A study of individual values and employment equity in Canada, France and Ireland

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper, in the context of the employment equity (EE) field, is to explore the relationship between individual values/beliefs and simulated hiring decisions of minority candidates in Canada, France and Ireland.

Design/methodology/approach – Individual values/beliefs were elicited using Likert type scales; subjects responded to a series of simulated hiring scenarios.

Findings – The link between individual value and belief systems and EE-related HR decision making on recruitment of minority candidates is modestly supported by the findings presented here. The values/beliefs of students from leading business schools influenced, if in part, their simulated hiring decisions on minority candidates presented in the scenarios. National context also matters as EE institutions differ at the societal level of analysis.

Research limitations/implications – The subjects were business school students of limited work experience addressing scenario situations, not practicing managers making real hiring decisions. The use of self-reports leads to the usual issues related to common method variance, the consistency motif, social desirability bias, and so on and we note the limits due to the reverse ecological fallacy. Research findings provide modest support to this argument but should be treated with caution.

Practical implications – Individual values and beliefs matter in HR decision making on recruitment of minority candidates.

Originality/value – Much EE research focuses on antecedents of values/beliefs; this paper is one of a handful of investigations that attempts to establish possible outcomes of values/beliefs towards EE.

Keywords Affirmative action, Employment, Human resource management, Equal opportunities, Canada, France, Ireland

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Despite numerous initiatives from both civil society and government legislations in Canada, France and Ireland, employment equity (EE) remains very much a partially fulfilled, and at times contentious, goal. Certainly there has been some progress, but "some" remains the operative word. Despite social and legislative pressures, why do certain minority groups continue to find it so difficult to obtain justice in the labor market? Why do some countries succeed, if in part, and others fail abysmally in this area? We argue here that legislation alone is insufficient – mindsets of the key

HR/business people often matter more. To understand EE we need to study its psychology (Bobocel *et al.*, 2001; Son Hing *et al.*, 2001). In this paper we explore the relationship between value and belief systems of business students, future HR/ business people, in leading business schools in Canada, France and Ireland and simulated hiring decisions of minority candidates using a series of scenarios related to gender, visible minority and disability candidates.

Belcourt *et al.* (2005) define EE as the employment of individuals in a "fair and nonbiased manner" and suggest that the EE issue has dominated much of human resource management (HRM) practice in recent decades. Affirmative action (AA) refers to "programs designed to ensure proportional representation of employees and undo the results of past discrimination" (Schwind *et al.*, 1999). This latter definition may be viewed as somewhat problematic because it does not explicitly acknowledge the assumption that those being considered for proportional representation are all equally qualified for certain positions. If this is not ensured, it implies involving preferences, which are illegal in some countries such as the USA. It is also problematic to speak of AA or EE in France due to French policies of integration and equality. The French ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity do not allow addressing differences arising from ethnic origin, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and so on even if these are for the purpose of generating data. The underlying assumption is that focusing on these differences in itself generates inequality; unsurprisingly, this assumption has come under heavy criticism in recent times. Notwithstanding the differences in the scope of EE or AA cross-nationally and differing societal and legislative contexts, it is fair to state that while the quest for justice in the labor market remains universal, the achievement of such justice varies from country to country. This focus on understanding differences in attitudes to EE across nations makes the research presented here quite challenging. In comparing attitudes to EE across nations we address a knowledge gap in the extant literature.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: firstly, we provide a brief review of relevant EE literature (section 2); a brief overview of extant EE legislation in the three national contexts of interest is then presented (section 3); the methodology is then described (section 4); the main findings of interest are then presented and briefly discussed (section 5); the paper concludes (section 6) that further research on how values and beliefs influence EE-related decision making is well worth the effort.

2. Employment equity
In this paper we take the position that EE legislation can go only so far to protect victims of discrimination in the labor market. We need to understand values, beliefs and attitudes of those managers, and those business students who will become future managers, who are ultimately responsible for implementing EE policies and programs. A key assumption underpinning the conception of values is that values will affect the behavior of individuals which in turn may affect the decisions individuals make (McGuire *et al.*, 2006). What are the values that influence EE-related employment decisions? Moreover, opinions vary widely about the need for EE legislations and programs. Caiden and Caiden (2001), in a paper delivered to the United Nations Expert Group Meeting, note that it is often difficult for legislative means to be effective in changing people's beliefs and behavior and continue in suggesting that broader strategies to create more tolerant societies need to be undertaken once the basic legislation is in place.

