

**Affirmative Action: The experience of people in middle  
management positions**

**By**

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### SPECIAL DEDICATION

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Affirmative Action: The experience of people in middle management positions

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## ABSTRACT

Affirmative Action remains one of the most highly sensitive, emotive and hotly debated subjects in South Africa. It is nevertheless an important legislated program that needs to be fully researched and constructively debated to bring change to the lives of previously disadvantaged groups. The present study focused on the experiences of black middle managers. The goal being to describe how black middle managers experience Affirmative Action at the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Emphasis was placed on how black middle managers define Affirmative Action, whether they feel that others question their abilities because of Affirmative Action or not and the extent to which Affirmative Action policies affect their job satisfaction and work commitment. The phenomenological approach was used to study the experiences of five middle managers at the SABC. Results of the study revealed that participants experienced Affirmative Action positively as a corrective process that provides employment opportunities for advancement and actualisation of potentialities. These results seem to counter previous research studies (e.g., Gillis et al., 2001; Koekemoer, 1998) that propound a high stress level and demotivation among those who are supposed to benefit from Affirmative Action, the affirmed. The current findings are congruent with Skedsvold and Mann's (1996) assertion that Affirmative Action policies increase job satisfaction and organisational commitment among beneficiaries.

## KEY TERMINOLOGIES

**Affirmative Action** - is a process or strategy implemented by the organisation to overcome barriers to equal employment opportunity, through a broad variety of activities relating to, inter alia, selection and recruitment, development and training and promotion practices targeting all previously disadvantaged communities (Human, 1993).

**Black** - refers to Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

**Discrimination** – is an intentional or unintentional act which adversely affects employment opportunities because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, marital status, or national origin, or other factors such as age.

**Intrinsic motivation** - refers to the innate propensity to engage one's interests and exercise one's capacities, and, in doing so, to seek out and master optimal challenges. People who are intrinsically motivated work on tasks because they find them enjoyable.

**Job discrimination** - harmful actions in workplaces directed towards a person or groups who are the targets of prejudice.

**Locus of control** - refers to the extent to which people perceive themselves or uncontrollable outside forces as being in control of events. **External locus** is when an individual see outside factors as being in control and **internal locus** is when an individual see internal factors as being in control.

**People of colour** - refers to Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

**Prejudice** is a negative feeling towards people based solely on their group membership.

**Previously disadvantaged** - refers to black people (Africans, Coloureds and Indians), women, and disabled persons.

**Revolving door syndrome** - the phrase refers to the ease with which companies are able to recruit new Affirmative Action candidates and the equal ease with which these recruits can feel frustrated, disillusioned and eventually leave the company.

**Self-actualization tendency** - the individual's push to become what its inherent potentialities suit it to be, these potentialities aim toward the maintenance and enhancement of life.

**Self-fulfilling prophecy** - a phenomenon that seems to work more often when it's forecasting that things will go wrong and they actually go wrong.

**Window dressing** - the deceptive practice of hiring people from the previously disadvantaged groups in order to make a company's employee profile appear good without giving real power to the affirmed employees.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

During the past years Affirmative Action in South Africa was a bone of contention between government, the private sector, and the labour force, primarily because it goes to the root of job security for the individual. It questions the validity of the comfortable status quo, and by so doing is seen to threaten it. Levy and Associates (1994) succinctly posit that to some extent, Affirmative Action is an already politicised issue in South Africa. It is an emotive issue. Many people feel strongly about it and construct elaborate arguments either against or in favour of Affirmative Action, depending on their own personal prejudices, feelings, and experiences, or what they have heard or read.

Many companies have heeded the government's call of implementing Affirmative Action without fail as stipulated in the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998). As a result of this legislation, South Africa has moved from what De Klerk (1998, p. 18) called the "crossover phase into the impact " phase whereby companies and organizations have appointed blacks, women and where possible, the disabled – willingly or unwillingly with the inevitable result that these individuals are now occupying positions on an Affirmative Action basis. It is a time period whereby the occupants of those positions are either making it or breaking it, companies are reaping government rewards for complying with the act, or facing the government's wrath for not implementing Affirmative Action programs. Thus, the impact might be good for some and bad for others.

Previous research studies (e.g., Koekemoer, 1998) were focused on arguments for and against Affirmative Action in South Africa. Having debated and implemented Affirmative Action for the past years, it is time to focus on the

experiences of those in the frying pan, the affirmed. In order to evaluate and redirect the country's Affirmative Action policies it is important that the affirmed be heard. This research study is an attempt to understand the experiences of those who have been given the opportunity to occupy managerial positions in the context of affirmative action. In this chapter the research problem, research question, research goal and outline of the study will be briefly discussed.

## **1.2 Motivation for the study**

Affirmative Action does not only affect those affirmed, it affects even more so, those not affirmed. Unlike other employees, it seems that affirmed employees are likely to be subjected to heightened scrutiny. De Witt, Erasmus and Swanepoel (1998, p. 4) propound that "Research in the early nineties for instance showed that many white male managers at that stage believed that blacks and white women are less capable than white men". Such views can destroy the self-confidence and motivation and may become a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. Perceptions, fears, stereotypes and beliefs of this kind may, if not managed properly, typically contribute to white resistance to the implementation of Affirmative Action and may form an important stumbling block in the process of true equity in the workplace (De Witt et al., 1998).

Research studies (e.g., Gillis et al., 2001; Koekemoer, 1998) seem to point to a high stress level and demotivation even among those who are supposed to benefit, the affirmed. According to Koekemoer (1998, p. 32-33) "Affirmative Action appointees have huge stress because of their disadvantaged social background. They often receive less praise and more criticism".

Black managers are alleged to still have a negative view of this process.

"They are silent firstly because of a deliberate personal aversion to being associated with Affirmative Action. Following years of tokenism, bad media and a stigma associated with being an 'Affirmative Action appointee', black

managers are at pains to dissociate themselves from Affirmative Action”  
(The Black Leader, 1994, p. 21).

Thus, if implemented without due consideration by those responsible for its implementation, it may result in lost happiness, lost reputation, pain and suffering.

Taking the above-mentioned assertions into consideration, it shows that the experiences of the affirmed are of fundamental importance for companies to evaluate and regulate their Affirmative Action policies. Knowledge of the impact of Affirmative Action on employees is of cardinal importance to any organization or institution. Though much has been known and researched about Affirmative Action in workplaces, there seems to be less documented information about the experiences of the affirmed employees in South Africa. More so, about managers' experience of Affirmative Action in broadcasting companies.

More studies need to be conducted to explore the experiences at different employee levels as to the impact of affirmative action. De Witt et al. (1998) succinctly emphasizes this view when they posit that recent research findings indicated that perceptions regarding the implementation of affirmative action in South African companies remain poor. The dire need and importance of research into the experiences of managers and other role players is clearly summed up by De Witt et al.'s (1998) concluding remarks,

"It is also clear that surveys on the opinions of various stakeholders regarding the implementation of affirmative action in South African organisations can provide very valuable information that may assist in the process of working towards true employment equity" (p. 21).

This study endeavours to heed this call by focusing on middle managers' experience of Affirmative Action.

In this study black middle managers are targeted primarily because they are among the key role players during the implementation of the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) at organizational level. Due to their positions, they form the bridge between top management and lower management, thus they are the cork on which companies revolve. Their experiences as black managers are crucial in making the employment equity of the company work as it has a telling effect on their own performance, the performance of those employees they manage, and therefore, that of the company as a whole. Having presented a justification for the study, the research question follows.

### **1.3 Research question**

From the research problem presented in the preceding paragraphs, it can be deduced that contrary to the belief that the affirmed enjoy the benefits of Affirmative Action, it is possible that they may not achieve job satisfaction in these positions. Given the history of affirmative action in South Africa, one is then tempted to ask this question: what are the experiences of the affirmed employees in South African companies?

This study is an attempt to answer the question “how are middle managers in a South African broadcasting company experiencing Affirmative Action?” This question lends itself to the research goals to be discussed hereunder.

### **1.4 Research goals**

The research goals of this study are divided into a general goal and specific goals.

#### **1.4.1 General Research goal**

The general research goal of this study is to explore the concept Affirmative Action and its implications for the role players. In pursuit of this goal, a literature study of the definition and the politics of this concept will be used as a foundation

for an in-depth analysis. Affirmative Action in the South African milieu and the history the South African Broadcasting Corporation, henceforth referred to as the SABC, will be presented as a foundation to reach the specific goals.

#### **1.4.2 Specific Research goal**

The specific research goal is to describe how people in middle management positions in a broadcasting company are experiencing the Affirmative Action program of the company. Thus, to gain a better understanding of the experience of Affirmative Action among affected role players, in this instance, black middle managers at the SABC.

#### **1.5 Method of inquiry**

In pursuit of the above-mentioned goals, the phenomenological approach was used as the research method that best matches this goal, primarily because it affords us to view reality through the eyes of the managers. Marshall and Rossman (1995) describe phenomenology as the study of experiences and the ways in which we put them together. Phenomenology is more relevant in this study where managers' experiences are explored.

Data was collected by first using a protocol in the form of a structured questionnaire with open-ended questions. Then, a semi-structured interview was used as a follow-up to the protocol to get clear clarification on terms, themes and meanings on issues raised in the protocol. It took the form of an in-depth interview with some predetermined questions or key words being used as a guide.

Data analysis was done by using the Interpretative-transformational approach (Ashworth, Giorgi & de Koning, 1986). It involves reduction of data through transformation into psychological language and represents a step-wise procedure intended for total account of data. The following four steps proposed by Giorgi (1985) were used:

- Sense of whole
- Discrimination of Meaning units
- Transformation of meaning units into psychological language
- Synthesis of the transformed meaning units into a consistent statement of the structure of Affirmative action

To increase the rigour in this research study, Guba's (1981) four aspects of trustworthiness and strategies were employed as purported by Krefting (1990). A detailed explanation of these aspects and strategies is presented in chapter three.

## **1.6 Outline of the study**

This report consists of five chapters. The present chapter is a general introduction to the research study. Focus was placed on the motivation for the study, research question, research goals and the method used to reach each goal. It was used to lay the foundation for chapters to follow.

Chapter two presents an overview of the concept of Affirmative Action. A number of definitions of this concept are given and used as guidelines to formulate a definition used in this study. As part of the literature study, previous research findings on the issue of Affirmative Action have been outlined. Emphasis is placed on the perceptions and attitudes prevailing from different role-players, especially what the affirmed employees ought to experience. A brief summary of the Affirmative Action policy of the company used in this study is presented.

The third chapter presents the research design used in the study. A detailed description of the participants is followed by an analysis of the quality of the research. Factors that were likely to affect the quality of the research and steps that have been taken to counter them are highlighted. The chapter closes with a step-by-step account on how data was collected and the techniques used in analysing it.



The fourth chapter presents the results of the study. Themes are laid out and interpreted. Interpretation of data is done within the phenomenological framework. The last chapter integrates preceding chapters. A discussion of the results is done by looking at the possible implications of collected data with special reference to the company's context. The study ends with a section detailing suggested recommendations.

## **1. 7 Conclusion**

Without any doubt, experiences of people affirmed are of cardinal importance for companies and South Africa as a whole. An in-depth understanding of employees' experiences assist companies to evaluate and regulate the Affirmative Action policies they have implemented.

In this chapter the research question, research goals, method of inquiry and the study outline have been presented. In the next chapter a discussion on the concept of Affirmative Action, literature review, the South African context, the SABC's employment equity policy and the theory applied in the study is presented.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundation for the chapters that are to follow. In this chapter the researcher presents different definitions of Affirmative Action in order to give an overview of the concept of Affirmative Action. The present researcher aims to accentuate similarities and differences in the various definitions presented. These definitions were used to formulate a definition deemed relevant to the research study.

The concept of Affirmative Action is highly contentious and has both positive and negative aspects attached to it. In order to present a balanced discussion of the concept of Affirmative Action, both arguments for and against Affirmative Action are discussed. As shall be explained, Affirmative Action has people that support it and those that are opposed to it - some see it as a corrective action, while others perceive it as reverse discrimination. Previous research findings are presented in this chapter to highlight prevailing perceptions and attitudes with regards to Affirmative Action.

The uniqueness of the context in which Affirmative Action programmes occur is of vital importance in this research study. The background of the study is presented by a discussion based on Affirmative Action in the South African setting and the SABC's employment equity policy. The chapter is concluded by a discussion on the basic assumptions of the interpretive theory as applied in this study. Emphasis is placed on the interpretive theory as a theory best suited to achieve the study goals.

## **2.2 The concept of Affirmative Action**

Affirmative Action finds its roots in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights formulated in the 1940s by International Labour (Wingrove, 1995). Anti-discrimination measures on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political means, national extraction, social origins, property, birth, or any other status were core issues. Affirmative Action is based on the concept of socio-economic equality, which became popular during the 1960s (McElroy, 2001). The term was first introduced by president J. F. Kennedy in 1961 and legislated for the first time in the United States in 1965 by president L. B. Johnson. Access to basics such as education and job appointments was presented as the right of every American (Wingrove, 1995).

