton, 1978: 205). This bias in favour of experimental, quantitative approaches to evaluation research can, in part, be understood in the context of the development of evaluation research. According to Reichardt and Cook (1979: 17) when evaluation research was in its early days,

it was assumed that programs could easily be designed to produce desired results and that the purpose of evaluation was merely to verify these anticipated effects. Quite naturally, then, evaluation was drawn toward quantitative methods with their traditional emphasis on verification.

More recently this bias in favour of quantitative approaches to evaluation research has been challenged (Filstead, 1979; Cronbach, 1982; Silverman, 1985). The growing attraction of qualitative research to many researchers is seen in the following statement by Miles (1979):

Qualitative data are attractive for many reasons: they are rich, full, earthy, holistic, 'real', their face validity seems unimpeachable; they preserve chronological flow where that is important, and suffer minimally from retrospective distortion; and they, in principle, offer a far more precise way to assess causality in organisational affairs than arcane efforts like cross-lagged correlations.

In recent years the quantitative vs qualitative debate has become less polarised. It is now well recognised that the methodological debate does not have to be resolved in an 'either/or' fashion (Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Lynch, 1983; Burstein *et al.*, 1985).

Rather, the view that program evaluation can be strengthened when both approaches are included in an evaluation design has gained credence. Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, has become increasingly common (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991). The key to triangulation is the use of dissimilar methods or measures, which do not share the same methodological weaknesses. A richer picture should emerge from the combined results (Cooksey & Gates, 1995).

5.4 The effectiveness review

The need for evaluation of affirmative action was seen as important even before the legislation was enacted. In 1984, a voluntary pilot affirmative action program involving 28 private sector companies and three higher education institutions was conducted. The aim of the programs was to assist Government, employers, unions and employees in identifying how the affirmative action programs would best proceed (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 1984a). As previously noted (see section 5.2), evaluation requirements were also included in the affirmative action legislation. The guidelines developed by the Department of Finance (1987) to assist government agencies in conducting evaluations recommended that evaluations of a program should occur at least once every three to five years. The timing of the Affirmative Action Agency's review of the Act, five years after the legislation had been enacted, was within the recommended period. The Agency's evaluation was called an 'Effectiveness Review' (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b) which suggests the evaluation process was primarily concerned with the questions of whether the program was achieving its objectives and whether the objectives themselves were still relevant and of high priority for the community and government needs.

According to the Department of Finance (1987: 12) a problem frequently facing evaluators seeking to determine whether objectives of a program are being met is that 'often objectives will not be explicitly stated in terms which permit measurement'. Evaluators are then in a position where they have to develop the objectives into

measurable terms themselves. This was the experience of the Affirmative Action Agency.

The objectives of the Affirmative Action Act are presented in the legislation in terms of requirements for employers to improve employment opportunities for women, but no measures were made explicit. More specifically, Section 3(1) of the Act requires that:

- (a) appropriate action is taken to eliminate discrimination by the employer against women in relation to employment matters, and
- (b) measures are taken by the employer to promote equal employment opportunity for women in relation to employment matters.

How to determine whether these objectives were being met was not explicitly outlined in the legislation. As noted in section 5.2, the evaluation guidelines provided in (section 10 of) the legislation were very general — to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of affirmative action programs in achieving the purposes of the Act and to review the effectiveness of the Act in achieving its purposes.

It was left to the Agency to determine how to put these guidelines into practice and into some measurable form. In doing so they identified the following areas, given the objectives of the Act, as relevant for assessment (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b: 126):

1. the awareness of relevant employers of their responsibilities under the Act;
2. the extent to which relevant employers have developed the affirmative action programs required by the Act;
3. the general quality of these programs;
4. the extent to which the programs have been implemented; and
5. the effectiveness of these programs in promoting equal employment opportunity for women.

For assessment of each of these areas, a series of studies were developed by the Agency. Rather than simply relying on their own expertise, the investigations were carried out by academics and external consultants, as well as Agency staff. An external consultant was responsible for reviewing the running of the Agency's operations, while

the academics were involved in projects examining workplace attitudes (Macquarie University, 1991, 1992, 1993), employers' views on compliance (Braithwaite, 1992) and the process of affirmative action implementation (Swinburne University of Technology, 1993). In the following sections, each of these projects will be reviewed.

It is important to note that while the Department of Finance guidelines for evaluation apparently favoured the use of quantitative measures in assessing performance, the Affirmative Action Agency did not limit itself to quantitative measures in its evaluation procedures. In selecting appropriate methods to address the areas it had identified, the Agency recognised the value of employing a combination of methods to assess the impact of the legislation (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b). Rather than confining itself to empirical and quantitative approaches alone, qualitative methods (including case studies) were also employed.