Over the last four to five decades research on EE has continued unabated. Reviews of this research, from diverse perspectives (Bobocel *et al.*, 2001; Forbes, 1989), suggest why equity and justice in hiring decisions are so difficult to attain. Bobocel *et al.* (2001) investigate justice concerns and AA and suggest that people's justice based objections to AA could be genuine but not inevitable; they further claim that by highlighting the existence of injustice, opposition to EE or/and AA could be reduced. It follows that it would be erroneous to ignore the psychology of EE programs and that exploring ways to increase perceptions of justice will likely be an important component in gaining management/employee approval for such programs.

In their extensive monograph, Kravitz *et al.* (1997) exposed many salient issues that surround EE/AA. The main focus of this review was to reveal the nature of EE/AA attitudes based upon a few key variables such as structure of AA/EE programs, qualifications of selected candidates, perceived fairness, respondent characteristics, demographic variables and others. This review underscores the importance of values and beliefs in such programs. A recent meta-analysis by Harrison *et al.* (2006) explores relationships between AA programs and several antecedent factors to formation of attitudes including structural features of such AA programs (e.g. "opportunity enhancement", "equal opportunity", "tiebreak" and "strong preferential treatment"), perceiver demographic and psychological characteristics, interactions of structural features with perceiver characteristics, and presentation of AA program details to perceivers, including their justification. This meta-analysis included at least 26 independent samples involving 29,000 people and has contributed to our understanding of the antecedent factors to formation of attitudes toward EE and AA programs.

We now turn our attention to a review of the literature pertaining to the selection of predictor variables (i.e. beliefs and values) for the simulated hiring decisions made in this study. The study has been inspired by the work of eminent and seminal researchers such as Kluckholm (1952), Rokeach (1968, 1973), Hofstede (1980, 2002), and Schwartz (1992, 1994) who have all provided theoretical and empirical arguments to support the idea that values that are held as important by people shape their behavior including decision-making behavior. The current exploratory study was designed to investigate, in a simulated decision-making environment, if hiring-decisions are influenced by individual value systems.

We did not restrict ourselves to any one of these classic theories and their unique sets of values and value propositions; our main guiding principle was the question as to what kind of beliefs and value statements would explain why a decision maker would or would not hire a minority candidate on grounds of gender, visible minority or disability. The following are some examples of beliefs and values that we concluded would be directly relevant to this study: Is EE/AA desirable? Are women, visible minorities and persons with disabilities deserving of special attention? Has government not already done enough for these groups? Should not business people be left alone and not be forced to hire minorities?

Predictor variables were also selected following the works of Devine (1989) and Fiske and Neuberg (1990) that suggest that peoples' judgments about others are often influenced by the stereotypes that they hold about the group or groups to which the person belongs. The decision to hire a female, or a person with a disability or a visible minority will be influenced by the group stereotype that is held about these groups. The study included items related to individual beliefs and values that tap into such stereotypes (see Table I for all 28 value related items and Appendix for the three hiring scenarios).

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Values and beliefs (1-5 Likert)	Canada		France		Ireland		Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. AA is a good policy	3.5	1.0	3.1	1.1	3.6	0.9	0.000
2. EE is fair to all employees	3.1	1.2	2.6	1.3	3.2	1.1	0.001
3. AA creates privilege for some people	3.7	0.9	3.4	1.0	3.4	1.0	0.009
4. I would not like to work for an organization with an AA plan	2.5	1.0	3.7	1.2	2.5	0.9	0.117
5. Employees should be actively involved to promote AA	3.3	1.0	2.8	1.2	3.6	0.9	0.000
6. Government should leave business people alone to do what they want	2.3	1.2	2.5	1.2	2.2	1.3	0.223
7. Some people in society do not want to work hard	4.3	0.9	4.0	1.0	4.3	1.0	0.040
8. Employees should be selected based upon their selection scores only	2.6	1.1	3.1	1.4	3.3	1.3	0.000
9. I would be willing to work for an organization with an AA plan	3.9	0.9	2.9	1.0	3.6	0.9	0.000
10. People usually get what they deserve	2.5	1.0	2.6	1.0	2.8	1.2	0.118
11. It is not fair to a member of a majority community to lose a job opportunity because of membership	3.8	0.9	3.9	1.1	3.9	1.0	0.723
12. Fixing quota for jobs for certain people is a bad idea	3.5	1.0	3.5	1.2	3.8	1.0	0.155
13. You need to be in the right place in the right time to get a job	3.3	0.9	3.8	1.0	3.3	1.2	0.001
14. AA policy is good for business	3.4	0.8	2.8	0.9	3.4	1.0	0.000
15. AA is good public relations for the company	3.7	0.8	3.5	1.2	3.4	1.0	0.061
16. Women are deprived of their right to a management position	2.7	0.9	3.4	1.1	2.9	1.2	0.000
17. Government has done enough for minority populations	2.8	1.1	2.1	1.0	2.4	1.0	0.000
18. Women and other minorities should receive special training	2.5	1.0	2.2	1.1	2.2	1.0	0.087
19. Voluntary AA is better than forced AA	3.8	0.9	3.9	1.0	3.6	1.0	0.119
20. The organization must have a quota for the number of AA target group individuals it will hire	2.7	0.9	2.4	1.0	2.5	1.0	0.069
21. As a customer, I shall not do any business with an organization that discriminates against people	3.5	1.1	3.7	1.3	3.3	1.1	0.070
22. Profit making should be the only goal of a business organization	2.1	1.0	2.2	1.2	2.0	1.1	0.807
23. My opportunities have been hurt because of AA	2.3	1.1	2.2	0.9	2.3	1.0	0.844
24. There will always be some discrimination in the world	4.3	0.7	4.2	0.9	4.2	1.1	0.493
25. Gender discrimination has hurt women a lot regarding job opportunities	3.8	0.9	4.2	0.8	3.8	1.1	0.003
26. Persons with disabilities are better off staying at home	1.4	0.8	1.3	0.7	1.4	1.0	0.825
27. God determines who gets what	1.9	1.1	1.5	1.0	1.8	1.1	0.003
28. I believe in astrology	2.1	1.1	1.5	1.0	1.9	1.1	0.001

