

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER-BASED AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION ATTITUDES, PARTICIPATION IN DECISION- MAKING AND  
ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

BY

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the Master's dissertation that I hereby submit for the degree MA: Research Psychology at the University of Pretoria is my own work and it has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at another University.

**Sibongile Deborah Vilakazi**

**August 2007**

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of affirmative action was introduced eight years ago in South Africa and remains to this day a highly topical issue. It appears that issues of effective implementation of affirmative action measures are at the heart of these debates. The gender-based affirmative action measures are the most intriguing in the South African context, as all women are considered beneficiaries of affirmative action. The reason for the aforesaid is that all women were subject to male domination during the Apartheid system. Women's experiences of subordination are, however, intertwined with race.

It therefore becomes difficult to decide which should receive the highest priority: race or gender, in other words, who should give way to whom, black men or white women. The above scenario presents the question: what attitudes do men and women have towards gender-based affirmative action measures? This question is asked in the context of whether men and women perceive themselves to be participating in organisational decision-making and whether those perceptions together with their gender-based affirmative action attitudes are related to their commitment to the organisation.

For data collection purposes, a questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to 350 lecturers in the Faculties of Engineering and Humanities at an academic institution. Convenience and accessibility sampling methods were used. Only 27 individuals responded to the questionnaire. Fieldworkers were subsequently employed to distribute the questionnaires personally. This method yielded 48 responses.

The findings indicate that both men and women have positive attitudes towards gender-

based affirmative action and that both genders perceive themselves to be participating in organisational decision-making. In addition, both genders express a high level of commitment to the organisation. These findings are similar across the Engineering and Humanities faculty.

A multiple regression analysis indicates that gender-based affirmative action attitudes together with perceptions of participation in decision-making predict organisational commitment only weakly. A strong correlation does, however, exist between perceptions of participation in decision-making and organisational commitment.

It was concluded that gender-based affirmative action attitudes and participation in organisational decision-making independently predict organisational commitment. This indicates that affirmative action is merely a tool to obtain access for previously marginalised groups into otherwise less accessible organisations. It does, however, not predict whether the individuals in question will remain committed to these organisations. Organisational commitment is, in fact, predicted by whether the individual feels that his/her contributions are appreciated in the organisation. This applies regardless of gender and faculty.

## KEY TERMINOLOGIES

**Gender** –is a social construct regarding culture-bound standards, roles and behaviours for, as well as relationships between and among, women and men and boys and girls.

**Attitudes** – are people's biases, inclinations, or tendencies that influence their response to situations, activities, people, or program goals.

**Affirmative action** – is positive action taken to create a situation which promotes and assists elements of equal opportunity. This can mean removing barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace, such as training women so that they are eligible for a promotion.

**Organisational Decision-making** – is a process that unfolds over a period of time. It is filled with discussions and debates and is closely related to a position of power or influence within the organisation.

**Organisational commitment** – is the extent of an individual's commitment to an organization. There are three major types of organizational commitment: for instance, Affective Commitment is when an individual strongly identifies with the goals of the organization and desires to remain a part of the organization.

**Academia** –is a collective term for the scientific and cultural community engaged in higher education and research, taken as a whole.

**Women** – A woman is an adult female human being, as contrasted to a man, an adult male, and a girl, a female child. The term woman (irregular plural: women) is used to indicate biological sex distinctions, cultural gender role distinctions, or both.

**Men** - A man is a male human adult, in contrast to an adult female, which is a woman. The term man (irregular plural: men) is used to indicate a male person.

**Subordination** – The act or process by which a person's rights are ranked below the rights of others.

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

**Discrimination** - An intentional or unintentional act which adversely affects employment opportunities because of race, colour, religion, sex, handicap, marital status, or national origin, or other factors such as age

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been eight years since 1999 when affirmative action legislation came into effect in South Africa. It would seem, however, that the concept has not fully been accepted, as it remains to this day a highly topical issue. Several individuals hold strong emotions of either support or resentment towards it. Those who support affirmative action believe it to be a means of levelling the playing field in terms of correcting Apartheid's wrongs. These individuals believe it to be a way in which the public and private sector can contribute to the reconstruction and development of the country (Pons & McGregor, 1994). On the other hand, others have criticised affirmative action as reverse discrimination or back-door Apartheid, thus creating resentment amongst white males (McLean, 2002; Taylor, 2002; Whiteneck, 2003).

Regardless of the debates, the fact remains that affirmative action is being implemented. The more important question should rather be whether affirmative action is effective in addressing the wrongs of the past without necessarily alienating other groups of individuals and if not, how it can be made effective. Nkuhlu (1993) argues that for affirmative action to be effective or to work, everybody must believe the new system to be fair or reasonable. In other words, all those concerned must accept the laws of the country and organisations as fair.

In addition, Nkuhlu (1993) believes that increased support is pivotal to ensure effective and equal opportunities. Achievements must be rewarded and the affirmative action

beneficiaries must be encouraged to seek new challenges.

The above introduces the question as to whether all those affected by the policy perceive it to be fair. It is in this light that this study has been developed. It aims to assess this question by looking at the process of organisational decision-making, attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action and the extent of individual commitment towards the organisation in a previously white male dominated organisation.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

Prior to 1994, South Africa was characterised by a culture of patriarchy and white domination. Such a culture ensured that economic and political opportunities were limited for women, especially black women, given the double discrimination of being black in addition to being female (Naidoo & Kongolo, 2004). Affirmative action was introduced and legislated in 1999 to address and correct such discrimination.

Since the legalisation of affirmative action, government has been pressurising all South African sectors towards implementation (Msimang, 2000). Implementing affirmative action by definition entails that all sectors have to undergo change.

The changes introduced by affirmative action policies have created tension within the country. Although companies have attempted to integrate previously disadvantaged groups into their organisations, certain studies indicate that these groups' experiences in some of these organisations have been negative due to various reasons. These reasons include a tendency within some organisations not to 'trust' these groups with

complex decisions. It seems that a number of organisations merely employ previously disadvantaged individuals to satisfy policy requirements instead of to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation, thus the term 'window dressing' or 'fronting'.

As a result, these individuals have to possess high levels of resilience to cope in these organisations. Those that do not have such resilience, express feelings of lack of loyalty or commitment to the organisation, in some cases to such an extent that they leave the organisations at the first opportunity that presents itself (BMF, 1993; Kvande & Rasmussen, 1995; Motileng, 2004; Potgieter, 2002).

It seems that the reason behind the negative experiences of some affirmative action beneficiaries is that not all individuals have accepted affirmative action policies to be fair. For instance, former main opposition party leader, Mr T. Leon, has labelled affirmative action policies as a "reintroduction of back door apartheid" (Corcoran, 2005). Such attitudes towards affirmative action make it difficult for the concept to be effective.

It is important to note that some white males in South Africa perceive affirmative action as a very real threat (Koekemoer, n.d.). Such perceptions have negative consequences, such as low motivation and unproductive work attitudes. Heilman (1996) confirms the above in his study, which indicates that where women or other previously disadvantaged groups are given preference in decision-making, those who traditionally would have been favoured for the tasks, feel that they are sidelined unfairly, especially when they perceive themselves to be more deserving of the responsibility. This causes negative feelings.

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In recent years, the empowerment of women, and especially black women, has enjoyed heightened enthusiasm. This can be ascribed to the double discrimination discussed under 1.2 above. President T. Mbeki seems to be especially committed to this empowerment initiative, a commitment which he clearly illustrated when he chose Ms P. Mlambo-Ngcuka as his deputy president after relieving Mr J. Zuma of his duties (Wines, 2005).

This initiative means that black women enjoy preference above black men, who are also affirmative action beneficiaries. Although white women enjoy affirmative action status, they have to give way to both black men and women.

It is this complicated scenario that necessitates large-scale research to determine how the parties concerned, i.e. both black and white women as well as black men, and white men view themselves within the context of affirmative action. It is imperative that the various parties' attitude towards the concept be understood.

A convenient way of researching this concept is by evaluating it in relation to the extent to which the parties perceive themselves to be making valuable contributions to the organisation or participate in the decision-making processes, The parties' commitment to the organisation is subsequently determined.

As indicated above, Nkuhlu (1993) argues that it is pivotal that all those affected by affirmative action need to perceive it as fair to ensure its effectiveness. One of the arguments for affirmative action is that it contributes positively to the organisation, as it introduces diversity, which is beneficial for business (Bergmann, 1996). It is thus

imperative that affirmative action be implemented effectively. One contribution to the quest for effective affirmative action is determining whether a relationship exists between the attitudes that individuals hold towards the concept, perceptions of participation in organisational decision-making and organisational commitment.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION**

Is there a relationship between gender-based affirmative action attitudes, perceptions of participation in organisational decision-making and the extent of commitment towards the organisation of males and females in a previously white male dominated organisation?

#### **1.3.1 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What attitudes do women and men in a former white male dominated organisation hold towards gender-based affirmative action policies in their organisation?
- To what extent do the men and women perceive themselves to be participating in organisational decision-making?
- Is the extent of participation in organisational decision-making and gender-based affirmative action attitudes related to commitment towards the organisation?

### **1.4 RESEARCH GOAL**

The goal of this research is to provide an answer to the question of whether a relationship exists between gender-based affirmative action attitudes, perceptions of participation in organisational decision-making and the extent of commitment towards the organisation for males and females in a previously white male dominated



organisation. Hopefully, the answers to this question can contribute to making the idea of affirmative action more effective.

### **1.5 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

An academic institution was selected for the data collection purposes of this study. This method was chosen since academia largely represents many organisations in South Africa in that they are white male dominated and currently undergoing changes to include those individuals who have been marginalised in the past. An academic institution also seemed to be easily accessible compared to other organisations, given their openness to research.

Academia in South Africa is historically characterised by male dominion. According to de la Rey (n.d.), universities have been characterised by an intersection of gender and race discrimination since its establishment in 1916, as universities were to a large extent racially segregated with limited and inferior resources and opportunities for blacks. Discrimination in this regard also extended to white women. Although white women were included in the very first Council of the University of Cape Town, only ten white women had served as Councillors at the time of the Centenary celebrations in 1986/7 (de la Rey, n.d.).

De la Rey (n.d.) further establishes that by 1992 after the fall of Apartheid, white academics were still by far the dominant group, comprising 87% of all teaching and research staff at universities. Women, on the other hand, comprised only 29.8% of academic and research staff at universities.

Another reason for selecting an academic institution for data collection purposes is education level. To become a member of staff at an academic institution, one must possess at least a minimum academic qualification, which may be a junior degree. This guarantees a certain level of educational equality, as all staff members, both male and female, possess a basic university qualification. This may not necessarily be the case in other organisations, where various other reasons may have attributed to an individual's success in the organisation or even his/her employment in the organisation, for instance one's experience in the field may have paved the way in the organisation.

Some level of equality is important, as affirmative action requires that individuals from the previously disadvantaged groups must be on an equal level or have the potential to rise to the same level as those from previously advantaged groups to be offered the position.

Specifically, lecturers from the Faculty of Humanities and Engineering were targeted for data collection. These faculties were chosen, as the Faculty of Engineering is stereotypically male territory, while the Humanities faculty is stereotypically female territory.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY**

A sample of accessibility and convenience was used to collect the data. A questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to 350 lecturers with a request to return the completed questionnaire to a designated e-mail address. The e-mail also contained an introductory note, which stated that the University Registrar had endorsed the study. This was done to ensure respondents that the study was legitimate and supported by the relevant

authorities. Anyone of the target respondents could respond anonymously and return the questionnaire to the designated e-mail address.

The response rate was, however, very low. Fieldworkers were subsequently used as an alternative plan to approach the lecturers individually. In addition, questionnaires with envelopes were placed in lecturers' pigeonholes. A return box was erected at the departmental main administration rooms in an attempt to remind the lecturers to return the questionnaires. Although the intended sample size was 60, only 48 questionnaires were returned.

The data was captured using the SPSS programme to prepare for analysis. The data was also checked for inconsistencies during the capturing process. Frequencies were generated to analyse the biographical data for the production of a profile or characteristics of the participants. SPSS was used to run reliability for the scales as well as to create composite scores for the scales and to analyse and answer all the research questions.

## **1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This report comprises six chapters. The current chapter introduces the topic and the goals of the study. The main aim of this chapter is to describe what the researcher envisions regarding the study. The reasons for studying this issue as well as the methods used during the study are also presented.

Chapter two presents a literature review. Each variable in the study is discussed in detail. The variables are also broken down and discussed in detail to determine how

they interact with each other. Studies that bring all the concepts together are presented to illustrate the link between all three variables.

Chapter three discusses the methodology used in the study. The entire process, including the study design, the justification of quantitative methods, the development of the study instruments, recruitment of participants, the data collection process and data analysis are presented in detail.

Chapter four presents and discusses the findings from the study. Firstly, the participants' profile is discussed, followed by an exploration and an answer to the research questions. Other studies are also introduced to explain and justify the findings of the current study in an attempt to make sense of the findings.