It was a policy primarily aimed at correcting institutional discrimination where decisions, policies and procedures that are not necessarily explicitly discriminatory have had a negative impact on people of colour (Kivel, 2001). People of colour were deliberately sidelined in the market place and the majority of them were subsequently rendered jobless and poverty stricken. The law was to allocate basics (e.g. education, job appointments) on a favoured basis to certain classes of Americans -- e.g. blacks or women. This was justified on two grounds. First, because they were the victims of another class of Americans, white males who were mainly responsible for sidelining them. Second, only by assuring equal access to such consumer goods as education could the disadvantaged compete fairly. South Africa, as will be explained in the next section, shares the American experience due to the imbalances created by years of apartheid. Similarly, in South Africa Affirmative Action has been legislated to try and correct the imbalances as per The South African Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998).

Affirmative Action is a sensitive process open to diverse interpretations, depending on one's personal beliefs, opinions, norms and values. Although it is generally believed to entail essentially positive, remedial action taken to redress historical injustices, there are many people who do not regard it as being positive and would

like to see it eliminated. It has been associated with negative terms such as tokenism and reverse discrimination (Leopeng, 1999). Subsequently, alternative terms were coined, for example, black advancement, equal opportunities, democratisation, harmonisation, accelerated advancement, managing diversity, and so forth, to camouflage Affirmative Action. In this research study, the present researcher endeavoured to establish whether middle managers experience the implemented Affirmative Action process positively or negatively.

As Affirmative Action means different things to different people, a number of definitions are given to it. A broader definition is that propounded by Adèle (1996, p. 6):

“Affirmative Action has been seen as a means of correcting historical injustices and as an attempt to work from there to eventually creating level playing fields where everyone can compete, based upon equal access to education, training and other opportunities formerly restricted to the white minority population”.

The aim being to make conditions such that everyone can compete, based upon equal access to education, training and other opportunities formerly restricted to the white minority population. It consists of policies, programs, and procedures that give preference to blacks and women in job hiring, admission to institutions of higher education, the awarding of government contracts, and other allocations of social benefits (Adèle, 1996). The main criteria for Affirmative Action are race, gender, ethnic origin, religion, and disability.

The South African Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998), as stated by Tinarelli (2000), views Affirmative Action positively as a transitory intervention strategy designed to achieve equal employment opportunity unduly restraining the career aspirations or expectations of current organisational members who are experienced in their jobs. It must be rooted in the principles of justice and equity. Levy and Associates (1994, p. 4.2) also lend support to this view by arguing that

"Affirmative Action is a (temporary) strategy to achieve equality at work without lowering standards and without limiting the prospects of existing competent employees"

A more business-focused definition is given by the The Black Leader (1994, p. 17) which propounds that Affirmative Action is "a broad policy of making a concerted effort to employ black people in business, and to advance blacks into senior positions with real powers to make decisions". Along the same lines, Namibia's Draft Bill on Affirmative Action in Employment adheres to these two definitions by positing that Affirmative Action is ( Levy & Associates, 1994, p. 4.4):

1. "a strategy to overcome and eliminate racial discrimination in the workplace, and thereby promote equal opportunity"
2. "a strategy to give preferential recruitment or promotion to suitably qualified people in designated groups to ensure these groups are equally represented in the various positions of employment"

Affirmative Action should be a deliberate and concerted effort to accelerate opportunities for all previously disadvantaged communities, through training and education relevant to business, which will enable them to be advanced to positions in which they were previously not represented. This is further highlighted by Combs and Cruhl (1986, p. 1) when they maintain that "by Affirmative Action, we refer to a set of specific and result-orientated procedures that are utilized to ensure that non-whites and women are not disadvantaged in an effort to secure employment (e.g. recruitment, selection, and promotion)". They further argue that Affirmative Action is not an end, but rather a means of ensuring the ultimate goal of equality of employment opportunity to remedy past and present discrimination against blacks, other minorities and women.

Affirmative Action should be a means of upgrading and improving the standard of living amongst previously disadvantaged groups and ensuring that they are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels of the workforce of

a designated employer based on the demographics of the country. A definition that captures this assertion is the one given by Gillis et al. (2001) which propounds that Affirmative Action is specific actions in recruitment, hiring, upgrading and other areas designed and taken for the purpose of eliminating the present effects of past discrimination, or to prevent discrimination.

Affirmative Action is a springboard from which equal opportunities arise. As seen by Wingrove (1995, p. 9) it “is a generator of the equalization action, of reparation activities and pro-active steps to erase disparity between people brought about by lower standards of education, by racism, government policies and by other disadvantages that caused lack of development and opportunities”.

For the purpose of this study, Affirmative Action is defined as a process or strategy implemented by the organisation to overcome barriers to equal employment opportunity, through a broad variety of activities relating to, inter alia, selection and recruitment, development and training and promotion practices targeting all previously disadvantaged communities (Human, 1993). It means taking positive steps to recruit, hire, train, and promote individuals from groups that have traditionally been discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, disability, ethnic origin, religion, and age. In this sense, Affirmative Action goes beyond equal employment opportunity, which requires employers to eliminate discriminatory conditions, whether inadvertent or intentional, and to treat all employees equally in the workplace.

Affirmative Action is hereby seen as a temporal intervention to achieve equal employment opportunity without lowering standards or removing competent whites from their current positions. Thus properly implemented Affirmative action programmes should lead to the optimisation of the potential of all South African’s human resources, raising of standards and a true respect and management of diversity. It is a strategy or process which, amongst others, results in the achievement of greater employment equity (Human, 1993).

As maintained in preceding paragraphs Affirmative Action may not offer the perfect solution for companies to eradicate the disparities caused by decades of past injustices. Currently it remains the most dynamic and active process to achieve some progress towards the goal of achieving equal employment for all (Tineralli, 1995). Herbert (1994) support this view when he maintains that if Affirmative Action is approached, assessed and handled in a true businesslike manner then there is much hope for corporate business and most all employees.

To put the concept in perspective and to understand the context in which affirmed managers find themselves, it is important to briefly look at some of the arguments presented for and against this process.

### **2.2.1 Arguments for Affirmative Action**

The following quotation ushers in arguments for Affirmative Action:

“Many supporters view Affirmative Action as a milestone, many opponents see it as a millstone, and many others regard it as both or neither - as a necessary, but imperfect, remedy for an intractable social disease. My own view is that the case against Affirmative Action is weak, resting, as it does so heavily, on myth and misunderstanding” (Skedsvold & Mann, 1996, p. 1).

There is a belief that Affirmative Action uses discrimination to cure discrimination. Skedsvold and Mann (1996) argue that this is a myth that uses the same word - discrimination to describe two very different things. Skedsvold and Mann maintain that job discrimination is grounded in prejudice and exclusion, whereas Affirmative Action is an effort to overcome prejudicial treatment through inclusion. Thus, the most effective way to cure society of exclusionary practices is to make special efforts at inclusion, which is exactly what Affirmative Action does.

Affirmative Action policies address and redress systematic economic and political discrimination against any group of people that are underrepresented or have a history of being discriminated against in particular institutions (Kivel, 2001). Beneficiaries of these programs have included women, people with disabilities, and poor and working class people, but their primary emphasis has been on addressing racial discrimination.

Affirmative Action programs have not eliminated racism, nor have they always been implemented without problems (Kivel, 2001). Affirmative Action is remedial action that corrects previous disadvantages caused mainly by racism. It ensures that the disadvantages to people of colour and the benefits to white people do not continue to be passed on to each succeeding generation. Kivel maintains that Affirmative Action helps mitigate these historical effects of institutional racism. It also counters the effects of current discrimination, intentional or not.

As Kivel (2001) maintains, most job opportunities are heard about through informal networks of friends, family and neighbours. He further argues that the result of racism is segregated communities, schools and workplaces. This pattern left previously disadvantaged groups out of the loop for many jobs, advancement opportunities, scholarships and training programs. As documented in the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998), one of Affirmative Action's core principles is the requirement of widespread and public advertisement of job opportunities so that not only people from previously disadvantaged groups, but white women and men who are outside the circles of information, have an equal opportunity to apply for these positions.

Currently the previously disadvantaged who were excluded from jobs, educational opportunities, or denied opportunities are able to gain access through Affirmative Action (Kivel, 2001). The paragraph below verifies this statement.



“Affirmative Action programs have been effective in many areas of public life because they opened up opportunities for people who would not otherwise have them, including white women and men. Attacks on Affirmative Action are part of a systematic attempt to roll back progress in ending discrimination and to curtail a broad social commitment to justice and equality. Attacking Affirmative Action is self-destructive for all of us except the rich” (Kivel, 2001, para. 25).

Another area Affirmative Action addresses is preferential hiring programmes (Skedsvold & Mann, 1996). Many times blacks have been excluded from hiring pools, overtly discriminated against, unfairly eliminated because of inappropriate qualification standards, or have been rendered unqualified because of discrimination in education and housing (Kivel, 2001). Court decisions on Affirmative Action have rendered illegal those qualifications that are not relevant to one's ability to do the job. Emphasis is now put on job experience and job specific qualifications. Consequently, companies can no longer use inappropriate qualifications as an excuse for not affirming or promoting blacks. As one of Affirmative Action's prerequisites, it is mandatory to put in place hiring goals so that those employed begin to reflect the racial mix of the general population from which workers are drawn (Act 55 of 1998).

Sometimes people argue that Affirmative Action means the best-qualified person will not be hired. There is, however, no legal requirement to hire an unqualified person. There is a mandate that in choosing between qualified candidates, the hiring preference should be for a person of colour when past discrimination has resulted in white people receiving preferential treatment. The South African Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) states categorically that Affirmative Action measures must include equitable representation of suitably qualified people from designated groups in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce. Thus, the selection of unqualified candidates is not permitted under Affirmative Action guidelines and should not be equated with legal forms of Affirmative Action.

As purported by Kivel (2001), employers have traditionally hired people not only on test scores, but also on personal appearance, family and personal connections, school ties and on race and gender preferences, demonstrating that talent or desirability can be defined in many ways. Hiring people on non-job related traits have all contributed to a segregated work force where whites hold the best jobs, and people of colour work in the least desirable and most poorly paid positions. Affirmative Action policies serve as a corrective to such patterns of discrimination. They keep score on progress toward proportional representation and place the burden of proof on organizations to show why it is not possible to achieve it.

The positive aspects and scope of Affirmative Action are best summarised by Kivel (2001) in the paragraph below:

“Affirmative Action is not a cure-all. It will not eliminate racial discrimination, nor will it eliminate competition for scarce resources. Affirmative Action programs can only ensure that everyone has a fair chance at what is available. They cannot direct us to the social policies necessary so that people do not have to compete for scarce resources in the first place. The larger question to ask is why are there not enough decent paying, challenging and safe jobs for everyone? Why are there not enough seats in the universities for everyone who wants an education? Expanding opportunity for people of colour means expanding not only their access to existing jobs, education and housing (Affirmative Action), but also removing the obstacles that cause these resources to be limited” (para. 26).

Now that a brief overview of the positive aspects of Affirmative Action has been given, arguments against Affirmative Action will be presented below.

### **2.2.2 Arguments against Affirmative Action**

Despite what has been said in the preceding paragraphs, Affirmative Action is a compromise and does not please everybody. Affirmative Action might well increase the very evil it seeks to cure: prejudice. There are many (e.g. Gillis et al., 2001; Herbet, 1994) who argue that Affirmative Action uses reverse discrimination to solve the problem of discrimination. This bothers employers as well as employees who do not qualify for Affirmative Action. Employers feel that they end up with a lesser quality worker and the employees feel discriminated against on the bases of race and gender. The employee could incite racism among the bypassed group, and thus while Affirmative Action was introduced to decrease racism, it may actually incite racism.

Another disadvantage of Affirmative Action mentioned by Gillis et al. (2001), is that it stigmatises the beneficiaries. Every employee from a minority that benefits from Affirmative Action bears a mark of not being the best choice, but only the best choice from the affirmed group, even if the person was selected for being the best available on the complete job market. Thus, Affirmative Action drives a wedge between individual self-esteem and economic success.

Affirmative Action does provide people from certain minorities with a job they would not have secured otherwise. But the quality of this job could be compromised in surroundings hostile towards the group that the employee is from and this brings doubts as to whether the affirmed employee is happy with this job or not (Gillis et al., 2001).

A disadvantage of Affirmative Action that is currently in circulation is that affirmative Action leads to dropping of standards (Gillis et al., 2001). Supporters of this view reason that it promotes the hiring of less skilled workers. Employers have to choose from the best available employee from the minorities, instead of having to choose simply the best available employee in the market. Amongst other aspects,

the present researcher aims to explore views held by black middle managers with regards to the effect of Affirmative Action on the maintenance of job standards.