Table I.
Values and beliefs

Most research studies, whether experimental, quasi-experimental or survey types, conducted mainly by organizational, social and industrial psychologists, have focused upon values and attitudes toward EE/AA policies and programs. In other words researchers have mainly focused upon the antecedent factors that form these attitudes. Only a handful of investigations have tried to link values and beliefs to actual hiring decisions (Fritzsche *et al.*, 1999; Slack, 1987; Naff, 1998; McGuire *et al.*, 2006). A gap exists in our understanding of the role played by values and beliefs in determining hiring decisions of both majority and minority candidates. This is the gap we wish to address in this paper albeit using simulated hiring decisions by business students. We begin with an overview of the relevant legislative context in Canada, France and Ireland.

3. Overview of EE legislation in Canada, France and Ireland
3.1 Canada
The Canadian Human Rights Act (1977) established the Canadian Human Rights Commission to promote human rights and equality in Canada. This includes enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and permits special programs to remedy past or present discriminatory practices. The Federal Employment Equity Act (1986) resulted from a report noting that voluntary measures adopted by some organizations and the Human Rights Legislation already in existence were not enough to overcome obvious workplace discrimination (Abella, 1984). The Act applies to federal Crown corporations and federally regulated private sector employers with 100 or more employees, and the federal public service. Four groups are covered under the Act: women, aboriginal peoples/natives, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities. Rather than imposing a quota system, this Act requires that each organization's EE plan contain "an effective enforcement mechanism" the design of which is left to the employer. Canadian federal EE has caused minimal backlash, possibly because there is no expectation for organizations to fill quotas; that is, it allows each organization to develop a system that best suits its needs. A more critical perspective would suggest that there might have been minimal backlash to Canadian EE plans due to their minimal effects. What is clear is that Canadian employers are largely protected from the charge of reverse discrimination by section 16(1) of the Canadian Human Rights Act that explicitly permits the implementation of special programs that prevent or reduce disadvantage to minority groups or remedy the effects of past discrimination against such groups. Section 53(2) of the Act allows a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to order a special program where such action is deemed necessary to prevent discriminatory practices from occurring in the future.

3.2 France
France has recently become the centre of international attention due to the riots that severely disrupted normal life in several French cities. An article in *Fortune* (2005) claims that the social unrest among French youths was caused by lack of jobs as the children of immigrants are subjected to discriminatory employment practices. Particularly noteworthy here is the fact that French law effectively prevents AA programs. While some declare that efforts to establish equality in employment opportunities in France have been rendered ineffective due to the legal system in France, others complain about the failed integration model in French society (see article in *New Statesman*, 2005; Laufer, 2003). President Sarkozy, before his ascent to the presidency, suggested that France should abandon the pretence that all its citizens – including an

estimated five million Muslims, many of African origin – are treated equally, and adopt AA policies (as in Canada and Ireland).