Chapter five discusses the limitations and lessons learned from the research process. This chapter aims to draw future researchers' attention to the tribulations that may be encountered in the course of such a study and thus urges them to take the necessary precautions.

The sixth and final chapter conveys the conclusions reached from the study and introduces recommendations for future research.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter sets the tone for succeeding chapters. Motivation for the study was discussed to provide a reason as to the necessity of the study. The research question

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was subsequently posed and broken down into specific research questions that the study intends to answer.

To indicate the direction that the researcher envisions the study to take, the research goal was provided. The study was then placed in context by describing the context within which data was collected. Lastly, the research methodology was discussed to indicate the process and techniques used to arrive at the findings.

The above chapter outline is presented as a map of the report.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to bring together the three variables observed in this study. These variables are:

- Attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action;
- Perception of participation in decision-making; and
- Organisational commitment.

This chapter discusses each of these variables in detail to provide clarity and to illustrate the interconnectedness of these variables to each other.

The idea of gender is discussed first. The discussion starts out by explaining what gender means and how gender relations develop. The concept is subsequently contextualised within South Africa to illustrate what it meant to be a woman in the Apartheid era and how far women have come in the post-apartheid era.

This is followed by a discussion of the affirmative action concept. An attempt is made to understand the concept by revisiting its origins and subsequently discussing the pros and cons of affirmative action in the current South African situation.

A discussion on attitudes follows, focussing on defining attitudes, explaining how they develop, their implication for behaviour and whether they can be changed. This is followed by an explanation of what participation in decision-making entails. This section also covers organisational commitment, its definition, personal correlates or individual determinants to it and the consequences thereof.

This chapter concludes by reviewing various related studies in an attempt to illustrate the link between the above concepts.

## **2.2 GENDER**

According to Macdonald, Sprenger and Dubel (1997), gender refers to socially constructed differences between men and women that are not necessarily caused by biological sexual differences. They maintain that “gender relations are the rules, traditions and social relationships in societies and cultures, which together determine what is considered ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ and how power is allocated between and used differently by, women and men” (p.4).

Essentially, gender is a social construction of masculinity and femininity, which is instilled through learning rather than innate behaviour and differs over time and place.

Similarly, Wilson (1995) maintains that males and females learn certain socially acceptable behaviours associated with the specific gender. According to Wilson (1995), the birth of a child is an occasion where a number of gender rules are reconstructed and

regenerated. Examples include colour coding for dressing babies and the gender specific names given to children. Parents of newborn girls and boys handle their babies differently and tend to describe their babies in gender-stereotyped ways.

Furthermore, parents of boy and girl toddlers treat these toddlers differently according to gender. For instance, parents of sons are more preoccupied with punishment, negative sanctions and conformity to gender standards. Girls are usually given more comfort. Boys are taught how to perform tasks and are praised for their independence and ability. Fathers, in particular, emphasise task performance, competence, achievement, careers and occupational success for their sons, while on the other hand, emphasising dependency behaviours in their daughters.

The toys given to male and female children also differ. Boys are given toys such as vehicles, animals and guns, while girls are provided with dolls and household toys (Wilson, 1995).

The sex-role socialisation persists in adulthood. Communication received via the media reinforces the same messages. Wilson (1995) maintains that until recently, the depiction of women in working roles have been scarce, while the depiction of women as professionals or executives have been virtually non-existent. A number of stereotypical roles were ascribed to women instead. These included the notion that a woman's place is in the home that women do not make important decisions and that women are dependent and require men's protection.



Men are understood to have the voice of authority in most societies. Advertisers exploit this power by using males as authoritative figures in their advertising campaigns. An example would be an advertisement of a man telling women why a certain floor polish is better than another.

This gender role socialisation becomes challenging for women and men who do not wish to be classified and placed in a certain socially acceptable box. For instance Baker and Skevington (1989) studied a group of male and female students studying Law and who were about to become advocates. Essentially, the study found the relation between women and occupational identity problematic. For men, the relation was found to be normal. The women experienced tension between personal self-identity and occupational identity. Women and lawyers were described as dissonant, which resulted in the identity relationship struggle. On the other hand, masculinity and the law became synonymous, with the masculine personality depicted as identical with the legal personality. Part of the process for a woman to become a lawyer thus required that the woman overcome certain feminine traits (Baker, 1989).

Gender awareness consequently involves the realisation of such differences between sex roles and gender roles as well as a realisation that gender roles are historically and socially constructed and can be changed. The struggle for gender equality is based on the realisation that gender inequality is a product of structural and institutional discrimination (Macdonald *et al*, 1997).

### 2.2.1 WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA: PAST AND PRESENT

During the Apartheid regime a person's race or gender resulted in either favoured or disadvantaged treatment. Being black in South Africa was an unforgivable sin. Black people were subjected to cruelty due to a socially constructed inferiority.

In addition, being female meant subjection to some form of discrimination due to gender. According to Msimang (2000), the conservatism, violence and rigidity of the Apartheid regime encouraged a culture of patriarchy that limited the possibilities or opportunities for women, both at home and in public.

Msimang (2000) maintains that although women were exposed to limited opportunities, the degree of limited opportunities was also influenced by their race, class, religion and sexual orientation. For instance, the formal employment that white women were often exposed to was secretarial and clerical positions. Even though their exclusion from other formal employment was not legislated, it was perpetuated by traditional ideas about women's place in society that was dominant within the Afrikaans and English communities. White women's employment patterns hence echoed their roles in society.

Similarly, the employment patterns of black women also echoed their roles in society. Since race was intertwined with poverty, the number of black women that participated in the workforce exceeded the number of white women. Black women were commonly employed in the domestic area, thus supporting the lifestyles of white women. Where black women were employed in the corporate world, it was often as cleaners or 'tea-ladies'.

In rural areas, black women worked alongside their husbands as farm labourers, often conducting the same tasks yet receiving lower pay due to their gender. Where employment was scarce, black women relied on their husbands' pay check. These husbands often worked in mines as migrant-labourers (Msimang, 2000).

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 in the post-apartheid South Africa brought a new era of hope for women. For the first time in the country, women of all races had the inalienable right to equal opportunities as men. All forms of unfair discrimination were abolished, at least in theory.

Such threats are evident in a research survey conducted by Research Surveys (2003), which indicates that gender discrimination still exists in workplaces, even though women have achieved success and made important contributions to society. The survey indicates that more women, especially single, divorced or widowed women, feel that they are discriminated against when it comes to employment opportunities. Black women tend to feel more strongly about this issue than their white counterparts.

In addition, more women feel that affirmative action has a role to play in providing better access for women to leadership positions in the workforce. The survey yields that women experience barriers, such as the limited freedom to practice their own culture and beliefs. Women also believe that sexual harassment is the norm instead of the

exception in the workplace (Research Surveys, 2003).

On a positive note, the survey indicates that women feel that more and more employers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the needs of working mothers.

Over the past few years, much has clearly been achieved to advance the plight of women in South Africa. However, much more should still be done to ensure that the ethos of discrimination against women is completely abolished. Putting policies in place is simply not enough. Constant investigations must be undertaken to ensure that the implemented policies achieve what they are envisioned to, which is the transformation of the basic work culture.

### **2.3 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION UNDERSTOOD**

In defining the concept of affirmative action, Alexander (2006) makes an important distinction between transformation measures and affirmative action. He maintains that by definition in South Africa, transformation measures rather than affirmative action measures are essential to bring about normality. Transformation measures include the provision of housing to the poor, education or skill development and job creation.

Affirmative action, on the other hand, is an aspect of transformation measures. Affirmative action comprises all efforts designed to ensure that those qualified individuals from designated groups obtain equal employment opportunities and are represented equitably on all occupational levels and in all categories in the workforce. By definition, transformation must therefore occur first to ensure that most black people are at a stage

where they can benefit from affirmative action measures.

Since affirmative action draws from the premise that preference is given to members of a designated group if they are as qualified or skilled as those from the non-designated group, true affirmative action can only occur where it is rooted in the idea of transformation. An assessment of whether affirmative action occurs in a particular organisation can therefore be done by tracking how far junior staff develops in that particular organisation.

Before one can completely understand the concept, it is pivotal to trace the origins of affirmative action. The foundation and rationale for the implementation of affirmative action is outlined below.

### **2.3.1 ORIGIN AND RATIONALE FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

According to the Citizen Advocacy Centre (2005), affirmative action dates back to the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment in the United States of America. This clause prohibits states from creating any law that denies citizens equal protection. However, American history teaches that the equal protection clause proved to be inefficient in preventing discrimination against minorities and women.

In 1964, American Congress consequently passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to strengthen the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, thus prohibiting discrimination based on race, colour, gender, national origin and religion. Moreover, the above act banned the use of quotas to allow for minority participation in certain programmes (Citizen Advocacy Centre, n.d).

In 1967, the then American president, L. Johnson advised that although the Civil Rights Act was a significant first step in abolishing discrimination in America, it still proved insufficient. He warned that two nations were emerging from one country and that these nations were divided and unequal.

In response to President L. Johnson's warning, his successor, President R. Nixon, in conjunction with Congress, passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. This act reinforced the power of the federal government to hold accountable or sue employers, unions, local government and states for discrimination in employment. The act insisted that employers make every effort to employ more individuals from racial minorities and to set goals and timetables. These efforts were labelled 'affirmative action programmes'. Government offered subsidies to companies that partnered with minority-owned companies. Eventually, affirmative action was used in matters extending beyond employment. It reached areas such as college admission and subsequently became a highly contested issue (Citizen Advocacy Centre, n.d).

Critics denied and still deny affirmative action on the basis that it rewards lesser-qualified individuals unfairly. Supporters, on the other hand, argue that affirmative action acts as a solution to racial minorities and women who have been excluded and discriminated against throughout history (McLean, 2002; Taylor, 2002; Whiteneck, 2003).

### **2.3.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

The Affirmative Action Act was passed in 1998 and came into effect in 1999 (Msimang, 2000). According to Ndzimande and Sikhosana (1996), the concept of affirmative action in South Africa was adopted from America. One noticeable difference is, however, that

where affirmative action in America was aimed at benefiting minority groups, the beneficiaries in South Africa comprise the majority of the population.

Nzimande *et al* (1996) maintain that the concept of affirmative action has become dominant in South Africa as a strategy to redress historical inequalities. They hold that affirmative action comprises all actions aimed at redressing inequalities that resulted from Apartheid. Affirmative action thus aims to promote proportional representation of previously marginalised groups, specifically blacks, disabled individuals and women in both public as well as private institutions.

According to the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) (1995), the Black Management Forum (BMF) states that the objective of affirmative action is the fair representation of all sectors of South African society at all levels and all fields in proportion to their presence in the population. The BMF holds, however, that affirmative action programmes should be terminated as soon as more decision holders in an organisation include the previously under-represented categories. Only once this situation is reached can the selection processes of new employees take place without policy intervention. In addition, Human (1993) is of the opinion that affirmative action is a temporary intervention designed to obtain equal employment opportunities without jeopardising the career aspirations of current organisational members who are competent in their jobs.

South Africa has, however, not been any different from America where the implementation of affirmative action is concerned. The concept is highly contested in the country and the majority of individuals holds a view, whether one of support or rejection,

towards it.

### **2.3.3 EVALUATING THE PROS AND CONS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

Any good invention occasionally reveals a number of unintended consequences. Affirmative action is no different. It is thus vital that the concept be evaluated meticulously to ensure that it achieves its intended purpose. As mentioned in 1.1 above, the issue of affirmative action is a highly topical one and numerous views concerning its advantages and disadvantages prevail. A number of undisputable pros of affirmative action, provided that it is implemented correctly, can be identified. These advantages are as follows:

- discrimination is a reality. It exists whether one is willing to acknowledge it or not. Affirmative action forces individuals to come face-to-face with their own prejudices. According to IDASA (1995), “Despite a personal commitment by some managers to non-racialism and non-sexism, managers continue to be prejudiced against women and blacks in ways that they do not recognise as prejudice” (p.4). Affirmative action thus attempts to abolish such prejudices forcefully;
- affirmative action creates opportunities for women and previously disadvantaged groups to showcase talents that would otherwise have remained dormant. This, in turn, decreases the poverty level amongst the above groups that resulted from the lack of access to better paying positions (Bergmann, 1996); and
- affirmative action promotes a diversity of viewpoints within one environment, thus creating more lively and intelligent debates. Bergmann (1996) maintains that diversity has a positive incentive in many situations. For instance, increased demand has been created in business for goods and services that appeal to the diverse groups in the country. This increase in demand is a direct result of the



increased buying power of groups, such as women and the previously disadvantaged (IDASA, 1995).

As mentioned above, the concept of affirmative action is not immune to unintended consequences. The main problem appears to be that its effectiveness depends on those responsible for its implementation having an acute understanding of its rationale as well as a sincere commitment to its successful implementation. If the aforesaid is absent, the concept is prone to abuse from both the beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries alike.