5.4.1 Workplace attitudes

In the 'workplace attitudes survey', the Employment Research Group from Macquarie University was given the brief by the Affirmative Action Agency of establishing a 'benchmark of workplace knowledge, and attitudes to, affirmative action' (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b: 16). Taking a quantitative approach to this task, a survey questionnaire (with set response categories) was devised to assess the levels of awareness of affirmative action among employees and levels of approval for affirmative action (Macquarie University, 1991, 1992, 1993). The questionnaire was distributed to 90 companies over a three year period, 1990–1992. In assessing the extent of employees' knowledge of affirmative action and their feelings about it, the survey aimed to examine the extent to which affirmative action programs were having an impact on the workplace. By collecting data over the three year period, the researchers were including a time dimension to the analysis to better capture the change processes occurring.

The companies surveyed were randomly selected, but only 49 per cent of companies approached in 1990, 31 per cent of companies approached in 1991 and 48 per cent of companies approached in 1992 agreed to participate in the survey. The report of the 1992 study (Macquarie University, 1993) includes data relating to Band 3 companies¹, so the final presentation of data over the three year period is confined to Band 3 companies.

Many of the companies not participating in the survey claimed their affirmative action programs were not far enough advanced to warrant their involvement. Many of the companies clearly stated 'they had "not done enough" with their affirmative action programs' (Macquarie University, 1991: 18).

The authors recognised any findings from the survey were likely to represent a somewhat more optimistic picture of the impact of affirmative action than for the population as a whole, as those electing to participate in the study would be more likely to have an affirmative action program in place than the population as a whole (Macquarie University, 1991).

Even with this apparent positive bias in the sample, only 32 per cent of respondents in 1990 and 30 per cent of respondents in 1991 indicated they were familiar with their organisation's affirmative action program. An important point to keep in mind here is that the questions about awareness of affirmative action were at a very general level. In the 1990 survey, statements did not distinguish between the many different forms affirmative action can take. Although different affirmative action policies and the different implementation strategies used to enact them have a significant influence on individuals' awareness of, and reactions to, affirmative action policies (Heilman, 1994), this level of detail was not sought by the Macquarie team.

In the 1991 and 1992 surveys, additional questions were included in the survey to specifically examine respondents' attitudes towards policies and practices aimed at

¹ It is not clear from the report why there were only Band 3 companies included in the final stage.

redressing past discrimination and facilitating part-time employment at the management level. An interesting finding was that although 80 per cent of respondents concurred with the statement that affirmative action is necessary to ensure equal employment opportunities for women (Macquarie University, 1993: 29), there was some concern about how affirmative action was implemented.

Respondents, particularly men, were not positive about policies and practices that address past discrimination (eg. by providing special training opportunities). Further, they were not positive about policies that would enable people (but usually women) who want to combine paid work and family life to maintain contact with traditional career paths (eg. by having part-time management positions).

(Macquarie University, 1992: 27)

These responses, however, were not placed in the context of the respondents' experiences. Expectations rather than actual experiences of such policies may have been driving their responses. That responses were in fact based on expectations rather than actual experiences could be implied from the lack of any real program development many of the 24 affirmative action coordinators were able to describe when asked to identify the main features of their affirmative action programs.

In three companies it was stated that they did not have a program. Another twelve were unable to describe any 'features' of their programs other than the fact that a policy statement had been used.

(Macquarie University, 1992: 22)

The findings from this study indicated there was 'in-principle' approval of affirmative action. This high approval rating would seem to suggest that the objectives of the legislation were still perceived as relevant in the community. In terms of knowledge of affirmative action programs in the workplace, only one third of respondents were aware that their company had an affirmative action program, yet all companies covered by the survey reported having a program in place. From the findings of Macquarie studies it seems the impact of the programs would appear to have been quite limited in the workplace.

5.4.2 Case studies on affirmative action implementation

Another part of the review process involved nine case studies² on affirmative action implementation prepared by the Swinburne Centre for Women's Studies (Swinburne University of Technology, 1993). The focus taken by the Swinburne team was that of investigating particular program initiatives. The nine case studies were chosen to investigate how affirmative action had been implemented in these private sector organisations and to bring to light strategies that had apparently been 'successful' in removing barriers to women's employment opportunities.

The case studies were developed over a two and a half year period, involving three visits to each company. The approach taken by the Swinburne team could generally be described as qualitative. The main sources of data were interviews conducted with the affirmative action coordinators, management representatives, female employees and trade union representatives. Supplementary interviews were also carried out with 'people who had experience with particular aspects of company practice or affirmative action programs' (Swinburne University of Technology, 1993: 3).

In drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of any affirmative action policies implemented, the authors considered the comments by all interviewees. Those policies determined to be 'successful' and so described in more detail were only those 'where there was solid agreement with an initiative (even if there were reservations about its implementation or other related practices)' (Swinburne University of Technology, 1993: 5). Whether agreement with a policy necessarily means it has actually improved the status of women, or is perceived as improving the opportunities of women, is another question. Agreement that it was a 'good' idea appears to be the basis of deciding whether a policy was successful. For instance, the initiatives of open recruitment advertising, specifically encouraging women to apply for jobs in non-traditional areas and training for managers in fairer processes of recruitment were strongly approved by

² The case study companies had been identified by the Affirmative Action Agency as being innovative in the affirmative action domain.

managers and supervisors. 'The only objection to the new arrangements that were voiced were occasional claims that they had not been fully effective in ensuring that merit was the basis for appointment' (Swinburne University of Technology, 1993: 20)

Whether or not women perceived their employment opportunities had improved does not appear to have been addressed in the Swinburne study. Taking an 'equal outcomes' perspective, the finding that in each case, the initiatives had increased the number of women hired, if only marginally (Swinburne University of Technology, 1993) could be argued to support the claims by O'Donnell and Hall (1988), Thornton, (1990) and Poiner and Wills (1991) that requiring companies to develop affirmative action policies will only have a marginal effect on the actual employment opportunities of women. Alternatively, it could be argued that there has not been sufficient time for the policies to reach their full potential and that there is simply not enough information provided in the published report of the study about employees' perceptions of affirmative action policies, their employment opportunities and the context in which the policies have been implemented, to decide whether it has been effective or not.

5.4.3 Compliance

In providing a compliance evaluation as part of the Effectiveness Review, the Affirmative Action Agency not only measured the reporting rates of companies covered by the legislation (as seen in Table 4.1), it also supported a study by Braithwaite (1992) concerned with ascertaining the extent to which companies were complying with the spirit of the law.

Braithwaite's (1992) work explored industry's perceptions of the desirability and practicability of the affirmative action legislation and its impact on industry and the community (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b). To do this, she interviewed EEO contact officers in 153 of the private sector companies required to report to the Agency. The companies surveyed were distributed across each of the three Bands, representing workplaces with varying proportions of women workers and were geographically

spread through Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Eighty–nine per cent of the companies approached by Braithwaite co–operated in the survey.

From Braithwaite’s (1992) analysis only 11 per cent of companies were found to be making a substantial effort to improve employment opportunities for women. The rest of the companies were found to be somewhat less committed to implementing policies to improve women’s employment opportunities, with 16 per cent judged to be demonstrating no commitment at all to improving women’s employment opportunities (Braithwaite, 1992).

Braithwaite’s data also tended to point to a rather ambivalent attitude towards EEO in the workplace. She concluded that :

1. Most EEO officers expressed commitment to the EEO program, but the majority had not set specific goals for it nor did they believe they were likely to bring about significant improvements in the program in the next 12 months.
2. In the majority of business units, female employees were not seen to be particularly interested in EEO nor were unions reported to be active on EEO issues.
3. ...Senior management was seen to be less sympathetic to the legislation and disbelieving of the need for legislation. At the same time, opposition was not strong. EEO was simply not an issue of interest in the workplace.

(Braithwaite, 1992: ii)

It must be kept in mind that Braithwaite’s work was based on the perceptions of the EEO officers, not the employees themselves. Why such apathy prevailed may be better understood in the context of the employees’ experiences and attitudes towards affirmative action. First hand accounts from employees could better contribute to our understanding of the issues. One of Braithwaite’s recommendations was to set up and support existing information networks to ensure EEO contact persons have a valid reference point for evaluating their programs, rather than relying simply on their own perceptions (Braithwaite, 1992).

From these three studies (Macquarie University, 1991, 1992, 1993; Swinburne University of Technology, 1993; Braithwaite, 1992) the Affirmative Action Agency

(1992b) concluded that while there appeared to be strong support for affirmative action, there was not a corresponding level of knowledge about affirmative action requirements and policies and that the rate of affirmative action progress had been very uneven.

5.4.4 Program performance trends

A further dimension to the compliance evaluation was the work carried out by the Agency tracking the trends in program performance by companies over the period 1988/89–1990/91. Staff of the Agency developed the following rating system for reports:

- Poor: had not issued a policy statement or had not assigned responsibility at a senior level.
- Basic: had issued a policy statement and assigned responsibility at a senior level.
- Medium: had issued a policy statement, assigned responsibility at a senior level and done one or two of the following — consulted unions, consulted employees especially women employees, had reviewed personnel policies and practices, had set objectives and forward estimates, had implemented monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- High: had issued a policy statement, assigned responsibility at a senior level and done three to five of the additional measures included in medium performance.

Tracking the performance of all reporting companies, the Agency concluded that there had been ‘a general improvement in performance during the period with most programs improving or maintaining performance levels’ (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b: 32). As this rating system was based on the quality of the information contained within the reports, little can be concluded about the effects of the policies in the workplace.

5.4.5 Employers’ programs and reports

Another project undertaken as part of the Effectiveness Review was a survey developed by Agency staff to ascertain employers’ views of the reporting requirements for companies. This part of the review process was concerned with analysing the procedures employers were required to follow to ascertain whether the procedures could be improved.

One thousand companies were sent a questionnaire by post, from which there was a 52 per cent response rate. Findings from the survey indicated that 'most employers understood the Eight Steps and supported the Act's framework for development' (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b: 29). In terms of the reporting requirement, half of the respondents indicated that rather than annual reporting, they favoured biennial reporting. That the response rate was just over 50 per cent must be kept in mind when interpreting these findings. It may be there is a bias due to response selectivity (Singleton *et al.*, 1993). The non-respondents may have responded quite differently to the questions.