In tandem with the above-mentioned negative attitudes and perceptions, common objections to Affirmative Action can be summarized under the following assertions:

- It is reverse discrimination, which preferentially advantages blacks.
- Loss of expertise
- Lowering of standards, reduction of quality standards. Less qualified, less experienced people do not deliver the same quality of service.
- Underperformance owing to stress. Whites are stressed due to fear of unemployment and blacks are stressed due to disadvantaged social background.
- It helps the wrong people - people who are wholly unqualified are the ones in real need of preferential treatment and not those at the top end of the social scale within the protected group.
- It stigmatises its beneficiaries such that members of the protected group are seen to have acquired their positions because of their race instead of ability and efforts.
- It will be a permanent and not a temporary remedial device for past injustices as privileges once enjoyed are not easy to withdraw.
- As tabled in the preceding paragraphs Affirmative Action may foment rather than cure racism

The advantages and disadvantages as discussed above, can perhaps be summed up in the paragraph below:

“Despite all of the negative aspects of Affirmative Action I mentioned above (without doubt there are many, many more), I feel that Affirmative Action is necessary. Until a better solution is found or until the people of America finally stop quarrelling about race, colour and culture and establish peace in

the country itself, Affirmative Action should stay, being the best solution available: a compromise” (Gillis et al., 2001, para. 9).

The present researcher hopes that this research study will be able to validate or negate some of the assertions mentioned by both those for and against Affirmative Action and by so doing, assist in casting some light on how the affected actually experience Affirmative Action in the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The findings of this research study are presented in detail in chapter four. The next section presents previous research findings related to the study.

### **2.3 Related research studies and findings**

The success or failure of implementing Affirmative Action lies with the management of organizations and therefore their perceptions and attitude towards Affirmative Action are very important. De Witt et al (1998) maintain that recent findings indicate that perceptions regarding the implementation of Affirmative Action in South African Companies are still poor. Many of the white supervisors are not confident that blacks have the knowledge to address Affirmative Action issues. In a situation like this, nothing, no matter what kind of regulation you think of, will change unless the people (employers in this case) are willing to cooperate.

Research studies (e.g. De Witt et al., 1998; Leopeng, 1999) show that there is still a difference in the understanding of Affirmative Action between white and black employees. Testimony to this is given in a research study done in a South African company conducted by Leopeng (1999, p. 65). Amongst others, he found that:

- The view that Affirmative Action is about the dropping of standards came from a white focus group. Black employees never shared this view.
- Whereas black employees at the company in Leopeng’s study do not feel that there is a skills flight from the country, whites feel otherwise.
- There is a significant difference in understanding the definition of Affirmative Action between whites and other groups. Whites see it as reverse racism, while blacks see it as mainly a corrective measure of the wrongs of the past.

In this study, the researcher seeks to understand what Affirmative Action means to the middle managers and how they perceive that this process has affected job standards at the SABC.

Gillis, Gomes, Valliere, and Doyon (2001) propound that Affirmative Action tends to undermine the self-esteem of the affirmed. Thus, when the affirmed person senses that superiors believe that he or she does not have what it takes, or has been appointed solely for window dressing, the affirmed will be demotivated and under perform. By so doing the affirmed will be fulfilling the stereotype the managers have of him or her. Contrary to this assertion, Skedsvold and Mann (1996) posit that although Affirmative Action may have this effect in some cases, interview studies and public opinion surveys suggest that such reactions are rare. In this study, the researcher seeks to find out whether black middle managers experience affirmative action as demotivating or motivating to them.

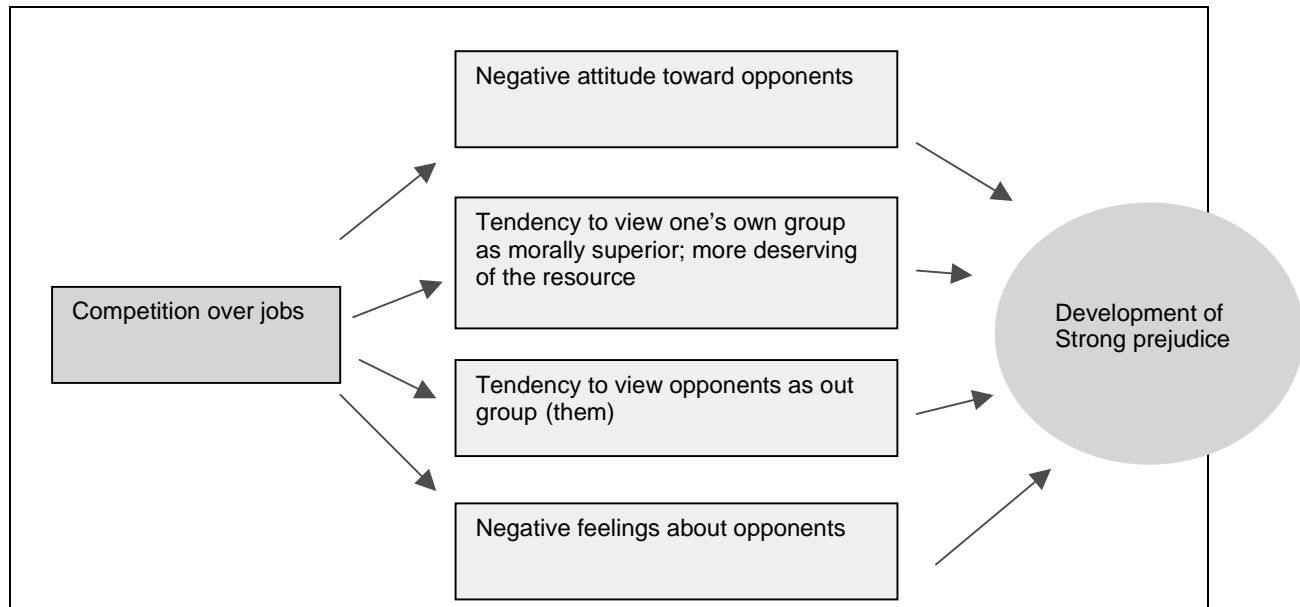
In the Gallup poll cited by Skedsvold and Mann (1996) the researcher asked employed blacks and employed white women whether they had ever felt that others questioned their abilities because of Affirmative Action or not. It was found that nearly 90% of respondents said no. According to Skedsvold and Mann (1996) it is understandable since white men, who have traditionally benefited from preferential hiring, do not feel hampered by self-doubt or a loss in self-esteem. Skedsvold and Mann assert that, in many cases Affirmative Action may actually raise the self-esteem of the affirmed by providing them with employment and opportunities for advancement. There is also evidence that Affirmative Action policies increase job satisfaction and organisational commitment among beneficiaries (Skedsvold & Mann, 1996). Once again the researcher will try to find the extent to which the above assertion is experienced by black middle managers at the SABC.

A brief look at intergroup relationships and the collective identity of racial groups may perhaps suggest that the drive for Affirmative Action might be happening at

the wrong time. As purported by Devine (1995) social and intergroup dynamics can determine the target for prejudice in any given society. In discussing Affirmative Action, it is important to take heed of Dovidio, Gaertner, Niemann and Snider's (2001) call to recognize the importance of understanding group functions and collective identities about race relations in South Africa. Given that in South Africa blacks are gaining entry into the market that was previously white dominated, it can be assumed that this may serve as a cause for tensions, competition and conflict between the two races. A full discussion of the South African context will be presented in the next section. A brief discussion of the realistic conflict theory that endeavours to address the source of prejudice and discrimination follows in the paragraphs below.

The realistic conflict theory looks at the role of competition for the development of prejudice (Beyer, 1996). According to the realistic conflict theory, prejudice and discrimination sometimes develop out of competition for scarce resources such as jobs, good schools and other desirable outcomes (Dovidio et al., 2001). The realistic conflict theory states that the competition for valuable but limited resources can lead to prejudice whereas cooperation that results in successful outcomes reduces intergroup bias. From this perspective, tolerance and fairness prevail in situations in which group interests are compatible and complementary.

Furthermore, the realistic conflict theory suggests that as such competition continues, the members of the two groups involved view each other in increasingly negative ways. A classic study conducted by Hovland and Sears (in Baron & Byrne, 1991) found that the more negative economic conditions were, the greater the incidence of direct and open conflict by whites against blacks. The present researcher aimed at exploring among participants if they have ever experienced racial conflict as a result of Affirmative Action in the context of job shortage.



**Figure 2.1 Realistic conflict theory (Baron & Byrne, 1991, p 191)**

As jobs become scarcer, and more blacks are affirmed, it is likely that whites will desire to preserve their established prerogatives. According to the Psychological Reactance theory propounded by Brehm and Brehm (in Tesser, 1995, p. 270), “whenever the established prerogatives are limited or threatened, the need to retain our freedom makes us want them significantly more than previously”. The psychological reactance theory further maintains that when increasing scarcity or anything else interferes with our prior access to some item, we react against the interference by wanting and trying to possess the item more than before.

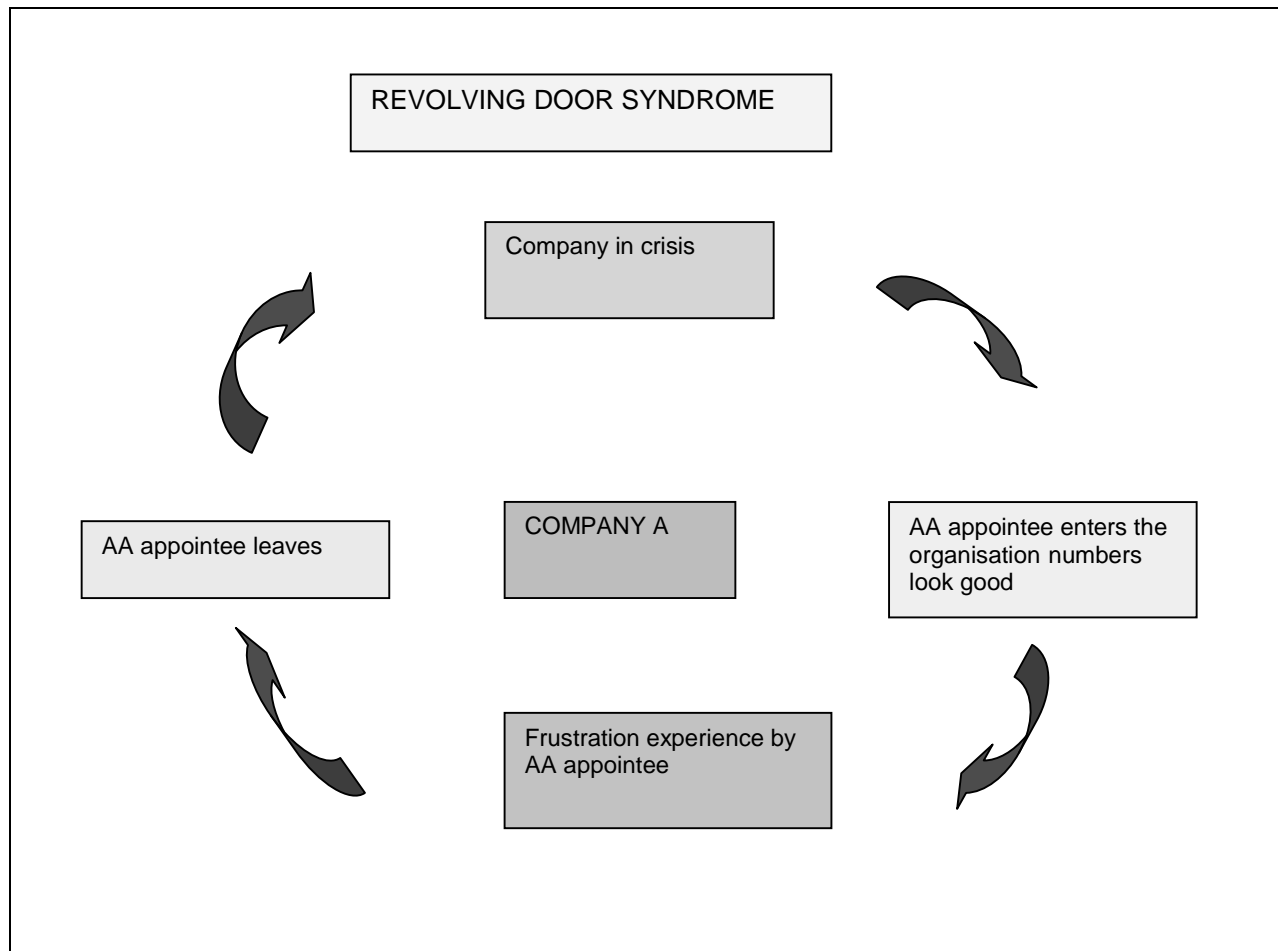
Therefore, given the above-discussed theories, an environment filled with tension might be in the offing. In the light of these theories and the current job scarcity in South Africa, the present researcher wished to understand whether black middle managers experience any negativity from their counterparts.

The dawn of a new political era in South Africa has brought high economic expectations for blacks. Anstey (1997) justifies black expectation by maintaining



that “After years of repressive legislation and job reservation by race, black people have a legitimate expectation that political liberation will mean accelerated opportunities for development, education, careers and jobs” (p. 17). However, even though the expectations might be based on legitimate concerns, a significant number of blacks have unrealistic expectations bordering on a sense of entitlement but not reality. Madi (1993) gives a word of caution, “Blacks in this country have a right to expectations of improvement in their lot, but such expectations must be tempered with reality” (p. 109). Furthermore, Eric Mafuna (in Madi, 1993) accentuates the presence of unrealistic expectations amongst blacks by arguing that “the economic expectations of blacks are dangerously high” (p. 109).