French Constitution is characterised by three elements: the principle of equality, the refusal to recognise minorities and the trend to erase the nationality criteria as far as human and freedom rights are concerned. Article 2 of the French Constitution declares that France is an "indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic that guarantees equality before law of all its citizens with no distinction in term of origin, race or religion". This is valid for French and foreign people living in France. Discrimination based on nationality is anti-constitutional (except in very particular cases). The constitutional law is applicable only to acts – including employment in the public sector – of the State. Article 225-1 of the Penal Code (Law no. 2001-1066, 16 November 2001) defines discrimination as any distinction between physical or moral persons on the basis of origin, sex, family situation, state of health, disability, customs, politics, trade unionism, real or supposed belonging or non-belonging, to an ethnic group, a nation, a race or a religion. Article 225-2 of the Penal Code (Law no. 2001-1066, 16 November 2001) adds that discrimination carried out by a representative of the public authority, in his/her functions, is liable to a prison sentence of up to three years and/or a €45,000 fine. Despite the existence of these laws and by-laws, it is difficult to bring discrimination cases to a tribunal, because of the high level of proof required in penal procedures.

It is commonly accepted that the French stand against discrimination manifests itself through its attempts at integration. The setting up of priority educational zones in underprivileged locations in 1982 was an example of how the French system of integration differed from the approach adopted by other countries under the banner of "Positive discrimination" or "AA". The French system of integration focuses on treating underprivileged groups as a collective entity and emphasizes geographic location. France, as a signatory of the Amsterdam Treaty of the European Union (27 October 1997, article 13), recognises the need to combat both direct and indirect discrimination related to different grounds: gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or convictions, disability, age or sexual orientation. In recent years, one has observed the creation of more laws and policies to prevent discrimination from occurring in France. Law 304 (30 December 2004) dictates the creation of a "Higher authority" (HALDE) to advance the struggle against discrimination of people or groups of people on the basis of national origin, belonging or not belonging to a real or supposed ethnicity or race, gender or sexual orientation or disability.

3.3 Ireland

Prior to the enactment of the Employment Equality Act (1998) equality legislation in Ireland focused primarily on discrimination issues related to gender or marital status. Despite Irish constitutional provisions guaranteeing that "all citizens shall as human persons be held equal before the law", Irish Equality law has traditionally had a narrow focus and European Union membership (since 1973) has played an increasingly important role in shaping the direction of Irish Equality law. The 1998 Act, which has now become the cornerstone of Irish Employment Equality law repeals the Anti-discrimination Pay Act (1974) and the earlier Employment Equality Act of 1977 and establishes seven new grounds of discrimination, giving nine in total. These are: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community (Ó hAodha et al., 2007). The subsequent success of the Employment Equality Act (1998) led to the enactment of the Equal

Status Act (2000). This builds upon the foundations of the 1998 Act, outlawing the same nine grounds of discrimination in the provision of goods and services.

This brief review of Canadian, French and Irish experiences demonstrates that EE/AA is conceptualized, institutionalized and treated very differently from one country to another. Opinions vary widely about the need for EE/AA. For example, in Canada and Ireland employment discrimination has been recognised as a problem and legislation enacted to at least attempt to address the problem. Conversely, in France, it has been assumed that special AA legislations would create discrimination not abolish it and that all French should be treated equally – with no need to enact relevant legislations. In addition to the differences observed in the focus of legislations, EE/AA situation in Canada, France and Ireland also differ in other ways. For example, visible minorities are a significant segment of the Canadian population, and because Canada espouses a multi-racial and multi-cultural identity visible minorities as a target group have received significantly more attention compared to France and Ireland, the latter only recently addressing the issue due to increasing immigration. Gender and disability issues also appear to receive more attention in Canada and Ireland as compared in France. Finally, even though gender issue appears to have received different amounts of attention in the three countries, equity for women appears to have received more attention than equity for the other two groups in the study now discussed below.

4. Methodology

The research objective is to explore the individual beliefs and values of business students toward EE and AA (see Table I) and to explore the relationships that such values and beliefs may play in simulated hiring decisions of minority candidates (see Appendix). We simply hypothesize that they do, that hiring decisions will be influenced, if in part, by the values and beliefs of individual decision-makers.

Data were collected by means of a survey instrument comprised of three parts. In all three countries, surveys were administered in person by one of the authors in class room settings. Subjects were assured of anonymity and participation was voluntary. The instrument was translated into French for the respondents in France. Subjects from Canada and Ireland were administered the English version of the questionnaires and a common definition of EE/AA was included for all three. The nature of the survey instrument and its development process could be described as follows: part one consisted of three critical management scenarios that required each respondent to make simulated decisions about hiring women, members of a visible minority, and persons with disabilities (see Appendix). Drafts of these critical management scenarios were developed with input from two other experts in the HRM field in a Canadian university. The two experts working independently provided feedback on the meaningfulness and validity of the scenarios for a simulated hiring decision process. Subjects were also asked to rate the importance of EE for these groups of people on seven-point Likert-type scales.