5.4.6 Framework data on women's employment

That compliance with the spirit of the affirmative action legislation has been uneven (see section 5.4.3) has implications for other, quantitative measures the Affirmative Action Agency employed in its review of the legislation. As part of the review process, the Agency developed a framework for monitoring trends in women's employment drawing from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) employment statistics. Women's work force participation, women's earnings relative to men's and the representation of women across occupations were all part of this framework. For each of the indicators, women's position relative to men's had increased marginally over the period 1987 to 1992 (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b).

Holdcroft (1993: 1) recognised the difficulties associated with attributing a cause and effect relationship to these trends and the affirmative action legislation.

There are many economic and social factors that will have an impact on women's position in the work force. Furthermore, the Act's direct sphere of influence is limited to employers with 100 or more employees and higher education institutions.

It is not possible to analyse the effect of the affirmative action initiatives at the firm level in improving women's employment opportunities from aggregate measures alone, because developments at the firm level which are positive for women's employment

status are generally not reflected adequately in aggregate employment data (Dickens, 1991).

5.5 Other quantitative measures

As discussed in Chapter 2, the anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation in Australia reflected a widespread movement in western industrialised nations to ameliorate gender-based inequality in the labour market (Vogel-Polsky, 1985a). To mark the end of the Decade for Women in 1985, the United Nations sponsored a conference in Nairobi with the theme of *Forward Looking Strategies*. This conference challenged governments to develop comprehensive national policies to eliminate all impediments to the full and equal participation of women in all societies by the year 2000 (OSW, 1992). The Australian response to this was to develop a National Plan of Action for Women to the Year 2000. Sawer (1990) reported that more than 25 000 women across Australia participated in the consultation process from which the National Agenda for Women emerged. Published in 1988, the Agenda was an umbrella document, bringing together many specific national plans which had been developed or were in the process of development at that time (Sawer, 1990). The twenty action plans developed for the first five years of operation were concerned with both the social and economic well-being of women, and include programs concerning consultation and participation in decision-making, education, employment and training, child care, and sex discrimination.

An important component of the National Agenda is the set of gender equality indicators (GEIs) that had been developed by the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to measure the position of women relative to men over a range of social and economic domains (OSW, 1990). The indicators are one means of monitoring the effectiveness of the National Plan of Action in achieving full and equal participation of women in the Australian society, and so are often examined in relation to women's employment opportunities (see, for example, DEET, 1993).

There are 14 gender equality indicators³ to monitor the various dimensions of the programs initiated by the government. These indicators measure the status of education, training, employment, income support, health and family responsibilities of women relative to men. The indicators of particular interest in any discussion of the effectiveness of the affirmative action legislation have generally been concerned with the relative position of women to men in the employment sphere. All the GEIs are shown in Table 5.1. The four indicators often included in the debate about women's status in the workforce (House of Representatives, 1992; Still, 1993; Smith & Hutchinson, 1995) are Labour Force Participation, Occupational Segregation, Work Status and Earnings and a brief review of each follows. See Appendix 4 for a summary of these four indicators for the period 1986–1992.

Table 5.1: Gender equality indicators

<i>Gender Equality Indicator</i>	
No. 1	Educational Attainment
No. 2	School Retention
No. 3	Higher Education Enrolments
No. 4	TAFE Enrolments
No. 5	Apprenticeships
No. 6	Labour Force Participation*
No. 7	Occupational Segregation*
No. 8	Work Status*
No. 9	Earnings*
No. 10	Superannuation Coverage
No. 11	Income Support: Pensions and Benefits
No. 12	Life Expectancy
No. 13	General Health
No. 14	Work and Family

* See Appendix 4 for a summary of these indicators for 1986–1992.

Indicator 6, which measures labour force participation rates suggests that the ratio of females to males in the paid work force had increased over the seven years 1986–1992, particularly in the age groups 25–34, 35–44 and 45–54. The younger two age categories are the most common ages at which women with children withdraw from the paid work force for the purposes of child bearing and rearing. This GEI would suggest that proportionally fewer women of these age groups completely withdrew from the paid work force in 1992 than in 1986.

³ There were originally 11 indicators, but three more were added in 1992.

Indicator 7, the occupational segregation indicator, indicates that the greatest changes to sex ratios have been among the occupations of professionals, health practitioners, social professionals and business professionals. As well, there have been significant increases in the 'already predominantly female occupations of clerks and school teachers' (OSW, 1992: 197). The traditional male occupations (for example, general managers, specialist managers, managing supervisors (other business) and plant and machine operators/drivers) saw little change in the relative proportions of women and men. These data clearly indicated that occupational segregation was a prominent feature of the Australian labour force.

Indicator 8 represents the proportion of employed persons who are either employers or self-employed. Over the period 1986–1992 there were relatively fewer women than men in these categories. Moreover, the GEIs for the employer and self-employed categories for 1992 indicate a fall in women's proportional representation, more so in the employed than the self-employed category.