Adams (1993) asserts that the failure of a number of Affirmative Action initiatives is the assumption that it is the black trainee who must change, white managers must manage as they have done before, while the organisation maintains its structures and cultural systems. Many organisation cultures and related systems have been historically created by white management and do not offer a conducive environment to new recruits (Thomas, 1996). Consequently, recruits feel excluded, become disillusioned and eventually leave. Thomas (1996) calls this organisational behaviour the “revolving door syndrome” and depicts it as follows:



**Figure 2.2 The Revolving door syndrome (Thomas, 1996, p. 8)**

In the light of the above argument on culture, most companies put focus on helping the black employee to overcome his/her deficiencies through education, training and evaluation (Adams, 1993). These new employees must adapt and just assimilate, and if they fail they will be confirming to the stereotype that blacks and women cannot make the grade in the corporate environment. Adams advises that for Affirmative Action to work, white male managers must change too. The present researcher aims to gather from participants if they experience the company's culture as accommodating or not.

Affirmative action has experienced considerably less success with regards to integration in big business (Gillis et al., 2001). This observation by Gillis et al. is ascribed to the fact that big business has been generally more resistant to affirmative action and harder to regulate. They further posit that business is an area that most supporters of affirmative action expect to see a change.

In general blacks are still seen as follows: (Gillis, 2001; Madi ,1993; Skedsvold & Mann, 1996)

- lacking assertiveness
- lacking initiative
- having no work ethic ("Africa time")
- unproductive culture
- inclined to communism
- have lower standards and higher fault tolerance
- have unrealistic expectations and chaotic education

Each company has its unique factors which can either make or break Affirmative Action programmes. In the light of the preceding assertion, the present researcher is of the view that managers can learn from the experience of other South African companies. Following below is a table of factors that contributed to making Affirmative Action processes successful at Nampak. Nampak is Africa's largest packaging manufacturer. It is also the largest manufacturer of tissue paper products and holds a substantial share of the paper market.

**Table 2.3 Myths and Realities of Affirmative Action by Neil Cumming (in Thomas 1996. p. 69)**

<b>Factors contributing to less success</b>	<b>Factors contributing to success</b>
Decentralising the process	Centralising the drive
Giving it to “out of tune” personnel guys	Giving it to a “new South African” who isn’t defending his or her job.
Pretending it doesn’t cost money	Seeing it as an investment
Having it separate to the business strategy	Linking it to the budget and key strategies
No link to what focuses the mind of managers	Linking it to reward systems
Focusing on “almost white” darkies (golf-club syndrome)	“Stone Throwers” to comrade managers
Faint cues	Hard cues
Believing “they” must fit in with colonial management standards	Accepting an Africanising of management
Myth of “best man for the job”	Deliberately looking for black people
Myth of “real” jobs only	Mobilisation process (masses and the market)
Myth of “one speech converts masses”	Continuous propaganda
Myth of “things will stay the same”	Changing structures and roles
Because everybody is doing it	Because it will make you more competitive
Myth of “sink or swim”	Network - build support processes
Myth of “revolving-door” syndrome	Creating a “vibe”, new culture
Myth of “one braaivleis makes us all new South Africans”	Confronting our racism
Darkies on board is what it is about	Empowerment of the real people (two tier process)
One little error and you are out	Space and time must be given

## 2.4 The South African context

The South African government has proclaimed Affirmative Action as a measure which both public and private sector should, without fail, implement to redress the imbalances created by apartheid. As a result, many organisations have taken active steps to genuinely implement Affirmative Action or rather, to appease the government. There is no doubt that the pressure is on the industry to be seen to be "doing the right thing", and companies with a policy to employ and empower blacks will be looked upon more favourably than those that do not. The burning question company directors must face is whether they have adopted a policy of Affirmative Action for the wrong reasons, that is, for political reasons or sincerely want to redress the imbalances of the past (The Black Leader, 1994).

Affirmative Action requirements in South Africa are imposed on an employer through the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998). The seriousness of Affirmative Action in South Africa is captured by Neil Cumming (in The Black Leader, 1994, p. 17) when he posits that "No major company that wishes to operate successfully with legitimacy in South Africa can afford not to place the issue of Affirmative Action on its strategic agenda". In addition, some employers voluntarily adopt Affirmative Action plans in an effort to create a more balanced workforce. One of the Affirmative Action statutes as propounded in the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) has the following implications:

- It requires employers in both private and public sectors to take Affirmative Action measures as a means of creating greater employment equity
- Provision is made for involvement of trade unions in the formulation, and monitoring of Affirmative Action programs
- Employers must adopt a policy statement with a detailed plan of how Affirmative Action is to be implemented in selection, recruitment, training and development and promotion from within, changing organisational culture

- Employers must file periodic reports on the race and sex of their employees and send it to the Employment Equity commission appointed by government to monitor implementation of the Employment Equity Act
- An Employment Equity commission to enforce and monitor the implementation of Affirmative Action, thus to enforce compliance and to sanction non-compliance

The Employment Equity Act is aimed at encouraging those in control of assets to share with the previously disadvantaged. Talking of the Empowerment Equity Bill, Mark Lamberti (2004) had this to say: “In essence the bill is a plea, if not a demand, for white South Africans, particularly those in control of assets and enterprise, to share the gains of their previous advantage” (p. 3).

The legislation and implementation of Affirmative Action in South Africa has been surrounded by fears and concerns on the part of those who were favoured by apartheid. Koekemoer (1998) espouses this view when he posits that Affirmative Action is a very real threat to many whites in South Africa. He further asserts that whites fear that Affirmative Action will result in lowering of their status and enjoying lesser career prospects may also cause resistance. They feel they have no future in South Africa, especially for young white people. Leopeng (1999) found that most white employees in a South African company showed extreme negative views about the implementation of Affirmative Action, where statements like “loss of identity and detrimental to me” (p. 46) were uttered.

Given South Africa's history, blacks and women have not been able to realize their full potential and have been denied the capacity to compete (Human, 1993). Affirmative Action is therefore a means of giving the necessary education, training, development and opportunities to fill organizations' future personnel requirements with competence and confidence (Wingrove, 1995). Affirmative Action in South Africa is needed in order to bring all role players together on an equal basis to compete fairly. It does not mean equality but should lead to equal opportunities. In

line with the definition used for the purpose of this study in 2.1 above, Affirmative Action must be seen as an initial action of improving abilities to reach the point where a person is ready and able to compete on an equitable basis with others.

Wingrove (1995) posits that implementing Affirmative Action will give companies an edge in the market place, facilitate their drive towards world-class manufacturing standards and adapt their management styles to incorporate the participatory management approach. All these can be achieved by using the opportunity to appoint and utilize black managers to develop new markets and products.

According to Wingrove (1995) Affirmative Action should be implemented in South Africa happen due to:

- International changes, eradication of past injustices all over the world
- The upward mobility of blacks as many of them have been able to acquire necessary job skills. Thus, blacks will inevitably have buying power and decision making abilities, making it very important for companies to understand and cater for their needs.
- The gradual decline of whites in South Africa. Since the 1994 election many skilled whites left the country and for the economy to remain vibrant, more blacks should come into the fray to develop the same skills.
- Respect of diversity and for the survival of the whole

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned factors, Affirmative Action could therefore be seen as not only a political strategy but also a very wise business strategy for survival. It affords companies the opportunity to do business in South Africa in compliance with government legislation. Moreover, it opens opportunities to tap into the huge growing, inclusive market where everyone can participate irrespective of race, religion or sex.

In concluding this section, it is important to note that since the implementation of Employment Equity measures in South African companies, there is an amplification

of poaching top affirmative action executives (Bensted-Smith, 2004). According to Bensted-Smith, candidates are enticed by money and status to enable companies to fulfil their mandate of employing people from previously disadvantaged groups. Poaching is done with little consideration to the careers, growth, ability, desire, self-fulfilment, commitment and other factors promoting good business. In this study, the researcher would amongst others, investigate whether participants feel that ability and potential are considered when appointing an Affirmative Action candidate at the SABC.

## **2.5 The South African Broadcasting Corporation's Affirmative Action history**

In this section the SABC's employment equity background, the employment equity policy, policy implementation guidelines, training and development accommodation, harassment and victimization are presented in accordance with the SABC's Employment Equity Policy dated 2000.

### **2.5. 1 Background**

The Board of the SABC formally adopted the principle of employment equity in July 1994, to correct imbalances in the composition of the Corporation's staff complement. It did so in recognition that as a public broadcaster it can only achieve its full mandate through a representative and competent workforce that is reflective of the society it serves.

Due to the controversy surrounding the word Affirmative Action, the broadcasting company prefers to use the term Corrective Action. When asked how the company shifted from using the word Affirmative Action, to corrective action, the Human Resource manager replied:

“You know Affirmative Action was a word that has always has been bent around - and it has controversies attached to it - other people saying we



believe in Affirmative Action- some saying we don't believe in Affirmative Action – so I think from the perspective of the Board of SABC at top management they said let us call it rather, corrective action because what is Affirmative Action trying to do? It is trying to correct the imbalances caused by apartheid. It is a change of names but not a change in terms of the philosophy” (Personal communication, December 27, 2001)

The SABC committed itself to:

- ◆ Eliminate unfair discrimination in employment
- ◆ Ensure the implementation of employment equity to redress the effects of discrimination
- ◆ Achieve a competent and diverse workforce broadly representative of our society
- ◆ The development and retention of human capital focussing on the designated group

### **2.5.2 Employment Equity policy**

The SABC 's policy endeavours to offer equal employment and advancement opportunities to all persons without regard to race, gender, creed, colour or disability.

The objective of the policy is to:

- ◆ Ensure the SABC's continued survival, competitiveness and growth in a changing South Africa and global economy
- ◆ Apply employment equity principles consistent with the intent of national and international statutes governing human rights and labour relations, as well as SABC's collective agreements

The SABC will, therefore, continuously create conditions and initiate corrective measures to ensure equity of opportunities for all applicants and employees.

Attention will be focussed on the designated group, that is black people, women, and people with disabilities.

### **2.5.3 Policy implementation guidelines**

The SABC recognises that in order to achieve its overall strategic Employment Equity objectives, multidisciplinary expertise and cross-functional co-operation from all stakeholders is required. The achievement of these objectives will be facilitated by the implementation of the following strategies:

- ◆ Corrective action: To achieve employment equity a deliberate process of equity shall be applied in a manner that prioritises blacks, women and people with disabilities in SABC's employment and advancement strategies. This means that exclusions of white employees or obligatory retrenchment will not occur as a result of corrective measures in this regard.
  
- ◆ Recruitment, selection and promotion
  - ⇒ Divisional Employment Equity Micro Plans will be developed to form the backbone of all recruitment, selection and promotion activities.
  - ⇒ Micro plans will be developed in consultation with employee representatives and will form part of the divisional business plan and budget
  - ⇒ The nature of equity targets will be governed by geographic location, demographic profiles of operating regions and availability of required competencies.
  - ⇒ Micro Plans will be communicated to all employees to optimise credibility, confidence and ultimate success.
  - ⇒ Recruitment, selection and promotions in the SABC will be done correctively and transparently at all times in order to find suitably qualified people from designated groups.
  - ⇒ Reasonable accommodation needs for people with disabilities will be determined on the basis of the nature of the impairment and job function for

recruitment and selection purposes. When deemed necessary, the services of an occupational therapist will be engaged to assess the functional abilities of disabled persons during the selection process.

- ⇒ Competency and potential will further dictate selection. This will apply to both internal and external applicants.
- ⇒ Internally, promotions of competent individuals from the designated group will be accelerated to address under representation at all levels in the shortest possible time.
- ⇒ External applicants will be proactively sourced using one or a combination for the following;
  - Bursary Scheme and internship programs
  - Identification of potential applicants from tertiary institutions throughout the country
  - Head Hunting for strategic positions with the assistance of Executive Search Agencies
  - External recruitment advertising using appropriate media sources
  - Advertisements, where practicable, to be circulated to organisations that represent the interests of people with disabilities
  - Selection panels will be gender and race representative and appropriate selection interview techniques standardized for all interviews at all levels.
  - Exit interviews will be carried out for all employees to ascertain reasons and points of action for the affected area(s) and SABC as a whole.

#### **2.5.4 Training and Development**

The SABC will undertake focused development and training for all members of staff through internal training and other relevant learning interventions thus:

- ◆ Training and development resources will be made available

- ◆ Implementation of Accelerated Management Development Program
- ◆ Mentorship and coaching programmes
- ◆ Promote understanding and appreciation of their cultural diversity

### **2.5.5 Reasonable accommodation**

The SABC will provide reasonable accommodation for all employees, including people with disabilities in terms of the inherent requirements of the job and the nature of the disability, across all levels and jobs.

### **2.5.6 Harassment and victimization**

The SABC believes that everyone has the right to work in an environment that is safe, healthy, amicable and free of all forms of harassment and victimization. Sexual, racial, and disability based harassment and victimization are therefore considered as serious disciplinary offences attracting appropriate sanction.

Given the above-tabled history, it is clear that the SABC adopted the Employment Equity policy to offer equal employment and advancement opportunities to all its employees and to correct imbalances caused by apartheid. It is important to mention that the SABC has been undergoing tremendous changes and faced with challenges in terms of Employment Equity. These circumstances have to be taken into consideration when interviews were conducted, data analysed and more importantly, in the compatibility and use of the phenomenological method of inquiry.