Beneficiary abuse may take the form of beneficiaries perceiving affirmative action as an opportunity for advancement at all costs and feeling entitled to privileged opportunities to such a degree that sight of values, such as integration and diversity, is lost. In cases such as these, the so-called myth of reverse discrimination may enter the equation.

Non-beneficiaries may abuse affirmative action by resisting its implementation. Abuse can also take the form of not understanding fully what the concept implies and thus implementing it incorrectly. For instance, fronting or window dressing occurs where individuals who do not meet the requirements for certain positions are employed merely to satisfy quotas. Such individuals can consequently not contribute meaningfully to the organisation.

Another unintended consequence that Alexander (2006) highlights is that affirmative action reinforces the racial categories defined by the Apartheid regime. This undermines the possibility of attaining a truly non-racial democratic South Africa even further.

Alexander (2006) argues that other means of identifying the beneficiaries ought to be researched and implemented. Such means include the use of language skill to promote redress in a natural manner. He argues that new civil servants should be appointed on the basis of their ability to speak at least one African language. In this way, racial integration may be promoted.

The current problem is that race has been intertwined with all forms of discrimination in South Africa. As stated previously, black women have been subjected to double discrimination on the grounds of both race as well as gender. It is consequently pivotal to observe the issue of race as a critical denominator. This does, however, not detract from the importance of creating a platform for racial identities to be substituted by other identities. A national identity may, for instance, substitute a racial, ethnic or gendered identity.

## **2.4 ATTITUDES**

According to Forsyth (1987), attitudes play a vital role in our lives. Without attitudes, individuals would be lost, since attitudes form an important basis of our reference to the world. They touch most spheres of our lives and determine what one will see and hear as well as what one will think and do.

Forsyth (1987) defines attitudes as “an affective feeling of liking or disliking based on beliefs (cognitions) about an object which leads to readiness to behave in a certain manner” (p.192). Similarly, Petty (1995) understands attitudes to be generalised judgments that individuals hold about themselves, objects, issues and other people.

Petty (1995) maintains that the basis of attitudes can be:

- affective or feeling orientated, for example, people deciding that they will follow a certain career path because they like it or they feel positive towards it, regardless of whether the chosen career can supply a sufficient income;
- based on cognitions or beliefs and knowledge, for instance, deciding to work for a certain organisation based on the personal development or benefits that the organisation offers;
- behaviours or actions, for instance, deciding to love a certain organisation due to life-long affiliation; or
- a combination of the above elements.

Although attitudes are based on the above elements, the relationship between attitudes and the elements is reciprocal. Attitudes thus have an impact on the elements. Attitudes might, for instance, cause one to feel happy in an organisation one likes, i.e. affective influence, to think of mostly positive traits when asked about the organisation, i.e. cognitive influence, and be willing to put forth more work than would be expected for the organisation, i.e. behavioural influence.

#### **2.4.1 HOW ATTITUDES DEVELOP**

According to Forsyth (1987), attitudes are learned. Although there are those instinctive attitudes that stem from genetic heritage, such as the fear of falling, we largely learn to feel what we feel. Forsyth (1987) maintains that there are different ways in which we learn these attitudes. These ways are socialisation, mere exposure or operant

conditioning.

**Socialisation** is a process where one adopts the norms of a society (Williamson, Swingle & Sargent, 1982). According to Williamson *et al* (1982), the socio-cultural environment in which one resides shapes the kinds of attitudes that one may develop. This occurs because the socio-cultural environment defines and limits the shaping and expression of attitudes. For instance, the Apartheid regime labelled interracial marriages taboo, which resulted in fewer such marriages. However, since the new democracy in South Africa, more interracial marriages are observed.

**Mere exposure** occurs where individuals are exposed to a certain object or situation repeatedly. Forsyth (1987) maintains that where individuals are exposed to an object frequently enough, they commonly form a positive attitude towards it. For instance, when a new song is released, one may not like it. As one hears the song frequently, one may develop a positive attitude towards it.

**Operant conditioning** occurs where one learns an attitude as a result of direct reward or punishment. For instance, individuals may be praised each time they exhibit a certain attitude. Eventually they may adopt that attitude. The opposite is equally true. Where individuals are punished for exhibiting a specific attitude, they may eventually learn to prevent that attitude, or learn when and how it is appropriate to exhibit that attitude (Forsyth, 1987).

Feldman (1985) maintains that in operant conditioning, the person normally has direct contact with the attitudinal object or verbal labels for the object. In some cases, the

person learns by merely observing others being punished or rewarded for exhibiting those attitudes. This kind of learning is termed vicarious learning.

#### **2.4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR BEHAVIOUR**

Forsyth (1987) holds that as much as attitudes play a vital role in our lives, the relationship between attitudes and behaviour remains unclear. People do not act out their attitudes consistently. Various other factors play a role in determining whether an attitude will correspond to behaviour.

Feldman (1985) maintains that behavioural norms and behavioural intentions should be considered when predicting whether an attitude will lead to behaviour. This is based on the 'theory of reasoned action' by Ajzen and Fishbein (Feldman, 1985). This theory maintains that behaviour is fundamentally a function of an intention to carry out a particular behaviour relevant to an attitudinal object. Two factors, namely the attitude towards the behaviour and the perceived social pressure to carry out the behaviour, determine the intention.

Moreover, Forsyth (1987) introduces the following three conditions that must be satisfied before an attitude can lead to behaviour:

- the attitude must be readily available to serve as a guide for actions. For instance, one may not always consider one's biases, which results in these biases not influencing actions;
- one may at times decide that although the biases may be readily available, they are irrelevant to the particular situation. People may, for example, hold an attitude that

women are incompetent. When faced with a decision to employ a woman, they may decide that the bias is irrelevant in that situation; and

- the situation may be a determining factor. The situation may be so restrictive that one's attitudes cannot influence behaviour.

### **2.4.3 CAN ATTITUDES CHANGE?**

The fact that attitudes are not genetically inherent but learned through different processes of socialisation implies that attitudes can be changed or unlearned. Persuasive communication is identified as one of the tactics that can be employed in attitude change (Feldman, 1985).

Although Feldman (1985) maintains that specific factors can lead to attitude change, there is no existing formula that leads directly to successful persuasion. Forsyth (1987) identifies the source of the message, the message itself and the receiver of the message as the most important determinants of attitude change.

**The source of the message** must fulfil certain requirements before it can persuade effectively. For instance, there are many sources, such as advertising campaigns, which attempt to sell their ideas for the purposes of persuasion on daily basis. One is, however, not persuaded by all these campaigns. In fact, there is a tendency to pay attention to some campaigns over others. Forsyth (1987) explains that in general, there is a tendency to listen more closely to sources that are attractive, appear to have more credibility and display similarities to the receiver.

A source's credibility is determined by expertise and trustworthiness. According to

Forsyth (1987), some sources lack credibility due to a perception that they do not have sufficient knowledge of the subject under discussion. Other sources lack credibility because they cannot be trusted to provide unbiased information.

Similarity implies that we tend to be attracted to people who are similar to us in some ways. In terms of attractiveness, the theory holds that people we like tend to persuade us easier than people we dislike (Forsyth, 1987).

If organised poorly, **the message** itself may fail to persuade successfully, regardless of whether the source is convincing. Forsyth (1987) maintains that the message has to capture the attention of the audience to be effective. Moreover, the message must be understandable and the audience must understand what is said. The source must also attempt to make the message convincing enough for the audience to accept it. Lastly, the message must be memorable to create a lasting impact (Forsyth, 1987).

**The receiver** is another critical component in successful attitude change. People are different and can therefore not be persuaded by the same tactics. According to Forsyth (1987), certain characteristics, such as gender, original attitudinal position, intelligence and self-esteem, can determine whether a message may be persuasive.

## 2.5 DECISION-MAKING

According to Garvin (2004), decision-making in organisations is not a singular event but rather a process that unfolds over a period of time. It is a process that is filled with power plays and politics and is rife with personal nuances and organisational history. Moreover, decision-making comprises discussions and debates and requires support at

all levels of the organisation when the time comes for the decision to be implemented.

Organisational decision-making is therefore closely related to influence or a position of power within the organisation. DuBrin (2005) defines power as an ability or potential to influence decisions and control resources. It is an individual's ability to overcome resistance in achieving a result.

Drenth, Heller, Koopman and Rus (1988) maintain that it is impossible to exercise influence or power unless there is access to the decision process. It is only after gaining access to the process that one can exert influence, when one's preferences are considered in the process of arriving at a decision as a result of one's direct or indirect intervention. Power, on the other hand, is exerted when one's preferences are incorporated in the decision as a result of one's direct or indirect influence (Drenth *et al*, 1988).

Drenth *et al* (1988) consider decision-making as a process that involves one or more persons and access to that process is a preliminary step. They maintain that the minimum requirement for access is information. If one is unaware that a decision is in the process of being taken, one cannot exert influence. What therefore occurs in the decision-making process is that individuals are provided with an opportunity to comment on the developing decision through the information they have. Drenth *et al* consider this step as a minimum degree of influence. Increasing levels of influence occur where the process of consultation results in the opportunity to contribute to the decision, even if the suggestions made during the consultation are not accepted. Higher levels of influence or participation therefore occur when some of the ideas emerging from the consultative



process are at least incorporated in the decision occasionally.

In addition, DuBrin (2005) maintains that there are two types of power that one may hold within an organisation. These types are:

- expert power, which is the ability to influence others because of one's skills and expertise that are respected by the organisational members; and
- referent power, which is the ability to influence others as a result of one's desirable characteristics and traits. This is based on others' desire to identify with or be led by an inspiring person.

DuBrin (2005) points out that it is important to distribute power throughout the organisation, as such distribution has proven to increase ownership of jobs as well as employees' sense of self-efficacy or confidence on a specific task. It has also shown to improve employment satisfaction, quality of work and productivity (Drenth *et al*, 1988).

Different types of decisions are made in organisations. Depending on their responsibilities and levels in the organisation, employees may not participate in all the decisions. According to Mesarovic (in Drenth *et al*, 1988), decisions can be categorised as short-term, medium and long-term. These types of decisions do not only differ in terms of timeframes but also have different functions in the organisation. Long-term decisions may, for instance, include policy-making decision, which is often dealt with by top-level management. Medium-term decisions constitute coordinative decision-making and short-term decisions comprise productive-executive decision-making.

Similarly, Simon (in Drenth *et al*, 1988) asserts that an organisation is composed of basic work processes at the bottom, followed by programmed decision-making processes that govern operations at the middle and non-programmed decisions that plan and monitor the entire system at the top of the organisation.

## 2.6 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organisational commitment is defined by Bartle, Dansby, Landis and McIntyre (2002) as the degree to which a person identifies with a specific organisation and its objectives and wishes to retain membership in the organisation to make these objectives possible. This definition implies a sense of loyalty to the entire organisation as well as an aspiration to participate in more general roles that come with the organisational membership.

Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982, p. 27) define organisational commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”. They maintain that organisational commitment can be characterised by at least three factors, namely:

- a strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation’s values and goals;
- a willingness to put forth considerable effort on behalf of the organisation; and
- a strong desire to uphold membership in the organisation.

This definition indicates an active relationship with the organisation because individuals are willing to offer something of their own to add value to the organisation’s well-being, regardless of whether they might have other commitments outside the organisation, such as a family or social commitments.

Mowday *et al* (1982) maintain that the probability of one's organisational commitment increasing or decreasing is dependent on whether the organisation satisfies the needs that an individual have. An individual with certain needs, desires, skills, etc., may expect to find an environment within the organisation that will satisfy many of these fundamental needs. Should the organisation satisfy them, the individual's commitment is likely to increase. Should the organisation fail to satisfy these needs, the individual's commitment is likely to decrease.

Alan (1991) asserts that certain employees may still offer an organisation loyalty and effort, regardless of what the organisation may offer. This can be ascribed to the fact that certain employees have attitudes and behaviours that are independent of organisational reinforcement. One explanation for these behaviours and attitudes is found in Kamali and Newbury-Birch (2001), where they assert that individuals respond differently to stressful situations. The way in which individuals cope with stressful situations may be related to their personal characteristics.

Middleton (1993) lists a number of these personal characteristics that may influence organisational commitment:

- tenure and age. This relates to situations where an individual's psychological attachment to the organisation is increased as a result of limited opportunities for alternative employment. In such cases, the individual's decreased degree of freedom may increase the attractiveness of the organisation;
- gender or sex. It seems that women tend to be more committed to an organisation than men. No consistent relationship is, however, obtained;

- a need for achievement. It seems that individuals with a high need for achievement tend to be committed to the organisation regardless of what the organisation offers them;
- work values that are integrated into personal values; and
- interpersonal trust or interpersonal relationships amongst employees in the organisation (Middleton, 1993).

### **2.6.1 CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

The definition of organisational commitment suggests a need or willingness of an individual to remain in the organisation and contribute to the betterment or fulfilment of the objectives and values of the organisation. It consequently follows that organisational commitment contributes to low personnel turnover (Middleton, 1993).

According to Mowday *et al* (1982), organisational commitment is also a strong predictor of absenteeism levels, as employees who are highly committed are more motivated to come to work on a regular basis than those who are not as committed.