With respect to the relative earnings of women and men, Indicator 9 shows that for the age groups 15-19, 20-24 and 60+ the earnings of women relative to men increased slightly, but there was no significant improvement for the other groups.

The lack of a significant or consistent pattern from the GEIs makes it difficult to ascertain whether the programs implemented under the National Plan of Action, including the affirmative action legislation, are going any way towards breaking down the barriers to women's full and equal participation in the paid work force. Moreover, as with the employment statistics used by the Affirmative Action Agency (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b), the aggregate nature of the GEIs means it is not possible to identify what policies (if any) implemented at the organisational level to break down discriminatory barriers facing women are improving employment opportunities for women. In terms of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of particular affirmative action policies, these aggregate measures may only be of limited value. They do not allow one to get at the mechanisms for effecting change.

5.6 A comparative approach

The problems associated with aggregate measures of women's employment experiences in assessing the effectiveness of affirmative action policies would suggest a more focused approach to tracing women's employment experiences over the years since the Act was proclaimed, may be warranted. For instance, it could be argued that comparing the employment profiles of those companies with a well-developed affirmative action program and those only submitting an annual report to the Agency, but seemingly doing little to facilitate women's employment opportunities, may shed more light on the effectiveness (or otherwise) of affirmative action. To determine whether there are any differences, Sheridan (1995) examined the employment profiles of the sample of 288 companies identified in section 4.7 as facilitating employment opportunities for women (Sample) and a random sample of 288 companies apparently demonstrating less commitment to the legislation (Control). The statistics collected from the employment profiles were the total number of women and men employed by the reporting unit and the number of women and men in management positions within the company. The employment numbers for those companies with affirmative action initiatives (Sample) and the other companies (Control) are presented in Table 5.2.

The first point to note from the employment profiles is that across the three Bands, the total number of women and men employed in the Sample reporting units was greater than the Control units. It appears that the companies making some effort to implement affirmative action initiatives (Sample) are, on average, larger employers than the randomly selected employers (Control). Another feature that stands out immediately from the employment profiles is that the total number of employees decreased over the three year period 1990/91 to 1992/93. This fall in employment is not unexpected given that these years represent the period in which Australia was experiencing a recession and unemployment rates were increasing nationally. 'Downsizing' was a common occurrence in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Still, 1993). In the reports to the Agency,

Table 5.2: Total employment, 1990/91 and 1992/93⁴

	Women employed (‘000)			Men employed (‘000)		
	1991	1993	% change	1991	1993	% change
<i>Band 1</i> Sample	169.9	165.2	-3	303.1	283.5	-6
Control	109.5	98.2	-10	151.6	127.2	-16
<i>Band 2</i> Sample	16.4	18.0	10	20.7	20.0	-3
Control	13.1	13.3	2	15.4	14.6	-5
<i>Band 3</i> Sample	14.7	14.8	1	16.7	15.8	-5
Control	8.4	8.6	2	13.1	12.8	-3
Total Sample	201.1	198.0	-2	340.5	319.3	-6
Control	131.0	120.2	-8	180.1	154.6	-14

many of the companies referred to the effect the recession was having on their employment profiles⁵.

It seems that both women’s and men’s employment rates fell proportionally less in the Sample companies than they did in the Control companies. Also, women’s employment rates in the Sample companies fell less than women’s employment rates in the Control companies, and men’s employment rates in both the Sample and Control companies. At a very simple level, this could suggest that women’s employment prospects appear brighter in the companies seemingly committed to affirmative action than in those not reporting affirmative action initiatives. This finding is not supported if one looks more closely at the breakdown of employment across Bands and by women’s share of employment.

Breaking down the employment figures by Band (see Table 5.2), one can see that, in absolute terms, women have fared better, or at least have not been hit so hard by the

⁴ For comparative purposes, only two years of data are included in the Tables. The 1991/1992 employment data were not included in the Tables or discussion, as they did not provide any additional insight.

⁵ For example, ‘the general downturn in the economy has impacted on the recruitment requirements of the Division which in turn has made some of our recruitment objectives of the previous report difficult to achieve’ (1990/91, Band 1 company) and ‘retrenchment of staff rather than recruitment over the last 12 months makes it difficult to show a fair account of achievements in attracting women to the company’ (1990/91, Band 1 company).

downsizing of organisations, than men in those companies in Bands 1 and 2 which appear to be doing something to improve employment opportunities for women. In Band 3, although women have a much greater representation of employment in companies with affirmative action programs, the rate of increase in employment over the three year period was slightly greater in those companies without well-developed affirmative action programs.

As defined in Chapter 2, industrial segregation occurs if women (or men) form a higher proportion of workers in an industry than they do in the total labour force (Mumford, 1989). As gender segregation is still very much a feature of the Australian labour market (Burton, 1991), a comparison of women's employment experiences across 'male' and 'female' industries was developed. As women make up 42 per cent of the Australian labour force (ABS, 1993) then those industries in which women make up significantly less than 42 per cent of employees were classified as 'male', those in which significantly more than 42 per cent of employees were women were classified as 'female' and those in which women were proportionally represented were classified as 'mixed sex' industries.