## **2.6 Theoretical background**

The interpretive theory has been used as a theory appropriately suited for this research study. In accordance with Denzin and Lincoln (1998) the interpretive theory includes several varieties such as hermeneutics, constructionism, ethnomethodology, cognitive, phenomenology and subjectivist. The phenomenological approach has been adopted and will be discussed in the next

chapter. This theory is used primarily due to the assumptions that will be discussed below.

One of the fundamental tenets of the interpretive theory is that an individual approaches life with a collection of knowledge composed of commonsense constructs and categories that are social in origin (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Thus social life is based on social interactions and socially constructed meaning systems. They further posit that social actors construct the world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings. Actors in particular places, at particular times, give meaning to events and phenomena through prolonged, complex processes of social interaction involving history, language, and action.

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) maintain that “ the Interpretive approach tries to harness and extend the power of ordinary language and expression, developed over thousands of years, to help us better understand the social world” (p. 123). Language is the central medium for transmitting meaning, and essentially to convey information and to describe reality. According to Terre Blanche and Kelly the inquirer using interpretive methods must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. They further advise that to understand the part (specific sentence, utterance, or act) the researcher must grasp the whole (the complex of intentions, beliefs, and desires or the text, institutional contexts, practice, form of life, language game, and so on). The meaning of a word or utterance is dependent on its context of use (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This assertion will be discussed in the next paragraph.

The interpretive theory places great emphasis on the social context. It maintains that concepts and generalizations are wedded to their context. In Neuman’s words (1998, p. 73). “The interpretive is the foundation of social research techniques that are sensitive to context, that use various methods to get inside the ways others see the world”. Neuman further asserts that techniques used within this theory are

more concerned with achieving an empathic understanding of feelings and worldviews than with testing laws of human behaviour. The interpretive theory challenges the researcher to understand the meaning of human creations, words, actions and experiences in relation to the contexts in which they occur.

Interpretivists argue that human action is meaningful. They believe that human action has a certain intentional content that indicates the kind of action it is (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Researchers working within the parameters of interpretive theory maintain that what an action means can be grasped only in terms of the system of meanings to which it belongs. Closely related to the assertion that meaning depends on the context, is the belief that people possess an internally experienced sense of reality. Thus, interpretivists assume that people's subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

To elaborate on the belief in human subjectivity, the interpretive theory maintains that the social world is largely what people perceive it to be (Neuman, 1998). As a consequence, social life exists as people experience it and give meaning to it. Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) clarify this assertion when they posit "we can understand others' experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us" (p. 123). Furthermore, multiple interpretations of human experience, or realities, are possible and people may or may not experience social or physical reality in the same way (Neuman, 1998). This subjective sense of reality is crucial to grasping human behaviour and qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

The interpretive theory posits that people have their own reasons for actions, and researchers need to learn the reasons people use for their actions. The theory maintains that meaning depends on the actor's intention. Motives, beliefs, desires, and thoughts are crucial to consider even if they are irrational, as they carry deep emotions, and contain false facts and prejudices (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Subsequently, in learning and understanding respondents experiences the

researcher has to understand what is meaningful or relevant to people being studied. Thus he/she must strive to see and present reality through the eyes of respondents.

Linked to the actor's intention is the interpretive theory's assumption that social reality is based on people's definition of it. Interpretivists maintain that a person's definition of a situation tells him/her how to assign meaning in constantly shifting conditions (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). The creation of meaning and the sense of reality is only what people think it is and no sets of meanings are better or superior to others. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) give a word of caution that the actor's definition of the situation is a powerful central concept for understanding the purpose of qualitative inquiry. In this study, the researcher presented different definitions of the concept of Affirmative Action in chapter two. Participants' definitions have been used in analysing the data in order to understand what the concept of Affirmative Action means to participants.

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) maintain that interpretive methods describe and interpret people's feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement as done in quantitative research. They further maintain that an interpretive description is true if it makes sense to those being studied and should allow others to understand the reality of those being studied. It is detailed, limited in abstractions and rooted in the experiences of participants. The goal of the interpretive enterprise is to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it or participate in it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

In accordance with the interpretive theory, the researcher should reflect on, re-examine, and analyse personal points of view and feelings as part of the process of studying others (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999). It urges making values explicit and does not assume that any one set of values is better or worse. In the light of

the above statement the researcher discussed the concept Affirmative Action in chapter two and presented a definition that he used for the purpose of this study.

Lastly, the interpretivists believe that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In order to understand a particular social action one should interpret what the actors are doing. Thus, the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action. In line with the above assertion and the phenomenological approach, analyses and interpretation in this study are presented in chapter four. As maintained by Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), interpretivists consider understanding to be an intellectual process whereby the researcher gains knowledge about the phenomenon studied. The last chapter presents the researchers gained knowledge of middle managers' experience of Affirmative Action.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter divergent definitions of Affirmative Action were presented, both positive and negative. A definition relevant to the study was adopted and explained.

As part of the literature study, previous research findings on the issue of Affirmative Action have been brought forward. Emphasis was placed on the perceptions and attitudes prevailing from different role-players, especially what the affirmed employees ought to experience. This is done with the hope of establishing whether the experience of affirmative action by middle managers in the target broadcasting company, will differ from or add to what has been previously documented.

To put Affirmative Action in perspective in the study, the context in which it takes place has been elaborated on. The context of both South Africa and the employment equity policy of the company, the SABC, have been presented. The next chapter will present the research method used in this study.



## CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology of the study, data gathering, and analysis. In this chapter aims of the study are revisited in order to demonstrate the compatibility of the methodology with the study's objectives. The qualitative research approach and phenomenological method of inquiry are fully discussed with emphasis placed on their appropriateness in this particular study. The researcher gives a step-by-step account as to how the study was carried out under the heading Research Structure.

Furthermore, the sample, how data was gathered, analysed and interpreted, techniques used to increase the rigour and the shortcomings foreseen in the study are presented. The chapter ends by briefly looking at external events that were taking place with regards to Affirmative Action during data gathering.

### 3.2 Aim of the study.

As mentioned in chapter one, the aim of this study is to describe how black middle managers in a South African broadcasting company experience Affirmative Action. The interpretive theory explained in chapter two, the research approach and research method discussed in this chapter, are hereby regarded as best suited to study human experiences. By focusing on the experience of the affected middle managers, it is hoped that psychologically relevant insights might be gleaned for use in the field of psychology.

### 3.3 The research approach

This study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. A qualitative research approach is employed as it affords the opportunity to describe an experience from

the participant's point of view and to record their impressions (with words, gestures and tone). This sentiment is echoed in Polkinghorne's (1989, p. 45) assertion that "from a qualitative research, the richness and profundity of human reality is seen as closely related to the structures and meanings of natural language".

In this study the Affirmative Action experience of managers is of cardinal importance and thus the researcher uses the qualitative approach to document and understand what respondents say. This approach offers the ability to go into greater depth, and obtain more details. Berg (1998) maintains that qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives. Furthermore, through this approach the researcher has been able to focus on the subjective meanings, definitions, metaphors, symbols and descriptions as presented by respondents.

Descriptive research refers to all those inquiries whose goal is to give a neutral, close and thorough account of the topic they are investigating (Polkinghorne, 1989). In this chapter the researcher aims to give a description of the procedures employed to collect data, selection of respondents, steps applied to move from raw interview data to a general description of managers' experience of Affirmative action.

### **3.4 Phenomenology as a research method**

The basic assumption of phenomenological research is that the phenomenon must be studied in the general world in which they naturally appear (Roos, 1992). The human's experience of the phenomena is seen as a reflection of his/her dialogue with the world. Phenomenology as a research method aims to describe this dialogue. The phenomenological method also describes the phenomena as it reveals itself in all facets and does not place any restrictions on the experience (Roos, 1992). In light of this, the present researcher aims to describe the

phenomenon as it is experienced by the individual in his/her living world, thus the experience of Affirmative Action by middle managers in a broadcasting company.

Phenomenology, as one of the interpretive methods, regards the context in which human experience occurs as important (Kruger, 1988). Human experience and behaviour are always linked to the living world of the individual and every human experience is linked to the situation wherein he/she lives. This emphasis on context is supported by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) when they maintain “The commitment to understanding human phenomena in context, as they are lived, using context-derived terms and categories, is often referred to as the phenomenological perspective” (p. 126). In this study the context in which middle managers operate is regarded as being of critical significance in understanding their experience of Affirmative Action.

The phenomenological method does not view individuals as organisms that react to stimuli, but as organisms that perceive or experience reality in unique ways. It also accepts that every human being experiences his/her living world in a unique and non-repeatable way and that he/she is also affected in a unique way by the phenomena. To this effect, the phenomenological method is seen as being appropriate and best suited to gather an authentic understanding of middle managers' experiences.

At this point it suffices to sum up the appropriateness of phenomenology in this research study by asserting that, “Phenomenological research is descriptive and qualitative and in particular focuses on the subject's experienced meaning instead of the description of their overt actions or behaviour” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 45).

### **3.5 The research structure**

The research structure is the plan along which information is gathered (Smith, 1994). The research process follows a general format for the phenomenological

investigation of subjective consciousness offered by Polkinghorne (1989) as follows:

1. Gathering of a number of naïve descriptions from people who are having or have had the experience of Affirmative Action
2. Engaging in a process of analysing these descriptions so that the researcher come to a grasp of the constituent or common elements that make the experience what it is.
3. Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear and articulate description of how managers experience Affirmative Action.

As a closing remark, the present researcher hereby acknowledges that the research method employed in this study is only one way, out of many possible ways, that a qualitative analysis of this topic can be done (Giorgi, 1985). However, it should be emphasised that the phenomenological perspective was chosen in particular as the best possible way suited to the researcher, the research topic and the context.

### **3.6 The target population and sample**

The target population is black middle managers within a South African Broadcasting Corporation who have been part of the affirmative action program implemented in that company. Participants were chosen deliberately to increase the utility of information gathered, the uniqueness of their position and also to allow for in-depth investigation. The sampling method used in this study is known as purposive or judgemental sampling (Neuman, 1998).

The sample consists of four black middle managers of which two are males and two are females. Three are from the Human resource department and one is from IT department. All were employed at the company within the time frame of the

present effective Affirmative Action. It is hereby maintained that participants experience Affirmative Action as currently implemented in their company, by virtue of the fact that they come from a previously disadvantaged group (black Africans) and the time period in which Affirmative Action conditions were put in place within the company. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used four participants in order to gather large amounts of information, go into greater depth, and be able to achieve an intimate familiarity with participants.

The Human Resources Manager has been interviewed as the fifth respondent. This was done primarily for the researcher to have an understanding of the broadcasting company's Affirmative Action history and to grasp the context in which other middle managers are operating. Valuable information as to the mood and culture of the company was gleaned from this interview.

In choosing the above-mentioned participants, the following guidelines offered by Kruger (1988) were observed:

1. All participants had experienced Affirmative Action as applied in their company.
2. All participants were verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to the topic.
3. All participants used the same language as the researcher. For the purpose of this study interviews were conducted in English, a language all the managers were comfortable with.
4. Participants expressed willingness to be open to the researcher.

### **3.7 Data collection**

As asserted by Polkinghorne (1989, p. 50) "the very process of gathering data allows the researcher to learn about the experience and to obtain some notions

about its structure". It was therefore very important for the present researcher using the phenomenological research, to participate directly in the data gathering process and the interviews were thus conducted by the researcher himself.

The following methods were used to gather data:

### **3.7.1 The Protocol (Structured Questionnaire)**

A structured self-completion questionnaire was used as an initial data gathering means, and to lay the foundation for further dialogue with respondents (see Appendix A). Contact was initially made with respondents via the telephone as well as face-to-face. After explanation of the aims and objectives of the research study, respondents were invited to participate in the study. Those who agreed were then handed a structured questionnaire with open-ended questions which allowed them to express their views openly. Both the electronic version and hardcopies were given to respondents to complete at their own pace. Respondents chose the method that suited them best, some opted to answer electronically and returned the protocol via email while others used hardcopies. The researcher collected hardcopies from respondents three to four days later with electronic versions taking the same period of time to complete and return.

Fischer (in Kruger, 1988) regards written descriptions as offering time-saving advantages as there is no need for transcription, but also because they may be used as a basis upon which to formulate further questions that are grounded on the explicit descriptive material of the subject's written experience. Despite valuable feedback gleaned from the protocol, it served to establish the initial rapport between the researcher and respondents.

### **3.7.2 Semi-structured interview (one on one)**

Tuttery, Rotnery and Grinnell (1996) recommend that a semi-structured interview be used when the researcher wants to understand people's experiences, and they posit that "it is important when you want to compare information between and among people while at the same time you wish to fully understand each person's experience" (p. 56).

According to Polkinghorne (1988), the phenomenological interview is seen as a discourse or conversation involving an interpersonal engagement in which subjects share with the researcher their experience. The interview was used in this study as a follow-up to the protocol whereby the researcher clarified on terms, themes and meanings on various issues raised in the protocol. Questions were constructed mainly in conjunction with the answers given in the protocol (see Appendix B).

The interview took the form of a face-to-face, in-depth interview with some predetermined questions or key words being used as a guide. The interview lasted from half an hour to an hour depending on the respondent's answers. This helped the researcher to source information from respondents while at the same time fully understanding each respondent's experience.