Middleton (1993) holds that high levels of commitment contribute to extra-role behaviours, which are behaviours that extend the scope of the job description that, contribute to the organisation positively. This includes helping behaviours, innovativeness and spontaneous behaviour that contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation.

### **2.7 RELATED STUDIES**

Although existing literature suggests a link between attitudes towards affirmative action,

participation in decision-making and organisational commitment, no simultaneous link between these three variables seems to have been established. Links have, however, been established between either one or another variable, for instance, a link between perceptions of participation in organisational decision-making and organisational commitment or a link between women's or other affirmative action beneficiaries' experiences and organisational commitment. To illustrate this point, a number of relevant studies are discussed below.

The link between affirmative action and gender is that gender acts as one of the determinants of whether one is considered a beneficiary of affirmative action. All women in South Africa are affirmative action beneficiaries. This type of affirmative action is termed gender-based affirmative action and is the focus of this study. Existing literature indicates that gender is intertwined with race to some degree.

Studies aimed at investigating attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action generally point to differences between the attitudes that men and women hold towards the concept. Females tend to hold more supportive attitudes than males (Beaton & Tougas, 2001; Garcia, Desmarais, Branscombe & Gee, 2005; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Slack, 1989; Tougas, Beaton & Veilleux, 1991). Kravitz *et al* (1993) found that the differences may be ascribed to both gender and race. As much as women tend to be more endorsing of gender-based affirmative action, blacks tend to endorse the concept even more than their white counterparts.

In his study, Slack (1989) found that fire chiefs, which is a masculine dominated profession, generally exhibit negative attitudes towards all forms of affirmative action.

Moreover, their attitude towards gender-based affirmative action, i.e. women entering the field of employment, was even more negative as their attitudes towards race-based affirmative action programmes.

Beaton *et al* (2001) found, however, that undergraduate university students perceived affirmative action programmes aimed at benefiting women and disabled groups more positively than they did race-based ones.

According to Garcia *et al* (2005), the participants' context is more important for determining their attitudes than in-group collective interests. The above study found that men who had conscious experiences with gender-based affirmative action and comparable worth tended to display negative attitudes towards the gender-based affirmative action programmes. This group of men also tended to justify their group's privilege within the organisation. According to the study, numerous women also tended to exhibit negative attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action programmes, yet to a lesser degree than men. These findings were attributed to social pressures on the women to overstate their beliefs, especially those with a high need for social approval, when in an environment that responds negatively to disadvantaged group members who challenge the *status quo*.

A study conducted by Parker, Baltes and Christiansen (1997) found that both men and women exhibit positive attitudes towards affirmative action measures. White males supported all forms of affirmative action measures and did not associate them with a loss in career development opportunities, organisational injustice and negative work attitudes. Men thus perceive such measures as a catalyst in creating a more democratic

workplace and thus a reason to feel proud of the organisation. Parker *et al* (1997) highlights, however, that the sample used in the study was drawn from government institutions, where employees are educated with regards to affirmative action programmes and their implications. The positive attitude that men were found to hold towards affirmative action measures could thus be ascribed to a better understanding of affirmative action.

A study conducted in South Africa by Mwaba and Simbayi (1998) finds no differences between the attitudes that men and women hold towards gender-based affirmative action. Both genders endorse the gender-based affirmative action programmes and believe that such programmes will not have any negative effects on their employability. However, studies performed on specifically white South Africans indicate that both male and female white South Africans hold negative attitudes towards the general affirmative action measures. They experience them as unfair and hindering their career aspirations. As a result, they express an intention to leave the country (de Chaud & Padayachee, 2001; Wambugu, 2005).

In a study to explore the experiences of black managers to describe how they experience affirmative action at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Motileng (2004) found that black managers experience affirmative action positively. Although they perceive affirmative action as a corrective measure aimed at creating opportunities for the previously disadvantaged to showcase their potential and capabilities, they have encountered a degree of resistance and stereotyping along the way. In general, these managers feel that they have to work harder than their white counterparts to prove themselves. As such, they view resilience and coping skills as

essential to being an affirmative action beneficiary.

Kand and Rekor (2005) conducted a study to answer a question as to whether Perceived Involvement in Decision-Making (PIDM) resulted in high loyalty, commitment, and retention. The sample chosen for the study was divided into two clusters, namely those with high PIDM values and those with low PIDM values. The findings indicate that those individuals with high PIDM values also exhibit higher loyalty, commitment and retention compared to those with low PIDM values.

Similarly, Elloy, Everett and Flynn (1995) found that individuals with a higher involvement in their jobs differ significantly from their less involved counterparts in that those with a higher involvement are more likely to perceive opportunities for growth in their job. These individuals are also more satisfied with the supervision they receive and are more committed to their jobs and organisation. The study warns, however, that role conflict and role ambiguity may occur when participation in decision-making is increased in an organisation with individuals who prefer routine to a job.

Another link of enquiry exists between decision-making and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), which can be defined as behaviour that is performed voluntarily and not directly rewarded by the formal reward system that contributes to the effectiveness of the organisation. Van Yperen, van den Berg and Willering (1999) tested the hypothesis that perceived support from the supervisor intercedes the link between participation in decision-making and OCB. The study indicated that participation in decision-making improves employees' sense of supervisory support, thus making them more likely to respond by displaying OCB. The study also yielded that although decision-making was



related to organisational commitment, no meaningful link was observed between organisational commitment and OCB.

When studying workplace variables and affective responses that contribute to female managers' intention to leave an organisation, Korabik and Rosin (1991) identified the following potential factors that contribute to a decision to leave as well as low job satisfaction and organisational commitment:

- a perception that their expectations have not been met;
- a perception that their jobs offer limited responsibility, leadership, variety, time flexibility and independence;
- the existence and perception of office politics; and
- operating in a male dominated environment.

Bartle *et al* (2002) studied the attitudes of military respondents towards Equal Opportunity Fairness (EOF) by investigating it in relation to job satisfaction, organisational commitment and perceived work efficacy. The study hypothesised that the respondents' perception of Organisational Equal Opportunity Fairness (OEOF) positively influence respondents' perception of Work Group Equal Opportunity Fairness (WGEOF), which directly and indirectly leads to perceptions of work group efficacy, job satisfaction and ultimately leads to organisational commitment. The findings support the hypothesis that the attitude towards perceptions of OEOF influences attitudes towards WGEOF. In other words, the military personnel's attitudes towards WGEOF is influenced by whether, for instance, they believe or perceive that the organisational promotional policies are biased against the demographic group within which they reside.

This belief or perception, in turn, influences their attitudes towards WGEOF. The findings also support the hypothesis that the respondents' perception of WGEOF would influence their Perception of Work Group Efficacy (PWGE), job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

These studies indicate that a number of variables play a role in the kind of attitudes that one displays towards affirmative action. These variables include the individual's gender and race as well as the kind of environment in the organisation. The literature review indicates that women are generally supportive of the concept of affirmative action. However, women from environments or organisations that punish disadvantaged groups who question the status quo are less likely to support the gender-based affirmative action programmes. White males from institutions, such as the government, that encourage affirmative action programmes, tend to support affirmative action and associate it with pride. Blacks in general tend to be more supportive of affirmative action programmes as whites. Moreover, organisations that are traditionally male dominated, for instance fire chiefs, tend to harbour conservative attitudes towards women entering the field.

The link alluded to by the literature review between the three focal variables in the study is that perceptions of unfairness in an organisation are likely to motivate individuals' intentions to leave the organisation. Similarly, perceptions of fairness amongst employees in an organisation are critical for the effective functioning of individuals and the organisation as a whole. This tendency can be ascribed to the fact that support from supervisors, being part of the organisation and perceptions of participation in organisational decision-making are all associated with commitment to the organisation.

Where women perceive that their expectations are not being met in a male dominated organisation, they express intentions to leave the organisation. Similarly, whites who feel overlooked by affirmative action programmes in the country and who feel unfairly treated, express intentions to emigrate from South Africa.

In both cases, fairness and unfairness manifest itself in the perceptions of own involvement in the decision-making and in affirmative action attitudes, which leads to intentions to leave either the organisation or the country.

The challenge that therefore faces many organisations is to strike a balance between the changes introduced by affirmative action programmes and employees' perceptions of inclusiveness. The effectiveness of transformation attempts is embedded in the perceptions of fairness from all those affected.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed each of the constructs addressed in the study. Firstly, the concept of gender was discussed and an illustration provided of what it meant during the Apartheid era and currently means to be a woman in South Africa. An understanding of the concept of affirmative action was subsequently attempted. This was followed by a discussion of attitudes, focussing on what they are, how they develop, whether they influence behaviour and whether they can be changed. A discussion of decision-making and organisational commitment followed. The chapter concluded with a review of related literature to illustrate how the above three variables may be related.

From the discussion it can be deduced that the variables are interrelated in some ways. To a large extent, attitudes form the basis of what we see and think. For centuries, attitudes towards women have been that of inferiority to men, which resulted in inequality between men and women in terms of work possibilities. The present moment is marked by an attempt to attain a shift in these attitudes towards women. The shift has been channelled *inter alia* through the concept of affirmative action in work organisations.

Because the above attitudes have been well ingrained, there is still some resistance in some organisations to view women as equal to men. Such perceptions may result in women not being provided with the necessary access to the decision-making processes within the organisation, and consequently an inability to exert their influence. Such limited influence has negative consequences, since this may lead to women lacking the necessary commitment to the organisation. This lack of commitment has spiralling negative consequences, as it results in job turnover, absenteeism and limited extra work behaviours. Where women are seen as equal to men within the organisation, the opposite applies.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology implemented in the study. The research design and motivation for the design and method of study is examined, followed by a description of the participants involved in the study as well as the sample size and the sampling method. A detailed discussion of the reliability coefficients as well as the instruments used within the study and their development follows. The chapter concludes with the data collection procedure and data analysis methods.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A cross-sectional design was employed in this study. According to Hartman and Hedblom (1979), a cross-sectional design comprises two groups that are believed to be comparable and are selected on the basis of some variable. Data is collected at a single point in time.

For this study, two groups, namely men and women, were studied at one point in time. In addition, two different environments, namely the Humanities and Engineering faculties at University B, were sampled and compared.

Hartman *et al* (1979) maintain that although a cross-sectional design is fundamentally a comparable design, it can also be correlative within the groups. This study compared and established whether there is a correlation or a relationship between the attitudes held by women towards gender-based affirmative action policies, perceptions of extent

of participation in decision-making and their organisational commitment in relation to the attitudes held by the men. Moreover, the study compared whether differences between the two environments, i.e. Humanities and Engineering, existed.

### **3.3 MOTIVATING QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

The method of data gathering chosen depends on the intensions of the study. One may choose to gather data quantitatively or qualitatively, provided that the purpose of the study is achieved. The two data collection methods are said to be fundamentally distinct, with qualitative methods being concerned with meaning, while quantitative methods are concerned with the collection and analysis of numerical data or social facts (Brayton, 1997).

Brayton (1997) maintains that the two methods differ in terms of methodology or characteristics as well as epistemology or assumptions. The assumptions and characteristics of quantitative methodology that guided the current study are discussed below.

#### **3.3.1 ASSUMPTIONS OF QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

According to Neill (2007), quantitative research is based on the following assumptions:

- reality is objective and devoid of the researcher. Reality can thus be studied objectively;
- research is value free. The researcher's values do not interfere with the research;
- the researcher ought to remain distant from what is being researched;
- the research is based primarily on deductive forms of logic and theories.

Hypotheses are tested in a cause-effect order; and

- the objective of the research is to develop generalisations that contribute to theory that allow the researcher to predict, explain and understand the phenomenon.

### **3.3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

According to Colorado State University (2007) and Neill (2007), the characteristics of quantitative data methods are as follows:

- quantitative data typically involves numbers;
- a hypothesis is required before research can be carried out;
- the researcher is an objective observer or seeks precise measurements and analysis;
- all aspects of the study are designed carefully before the data is collected; and
- tools, such as questionnaires or equipment, are used to collect the numerical data.

## **3.4 INSTRUMENTS**

The researcher constructed the Affirmative Action and Participation in Decision-making scales. The process involved in constructing each instrument is discussed below.

### **3.4.1 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SCALE**

The Affirmative Action scale was constructed by reviewing literature on the topic and using themes mentioned consistently in the literature to formulate statements that comprised the scale. A six-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 'Completely Agree', 'Agree', 'Not Applicable', 'Don't Know', 'Disagree' and 'Completely Disagree'. Respondents were required to respond to these statements by indicating the degree to

which they either agree or disagree with the statements. The 'Don't Know' and 'Not Applicable' response were reserved for those respondents to whom the statements did not apply, for instance, statements intended for either males or females solely. This scale has been documented in Appendix 1.