If one looks more closely at women's share of employment in those companies with affirmative action and those companies apparently doing little in the affirmative action area, women have a greater share of total employment in the latter. In Table 5.3, women's share of employment across Bands and across industries is presented.

Only in Band 3 does it appear that women have a greater share of employment in those companies with affirmative action programs than those without. In Bands 1 and 2, women appear to have a greater share (with the exception of Band 1 mixed industries) of employment in the companies without affirmative action programs. As these increases in women's employment are coming from a relatively lower base rate of employment in absolute terms (as seen in Table 5.2), it is difficult to interpret these changes.

Table 5.3: Women's share of employment, 1990/91 and 1992/93

		<i>Women as % of work force</i>							
		Male industries		Female industries		Mixed industries		Total	
		1991	1993	1991	1993	1991	1993	1991	1993
<i>Band 1</i>	Sample	21	21	59	61	49	51	36	37
	Control	23	25	72	71	39	40	42	44
<i>Band 2</i>	Sample	31	30	58	61	45	48	44	47
	Control	33	31	60	61	37	46	46	48
<i>Band 3</i>	Sample	28	28	69	69	50	51	47	48
	Control	26	27	57	58	42	44	39	40

5.6.1 Women's representation in management

Still (1993) found that over the period 1984 to 1992, women had experienced only a slight increase in their representation in management. From her study of over 100 companies in the top '1000' Australian companies, Still (1993) found that women's representation in management in the private sector had not improved over the nine year period. Although women's share of supervisory positions increased between 1984 and 1992, women's share of senior management positions fell. According to Still (1993: 26) '(i)t seems, then, that women were being given less opportunity in management in the private sector despite equal opportunity and affirmative action provisions'. Whether a simple quantitative measure such as that used by Still (1993) adequately captures women's opportunities is debatable. Burnell (1993) argues that the quantitative dimensions of labour market status that are commonly cited, for example, the earnings and an occupation distribution of women workers, are only a partial picture of women's work experiences. (This point will be taken up in more detail in section 5.7.)

The employment profiles submitted to the Affirmative Action Agency do not break down management positions into the same detail as Still's (1993) work did. They simply require reporting units to fill in a generic 'management' category in line with the occupational categories defined by the ABS, that is the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO). The data extracted from the public reports on

women's representation in management in absolute terms are presented in Table 5.4, while their share of management positions by industries can be seen in Table 5.5.

Table 5.4: Management positions, 1990/91 and 1992/93

		Women managers (‘000)			Men managers (‘000)		
		1991	1993	% change	1991	1993	% change
<i>Band 1</i>	Sample	6.7	6.3	-6	30.6	29.6	-3
	Control	3.4	3.4	0	13.7	11.8	-14
<i>Band 2</i>	Sample	0.8	0.9	12	3.3	3.4	3
	Control	0.7	0.8	14	1.6	1.7	6
<i>Band 3</i>	Sample	0.5	0.6	20	1.9	2.0	3
	Control	0.45	0.36	-20	1.6	1.6	0
Total	Sample	8.1	7.8	-4	35.9	34.9	-3
	Control	4.5	4.6	2	16.9	15.1	-10

Table 5.5: Women's share of management, 1990/91 and 1992/93

		<i>Women as % of management</i>							
		Male industries		Female industries		Mixed industries		Total	
		1991	1993	1991	1993	1991	1993	1991	1993
<i>Band 1</i>	Sample	10	10	27	26	21	23	18	18
	Control	8	9	45	47	16	18	20	22
<i>Band 2</i>	Sample	11	10	32	33	16	16	20	21
	Control	4	6	46	50	18	22	29	33
<i>Band 3</i>	Sample	11	11	38	40	19	22	22	23
	Control	11	8	30	35	26	19	22	18

From Table 5.4 it seems that women's representation in management, in absolute terms, is greater in those companies with affirmative action programs than those without well-developed affirmative action programs. Across all Bands, in both 1991 and 1993, there were more women in management positions in the Sample companies than the Control companies. However, as with women's share of employment, the picture is not so clear when one takes into account women's share of management positions.

Women's share of management positions in Table 5.5 does not differ greatly from the ABS data which show that women make up 25 per cent of managers in Australia (ABS, 1993; Still, 1993). As could be expected, women's share of management positions was greatest in those industries dominated by women. An interesting feature of women's share of management positions is that, even in the industries in which women dominate, the greatest share of management positions women have is still only 50 per cent. In those industries in which men dominate, women's share of management positions ranges from as low as four per cent to a maximum of 11 per cent.

As with women's share of employment, it appears that women's share of management as a percentage is generally higher in those companies seemingly doing little in the affirmative action field. Only in Band 3 are women apparently gaining a greater share of management positions than in those companies without affirmative action initiatives.