Kruger (1988) had this to say about the nature of the interview "rapport should exist between the researcher and the subjects, and it is important that the researcher create a situation in which the subject can feel relaxed and where anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed if so desired by the subject" (p. 151). Given the sensitivity of the topic, and as a research principle, each respondent was assured of anonymity prior to the interview. The researcher made an undertaking to the respondents that information shared was to be used solely for the purpose of the study. Furthermore, permission to use a tape recorder was sought to record the interview. All respondents gave their permission without any misgivings after the

researcher explained that the purpose of tape recording was to make sure that all the finer details are recorded.

Each recorded interview was transcribed into the corresponding written form. Transcripts of the recordings provided an excellent record of the interview interaction.

### **3.8 Data analysis and interpretation**

Data analysis is the core stage of research efforts in phenomenological psychology, (Polkinghorne, 1988). Furthermore, Polkinghorne asserts that “the aim of phenomenological inquiry is to reveal and unravel the structures, logic, and interrelationships that obtain in the phenomenon under inspection“ (p. 50). In lieu of this goal, data was analysed by using the Interpretative-transformational approach (Ashworth, Giorgi & de Koning, 1986). This approach involves reduction of data through transformation into psychological language and represents a step-wise procedure intended for total account of data.

The researcher used the following four steps as proposed by Giorgi (1985).

- ❖ **Sense of whole:** The researcher first read the entire naïve descriptions several times in order to get a general sense of the whole, which served as grounds for the next step.
- ❖ **Discrimination of meaning units:** After the sense of the whole has been grasped, the text was broken down into manageable units that were made within a psychological perspective and focusing on the phenomenon studied (affirmative action). The delineated meaning units should ultimately lead to the discovery of the essence or structure of Affirmative Action.
- ❖ **Transformation of meaning units into psychological language:** This was arrived at when meaning units have been delineated and the



researcher goes through all of them and expresses the psychological insight contained in them more directly.

- ❖ **Synthesis of the transformed meaning units into a consistent statement of the structure of Affirmative action:** This entailed synthesizing and integrating the insights contained in the transformed meaning units into a consistent description of the psychological structure of the event. The researcher hopes to present a description of the essence of affirmative action as experienced by middle managers.

### 3.9 Rigour in the research study

Krefting (1990) propounds that the terms reliability and validity are not relevant in qualitative research and are hereby replaced by terms such as truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. To increase the rigour in this research study, the researcher used Guba's (1981) four aspects of trustworthiness and the strategies applied as purported by Krefting (1990) viz,

#### 3. 9.1 Truth-value

This asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of finding the subjects and the context in which the study was undertaken.

To this end **credibility strategies** are used. Credibility refers to the ability of respondents to recognise their experience in the research findings. Credibility strategies that were used are:

- ❖ **Reflexivity:** the researcher aims to reflect on his own characteristics and to examine how he influences data gathering and analysis by using a field journal. The field journal will include, the daily schedule, logistics of the study, a method log and a personal diary reflecting the researcher's thoughts, feelings ideas and hypotheses generated after contact with informants.

- ❖ **Triangulation:** This is based on the idea of convergence of multiple perspectives for mutual confirmation of data. Triangulation of data sources - the researcher aims to maximize the range of data by varying interview times, dates and persons to be interviewed.
- ❖ **Member checking:** the researcher made the results of the study open for perusal by the subjects for them to judge their adequacy.
- ❖ **Peer checking:** the research process was continuously discussed with impartial colleagues who are busy with qualitative studies or have experience with qualitative methods.

### 3.9.2 Applicability

Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other context and settings or with other groups. In this research study, the researcher is of the view that applicability is not relevant as the study is aimed at describing particular experiences within a broadcasting company without trying to generalize to other situations or contexts.

### 3.9.3 Consistency

This inquires whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. The key in this research will be to learn from the informants rather than control them.

To achieve consistency, dependability strategies are employed. Dependability imply that vivid and clear explanation of data gathering and analysing procedures have been given such that an independent researcher, can be able to determine the extent to which the study is unique or repeatable (Krefting, 1990). Dependability strategies used in the study were:

- ❖ **Code-recode procedure:** during the analysis phase the researcher allowed a period of 2 weeks between initial coding and recoding of data and

comparison of the results. Coding was done by organising data into conceptual categories or themes, which were then used in data analysis.

- ❖ **Checking by colleagues and methodological experts:** in addition to peer checking, a supervisor has been appointed to check progression of events in the project.

### 3.9.4 Neutrality

Neutrality refers to the degree to which findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and perspectives (Krefting, 1990).

To achieve neutrality, confirmability strategies are used. Confirmability is hereby seen as the ability of an outsider to authenticate how and why decisions were made, and thus the research method, findings and results. The strategies used are:

- ❖ **The audit strategy:** The study is to be handed to an external evaluator who will evaluate its accuracy.
- ❖ **Triangulation of data sources and reflexivity:** as discussed in the data gathering section, two methods were used to enhance neutrality.

### 3.10 Limitations of the study

As an introduction to this section, it is perhaps relevant take cognisance of Berg's (1998, p. 7) advice that "researchers are to choose procedures keeping in mind the problems that may arise in specific research settings, among certain research groups, and in unique research circumstances". The present researcher acknowledges and anticipated that due to the sensitivity of the study, participants may present a positive outlook so as not to fall foul of their superiors. To ameliorate this tendency, the researcher assured participants of their anonymity that information shared was to be used for academic purposes only. The fact that

participants were working under tight schedules and that the researcher had a full time job elsewhere else, may have hampered the establishment of an intimate relationship.

More often than not, respondents were inclined to give the company's position first before talking about their feelings. As such, the researcher had to be alert to keep the respondent on track and persuade them to talk about their own experience of Affirmative Action rather than the company's. This was ascribed to the fact that as managers in their respective divisions, they are responsible to ensure that the company's Affirmative Action programmes are in place and that they represent the company. The present researcher took notice of this tendency when analysing and interpreting results.

### **3.11 Fieldwork events (Events taking place during field work)**

The present researcher is of the view that external events may have directly or indirectly confounded to impact on the process as it unfolds within the company of interest, and more importantly, on the perception of the middle managers at that time. To emphasize the current debate around Affirmative Action, some of the events that took place internationally and inside the country during the time of data gathering are hereby documented.

#### **(Ellis, 2001a, p. 8)**

*“The US Supreme Court yesterday said it would return to the politically explosive issue of federal affirmative action for racial minorities, deciding whether a programme to help disadvantaged businesses survived constitutional scrutiny.*

*Taking up one of the nation's most contentious social issues, the court agreed to hear a challenge to the US Transportation Department's revised highway construction programme designed to favour minority and other disadvantaged businesses.*

*Blacks and other minority groups have defended affirmative action programmes as a way to make up for past discrimination, while critics have attacked them as an illegal form of “reverse discrimination.*

*The US Justice Department during the presidency of Bill Clinton – who urged that affirmative actions programmes be amended, not ended – had defended the programme, which gives preference to blacks and other minorities.*

*The case gives the Bush administration’s Justice the chance to change course. President George W Bush has opposed affirmative action programmes that involve racial quotas, but has generally supported greater opportunity for minorities.”*

**(Reuters DETROIT, 2001, p. 2)**

*“A U.S. federal judge on Tuesday struck down the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action policy, reigniting a dispute over preferences for minority students in higher education that could reach the U.S. Supreme Court.*

*U.S. District Court Judge Bernard Friedman ruled in favour of Barbara Grutter, a white woman who sued after being rejected by the law school in June 1997. Friedman said the law school's practice of considering race as a factor in admissions was unconstitutional and ordered the school to stop the practice.*

*In a 91-page opinion, Friedman said the university's affirmative action policy was similar to a quota system that mandates a certain percentage of students should be from minority groups.”*

In South Africa the Affirmative Action debate is still raging. Inserts below bear testimony to the heated debates around Affirmative Action measures in South Africa.

**(Ellis, 2001b, p. 2.)**

*“Seven years after democracy, black economic empowerment is stalled and analysts say only a well-defined government programme can save it from collapse.*

*Today President Thabo Mbeki is still grappling with a strategy for black empowerment. Analysts, warning that time is running out, are urging Mbeki to be forthright in defining, leading and executing the black empowerment strategy.*

*Justin Chinyanta of Johannesburg-based Loita Capital Partners, a financial service group, says South Africa needs to move from quantitative empowerment to qualitative empowerment. "In the Mandela days it was a question of getting as many blacks as possible into equity, to show that change was taking place. Under Mbeki we need some qualitative empowerment. We need some analysis of assets on the market."*

**Pretoria News: Business Report, Wednesday, 4 April 2001. P 2.**

*“Kevin Wakeford, the chief executive of the South African Chamber of Business, a forum of mainly white business interests, says the country needs an economic charter to map out a mass upliftment of the black majority. "Empowerment should be a comprehensive revision of corporate policy. It should be about the masses and not just a few macrodeals". It should be about redistribution of skills, resources and wealth. It should be driven by civil society. It should be the non-racial integration of business, otherwise black people will remain on the fringes and the programme will fail."*

### **3.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter the methodology used for the present study was described. Arguments on the appropriateness of the method of inquiry adopted were presented and the choice of respondents was explicated. Data gathering and analysis procedures were explained. The study's limitations were outlined and some external events that may have compounded the research study unravelled.

In the next chapter results of the study will be presented. Data has been broken down into natural meaning units and discussed under specific themes.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the foundation constructed by chapters one to three and presents the results of the study. The findings of this study are hereby discussed in the light of previous research studies and findings on Affirmative action as discussed in chapter two. Interpretation of findings is done within the framework of the phenomenological approach, data gathering and analysis as described in chapter three. The present chapter is a detailed presentation of findings in this study.

To understand the experiences of respondents, the researcher reread the protocol and transcripts, listened to the recorded interviews repeatedly to gain a holistic sense of the whole data. A more exacting analysis was followed by spontaneously breaking down the data into natural meaning units (themes). Themes were initially expressed in the everyday language of middle managers and later transformed into formal psychological language.

Themes presented here are primarily focused on the experience of Affirmative Action by respondents in its lived-world context, that is, as it occurs at the SABC through the eyes of participants. In this discussion, headings are used for themes, with references from the protocol and interview materials, to highlight and help explain meanings. The four respondents are respectively referred to as Respondent A, Respondent B, Respondent C and Respondent D to maintain their anonymity.



## 4.2 Theme 1 - Meaning of Affirmative Action

The concept Affirmative Action as alluded to in chapter two, is viewed differently by different people. Respondents in this study presented a positive view of Affirmative Action and see it as a way of correcting the evils of the past. They all support the view that Affirmative Action entails essentially positive, remedial action taken to redress historical injustices. This view supports Leopeng's (1999) findings that blacks have a positive view of Affirmative Action and regard it as necessary to correct past injustices.

*“It is a process of Government whereby the past discriminatory practices are eradicated and affected people are given special treatment as a way of reparation.” (Respondent B)*

*“The empowerment of previously disadvantaged communities in an economic sense.” (Respondent D)*

Participants regard Affirmative Action as procedures that should give preference to blacks, the disabled and women in areas such as job hiring, admission to institutions of higher education, the awarding of government contracts, and other allocations of social benefits. It is seen as a means of creating level playing fields where everyone can compete based upon equal access to education, training and other opportunities.

*“As a deliberate process by which certain groups and people are consciously given preference and opportunity over others in order to level the playing field and correct past imbalances in opportunity and benefit.” (Respondent C)*

Respondents emphasized that it should be a broad policy to make a concerted effort to employ Black people into senior positions with real powers to make decisions. Incumbents should be given the responsibility that goes with the job and

held accountable for the outcomes that they are going to attain. If they do not perform, they must be treated as any other person who does not perform.

*“I think I should drive home the point that I don’t view Affirmative Action as a situation where you bring in blacks at lower positions, because that’s traditionally where they have been. Affirmative Action is empowerment for me at more senior levels.” (Respondent D)*

*“It is a measure used to ensure that previously disadvantaged groups (designated groups) are given equal opportunity and are equitably represented at the workplace. Not as clerks and secretaries but in decision making positions.” (Respondent A)*

According to participants, potential and competence should underpin Affirmative Action. This view is shared by Kivel (2001) and Wingrove (1995). They maintain that selection of unqualified candidates is not permitted under Affirmative Action guidelines and should not be equated with legal forms of Affirmative Action.

*“Where you have white people that have more potential than black people, black people should not be given the job because they are black. It should be because of their potential. In a case where there is no potential and you go ahead and appoint black people then it’s unfair discrimination.” (Respondent B)*

*“So even if it is a group of designated people, I will still take them through a proper process of recruitment and selection and I will pick the best from that designated group.” (Respondent C)*

The meaning of Affirmative Action presented by participants seems to be in agreement with their company’s view in that they perceive it mainly as a

programme to correct previous imbalances. This point of view is echoed by the human resource manager's assertion that:

*"They (the SABC's board) perceived Affirmative Action in terms of correcting imbalances in the SABC and they took a decision as top management that they will not call it Affirmative Action, they will call it corrective action and thus actually correcting the imbalances at the SABC." (The Human resource manager, personal communication, December 27, 2001)*

### **4.3 Theme 2 – The existence of stereotypes**

On numerous occasions in the interviews, participants mentioned the existence of stereotypes that are based on gender and race, that are still experienced. On a large scale this stereotype is directed at women. Women are regarded as incompetent and lacking the necessary skills.