#### **3.4.1.2 DECISION-MAKING SCALE**

A relatively similar process was followed when constructing the Participation to Decision-making scale. In this case, the literature review was, however, augmented by conducting four informal interviews with individuals from the target group. These interviews were done to place the scale in context. Participants in the interviews were asked about the process of decision-making in their departments and to relate some of their experiences of the process. The individual views or experiences together with the literature findings were taken into consideration. The emerging themes were used to formulate statements that comprised the scale. A Likert scale similar to the one used for the Affirmative Action scale was constructed.

#### **3.4.1.3 PILOT STUDY**

The above scales were subsequently piloted to a selected number of individuals representing the target group. The pilot study aimed to obtain feedback in terms of:

- whether the target group comprehends the statements;
- whether the statements are worded correctly;
- the applicability of the statements to the target group; and
- the time taken to complete the questionnaire.



The feedback was used to adjust the scales accordingly.

#### **3.4.1.4 VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENT**

According to de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport (2002), the validity of an instrument relates to whether the instrument measures the concept it is intended to measure accurately. This implies that it is possible to measure a concept incorrectly. In this study, content validity was tested to arrive at a decision that the instrument measured what it intended to measure.

Content validity is a judgment based on consultation with other practitioners or feedback from the pilot study that the instrument is indeed measuring what it is envisioned to measure (de Vos *et al*, 2002). For this study, researchers in the relevant field were consulted and their opinions incorporated in the instrument. Feedback from the pilot study further informed a number of revision made to the instrument.

#### **3.4.1.5 RELIABILITY OF THE SCALE**

The reliability of an instrument refers to the extent to which independent administrations of the same instrument will yield the same results consistently (de Vos *et al*, 2002). According to de Vos *et al* (2002), a number of procedures can be employed to test for reliability. These procedures include the test-retest and split-half technique as well as obtaining a Cronbach Alpha of at least 0.6.

A reliability analysis was subsequently conducted on the instruments using Cronbach Alpha. The Affirmative Action scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.705, while the Participation to Decision-making scale yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.818. Both

Cronbach Alphas are thus considered to be high.

#### **3.4.1.6 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT SCALE**

Organisational commitment was assessed using the 15-point Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) in Mowday *et al* (1979). This questionnaire assesses respondents' self-reports of loyalty towards the organisation, willingness to put forth high effort to achieve organisational goals and acceptance of the organisation's values. The items in the questionnaire are assessed on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) 'Strongly Disagree' to (7) 'Strongly Agree'. The reliability coefficient is reported to be .92 (Koberg, & Chusmir, 2001).

### **3.5 PARTICIPANTS**

Lecturers from the Faculties of Engineering and Humanities at University B participated in the study. These faculties were chosen, since the Faculty of Engineering is stereotypically male territory, while the Humanities faculty is stereotypically female territory. The Humanities subject field is concerned with the understanding of human behaviour and includes the so-called 'caring professions'. Caring is stereotypically associated with women. The Faculty of Humanities could thus incorporate a higher number of female lecturers. Engineering is traditionally a male-dominated profession and the Faculty of Engineering could thus incorporate a higher number of male lecturers. Drawing a sample from these two groups was thus hypothesised to yield more representative results.

### **3.5.1 RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

University B's Human Resource Manager undertook the responsibility of recruiting participants to maintain the respondents' anonymity. It is a university principle to refrain from handing out staff members' contact details. The university consequently preferred to recruit the lecturers.

A questionnaire was distributed randomly via e-mail to 350 lecturers from the Faculties of Engineering and Humanities. The lecturers were instructed to return the questionnaire to Human Resource via e-mail. A sample of respondents' convenience, accessibility and willingness to participate in the study was used.

This sampling method was chosen since it was hypothesised that the sensitive nature of the study might dissuade respondents from associating with it. Those respondents who indicated their willingness to participate were consequently targeted. The population from which the target sample is drawn is also not readily accessible due to lecture times, assignment and exam markings.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

Initially, the study was intended to be conducted at the Faculties of Humanities and Engineering at University A. University A was selected since it met the criteria of being a previously white male dominated institution that was undergoing changes to include the previously disadvantaged groups. Although the Humanities faculty granted permission for the study to be conducted, the Engineering refused. No reason was provided for the refusal.

## University of Pretoria etd – Vilakazi, SD (2007)

Since the comparison of the faculties was essential to the study, the researcher opted to request permission to perform the study at University B. Although University B is also a previously white male dominated institution, it has earned the reputation for being a liberal institution.

After receiving the request letter, which outlined the nature and purpose of the study, the University Registrar granted verbal permission to conduct the study. Since the relevant authorities indicated that consent to participate from the individual respondents was sufficient, the university did not believe it necessary to provide written permission. Following correspondences with the University Registrar and the Human Resource Manager, an informal written permission letter to conduct the research at the university was, however, granted.

As mentioned previously, the university undertook the responsibility of distributing the questionnaire to ensure that the responding lecturers remained anonymous to the researcher.

With the institution's assistance, the questionnaire was distributed randomly to 350 lecturers via e-mail. The lecturers were requested to respond to the questionnaire and return the completed questionnaire to a designated e-mail address.

Information regarding the purpose of the study, confidentiality, the time it would take to complete the questionnaire and the fact that the University Registrar had endorsed the study was included in the e-mail sent to respondents.

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The response rate was, however, very low. Even after repeated requests and reminders, only 27 out of the 350 lecturers responded to the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents were women from the Faculty of Humanities. A contingency plan was subsequently devised to obtain a better response to the questionnaire and thus meet the target sample size.

A personal approach was implemented. Three students, unknown to both the researcher and to the study, were employed and provided with basic training to distribute the questionnaires to the lecturers. It was pivotal that the students were strangers to the researcher and unfamiliar with the study, as this would maintain some degree of anonymity of the respondents.

The students were provided with an introductory instruction to inform the lectures that they were distributing the questionnaire on behalf of an MA student completing a mini-dissertation. The students would further explain that the questionnaire would take ten minutes to complete. As the students had no information as to what the study entailed, the lecturer was requested to read the consent form, which provided all the details that the lecturer needed to know about the study.

If the lecturer agreed to participate, the questionnaire would be completed while the fieldworker waited, placed in the sealed envelope provided with each questionnaire and handed to the fieldworker.

Hard copy questionnaires were also randomly left in lecturers' pigeonholes at both faculties. A clearly labelled return box was erected at the departments' main

administration offices in an attempt to remind the lecturers to complete the questionnaire, whether in hard copy or electronically.

Following an extremely cumbersome process and many refusals to participate, only 48 questionnaires were completed. The main reason provided for refusals was that respondents did not have the time to complete the questionnaire.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD**

A statistical programme, SPSS 15.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc., 2006), was used to run the analysis in the study. The data was entered into SPSS and cleaned for inconsistencies in data entry. Frequencies and cross tabulations were generated to provide the respondents' profile. Cross tabulations for gender and faculty were also run on each item of the scales to determine the proportions of who responded in a particular way to each of the questions/items. More emphasis was placed on the proportions that responded 'Don't know' and 'Not Applicable'.

After recording the proportions who responded 'Don't Know' and 'Not Applicable', these two responses were replaced with '99' or 'missing'. This was done to prepare for the creation of composite scores for each scale. A 'Don't know' or 'Not Applicable' response is not a desired response. Given its neutrality, it was not included in the composite scores.

The reliability coefficients were subsequently run on each scale for gender and faculty. This was done to ascertain whether the scales were reliable enough to conduct an

analysis and comparison for gender and faculty. The alpha coefficients are tabled below.

**Table 3.1: Chronbach Alpha for Each Scale by Gender and Faculty**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Gender-based Affirmative Action Attitudes</b>	<b>Participation in Decision-making</b>	<b>Organisational Commitment</b>
Males	0.731	0.823	0.868
Females	0.702	0.813	0.873
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Gender-based Affirmative Action Attitudes</b>	<b>Participation in Decision-making</b>	<b>Organisational Commitment</b>
Humanities	0.674	0.774	0.863
Engineering	0.617	0.843	0.881

Table 3.1 indicates that the reliability coefficients range from acceptable to high for gender and faculty. This suggests that an analysis and comparison of gender and faculty is possible.

Composite scores for each scale were subsequently computed to analyse how individuals performed on each of the overall scales. The highest possible mean score that an individual could obtain on the Gender-based Affirmative Action Attitudes and the Perceived Participation in Decision-making scales is four. For the Organisational Commitment scale, the highest possible mean score is six.

A t-test for independent samples was run to determine whether differences existed amongst the gender and faculty on each scale. A t-test for independent samples is used to compare two sample means obtained from two independent groups that either have

inherent differences, such as males and females, or two groups that would have received different levels of an intervention, for instance, an experimental and control group (Chiroro, n.d.).

If the p-value of the t-test was less than 0.05, it indicated significant differences in gender and/or faculty. However, if the p-value of the t-test was more than 0.05, it indicated no significant statistical differences within gender and/or faculty.

A correlation analysis was run to analyse whether a relationship exists between the variables. A multiple regression analysis was subsequently employed to determine whether the two independent variables, namely gender-based affirmative action and participation in decision-making, could simultaneously predict the dependant variable, namely organisational commitment.

If the r-value was close to 1 and the p-value was less than 0.05, it indicated a strong positive relationship between the independent and the dependant variables.

For the regression analysis, a p-value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant, which indicated a strong ability of the independent variables to predict the dependent variable. However, a p-value of less than 0.10 indicated that the independent variables predicted the dependant variable weakly.



### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this study and described the process followed from study design to data analysis.

The research design and reasons for using the specific design was presented, followed by a motivation for implementing quantitative methods of data collection. A discussion of the instruments, how they were developed as well as their validity and reliability followed.

The discussion of participants and the participant recruitment process were presented. The chapter concluded with an examination of the data collection process and a detailed discussion of the method of data analysis and interpretation of findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the study. Firstly, it examines the participants' profile. The research questions are subsequently explored and answered, followed by a discussion of their implications.

The findings are presented in first order level analysis. This analysis involves a presentation of proportions of respondents on each statement of the scale. This is done to illustrate similarities and differences in tendencies to respond to statements in particular ways. It was noticed during the analysis that tendencies within the gender and faculty to respond to the gender-based affirmative action statements in particular ways were apparent. These tendencies seemed noteworthy and are thus presented.

An analysis on the second level or the composite scores is subsequently presented. It is on this level of analysis that the research questions are answered. The research questions are thus discussed and their implications illustrated.

#### 4.2 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The sample of the study comprises 20 males and 28 females. Thirty respondents belong to the Faculty of Humanities, while 18 belong to the Faculty of Engineering. The total sample size is 48. The above findings are illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Sample Size Profile

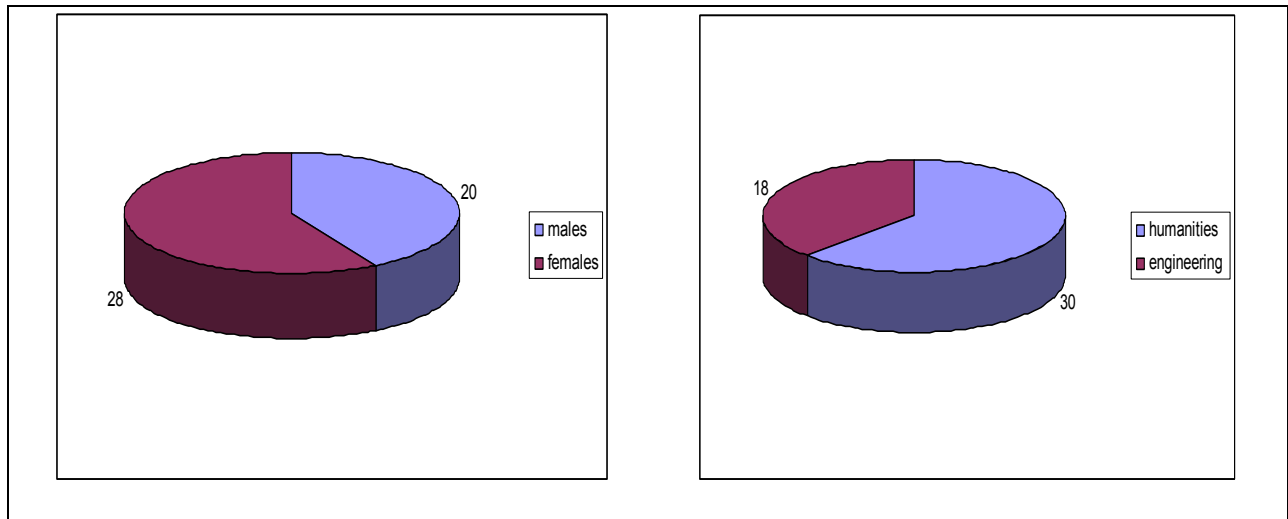
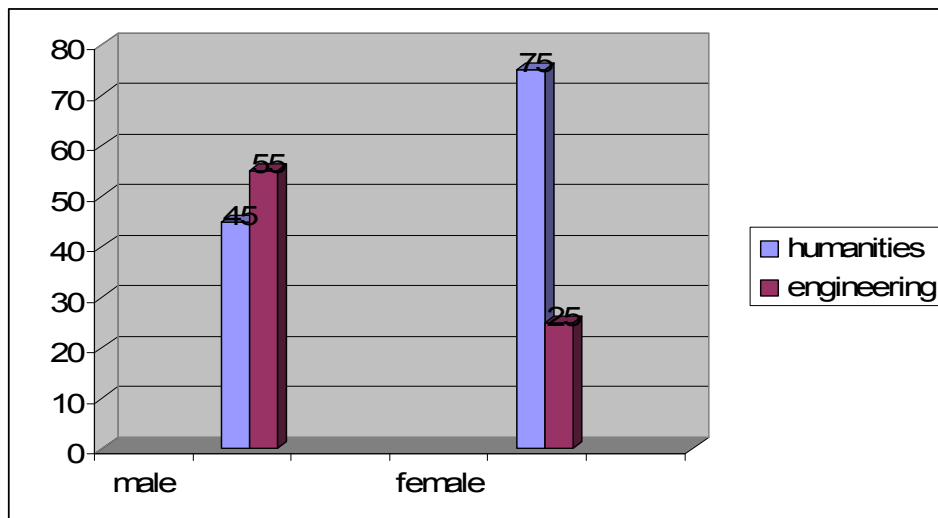