5.7 Multidimensionality of women's employment status

Rather than clarifying the effect affirmative action legislation may have had on employment opportunities for women, this brief review of employment profiles of those companies apparently active in the affirmative action domain, and those apparently doing little, has tended to suggest greater complexity. In terms of absolute numbers, companies with affirmative action programs appear to offer women greater employment prospects than those seemingly doing very little in the affirmative action field. In terms of women's share of employment, however, it seems companies doing little in the affirmative action field offer greater opportunities than those reporting at least some evidence of well-developed affirmative action programs.

These findings that women are not clearly better off in companies with affirmative action programs than those without is consistent with a study by Blumrosen (1968). Blumrosen (1968) found that a sample of American companies without affirmative action programs in place had made greater progress in improving employment

opportunities for minorities than those companies with affirmative action programs (Sawer, 1985).

The varying patterns of women's employment status apparent from the analysis of the employment profiles may be attributable to a range of factors:

1. Based as it is on the judgment of the staff of the Affirmative Action Agency in reviewing the public reports, the definitions-based assessment system used for identifying 'performers' in the affirmative action domain may be unreliable or invalid;
2. The random sample of companies seemingly doing little in the affirmative action domain may be capturing companies which are, in fact, making efforts to improve the employment opportunities for women. They just haven't reported the efforts as such to the Affirmative Action Agency;
3. The time-frame for judging women's employment experiences may be insufficient to capture structural changes as a result of the affirmative action policies, particularly in light of the recessionary business environment characterising the years 1990–1993;
4. The affirmative action initiatives taken by companies are simply inappropriate for, or irrelevant to, achieving real change in employment profiles.

These inconsistencies suggest that women's employment experiences are not adequately reflected by employment indicators alone (Tougas & Veilleux, 1989). From her analysis of technology's impact on women's work, Burnell (1993) argued that women's employment status is a multidimensional phenomenon and there are many aspects of an individual's or group's work experience that interact to influence labour force status. Although quantitative dimensions of labour market status provide valuable insight into women's work experience, such indicators are not sufficient by themselves to capture the multidimensionality of women's experience (Aitkenhead & Liff, 1991).

Numbers have been crucial in demonstrating that women are disadvantaged in the workplace relative to men, but they should not stand alone. As Poiner (1995: 67) states 'while not discounting numbers, it is time to adopt other and complementary approaches likely to be both more probing and sensitive'.

By focusing on women's experiences, Newman (1995b) maintains that we can bring into focus many of the hidden dimensions of organisations which are masked by the apparent rationality of organisational structures. Building on the quantitative indicators of women's employment status through the qualitative incorporation of women's experiences can provide a more comprehensive view of women's employment experiences (Burnell, 1993). Tapping into women's employment experiences through exploring their perceptions of their work experiences was the means by which my research sought to build on the quantitative indicators of women's employment status.

In drawing on women's experiences as a significant resource, the approach taken could be seen as consistent with what Harding (1987) labels feminist research. An important feature of feminist research is according to Harding (1987: 7) that:

it generates its problematics from the perspective of women's experiences. It also uses these experiences as a significant indicator of the 'reality' against which hypotheses are tested.

The present study explored the more qualitative aspects of women's employment experiences relating to affirmative action; in particular, their perceptions of affirmative action and their employment opportunities. This was seen as a valuable means of extending the debate about the effectiveness of affirmative action initiatives as an individual's perceptions of their environment and affirmative action may influence their behaviour with respect to affirmative action (Schneider *et al.*, 1980; Mintzberg, 1994; Lowenstein, 1996). Consideration of employees' perceptions may help inform the design and implementation of affirmative action initiatives.

5.8 Perceptions

Although recognising the value of the feminist approach of including women's experiences as a significant resource (Harding, 1987), it is also important to acknowledge there are no direct lines of truth to these experiences. There is no 'objective reality' to these experiences that we can tap into; all such experience is mediated by the individual and their way of viewing the world (Mullins, 1993). As Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 12) maintain 'any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity'. That people behave on the basis of **what is perceived** rather than **what is** (Thomas, 1951; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1985; Heilman, 1994) underpins much research in the organisational behaviour domain. According to Schneider *et al.* (1980: 139) a critical assumption underpinning the study of organisational behaviour is that

member perceptions of organisational practices and procedures are the critical data in understanding organisational behaviour. No behaviour in, or of, organisations occurs in the absence of perceptions. To conceptualise an organisation requires consideration of human behaviour, and human behaviour does not exist without perception.

It is important to recognise that while it is well understood that perceptions may influence behaviour, other factors may also have an influence. Lowenstein (1996: 272) shows that many of our decisions on how to behave are influenced not only by perceptions but by other, 'visceral' factors, including moods and emotions. In light of the role employees' perceptions of their organisations may play on their behaviour, perceptions have taken a critical role in the development of organisational research (Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1985; Glick, 1985; Rousseau, 1988; Dastmalchian, 1991; Mullins, 1993; Barnett, 1995; Delaney & Huselid, 1996) including research into organisational effectiveness and equality (Heilman, 1994; Parkin & Maddock, 1995).