Part two contained 28 five-point Likert-type statements that measured values, beliefs and attitudes of respondents toward EE, AA, quota systems or special accommodations (see Table I). Some items also measured religious and social values. The statements were developed based on a review of the existing literature but mainly drawing heavily on the instrument developed by Kravitz and Gunna (2004). The instrument developed by Kravitz and Gunna (2004) was for a different purpose, mainly to identify a subject's knowledge of the requirements of AA in the USA. In this investigation the purpose was to measure values, beliefs and attitudes of respondents

and to link these to EE issues. Forty-one value items were given to two experts in the HRM field for their feedback on the content validity and meaningfulness the items. Based upon this feedback and subsequent pilot testing with a group of Canadian MBA students, thirty-one items were retained. As the present study focused on subjects from three different countries, Canada, France and Ireland, three more items were eliminated for contextual reasons (see Table I). The final part of the questionnaire elicited demographic information from respondents on gender, age, educational attainment and work experience. Quantitative data analyses conducted included descriptive statistics, factor analysis, chi-square analysis, analysis of variance, *post-hoc* tests, and binary logistic regression.

In Canada, data were collected from fourth year Co-Op business students ($N = 129$). The students had at least one year's work experiences in a Canadian organization. In France, data were collected from students at master's level in the fields of business and engineering ($N = 113$). Some French respondents were employed either part-time or full-time and had returned to university for continuing education. In Ireland, data were collected from final year (fourth) business students in a leading business school ($N = 86$). These students had all spent over six months on a jobplacement program as part of their business studies degree and a small number were mature students. The overall sample can be categorized as a convenience sample ($N = 328$): approximately 95 per cent percent of subjects had some work experience, average age was 23, 55 per cent were female and 45 per cent male.

5. Findings and discussion

Data were analysed using SPSS and the findings are presented as follows: Table II reports subjects' perceived importance of EE for women, visible minority, and disability candidates; Table III reports the simulated hiring decisions that were actually made in the scenarios presented; Table I reports the subjects' values/beliefs concerning EE and AA; finally we briefly discuss the results of correlation (Table IV)

	Canada $N = 129$		France $N = 113$		Ireland $N = 86$		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Significance
Equity for women	5.9	1.3	4.9	1.9	6.0	1.6	0.000
Equity for visible minorities	5.5	1.5	4.2	1.9	5.4	1.7	0.000
Equity for persons with disabilities	5.8	1.3	5.1	1.7	6.1	1.4	0.000

Table II. How important is EE?

Target group-scenarios	Canada (%)	France (%)	Ireland (%)	Significance
Hire male candidates	11	3	23	0.00
Hire female candidates	80	83	60	
No response	9	14	17	
Hire visible minority	73	59	45	0.00
Hire caucasian candidate	10	13	33	
No response	17	28	22	
Hire a person with disability	75	79	56	0.00
Hire a person without any disability	9	15	24	
No response	16	16	20	

Table III. Hiring decisions

and binary logistic regressions (Tables V and VI) on the relationship between individual values/beliefs and simulated hiring decisions of minority candidates.

5.1 Importance of EE
Respondents rated the importance of EE for three target groups: females, members of a visible minority, and persons with disabilities on a seven-point Likert scale (1 being extremely unimportant, and 7 being extremely important). The results shown in Table II indicate the following: first, respondents to the survey, from all three countries, consider the need for EE for all three groups of minority candidates at moderate to high levels. This finding is supported by our literature review in section 2 suggesting that EE in recent years has received more societal and legislative attention. Second, Canadian and Irish subjects attach higher importance to EE as compared to the subjects from France. This result is also supported by our review of the broader societal context in the three countries.

Analysis of variance and *post hoc* tests (LSD) were performed on the data for equity for women, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. ANOVA results were as follows: women (MS 89.5, SS 44.8, F 16.8, and the results were significant at 0.00 level); visible minority (MS 112.1, MS 56.1, F 18.7, the results were significant at

Values/beliefs	Hiring women	Hiring visible minority	Hiring disabled	
Toward EE/AA as a policy (alpha = 0.83)	0.23*	0.11**	0.14*	**Table IV.**
Toward a quota system (alpha = 0.60)	0.21*	0.05	0.01	Correlations between
Toward women as target group (alpha = 0.67)	0.12**	0.04	0.04	respondent values/beliefs
Toward social action (alpha = 0.69)	0.06	0.10	0.11**	and hiring decisions

Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp (B)	
On EE/AA as a policy	0.55	0.14	15.19	1.74	
On Quota system	−0.44	0.25	3.34	0.64	
On Women as target group	0.38	0.18	4.13	1.45	**Table V.**
Social action	−0.22	0.14	2.31	0.80	Binary logistic regression for hiring women