*"I think it could happen to any black person, but it happens much more aggressively if you're a woman." (Respondent C)*

More pronounced is the reluctance by some black men to be lead by a woman. Culture seems to be playing a major role in this particular stereotype. Black women are mostly looked down on by black men.

*"Beyond that, there's also a problem of people, especially from the designated community, having difficulty with being managed by other people from the designated communities." (Respondent C)*

*"There are still those cultural stereotypes and we bring them along from where we are coming from. And sometimes even we as women, we get aggressive in terms of trying to assert ourselves." (Respondent A)*

*“So it is very difficult in such communities to have a woman managing males, I will give you an example with one of our radio stations. The station manager is a woman and when she got there three years ago there was turmoil.” (Respondent B)*

*“I feel black male Africans, they don’t want to be managed by a woman. Like I said, as you know that there are still those stereotypes from men who are African men and don’t want to be managed by women.” (Respondent A)*

Interestingly, participants mentioned that they experience a kind of resistance between women. Stereotypes exist amongst women themselves making it difficult to accept one another. Thus, women subordinates find it hard to be lead by another woman. Women stereotypes are experienced even more so along interracial lines.

*“I’m very convinced that women cannot work with other women.” (Respondent A)*

*“And I think in race groups, our sisters who are Coloureds and Indians you will still find those that perceive or see themselves as being superior to blacks.” (Respondent B)*

*“But listen to this one, the worst problem is where a coloured manages Black women, now that is worse. I don’t know what causes that, maybe it’s because we are still carrying on from apartheid where there was first class, second class and so forth.” (Respondent A)*

With stereotyping comes stigmatisation of affirmed employees. Participants feel that some people within the company still believe that being affirmed means you are not chosen based on your abilities and skills. This finding supports Gillis et al.’s (2001) assertion that the affirmed are seen to have acquired their positions

because of their race instead of ability and efforts. Consequently, incumbents have to work harder than their white counterparts.

*“Stigma of being an Affirmative Action candidate and perceptions that Affirmative Action means compromising quality, competence and performance i.e. gravy train syndrome with no value add.” (Respondent C)*

*“You have to work harder than your colleagues, your white colleagues in the same level and then they respect you.” (Respondent C)*

The stereotyping and stigmatisation alluded to above go hand in hand with the next theme, fear and resistance.

#### **4.4 THEME 3 – Fear and resistance**

A phenomenon that has been experienced by participants in the research study is resistance from some white colleagues and superiors. Participants contend that resistance is encountered rampantly at the initial stages of employment. In particular they ascribe this resistance to white fear. In particular, this correlates with Anstey’s (1997) argument that Affirmative Action violates white employees sense of security, threatens positions, jobs, incomes, self-esteem and feelings of worth.

*“It (Affirmative Action) is a relatively difficult concept to accept from the white middle management levels which are the operational, implementing helm of any strategy in the organisation.” (Respondent C)*

*“I actually think one of the problems why Affirmative Action has not achieved what it has intended to achieve and as rapidly as possible as it should, it is precisely because of white fears and the truth of the matter is Affirmative Action programmes have done very little to allay those fears.” (Respondent D)*

Due to the fear of losing jobs, some white men band together to form power blocks that impede the implementation of Affirmative Action. This concurs with Koekemoer's (1998) assertion that Affirmative Action is a very real threat to many whites in South Africa which may result in resistance. This finding also supports Leopeng's (1999) finding that most white employees showed extreme negative views about the implementation of Affirmative Action.

*"Yeah it's very prevalent. It's actually worrying that some of the senior manager who are whites and that are very conservative, anti-Affirmative Action, are actually spreading the negativity among their subordinates who are white." (Respondent B)*

*"I mean when I arrived here, to talk to you about the power block, my first year here was an extremely traumatic period." (Respondent C)*

This power block has a telling factor on the implementation of Affirmative Action, as it consists of people in powerful positions: those who define the culture and climate of the company. The importance of the organisation's culture is underpinned by Anstey's (1997) argument that there is experience suggesting that organisational culture change should precede organisational reengineering initiatives to reduce fears and resistance, promote ownership of the change process and to achieve buy in and active participation in the Affirmative Action process. Participants expressed the SABC culture as follows:

*"White managers, especially middle management form a powerful block and really define culture and climate of organisation i.e. critical mass force and practice." (Respondent C)*

*"It was a culture shock number one." (Respondent C)*

The power block has the ability to make the conditions unbearable for black appointees, resulting in many of them leaving the company early. The reaction

from the white power block supports the Psychological Reactance theory as purported by Brehm and Brehm (in Tesser, 1995) that when increasing scarcity or anything else that interferes with our prior access to some item, we react against the interference by wanting and trying to possess the item more than before. Participants perceive this power block as slowing the process and lacking the commitment to implement changes.

*“This is my personal opinion, I think there is some reluctance because for one reason or the other, all the women who do get those positions don’t stay long.” (Respondent A)*

*“Subsequent disillusionment from designated groups and revolving door syndrome sets in for high potential individuals looking for cultural alignment, advancement, and reward.” (Respondent C)*

*“Instead of identifying people that could be mentored and groomed into those positions we have not done that. So hence I believe that we have not been really committed to developing people.” (Respondent B)*

In some instances other black employees are used to making conditions unbearable for the affirmed and make it difficult for the incumbents to bring about change.

*“For some strange reason, black people when they can’t see beyond their noses and they would rather align with the high person than to align with their own. And yes I have had that personal experience in the sense that the individuals tried. One, the first thing they do is try to play on your confidence and say you are not competent. Work on your character and if all else fails, they resign which is what happened in my case.” (Respondent C)*

*“...people who are fearful will play one against the other and when you see your own kind being part of that and playing that game, it’s a very humbling experience. But if your value system is strong, you are going to retain your faith in humanity and you will try to build that person.” (Respondent C)*

It is important to note that not all white people experienced fear. Participants did emphasize that there are some white people who have good intentions and were keen to see change.

*“I think even amongst whites, not all of them are (accommodating) but gradually there is accommodation but it consoles me when a white manager says in this position we want a black person it means we’re getting somewhere.” (Respondent D)*

*“Look, I don’t doubt there are white people that mean well, that want to contribute this organization and this company.” (Respondent B)*

Closely linked to the fears mentioned above are expectations held by different employees and role players at SABC. This leads to the next theme presented below:

#### **4.5 Theme 4 - Expectations**

An expectation held by black managers is that Affirmative Action will lead to empowerment of the designated group. Participants entered the company with high expectations and the desire to develop, achieve success and add value to bottom line delivery. Thus, affirmative Action is viewed and experienced positively as a reparation exercise that affords the affirmed empowerment. As mentioned in Chapter Two, some blacks have expectations that political liberation means accelerated opportunities for development, education, careers and jobs (Anstey, 1997).



*“By empowering people by giving people, the designated groups, the affected groups special treatment through legislation. To try and say to people look we have been discriminated against in the past and this is what we are doing to correct that. We are also going to give you special treatment. So I see that as reparation.” (Respondent B)*

However, some unrealistic expectations and a sense of false entitlement is experienced among some black employees. Participants feel that some of their subordinates do not understand the job performance obligation and think that they are entitled to Affirmative Action irrespective of their input. Those subordinates think more about rewards rather than responsibilities and bottom-line delivery. Madi's (1993) allegation that many Africans have expectations of advancement based on entitlement is hereby validated.

*“Some blacks – still expect handouts.” (Respondent A)*

*“But the fact of the matter is that there is some sort of element of entitlement. And because I am Black, I should be given the opportunity to advance even though I am clearly not demonstrating competence. Nor am I demonstrating an attitude to show that I want to learn and I want to improve.” (Respondent C)*

In trying to facilitate and implement Affirmative Action, participants feel that the SABC is caught between the horns of a dilemma due to opposing expectations. Contrary to expectations held by some black candidates, shareholders expect bottom line delivery to take precedence over Affirmative Action. Middle managers in particular, are at the centre of the Affirmative Action plan. They have to ensure a balance between facilitating Affirmative Action and bringing in revenue. They experience this tension as challenging and demanding.

*“At the same time, your shareholder expects you to be profitable, even if you are not profitable. They suddenly expect you to make profit and not cost them money. Now that draws some tensions and those are major pressures that you have to try and balance out.” (Respondent C)*

As if that was not enough, the pressure of Affirmative Action is further accentuated by having to meet public expectations.

*“...and here you are as an executive manager, you are required to, one, achieve a public mandate – servicing the public on a number of areas.” (Respondent C)*

Subsequent to the stereotypes and inflexible culture mentioned in the preceding theme, participants propound that some white middle managers still have negative expectations about blacks. They do not expect blacks to succeed in managerial positions. This observation coincides with Adams's (1993) observation that most white managers do not expect blacks to succeed in managerial positions. The negative expectation affects the approach of the white manager as well as the morale of the black manager.

*“I find that HR people are afraid or not trained to handle it. White HR people also have fears making it difficult for them to handle Affirmative Action.” (Respondent B)*

The next theme differs from themes already discussed. It brings in the underlying tone of the research, and which, perhaps, forms the core experience of Affirmative Action by middle managers at the SABC. Throughout interviews held with participants, a sense of contentment, achievement and confidence exuded from all of them.

#### **4.6 Theme 5: Confidence and Competency**

In light of the above-mentioned themes, the negative experience of Affirmative Action by middle managers at SABC has been painted. In contrast, the overall experience of participants is a positive one, underpinned by a profound sense of achievement. The results of this study contradict Gillis et al.'s (2001) assertion that Affirmative Action tends to undermine the self-esteem of the incumbents. These results seem to concur with Graves and Powell's (1994) research findings that Affirmative Action policies increase job satisfaction and organisational commitment among beneficiaries.

*"It has affected me positively because as a woman I would like other women being advanced." (Respondent A)*

*"I think it has positively affected me as well." (Respondent B)*

Affirmative Action as seen through the eyes of participants, is a self-actualisation process. It allows one to actualise inherent potentialities that aim toward the maintenance and enhancement of life (Maddi, 1989). Given that participants strongly believed that Affirmative Action as applied at the SABC takes into cognisance competence and potential, perhaps being affirmed is a psychological booster. It constitutes an acknowledgement of inner ability by significant others. The following statement best sums this sense of accomplishment:

*"To be given an opportunity on an equal footing with other people to prove ones worth. To be able to change perceptions about blacks (specifically Black women) in the workplace." (Respondent A)*

Fulfilment is experienced profoundly when participants perceive a sense of achievement. As verbally and emotionally expressed by participants, this is an accomplishment equal to none. The present findings support Skedsvold and Mann's (1996) claim that Affirmative Action may actually raise the self-esteem of

the affirmed by providing them with employment and opportunities for advancement. The environment under which the affirmed works can either retard or nourish this sense of achievement.

*“We operate and are confident of who we are and why we have been appointed for that position. We are there not because we have been put there as to be there to give appearances. We are there because we have been recognised for our performances and our competencies.” (Respondent E)*

*“I think the way that we’ve gone about it is to demonstrate our competence. We can do the job and that we want to be held accountable where we fail.” (Respondent D)*

*“...because of my worth and my input he (superior) has been able to accelerate me in a way.” (Respondent B)*

Another source of accomplishment comes after enduring initial hardships. This constituted the ability to learn the ropes and emerge from difficult times unscathed. The negative experience laid a foundation for an acute sense of achievement and subsequent rise in self-esteem.

*“So I mean there have been bad experiences, there definitely have been. But for me, it has been about how I overcome those bad experiences.” (Respondent C)*

A strategy employed to overcome difficulties is to show confidence, assertiveness and mental toughness. Together with being competent, these three aspects earn black middle managers the respect of superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. With respect comes a feeling of buoyancy, hope and fulfilment on the part of participants.

*“The only way you wave through the white block and resistance is through confidence.” (Respondent C)*

Support from your superiors and subordinates plays an important factor in surviving and contributing to a positive experience. An understanding with both superiors and subordinates contributes to the atmosphere in which a positive or negative atmosphere emanates. There seems to be evidence of support from top management at the SABC which contributes to a positive experience.

*“Now if you are a manager faced with a white middle management block, unless you are very strong, assertive and have support from the top as well as from the bottom, you are not going to survive that war.” (Respondent C)*

*“I have been managed by someone who comes from the previously disadvantaged background, and he has been able to recognize my worth.” (Respondent D)*

An individual's upbringing, norms and value systems are critically important as coping strategies under this challenging environment. These coping strategies assist one to overcome negative challenges and contribute to the overall experience. As quoted below, these coping mechanisms help participants to perceive the outside environment as positive and to boost their self-confidence.

*“And also, if you don't have a very strong value system – you will lose faith in your own talent.” (Respondent C)*

*“I work hard for what I have got. I come from a background where entitlement doesn't exist, I come from a background where I as an individual have been taught that in life, we will have problems no matter, how you perceive and work through those problems that makes you a better person.” (Respondent C)*

Participants are happy with the progress and direction taken by the SABC in implementing Affirmative Action. They feel that people are generally appointed mainly on merit. Thus, although Affirmative Action is applied, competency and potential are not compromised. When blacks are being affirmed in senior positions, they do receive recognition. They (blacks) get properly remunerated and are given the responsibility and accountability that goes with the job.