A fundamental characteristic of people is that we assign meaning to an event and then respond to those meanings (Higgins, 1990). As Mullins (1993: 130) notes:

A situation may be the same but the interpretation of that situation by two individuals may be vastly different...The physical properties may be identical in terms of how they 'are', but they are perceived quite differently because each individual has imposed upon the object/environment their own interpretations, their own judgment and evaluation.

Within organisational studies, factors affecting an individual's perceptions of an object/environment are assumed to be the product of both the person and the situation (Higgins, 1990). That is, both internal and external factors influence an individual's perceptions. For instance, Mullins (1993) describes the factors affecting an individual's perceptions as personality, learning, intelligence, ability, training, interests, expectations, goals, past experiences and motivation. Aitkenhead and Liff (1991) also point to the role an individual's location in a structure (and the group interactional contexts associated with that location) plays in affecting their perceptions. Although the importance of these various mediating factors on an individual's perceptions is recognised in organisational studies, less emphasis is given to explaining the origins and meaning of these perceptions.

A common criticism by feminists of research in the organisational domain is the omission of gender from analyses (Hearn & Parkin, 1983; Pringle, 1993). Concern has been expressed that gender and gender relations have been absent or deemed to be relatively unimportant within the study of organisations (Sheppard, 1989; Burrell & Hearn, 1989; Acker, 1990; Alban-Metcalf & West, 1991; Pringle, 1993; Parker & Fagenson, 1994; Itzin, 1995). As a result, organisational theories have been developed on the basis of 'malestream' traditions (Burrell & Hearn, 1989: 1) which, according to many authors, fail to recognise that women's experiences are fundamentally different from men's experiences (Cockburn, 1985; Pringle, 1989; Pringle, 1993; Parker & Fagenson, 1994). One of the bases for the differences in women's and men's experiences frequently identified is the sexual division of labour; particularly the continued association of women with the private sphere and men with the public sphere. Citing Harstock (1987), Harding (1987: 185) argues that as human activity is structured in such basically different ways for women and men, it is clear that how each group

view their environment 'will represent an inversion of the other and in systems of domination the vision available to the rulers will be both partial and perverse'. As men have traditionally held the dominant positions within organisations (Schein, 1994; O'Leary & Ryan, 1994; Smith & Hutchinson, 1995), and in society in general, this has clear repercussions for the 'lenses' through which women and men view their environments.

The distinction between women's experiences and women's experience is an important point to recognise. Just as feminists rejected the concept of a universal 'man' informing organisational theory, similarly the notion of 'woman' or 'women's experience' is rejected. Instead, the multiplicity and diversity of experience in the workplace needs to be accepted as 'women's experiences' in the plural (Harding, 1987).

In exploring women's perceptions of their employment opportunities, this diversity and multiplicity may be captured. It is not, however, within the realm of this research to explain the origin and meaning of the various influences on employees' perceptions of their employment opportunities or their perceptions of affirmative action or to identify the other factors that may be operating to influence behaviour (Lowenstein, 1996). The value of the research lies in incorporating employees' perceptions in the debate about affirmative action. Their perceptions provide some insight how individuals are experiencing affirmative action and so add some 'flesh' to the quantitative indicators of women's employment status.

Just as the quantitative indicators of women's employment status are not sufficient by themselves to truly capture the multidimensionality of women's employment status, neither can this more qualitative approach stand alone (Aitkenhead & Liff, 1991). It is through consideration of multiple methods of viewing women's employment experiences that we will move towards a more comprehensive picture of the practice of affirmative action in Australia, and help practitioners create and implement effective affirmative action policies. This tactic is also consistent with the recent pressure toward employing triangulated methods in behavioural research (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991).

5.9 Summary

Evaluation of the affirmative action legislation has already received some attention, most notably from the Affirmative Action Agency itself in its Effectiveness Review (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b). There has, however, been a tendency for the various evaluations to focus on quantitative changes to women's employment status (OSW, 1990; Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b).

In this study an additional approach to addressing the issue of the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in promoting equal employment opportunity for women is suggested. This approach seeks to add to the information gained from the aggregate, quantitative indicators of women's employment status, through developing an understanding of how women view their employment opportunities and affirmative action. To do so has entailed exploring the experiences of employees themselves. Understanding employees' perceptions is important as they provide some insight into how employees view their work environment and what might be driving their behaviour (Lowenstein, 1996). Such information may be useful in helping to design and implement more effective affirmative action policies.

Consistent with the methodological arguments in favour of using multiple methods to address a problem, an approach to exploring women's experiences of affirmative action was developed that draws on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Rather than seeing the two approaches as mutually exclusive, the strengths of both were recognised. I could see the benefits of using qualitative methods to explore the implementation of affirmative action within a small sample of companies with seemingly well-developed affirmative action programs by interviewing a sample of employees to gauge their perceptions of the types of affirmative action policies implemented and their employment opportunities. A survey of a larger sample of employees (a quantitative approach) was then identified as a useful means of seeking confirmation, or not, of these qualitative findings (of 'quantifying' the 'qualitative'). In Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9

the two strands of this approach are discussed in more detail, the research findings presented and implications for the practice of affirmative action are explored.