Note: Model chi-square = 24.49* −2 log likelihood = 191.72

Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp (B)	
On EE/AA as a policy	−0.42	0.13	11.4	0.65	
On quota system	−0.12	0.17	0.54	0.89	
On women as target group	−0.15	0.15	1.1	0.85	**Table VI.**
Social action	0.21	0.13	2.9	1.24	Binary logistic regression for hiring visible minorities

Note: Model chi-square = 19.15* −2 log likelihood = 249.81

0.00 level); persons with disability (MS 65.9, SS 32.9, F 13.9, and the results were significant at 0.00 level). *Post Hoc* tests (LSD) revealed the following results: On the importance of EE for women, Canada and France, and Ireland and France were significantly different, but mean score differences between Ireland and Canada were not significant. For the case of visible minorities, Canada and France, Ireland and France were significantly different, but again mean score differences between Canada and Ireland were not significant. *Post hoc* analysis of data on the importance of EE for persons with disabilities revealed no significant difference between Ireland and Canada, while Canada and France, and Ireland and France were significantly different. There are almost certainly societal and historical influences here, but mindful of the "reverse ecological fallacy" (Hofstede, 2002) we treat findings at this level with caution.

5.2 Hiring decisions

In much previous work in this area subjects were usually investigated to assess their attitudes towards EE/AA. One of the most significant aspects of the current investigation was that subjects were confronted with three decision situation scenarios that required them to actually make a decision, albeit a simulated one, about hiring minority candidates. To determine if hiring decisions made by the respondents were associated with their country of origin, we conducted two analyses. First we conducted a Chi square analysis to find if hiring decisions were affected by country of origin. We also conducted *post hoc* analyses to determine the extent of differences between country groups. Table III presents the results obtained from chi-square analysis of these hiring decisions.

There were significant differences among the subjects of three different countries on who they would select to fill a job position. Women were selected in Canada and France in larger proportion as compared to men while they did not do as well in Ireland. Visible minorities were preferred by a larger number of subjects in Canada, as compared to the choices made by subjects from France or Ireland. It is worth noting here that immigration of visible minorities to Ireland is a very recent phenomenon. Canadian and French subjects chose persons with disabilities in greater numbers than did the Irish subjects. Subjects in all three countries chose to hire the female candidate more often than any other target-group.

Post hoc analysis (LSD) of hiring decisions by the respondents from the three countries revealed the following: on the subject of gender, Canada and Ireland ($p < 0.00$), and France and Ireland ($p < 0.00$) were significantly different; Canada and France ($p < 0.06$) were not significantly different. On the scenario on hiring visible minorities, all three countries were different from each other with Canadian respondents hiring visible minority candidates in greater proportion as compared to the respondents from Ireland and France. Our literature review showed in the previous section that France and Ireland have been slower in recognising the need to redress the employment problems of their visible minority populations. Finally, on hiring job candidates with a disability Ireland was significantly different from the other two countries suggesting that more may be needed in addressing disability issues in Ireland.

To investigate whether hiring decisions of female candidates were influenced by the gender of the respondents a binary logistic regression analysis was conducted taking hiring decision of females as dependent variable and values/beliefs as independent variables while controlling for gender of the respondents. Results obtained from this

analysis (model chi-square = 37.15, −2 Log likelihood 179.07, $B = 0.28$, $SE = 0.24$, Wald = 1.43, Exp(B) = 1.32, $P < 0.23$) showed that gender of respondents did not have any significant influence on the hiring decisions of male vs female candidates. The paper now moves to the individual level.

5.3 Individual values and beliefs
The aggregate values/beliefs of subjects concerning EE, AA, and other related issues are presented in Table I. What did these subjects think about AA and EE? Results shown in Table I indicated that they agreed that AA and EE were fair and were good policies to have, even though these policies create special privileges for the target group members. Why should an organization adopt such policies? Respondents agreed with the views that AA was good both for business and for creating a positive public image. What do they think about quota systems and forced AA? Subjects did not believe that there should be quota systems and agreed with the view that voluntary AA was better than forced AA. What would they do if an organization has an AA program? They expressed the view that they would not have any problem being an employee or a customer of an organization that implemented AA policies. What should be the role of government in this area? Subjects did not believe that governments had done enough for minority populations or that the government should leave business organization to make their own choices. What do subjects think about women? The subjects agreed with the view that women had been deprived of their rights to a management position and that gender discrimination had hurt women. Similarly, they did not believe that persons with disabilities would be better off staying at home.