*“They really went out affirming internally and then went out to get people with experience and qualifications.” (Respondent A)*

The experience participants have of affirmative action as implemented at the SABC, is that accompanied by learning and growth; learning more about oneself and about others. The experience of having to overcome barriers and hurdles, the support and the exposure in an environment where they have to implement change, brings about change in their outlook to life.

*“...there is understanding, definitely it has changed my outlook and how I used to think.” (Respondent D)*

*“When you see your own kind being part of that and playing that game, it’s a very humbling experience.” (Respondent C)*

Although there is much ground that the SABC still has to cover, participants were very boisterous in praising the efforts already in place at the SABC. In particular, they were delighted with the training, coaching and mentorship programmes that were in place. The empowerment of people as achieved at the SABC leads participants to believe that standards are not dropping. This view is supported by Leopeng’s (1999) research findings that blacks never shared the perception that Affirmative Action is about the dropping of standards.

*“I would commend them (the SABC) on that Affirmative Action was not just window dressing or increasing the numbers, they really did train the people. They really went out to hunt and got the right people for the job.”*  
(Respondent A)

*“The organisation is sensitive to this situation and strategies are being/have been devised to turn it around. There is no illusion that hard work lies ahead as the reality is that there is a shortage of skills in management and specialist technical disciplines.”* (Respondent D)

In spite of all the praise showered and the positive experience discussed above, participants mentioned some areas in which the company needed improvement. The following areas were mentioned:

*“Also the inter relationships where gender sensitisation is recognized, things like gender issues and awareness are recognized.”* (Respondent A)

*“Progress has been dismal at middle management levels, technical and specialist positions.”* (Respondent C)

*“At middle and junior management as well as supervisory levels transformation has not been successful as we are still predominantly white males.”* (Respondent D)

#### **4.7 Concluding remarks**

This chapter described themes that emerged from the data analysis. The present researcher illustrated themes using references and descriptions given by participants. Previous research studies and findings were used to test and discuss themes that emerged in this study.

As a closing remark, it is perhaps imperative to note that themes presented in this chapter are not to be regarded as the ultimate or the only way of analysing data presented by participants. Rather, they should be seen as one way of describing information gleaned from middle managers at the SABC.

In the next chapter the researcher presents a consistent description of middle managers' experience of Affirmative Action. The chapter is concluded by discussions on the evaluation of the study, recommendations, contribution of the study to the advancement of science and suggestions for further studies.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion of results and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to communicate a consistent description about the experience of Affirmative Action from results presented in chapter four. As mentioned in chapter two, the interpretive theory posits that understanding is an intellectual process whereby the researcher gains knowledge about an object of inquiry. In this chapter the researcher endeavours to share insights gleaned on middle managers' experience of Affirmative Action within a broadcasting company.

Furthermore, a critical evaluation of the study, recommendations, contribution of the study to the advancement of science and suggestions for further studies will hereby be discussed. A conclusion section will bring this chapter to an end.

#### **5.2 The experience of Affirmative Action**

The experience of Affirmative Action by middle managers at the SABC should be understood in context. Due to the unique position that middle managers occupy within the SABC, they may be expected to have a different experience of Affirmative Action from other employees. In accordance with the interpretive theory, multiple interpretations of human experience, or realities are possible and people may or may not experience social or physical reality in the same way. Middle managers form a link between top management and lower management. They are a unit mostly responsible for putting into practice company policies and decision. Thus, they are not only recipients, but also active role players in making the Affirmative Action process work.

In the context of participants' experience, Affirmative Action is seen positively as a corrective measure aimed at levelling the playing field. The interpretive theory assumes that social reality is based on people's definition of it, and that a person's definition of a situation tells him/her how to assign meaning. According to participants' definitions, Affirmative Action is an experience that includes aspects of opportunity, expectations, endurance, learning and fulfilment. The experience thereof is riddled with barriers and challenges that need to be conquered in order for one to achieve fulfilment.

Interpretivists believe that meaning depends on the actor's intention, motives, beliefs and desires. Based on the present study, the Affirmative Action process as implemented at the SABC offers an opportunity for self-actualisation. The meaning Affirmative action has to the affirmed is that of a process that presents a chance to express the capabilities, potentialities, or talents that one has. However, in striving for what makes life ideal or the ultimate sense of achievement, black middle managers have to face some stereotyping and resistance along the way.

Affirmative Action is an opportunity that can be seized or not, depending on the individual's subjective experience. By virtue of it offering promotion opportunities, it can be a confidence booster. Given that participants strongly believed that Affirmative Action as applied at the SABC takes into cognisance competence and potential, one understands that being affirmed may constitute an acknowledgement of ability. To the middle managers it was an opportunity that raised self-esteem. Many factors come into play as to how it is experienced after employment. One's job skills and ability have a telling effect on job satisfaction and self-esteem.

Over and above these issues, participants feel that they have to work harder than their white counterparts to prove themselves. Their success or failure is measured in terms of the potential and competence they possess. The individual's potential to learn and job competency can either make or break him/her at the SABC. If one possesses these two qualities, the experience can be an enjoyable one as

witnessed in previous chapters, lack of these attributes can be very detrimental. Though Affirmative Action is a platform to showcase these two aspects to the self and to the world, one's resilience and coping strategies are very critical in being affirmed.

In the light of job scarcity and increased competition, some tension and resistance exists within the SABC. Coping mechanisms among blacks and whites are needed to counter the tension and resistance. Subsequently, Affirmative Action calls for the use of coping strategies from those involved. The experience goes hand-in-hand with having to overcome barriers. One's locus of control, mental toughness and coping strategies are important in adapting. From the results of this study, it can be deduced that people with an internal locus of control will cope better when affirmed - believing that skills, hard work, foresight, and responsible behaviour will lead to positive outcomes. In this study participants showed signs of internal locus of control, believed in their ability and competence, and acted to counter the hostility directed at them.

Affirmative Action is a contextual process. The interpretive theory places high premium on the uniqueness of the context, and the environment in which Affirmative Action occurs has a telling effect on how it is experienced. A happy experience of Affirmative Action warrants an environment which accommodates, nurtures, and supports the uniqueness of each employee. The context in the present study was the SABC and as alluded to in the previous chapter, there were factors that promoted or hindered a positive experience of Affirmative Action.

Affirmative Action implies change. Change on the part of old employees and the external environment. Change in context for whose creation both employees from the previously disadvantaged and the previously advantaged groups are responsible. The environment should allow for mutual influence, feedback and adaptation. In line with the Psychological Reactance theory mentioned in chapter

four, change brought about by Affirmative Action is likely to be met with fear and resistance.

Participants experienced some white resistance and culture shock at the initial stages of their employment. To an extent, gender and racial stereotypes still exist and are experienced. This points to a prevailing inflexible company culture which is still dictated by certain groups. For Affirmative Action to have less resistance from previously advantaged groups, it warrants the creation of an organizational environment flexible enough to work to the advantage of all employees. Such an environment must allow for strengths introduced by new employees who have had no part in the formulation of prevailing corporate culture.

The interpretive theory maintains that people possess an internally experienced sense of reality. From the results of this study, it can be deduced that the experience of Affirmative Action is that of challenging and being challenged. Affirmative Action is thus a challenge to the existing system and to the system's comfort zone. It means being in a relationship in which each member seeks to control or define its nature. For the Affirmative Action experience to be a pleasant one, it should be characterized by appropriate structural adjustment in the organisation.

As mentioned in preceding paragraphs, Affirmative Action is accompanied by fears, expectations, and debates. If a culture of openness and delivery is to be achieved, then the fears, expectations and frustrations must be identified and addressed. Both white and black employees need to be engaged and participate in the debate on Employment Equity policy that affects their future in the organization.

As perceived by participants, Affirmative Action does not mean or lead to lowering of company's standards. It is how the people see it rather than the inherent characteristic of Affirmative Action. This is in accordance with interpretive theory's position that the social world is largely what people perceive it to be. Evidence in

the research study suggests that the claim on lowering or rising of standards may be the result of perceptions people have. As shown in the study, it depends on one's fears and expectations, and more importantly how the process has been implemented.

### **5.3 Critical evaluation**

A critical evaluation of this study brings to the fore certain limitations. The experience of Affirmative Action is quite a broad field to study, and could not be thoroughly dealt with in this study. Perhaps more studies could be done on specific aspects on the experience of Affirmative Action e.g. women and the disabled. It would be interesting to get comparison of how white managers and black managers experience Affirmative Action as implemented at the SABC.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

The existence of stereotypes, white fear and resistance may point to a complex dimension of Affirmative Action as implemented at the SABC. There may be a problem between focus on bottom-line delivery and focus on internal transformation. Employees of the SABC have a common shared vision on external delivery while not sharing in the vision for internal transformation. Hence, the existence of a power block that actively seeks to block change on the internal front. This may lead to in-groups trying to ensure that other groups or individuals fail to deliver, blacks acting to undermine resistant white managers, whites acting to undermine incompetent black managers.

The following recommendations are suggested:

- The primary goal at the SABC must be first to understand the context within which Affirmative Action occurs and to change the existing patterns that may hinder change.
- There is a need for management to revise attitudes to human resource management.

- To look consistently at people's output doing similar work and provide constructive performance feedback.
- Culture change should precede organisational reengineering initiatives to reduce fears and resistance
- Move towards a shared culture – increasing the number of blacks in middle management.
- Promote ownership of the change process and to achieve buy in and active participation in its process.
- Affirmative Action should be coupled with increased inter-group contact and dialogue. Increased contact can lead to growing recognition of similarities between groups. Similarity that can generate enhanced mutual attraction. Secondly, it can help counter the illusion of out-group homogeneity. Get to know each other on a personal basis. When direct group contact is used with care, it can be an effective tool for combating cross-group hostility and prejudice

### **5.5 Contribution of the study to the advancement of science**

It is hoped that this study will shed more light on understanding the experience of Affirmative Action by black middle managers in a broadcasting company. By focusing on the experience of the affirmed it is hoped that psychologically relevant insights about Affirmative Action might be gleaned for use in the field of psychology. This in turn will help companies and practitioners to employ relevant strategies that are revised and improved. The proper implementation of an Affirmative Action programme will help achieve real employment equity.

### **5.6 Suggestions for further studies**

To augment the study, the following topics may be worthwhile researching:

- How different top management and lower level employees experience Affirmative Action. It will be important to search for gaps in the understanding of the concept and its implementation.

- How Affirmative Action relates to intrinsic motivation of the affirmed and whites
- More detailed study on Employment Equity and job satisfaction. It will be interesting to do a quantitative study on the implementation of Employment Equity programmes and job satisfaction among affirmed employees.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The experience of Affirmative Action by middle managers remains their experience and cannot be denied or replicated, hence the findings of this study cannot in any way be generalized. Each of us lives in and creates reality in a slightly different manner based on our own unique combinations of heredity, experiences, presuppositions and perceptions. Similarly, middle managers can be expected to live in and create a slightly different experience of Affirmative Action. Their experience is, however, both true and valid and needs to be respected. This research study is and remains an attempt to present Affirmative Action as experienced by black middle managers at the SABC and through this study, relevant insight about the concept Affirmative Action could be gleaned.

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## APPENDIX A

### The Protocol (Structured Questionnaire)

#### Introductory questions

- ❖ How would you define Affirmative action

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- ❖ What are the core characteristics of affirmative action to you?

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- ❖ Which words would you use to describe how you experience affirmative action in your company?

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- ❖ What are the advantages of being affirmed?

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## APPENDIX B

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

#### Introduction

First of all, I would like to assure you that information shared with you will be used strictly for academic purposes and your anonymity will be protected.

Secondly, the main aim of this interview is to clarify concepts and themes brought from the self-complexion questionnaire, and to get your views on how, you **as a Middle Manager** experience affirmative action.

With your permission, I would like to record this interview make sure that I don't misinterpret information shared.

#### Some of the questions to be asked:

- ❖ In the questionnaire you indicated that ..... can you please elaborate.
- ❖ What do you mean by the word.....
- ❖ In the light of your definition of affirmative action, what do you think the company's affirmative action means. How does this differs from you view of affirmative action

**The basic question:**

How do you experience affirmative action implemented in your company?

**Follow up questions:**

- ❖ Please relate any incidents where you experienced disadvantages of being affirmed
- ❖ Any incident where you experienced the advantages of affirmative action?
- ❖ Do you think the currently implemented affirmative action in you company have impacted on your life? Please explain.
- ❖ Which factors would you say contribute to you present feelings about AA?
- ❖ In conclusion, would you say, your experience of AA in SABC is positive or negative? Please elaborate.
- ❖ Do you feel you are given the recognition, and responsibilities that you ought to get?
- ❖ What about your future prospect within the company, do you think it looks good or somewhat dented?

**Conclusion**

LASTLY

I would like to ask you some Demographic questions that may help in analysing my results:

Number of years at SABC.....

Position.....

Department.....

Age .....

**Thank you**