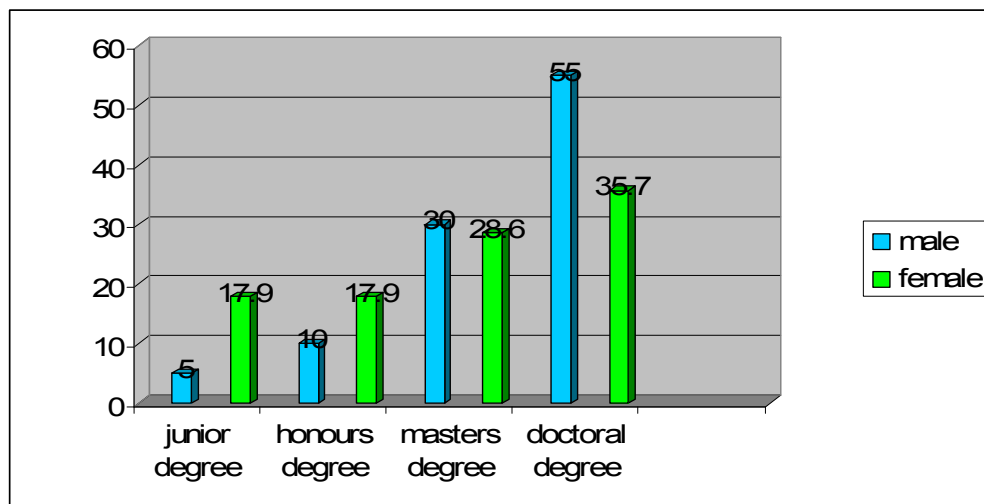
Figure 4.2 below indicates that 45% of the men who participated in the study belong to the Humanities faculty, while 55% hails from the Engineering faculty. A total of 75% of the females who participated in the study hails from the Humanities faculty, while 25% belongs to the Engineering faculty. These results are in line with the hypothesis that the Humanities faculty is particularly female dominated, while the Engineering faculty is male dominated.

Figure 4.2: Gender by Faculty



It is interesting to note that more males, 30% and 55% respectively, than females, 28.6% and 35.7% respectively, who participated in the study have Masters and Doctoral degrees. More females, 17.9%, have a junior and honours degree as the highest qualification, compared to the 5% and 10% respectively owned by males.

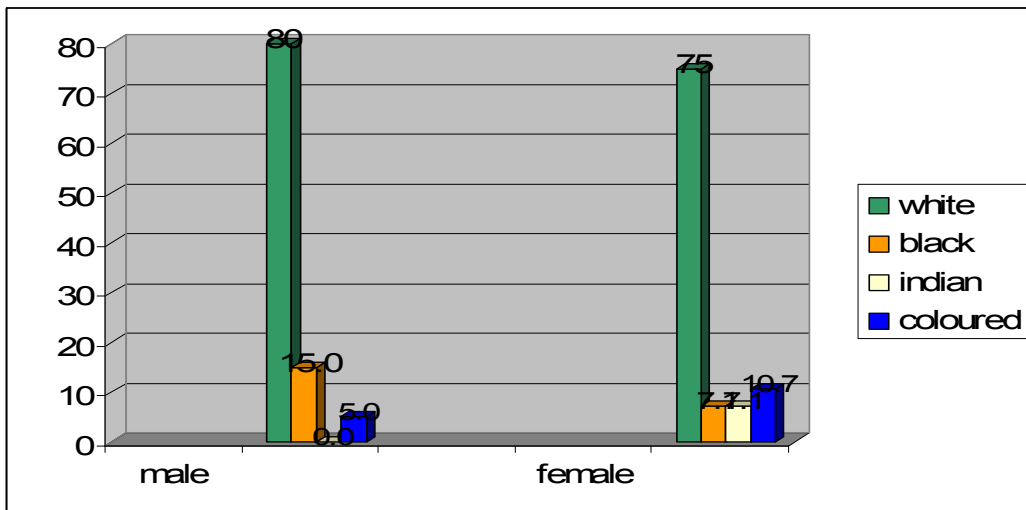
Figure 4.3: Qualifications by Gender



Similar findings are observed in de la Rey's (n.d.) study, entitled "Career narratives of women professors in South Africa". The women professors in the study narrate that their career direction after obtaining their junior degree was often directed by an external source, for instance a male colleague who suggested that they apply for further study or a promotion after realising their potential. These women would self-initiate the process by applying only after this external stimulus. These women indicate that they had to learn that they could apply. These findings further illustrate that academia is a male dominated territory. Women, at present, are still finding their way and learning the rules (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

A majority 80% of the males and 75% of the females who participated in the study is white, while 20% males and 25% of the females are black. These findings are illustrated in Figure 4.4 below. These findings echo the reports that it is often problematic in South Africa to deal with gender issues in isolation of race since the two are intertwined (de la Rey, n.d.; Mabokela *et al*, 2004; Maharaj, 1999).

Figure 4.4: Race by Gender



When comparing women's experiences, white women are often better represented than black women. A generalisation of women is thus impractical. Maharaj (1999) maintains that what unites women in South Africa across all diversity is that they do not enjoy the same access as men to the country's resources. However, women's experiences of subordination often differ, depending on whether the woman is white, black, Indian or coloured.

This is also indicated in the Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report of

2006/7. According to the report, the current affirmative action policies have mostly benefited white women, while their counterparts have only benefited to a lesser extent. The report indicates that when compared to black women, white women are over-represented at all management levels.

### **4.3 FIRST LEVEL ANALYSIS**

The first level analysis has been generated to produce proportions and tendencies to respond on the statements that may indicate noteworthy differences within the gender and faculty. There are no notable gender and faculty specific tendencies to report on the perceived participation in decision-making statements and the organisational commitment statements.

There are, however, noteworthy gender and faculty specific tendencies on the gender-based affirmative action attitudes statements. These tendencies do not appear on the composite scale and are reported and discussed below.

#### **4.3.1 ANALYSIS BY GENDER ON GENDER-BASED AFFIRMATION ACTION STATEMENTS**

The proportions indicate that both the women (92%) and men (95%) understand fairly well what affirmative action entails. A large proportion of both the women (71.4%) and men (85%) do not consider themselves to be affirmative action beneficiaries.

A large proportion of women (71.4%) do not think that affirmative action is reverse discrimination, compared to 45% of the men. A total of 35% of the men think that affirmative action is reverse discrimination and 20% of the men remain neutral by either

responding “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”.

Both the men (60%) and women (61.7%) do not think that affirmative action is meaningless. A majority of 75% of the women and 65% of the men agree that it is a necessary corrective measure.

A large proportion of women (71.4%) and 55% of the men indicate that they have not been discriminated against because of their gender, while 30% of the men respond either “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”. A majority of 85.5% of the women indicates that affirmative action has not hindered their career advancement, compared to 50% of the men. Only 30% of the men indicate that affirmative action has hindered their career advancement, while 20% answered “Don’t Know or “Not Applicable”. Interestingly, 60.7% of the women believe that affirmative action has not benefited their careers. The majority of men, (89.5%) are not anxious that a woman can come and take their job at any given time.

A total of 35% of the men and 35.7% of the women are positive that affirmative action policies will bring about equity in their department. Only 14.3% of the women are not positive and 50% are neutral, while 30% of the men are not positive and 35% are neutral regarding this statement.

The statements and proportions on each statement are tabulated below.

Table 4.1: Gender-based Affirmative Action Attitudes Statements by Gender

<b>In the past two years there has been more emphasis on employing women in the department</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	20%	45%	0%	20%	5.0%	10%
<b>Females</b>	3.6%	28.6%	17.9%	17.9%	28.6%	3.6%
<b>I think that this emphasis is jeopardising the career advancement of deserving men</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	5.0%	15%	10%	15%	25%	30%
<b>Females</b>	0%	7.1%	14.3%	7.1%	39.3%	32.1%
<b>I understand fairly well what affirmative action entails</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	35%	60%	0%	5.0%	0%	0%
<b>Females</b>	44%	48%	4.0%	0%	4.0%	0%
<b>I consider myself an affirmative action beneficiary</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	0%	5.0%	0%	10%	30%	55%
<b>Females</b>	7.1%	17.9%	0%	3.6%	46.4%	25%
<b>Affirmative action is simply reverse discrimination</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	5.0%	30%	10%	10%	30%	15%
<b>Females</b>	3.6%	10.7%	7.1%	7.1%	32.1%	39.3%
<b>Affirmative action is meaningless because it does not empower women to make key decisions in the department</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	25%	45%	15%
<b>Females</b>	7.1%	10.7%	10.7%	10.7%	35.7%	25%
<b>Affirmative action policies are a necessary corrective measure</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	25%	40%	0%	10%	25%	0%
<b>Females</b>	32.1%	42.9%	0%	10.7%	14.3%	0%
<b>During my employment at this university I have been discriminated against because of my gender</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	5.0%	10%	5.0%	25%	30%	25%
<b>Females</b>	0%	17.9%	7.1%	3.6%	39.3%	32.1%
<b>Affirmative action policies have hindered my career advancement</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	10%	20%	0%	20%	30%	20%
<b>Females</b>	3.6%	0%	3.6%	7.1%	42.9%	42.9%
<b>My career has benefited tremendously as a result of affirmative action</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>



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<b>Males</b>	5.0%	10%	20%	10%	15%	40%
<b>Females</b>	0%	3.6%	21.4%	14.3%	32.1%	28.6%
<b>I feel that as a woman I constantly have to excel in my work to prove myself</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	0%	0%	94.4%	5.6%	0%	0%
<b>Females</b>	10.7%	32.1%	10.7%	17.9%	14.3%	14.3%
<b>I am anxious that a woman can come at any given time and take my job</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	0%	0%	5.3%	5.3%	63.2%	26.3%
<b>Females</b>	7.1%	3.6%	35.7%	0%	28.6%	25%
<b>I am positive that affirmative action will bring about equity in my department</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Males</b>	5.0%	30%	5.0%	30%	30%	0%
<b>Females</b>	10.7%	25%	21.4%	28.6%	10.7%	3.6%

These findings imply that affirmative action policies have impacted on more men than women. It appears that the men understand intellectually what affirmative action entails and agree that it is a necessary corrective measure. They do, however, appear uncertain as to whether it is reverse discrimination and whether it will bring about equity in their department. This is possibly because some of them feel that affirmative action has hindered their career advancement, i.e. 30% of the males compared to 3.6% of the females.

The women seem to understand what affirmative action entails. They also believe it to be a necessary corrective measure. They do, however, not consider themselves to be beneficiaries of affirmative action and indicate that their careers have neither benefited nor were hindered by the policies. They are also uncertain whether it will bring about equity in their departments.

The fact that the women indicate that their careers have neither benefited nor were hindered could explain the more supportive attitude that women hold in comparison to

men. It appears that women's experiences of the policies do not qualify them to have any reservations.

Kravitz *et al* (1993) found that attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action differed based on gender and race, since women tended to be more endorsing. Black women tended to be even more endorsing than their counterparts.

It would therefore seem that attitudes are based on the individual's experiences of the concept. Individuals who consider themselves to have either benefited from or who consider themselves to not have been affected in any negative way, endorse the concept. Individuals who have been threatened by the concept exhibit attitudes that are less endorsing.

This could be explained by the in-group out-group bias theory. According to Devine (in Tesser, 1995), the need for a positive social identity motivates individuals to develop a competitive inter group point of reference. This competitive point of reference leads to perceptual biases and prejudiced behavioural strategies that favour the in-group or the group with which one identifies. Differences favouring the in-group are consequently exaggerated and emphasised, while differences favouring the out-group are minimised or ignored. Similarly, individuals who identify with the benefits of affirmative action view it favourably while individuals who do not identify with the benefits view it less favourably.