Were these subjects fatalistic about EE/AA? Views expressed were mixed: On the one hand, they did not believe that people got what they deserved, or that God determined who got what; nor did they believe in astrology. On the other hand, they agreed that there would always be some discrimination in the world and that one needed to be in the right place at the right time to get a job. Some views that could be seen as negative towards active EE/AA intervention were as follows:

· It was not fair to a member of a majority group to lose a job opportunity because of group membership;

· some people in society did not want to work hard; and

· employees should be selected on the basis of selection scores only.

ANOVA results indicated that there were similarities and differences in the values and beliefs among subjects based upon their nationality. For example, as compared to Canadian and Irish subjects, French subjects had different views on the fairness of EE and AA which one could argue is, if in part, contextual based on the review of France above; however, they had more supportive views about women and their rights to a management position. These differences can perhaps be explained in terms of the history of EE legislations and cultural beliefs in these countries briefly noted above. One should note, however, that Canadian, Irish and French subjects held similar views on 15 out of 28 value statements. One must, again, be cautious about any over-interpretation of country level variations based on individual responses at this level and we are aware of the dangers of the ecological and reverse ecological fallacies, a limitation discussed below. That said, the mean values are worthy of interest in themselves, hence their reproduction here.

5.4 Impact of values/beliefs on simulated hiring decisions
One of the main objectives of this paper was to test the relationships between individual business student values/beliefs and their simulated decisions to hire women, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. Data were collected concerning hiring decisions based upon the critical incident scenarios that were developed (see Appendix). Using factor analysis, the 28 value/belief items were reduced to the following four factors:

1. Attitude towards EE/AA policies ("a sample item: EE is fair to all employees"; seven items listed in Table I including item numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 14 and 15 loaded into Factor1).

2. Attitude toward quota systems (a sample item was: "fixing quota for jobs for certain people is a bad idea"; this factor was comprised of item numbers 12 and 19).

3. Attitude toward women as a target group (a sample item was: "women are deprived of their right to a management position"; three items 16, 18 and 25 listed in Table I loaded into this factor).

4. Social action (a sample item was: "government should leave business people alone to do what they want"; item numbers 6, 8, 11, 17, 21, 24, and 28 were in this factor).

The measuring scales were subjected to reliability analysis utilizing Cronbach's alpha and the correlations between these factors and hiring decisions are provided in Table IV. Only variable with loading greater than 0.40 (Ford *et al.*, 1986, p. 296) or 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 1987) on a factor should be considered "significant" and used in defining that factor, particularly in exploratory research. Attitude toward EE/AA as a policy (which emerged as the strongest factor) was associated with hiring decisions of all three target groups. Attitude toward women was associated with hiring decisions of women, as was attitude toward a quota system attitude toward social action for the reduction of discrimination was modestly associated with hiring decisions of the disabled. Overall, notwithstanding the low alpha values and somewhat arbitrary nature of the other three factors, the findings provide some support for the idea that simulated hiring decisions were related to respondents" values and beliefs, particularly towards EE/AA as a policy.

To further test the hypothesis that values/beliefs influence simulated hiring decisions, three separate binary logistic regression analyses were run taking the four values/beliefs factors as independent variables and hiring decisions of the three target group members as dependent variables. The test results are presented in Tables V-VII.

Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp (B)
On EE/AA as a policy	−0.35	0.14	6.1	0.70
On quota system	0.62	0.27	5.3	1.89
On women as target group	−0.27	0.17	2.6	0.76
Social action	0.14	0.14	1.0	1.12

Note: Model chi-square = 15.59*−2 log likelihood = 208.34

Table VII.
Binary logistic regression for hiring persons with disability

Results presented in Tables V-VII provide some further support to our argument that simulated hiring decisions of minority candidates are influenced, if in part, by the values and beliefs of those individuals making the simulated hiring decisions. It should, however, be noted that the four factors made varying contributions to the three dependent variables notwithstanding the fact that all three models were statistically significant.

5.5 Limitations

There are many limitations to this study. The subjects were business school students of limited work experience addressing scenario situations, not practicing managers making real hiring decisions. The use of self-reports leads to the usual issues related to common method variance, the consistency motif, social desirability bias, and so on (see McGuire *et al.*, 2006). The research instrument itself is capable of further improvement and validation, particularly as EE/AA as a policy was the only strong factor to emerge. Secondly, although we use the national level of comparison in the introductory sections of the paper, nationality is comprised of a complex set of confounding variables (Usunier, 1998). Notwithstanding this fact, we choose to focus on the national level in providing the introductory descriptive statistics because this is the most convenient initial level of comparison. In this qualification we note the problems posed by the ecological fallacy (Schwartz, 1994) which may be committed when group characteristics are held to convey information about individuals within groups; or conversely when the characteristics of individuals are taken as equivalent to those of national groups which Hofstede (2002) terms reverse ecological fallacy. In relation to values, Schwartz (1994) argues that reverse ecological fallacy occurs when researchers construct cultural indices based upon individual value measurements, without constructing culture-level analysis. However, this should not be taken to mean that this is the only or the most appropriate level of comparison between social entities. In other words, these findings, albeit providing modest support to our argument, should be treated with caution and further research in this area is necessary.