It is also important to note that 89.5% of the men are not anxious that a woman will come at any given time and take their job. Koekemoer (n.d.) asserted that some white

males see affirmative action as a real threat. The findings from the current study indicate, however, that none of the men are anxious about gender-based affirmative action. Only 10.4% of the men who participated in the study are neutral regarding this statement. This finding is explained by the fact that 95% of the men agree that they understand fairly well what affirmative action entails. It follows, therefore, that the men are educated about the concept and what it means. As a result, they are not threatened by it. Although it seems that the men are not entirely convinced that affirmative action is not reverse discrimination, they do believe it necessary.

Parker *et al* (1997) documented a similar finding, where white males viewed all forms of affirmative action as creating a more democratic place instead of associating it with a loss in career development.

#### **4.3.2 ANALYSIS BY FACULTY ON GENDER-BASED AFFIRMATION ACTION STATEMENTS**

The proportions indicate some notable differences in the responses from each faculty. For instance, 55.6% of the respondents from the Engineering faculty compared to 40% of the respondents from the Humanities faculty agree that there has been emphasis in the past two years on employing more women in the department.

A total of 22% of respondents from the Engineering faculty consider themselves to be affirmative action beneficiaries compared to 13.3 % from the Humanities faculty.

More respondents from the Humanities faculty (73.4%) disagree with the statement that they have been discriminated against in their department because of their gender, while

50% from the Engineering faculty disagree with this statement. A total of 34.4% from the Engineering faculty choose to remain neutral by responding either 'Don't Know' or 'Not Applicable'.

The majority of respondents from the Humanities faculty (70%) disagree with the statement that their career has benefited as a result of affirmative action, while 38.9% from the Engineering faculty disagree with the statement. Half of the respondents from the Engineering faculty (50%) remain neutral regarding this statement.

Moreover, 50% of the respondents from the Engineering faculty are positive that affirmative action policies will bring about equity in the department, while 26.7% from the Humanities faculty are positive. A total of 26.6% from the Humanities faculty are not positive and 46.7% are neutral.

The proportions on each statement are tabulated below.

**Table 4.2: Gender-based Affirmative Action Attitudes by Faculty**

<b>In the past two years there has been more emphasis on employing women in the department</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Humanities</b>	13.3%	26.7%	13.3%	10%	26.7%	10%
<b>Engineering</b>	5.6%	50%	5.6%	33.3%	5.6%	0%
<b>I think that this emphasis is jeopardising the career advancement of deserving men</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Humanities</b>	3.3%	10%	13.3%	3.3%	40%	30%
<b>Engineering</b>	0%	11.1%	11.1%	22.2%	22.2%	33.3%
<b>I understand fairly well what affirmative action entails</b>						
<b>Response</b>	<b>Completely Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Completely Disagree</b>
<b>Humanities</b>	59.3%	37%	0%	0%	3.7%	0%
<b>Engineering</b>	11.1%	77.8%	5.6%	5.6%	0%	0%
<b>I consider myself an affirmative action beneficiary</b>						

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Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	0%	13.3%	0%	3.3%	40%	43.3%
Engineering	11.1%	11.1%	0%	11.1%	38.9%	27.8%
<b>Affirmative action is simply reverse discrimination</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	3.3%	16.7%	6.7%	6.7%	33.3%	33.3%
Engineering	5.6%	22.2%	11.1%	11.1%	27.8%	22.2%
<b>Affirmative action is meaningless because it does not empower women to make key decisions in the department</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	10%	13.3%	6.7%	6.7%	36.7%	26.7%
Engineering	0%	0%	11.1%	33.3%	44.4%	11.1%
<b>Affirmative action policies are a necessary corrective measure</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	33.3%	43.3%	0%	6.7%	16.7%	0%
Engineering	22.2%	38.9%	0%	16.7%	22.2%	0%
<b>During my employment at this university I have been discriminated against because of my gender</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	3.3%	13.3%	6.7%	3.3%	36.7%	36.7%
Engineering	0%	16.7%	5.6%	27.8%	33.3%	16.7%
<b>Affirmative action policies have hindered my career advancement</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	10%	6.7%	3.3%	6.7%	30%	43.3%
Engineering	0%	11.1%	0%	22.2%	50%	16.7%
<b>My career has benefited tremendously as a result of affirmative action</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	0%	6.7%	13.3%	10%	33.3%	36.7
Engineering	5.6%	5.6%	33.3%	16.7%	11.1%	27.8%
<b>I feel that as a woman I constantly have to excel in my work to prove myself</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	6.9%	20.7%	34.5%	10.3%	13.8%	13.8%
Engineering	5.9%	17.6%	58.8%	17.6%	0%	0%
<b>I am anxious that a woman can come at any given time and take my job</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	6.7%	3.3%	20%	0%	40%	30%
Engineering	0%	0%	29.4%	5.9%	47.1%	17.6%
<b>I am positive that affirmative action will bring about equity in my department</b>						
Response	Completely Agree	Agree	Not Applicable	Don't Know	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Humanities	10%	16.7%	20%	26.7%	23.3%	3.3%
Engineering	5.6%	44.4%	5.6%	33.3%	11.1%	0%

The above findings indicate that more individuals from the Engineering faculty than from the Humanities faculty have benefited from affirmative action programmes. In addition, more individuals from the Humanities faculty (73.4%) than from the Engineering faculty (50%) disagree that they have been discriminated against in their department because of their gender.

Garcia *et al* (2005) and Slack (1989) emphasise the importance of the context or environment from which the participants come in determining their attitudes. They base this emphasis on their findings, which indicate that men tended to be more negative towards gender-based affirmative action programmes within masculine dominated professions. Moreover, women in such environments also tended to exhibit negative attitudes towards these programmes, although to a lesser degree.

In the current study, more individuals from the Engineering faculty (50%), which is a masculine dominated environment, compared to the Humanities faculty (26.6%), which is a female dominated environment, are positive that affirmative action will bring about equity in their department.

These findings further highlight the role of in-group identification and the bias that ensues from it. Individuals from a faculty that has benefited the most from affirmative action programmes are more optimistic that the programmes will bring about equity in their departments than individuals from a faculty that has not benefited as much.

#### **4.4 SECOND LEVEL ANALYSIS**

The research questions posed in the study are based on a second level of analysis.

Unlike on the first level of analysis, which assesses how individuals have responded to each statement, the second level analysis assesses how individuals have responded on the overall scale. For this purpose, the composite scores are used in the analysis.

A t-test for independent groups was used to determine whether differences exist between the groups, namely gender and faculty, on each scale. Both a correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between participation in decision-making, gender-based affirmative action attitudes and organisational commitment. The findings are discussed below.

#### 4.4.1 GENDER-BASED AFFIRMATION ACTION ATTITUDE

*What are the attitudes of women and men in a former white male dominated organisation towards gender-based affirmative action policies in their organisation?*

**Table 4.3: Hypotheses 1**

<b>Hypotheses</b>	
H <sub>o</sub>	There will be no difference between the attitudes that men and women hold in a former white male dominated organisation towards gender-based affirmative action policies in their organisation
H <sub>i</sub>	There will be differences between the attitudes that men and women hold in a former white male dominated organisation towards gender-based affirmative action policies in their organisation

The findings indicate that there are no significant differences between men and women in terms of their attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action policies ( $t(10) = -1.071, p > .05$ , two tailed). Both the women and men hold positive attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action policies (mean = 2.68, std deviation = 0.45).

These findings are also true regardless of faculty, since because no significant

differences were observed between the Humanities and Engineering faculties ( $t(10) = -1.433, p > .05$ , two tailed).

The current findings are in support of Mwaba *et al* (1998), who also found no differences between the attitudes of men and women towards gender-based affirmative action policies. Both the men and women in the study approved of the affirmative action programmes and believed that gender-based affirmative action would not have a negative impact on their employability.

#### 4.4.2 DECISION-MAKING

*To what extent do the men and women perceive themselves to be participating in organisational decision-making?*

**Table 4.4: Hypotheses 2**

Hypotheses	
H <sub>0</sub>	There will be no difference between men and women in terms of the extent to which they perceive themselves to be participating in organisational decision-making
H <sub>1</sub>	There will be differences between men and women in terms of the extent to which they perceive themselves to be participating in organisational decision-making

The findings indicate that the null hypothesis is to be accepted, since no significant differences between the extent of participation for women and men in decision-making are observed ( $t(17) = -.720, p > .05$ , two tailed). Both the men and women perceive themselves to be participating in decision-making (mean = 3.3, std deviation = 0.50).



Faculty does not appear to affect the extent to which individuals perceive themselves to participate in decision-making. No significant differences are observed between the Faculties of Humanities and Engineering ( $t(17) = -.287, p > .05$ , two tailed)

#### 4.4.3 ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

*To what extent are the men and women committed to the organisation?*

**Table 4.5: Hypotheses 3**

Hypotheses	
H <sub>o</sub>	There will be no difference between men and women in terms of the extent to which they are committed to the organisation
H <sub>i</sub>	There will be differences between men and women in terms of the extent to which they are committed to the organisation

Both the women and men are committed to the organisation (mean = 4.43, std deviation = 0.76). No significant differences between the men and women ( $t(42) = -.820, p > .05$ , two tailed) in terms of their extent of organisational commitment were observed, regardless of faculty ( $t(42) = -.776, p > .05$ , two tailed).

#### 4.4.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER-BASED AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ATTITUDES, PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

Since no statistically significant differences were observed between the women and men on either of the variables, namely gender-based affirmative action attitudes, participation in decision-making and organisational commitment, the men and women were combined in the analysis of whether a relationship exists between the variables. No separate correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were thus conducted for either the men or women and the Faculties of Humanities or Engineering.

The findings of the analysis are discussed below.

*Are the men's and women's extent of participation in organisational decision-making and gender-based affirmative action attitudes related to their commitment to the organisation?*

**Table 4.5: Hypotheses 4**

<b>Hypotheses</b>	
H o	There will be no relationship between the gender-based affirmative action attitudes, perceived participation in decision-making and organisational commitment of men and women
H i	There will be a positive relationship between the gender-based affirmative action attitudes, perceived participation in decision-making and organisational commitment of women

The findings indicate that there is a strong positive relationship between perceived participation in decision-making and organisational commitment ( $r = .735$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The relationship between gender-based affirmative action attitudes and organisational commitment is weak but positive ( $r = .541$ ,  $p = .10$ ).

To assess whether both gender-based affirmative action attitudes and perceived participation in decision-making simultaneously predict organisational commitment, a multiple regression analysis was run. The findings indicate that the variables together predict organisational commitment weakly ( $F(2, 4) = 4.279, p < .10$ ). Yet when a linear regression analysis is run of each independent variable, it appears that perceived participation in decision-making predicts organisational commitment strongly ( $F(1, 16) = 18.827, p < .001$ ). Gender-based affirmative action attitudes, on the other hand, predict organisational commitment weakly ( $F(1, 10) = 4.148, p < .10$ ).

This suggests that the two variables are not related. Each variable is, however, able to predict organisational commitment by itself. It appears that participation in decision-making is the main predictor of organisational commitment, regardless of gender or faculty.

It can therefore be accepted that when individuals feel that they are free to voice their opinions in the organisation and they are given challenging and important responsibilities that allow them to contribute to the organisation positively, they will be more committed to the organisation.

Employees' attitudes towards the gender-based affirmative action may predict their commitment to the organisation to a lesser degree. However, findings from the first level analysis suggest that individuals' attitudes towards the gender-based affirmative action may be influenced by individual experiences of the concept. Even though both men and women endorse the concept, women are more endorsing. This is attributed to in-group bias, as affirmative action has not impacted on women in a significant way, whereas

some men might have had negative experiences.

Individuals from the Engineering faculty are more hopeful than those from the Humanities faculty that affirmative action will bring about equity in their departments. This can possibly be ascribed to the fact that more individuals from the Engineering faculty than from the Humanities faculty believe their careers to have benefited as a result of affirmative action.

It therefore follows logically that gender-based affirmative action is nothing more than a tool to introduce more women into male reserved territories. It does, however, not predict that the men and women in those territories or organisations will remain committed to the organisation. Critical to organisational commitment is the extent to which individuals feel that they are integrated into the organisation and respected for their contributions, regardless of whether they are affirmative action beneficiaries.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented and discussed the findings from the study. Firstly, it presented the participants' profile, followed by a discussion of the first level analysis of the gender-based affirmative action attitudes. This was done to illustrate various noteworthy gendered and faculty-based tendencies on the responses.

The second order analysis, which is based on the composite scores, was done to answer the research questions. The findings from this analysis indicated that no gender or faculty differences exist on either of the variables. Both the men and women exhibited supportive attitudes towards the gender-based affirmative action policies,

perceived themselves to be participating in organisational decision-making and were committed to the organisation.

The findings indicated a strong positive relationship between participation in decision-making and organisational commitment as well as a weak positive relationship between gender-based affirmative action and organisational commitment. Simultaneously, the independent variables were found to predict organisational commitment weakly. It was therefore concluded that although the gender-based affirmative action attitudes and participation in organisational commitment are not significantly related variables, they do predict organisational commitment independently.