6. Conclusion

This paper explored one aspect of EE/AA in Canada, France and Ireland. In addition to investigating the values/beliefs of business students concerning EE, one of the main objectives of this research was to determine the impacts of such individual values/beliefs on simulated hiring decisions of women, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. Much previous research on EE/AA focused upon antecedents of values and attitudes, the background factors leading to the formation of attitudes towards EE/AA. The exploratory research presented here is one of the few that attempts to address outcomes of values/beliefs towards EE/AA. The study has made a modest contribution in this regard. Based on extant literature it was hypothesized that individual business student values/beliefs would influence their simulated hiring decisions of minority candidates and this is supported, if modestly, in the three recruitment scenarios analysed.

Subjects in all three countries rated fairly highly the importance of EE for, women, visible minorities and persons with a disability. There were some noticeable differences in decisions made due to nationality of origin and it is probable that there are societal, broad socialization and contextual factors involved. Beliefs and values also varied due

to nationality of origin in many areas; yet were largely similar in others. Due to the nature of the data, interpretations at the societal level must be qualified. The overview of the EE/AA situation in the three countries shows that there are societal differences in how each of these countries addresses legislative provision. Most significantly, the investigation shows that individual values/beliefs of these students from leading business/engineering schools (future managers) influenced their simulated hiring decisions on minority candidates as presented in the three scenarios.

These research findings and a review of the relevant literature clearly demonstrate that simply enacting legislation to overcome labor market discrimination is insufficient. A practical implication of this investigation is that there is potentially a key role for human resource professionals in contributing to EE and for academic teaching in educational programs. A good place to begin, as our findings suggest, might be in the business schools themselves – the values and beliefs of the business student are often the values of the future manager and it is worth noting that values are exceedingly difficult to change. However, the real challenge remains to enable people from different value systems to see the point of view of others; or as Habermas (1999) might put it – to acknowledge the otherness of the other as global cosmopolitanism and basically liberal ideas of egalitarianism nudge their way onto the globalization agenda. One way this can be facilitated is through social discourse among all concerned, including the three groups this investigation focused upon. Unless values, beliefs and attitudes can be changed through social discourse, legislation alone cannot ensure EE in Canada, France, Ireland or elsewhere.

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Appendix

This questionnaire has two parts [only scenarios reproduced here; for value items see Table I in main text] that deal with views and choices about EE/AA. We would appreciate if you could fill in this questionnaire. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. Also, your participation is voluntary. Any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Thank you! - (data collector's name)

Related definition: EE (AA) is the process of a business or governmental agency in which it gives special rights of hiring or advancement to minorities to make up for past discrimination against that minority.

Part one: critical management incidents

Please read the following managerial incidents and respond to the questions listed at the end of each incident.

Incident 1
Recently a human resource audit has been completed about the origin of employees working in your firm. This audit reveals that 98 per cent of managers of your firm are all males. A management position became available recently and the HR Department, after conducting their recruitment and selection process, has put two candidates in the final list. One of the two candidates is a female. Both the male and the female candidates are reasonably matched in terms of their qualifications and experience.

How important do you think is the issue of EE for women? (Please circle a number)
Extremely unimportant   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Extremely important

Which candidate would you hire? Check one of the following two answers:

(1) Hire the male candidate: _____

(2) Hire the female candidate: _____

Incident 2
After conducting a thorough job search and interviews, your firm has narrowed the list of applicants to two candidates. One of these two candidates is from a visible minority community. The other is a Caucasian. Both candidates are reasonably well matched in terms of qualifications and experience.

How important do you think is the issue of EE for visible minorities? (Please circle a number)
Extremely unimportant   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Extremely important

Which candidate would you hire? Check one of following two answers:

(1) Hire the visible minority candidate: _____

(2) Hire the male Caucasian candidate: _____

Incident 3
Persons with disabilities have been looking for EE in hiring. Your company has no employee with any kind of disability. Recently a clerical position became open. After a thorough search the HR department of your firm has put two candidates in the final selection process. One of these candidates is a person with a disability.

How important is EE for persons with a disability? (Please circle a number)
Extremely unimportant   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Extremely important
  Which candidate would you hire? Check one of following two answers:

(1) Hire the person with disability: _____

(2) Hire the person without any disability: _____

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