It was also concluded that affirmative action is merely a tool used to introduce previously marginalised groups into the otherwise less accessible organisations. It does, however, not guarantee that the individuals will remain committed to those organisations. Commitment is guaranteed by how well integrated the individual feels within the organisation and how much the individual believes his/her contributions to be appreciated in that organisation. This is true regardless of gender or faculty.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LIMITATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises the researcher's reflections regarding the research process. Like any other research study, the research process had a number of challenges. The researcher consequently feels more enlightened by the research process than by the actual findings from the study. As such, the researcher feels the need to reflect on these lessons learned during the process of the study.

This chapter discusses the limitations to the study, followed by an evaluation of the frustrations experienced during the data collection process. The chapter is concluded by an outline of the lessons learnt from those experiences and frustrations.

#### 5.2 LIMITATIONS

- The main limitation of the study was the sample size, which was very small. A meaningful factor analysis to test construct validity of the scales could thus not be run.
- The small sample size together with the sampling method biased the findings. The sampling method was accessibility and convenience. As a result, the responses in this study only reflect those respondents who were accessible during the time of data collection.
- Self-selection bias was also a possibility in this study. Self-selection bias occurs when individuals select themselves to participate in an activity or survey based on

interest in the activity and/or other subjective issues related to the activity (Carroll, 2005). The possibility of self-selection bias stems from respondents being told about the study and the purpose of the study before they were asked to participate. Based on the introductory information, individuals who were not interested in participating in the study simply refused.

- The literature review clearly indicated that race and gender are intertwined. It was, however, impossible in this study to analyse race separately, given the insufficient number of black respondents.

### **5.3 LESSONS LEARNED**

During the conceptualisation stage of this study, it was realised that the task was a daunting one, considering the political and emotive nature of the study. Some degree of resistance to participate in the study was envisioned. The study was, however, executed with the hope that much change would have occurred in organisations 12 years into democracy, both socially in terms of individual attitudes towards race and gender relations as well as economically in terms of the integration of previously disadvantaged groups into organisations.

It is therefore disappointing that the data collection process indicates otherwise. Firstly, obtaining permission to collect the data was a difficult process. Obtaining willing respondents proved even more difficult. These difficulties could, however, be attributed to a number of factors, such as the researcher being on a more junior level than the intended respondents.

It is possible that the lack of a sense of authority of the study resulted in the low

response rate. According to Bushman (1983), authority or perceived symbols of authority are critical in compliance. His study indicated that the appearance, in terms of authority and status, of the person making the request has significant influence on conformity.

People seem to obey instructions that come from authority figures even if they are not willing to comply. It should be noted that this study attempted to introduce a sense of authority by using the University to distribute the questionnaire and information about the study being endorsed by the University Registrar.

The researcher has learned that it would be advisable in future to assess the scope of the study, the ease with which gatekeepers will allow access and the time that the researcher has allocated to complete the study carefully. During the conceptualisation stage, it was assumed that targeting academics would ease the process of data collection, since they are also researchers and thus committed to producing knowledge. It was assumed that the intended target audience would welcome the study. Unfortunately, the actual process of data collection proved otherwise.

Another reason for such a low response rate could be attributed to issue salience. Sheehan (2001) maintains that salience is the association of importance and/or timeliness with a specific issue. Salience is subjective, since a topic may have high salience to some respondents and not to others. Sheehan (2001) further asserts that salience has more influence on response rate than the questionnaire length.

The lesson learned here is to be more flexible in terms of the unforeseen constraints and



not to overestimate one's ability to achieve the research objectives.

**Table 5.1: Response Rate Influences for E-mail Surveys (Sheehan, 2001)**

<b>Response Rate Influences</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
Survey length	Conflicting findings regarding the length. Some studies indicate that response rates for longer surveys are higher than those for shorter surveys, while others indicate that shorter surveys have a higher response rate. Other elements may therefore also contribute to response rate.
Respondent pre-notification	Conflicting findings. Some findings indicate that it increases response rate, while others indicate that it is perceived as unsolicited e-mail and thus problematic.
Follow-up contacts	Have positive effects on response rate.
Issue salience	Has a strong positive correlation with response rate for e-mail based surveys. This is, however, subjective because it depends on the respondent's interest in the issue.
University affiliation	The association of the research with a university has a positive effect on survey response rate.
Compensation	Some kind of incentive for participating in the study has a positive effect on response rate.

The study attempted to shy away from racial issues in the hope that women and men would have common issues that transcended race. Even if such issues existed, they could unfortunately not be tapped into seeing that not all racial groups were represented. It is difficult to evaluate women homogenously because race seems to interfere. White women are currently better represented than their counterparts.

Black women appear to be behind in a sense that they are still fighting battles of inclusion. These battles will have to be won before they can begin to experience other battles. The lesson learnt is that more time is to be given to the process of change for more women to be represented before a large scale or quantitative enquiry into their attitudes can be made. For the time being, more emphasis should be placed on ensuring that more women of all races are represented. In the meantime, qualitative methodology may be employed to tap into the restricted experiences of the few women

who are represented. It would appear that the time for large-scale research aimed at generalisation of men and women has not yet come.

Mabokela *et al* (2004) seem to differ with the above statement, as they maintain that research in academic disciplines falsely assume that increasing the number of women will make the problems of race and class disappear. Although the problem might not disappear, increasing the number of women from all diversity will form a base for women representation and thus make it easier to study their experiences. This, in turn, will result in more meaningful generalisations of all the diverse women.

An important lesson learnt was that when developing a scale, it is imperative that one steers clear from neutral responses, such as ‘Don’t Know’ or ‘Not Applicable’, especially if one intends to run a regression analysis. Such responses decrease the sample size, as they are not included in the composite scores.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

A research process is always filled with tribulations and frustrations. It is, however, imperative not to focus on those frustrations but to learn from them to avoid similar tribulations in future by finding alternatives.

In this chapter, critical reflections of the research process were articulated. The reason for providing such reflections was to warn future researchers in a similar field of the frustrations they may encounter and consequently find alternatives to avoid them. The limitations of the study were discussed for similar reasons.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the main conclusions achieved in this research, thus drawing the report to a conclusion. Recommendations for future research are also presented.

#### 6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions reached in the study in terms of the findings are as follows:

- no gender or faculty differences exist in terms of the gender-based affirmative action attitudes. Attitudes rather seem to depend on whether a career has benefited or was hindered in any way by the policies. Individuals who have either benefited or who have not suffered a negative impact are more supportive than those who have suffered a negative impact;
- men who have an understanding of what affirmative action entails are not threatened by the concept. Even though men may not be entirely convinced that affirmative action is not reverse discrimination, they do believe it necessary;
- no gender or faculty differences exist in the extent of perceived participation in organisational decision-making. The participants perceive themselves to be contributing to the organisation;
- no faculty or gender differences exist in terms of organisational commitment. The participants indicate that they are committed to the organisation;
- there is a strong positive relationship between perceived participation in

organisational decision-making and organisational commitment and a weak positive relationship between gender-based affirmative action attitudes and organisational commitment; and

- the gender-based affirmative action attitudes and perceived participation in organisational decision-making simultaneously predict organisational commitment weakly. This implies that the two independent variables are not related and should be treated independently.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The following recommendations are made for future research:

- future research must employ a larger sample size and random sampling to allow for generalisability;
- construct validity must be tested on a larger sample;
- fieldworkers must be used in the data collection instead of e-mails or other impersonal methods, since their response rate is very small. Gender and race matching of fieldworkers and respondents may be used to elicit more responses;
- neutral response options must be avoided on the scale, as some individuals would rather remain neutral on some emotive issues, which could be detrimental to the sample size in the analysis;
- all racial groups must be targeted to ensure meaningful generalisations of men and women;
- since transformation measures are the precursor of affirmative action benefits, the size of the pool of skilled women, especially black women, who can access the previously less accessible positions and organisations should be monitored; and

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- since the issue is currently extremely topical, a similar study, drawing from a pool of research experts in the field, may be considered nationally. This may limit the contradictions that currently exist in terms of the attitudes of men and women towards the gender-based affirmative action.

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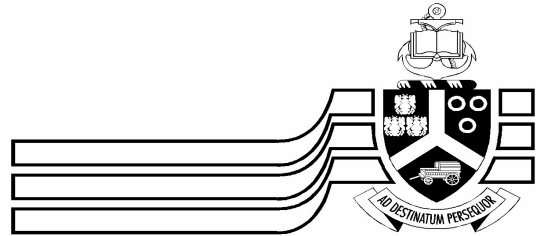
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**APPENDIX 1**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**



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***The relationship between gender-based affirmative action attitudes, participation in  
decision making and organisational commitment***

## University of Pretoria etd – Vilakazi, SD (2007)

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

**Description:** I am currently a second year MA: Research psychology student. I am completing a mini-dissertation as a prerequisite to obtain the degree. The mini-dissertation will look at the relationship between the attitudes of men and women in a previously male dominated organisation towards gender-based affirmative action policies, their perceptions of participation in organisational decision-making and the extent to which they are committed to the organisation. In order to achieve this, the faculty of Humanities and Engineering at the University B have been selected for data collection purposes.

In order for the research to be effective I invite you to assist me by agreeing to complete this questionnaire.

**Risks:** there are no foreseeable risks in participating in the study. Your participation will not disadvantage you in any way

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be protected and your confidentiality will be ensured

**Time involvement:** the length of your participation in this study will be approximately twenty minutes in total.

**Payments:** You will receive no payment for participating in this study.

**Participant rights:** if you have read this form and have decided to participate in this study, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at anytime without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions and your right will be upheld at all times. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or are dissatisfied at anytime with any aspect of the project, you may contact the ethics committee at the University of Pretoria,



## University of Pretoria etd – Vilakazi, SD (2007)

For any questions about this study, you may contact – Sibongile Vilakazi at Tel: (012) 302 2229 or 0722392147 or by email: [svilakazi@hsrc.ac.za](mailto:svilakazi@hsrc.ac.za).

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### Informed consent

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher about the nature, procedures and risks of the study. I have also received, read and understood the above information regarding the study.

I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details such as name, age, sex, and date of birth will be processed anonymously.

I may at any stage, withdraw my consent to participate in the study. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION A

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please indicate your response with an X in the appropriate box.

1. Which faculty do you work in?

Humanities	1
Engineering	2

2. Please indicate your gender

Male	1
Female	2

3. Please indicate your race

White	1
Black	2
Indian	3
Coloured	4

4. How old are you?

Between 21-30	1
31-40	2
41-50	3
51-60	4
Above 61	5

## University of Pretoria etd – Vilakazi, SD (2007)

5. Are you a (n)

Assistant lecturer	1
Junior lecturer	2
Lecturer	3
Senior lecturer	4
Associate professor	5
Full professor	6

6. Please indicate your highest qualification.

Junior degree	1
Honours degree	2
Masters degree	3
Doctoral degree	4

7. Where did you obtain your highest qualifications?

In South Africa	1
Outside South Africa	2

8. How long have you been working in this department?

1-5 years	1
6-10 years	2
More than ten years	3

9. What position, if any, do you hold in your department? (E.g. head of department, course co-ordinator, etc.)

## SECTION B

*Please indicate with an X the degree to which the following statements most represent your current situation in your department.*

	Completely agree	Agree	Not applicable	Don't know	Disagree	Completely disagree
1. I am satisfied with the frequency of my participation in making decisions in the department..						
2. I feel free to voice my opinion during meetings.						
3. I feel that my colleagues do not take my contributions in meetings seriously.						
4. My current responsibilities are challenging.						
5. I feel that I am given less important responsibilities in my department as compared to my other colleagues.						
6. Most of my colleagues think highly of my contributions in the department.						
7. Most of my suggestions are not implemented in this department.						
8. I feel that I am able to initiate change in my department.						
9. I feel that my ideas are only taken serious when I insist upon them.						
10. I feel that in the past two years I have played a role in bringing about changes in the department.						

**SECTION C**

The following statements represent feelings that people have expressed towards advancing women through affirmative action policies in their department. Please indicate the degree to which the following statements most represent your current situation by an X.

	Completely agree	Agree	Not applicable	Don't know	Disagree	Completely disagree
1. My department has more males than females.						
2. In the past two years there has been more emphasis on employing more women in the department						
3. I think that this emphasis on women is jeopardizing the career advancement of deserving men.						
4. I understand fairly well what affirmative action entails.						
5. I consider myself an affirmative action beneficiary.						
6. Affirmative action is simply reverse discrimination.						
7. Affirmative action is meaningless because it does not empower women to make key decisions in this department.						
8. Affirmative action policies are a necessary corrective measure.						
9. During my employment at the current University I have been discriminated against because of my gender.						
10. Affirmative action policies have hindered my career advancement						
11. My career has benefited tremendously as a result of affirmative action policies.						
12. I feel that as a woman I constantly have to excel in my work to prove myself.						
13. I am anxious that a woman can come at any given time and take my job.						
14. I am positive that affirmative action will bring about equity in my department.						

**SECTION D**

*The following statements indicate the possible feelings that one may have towards the organisation for which they work. Please indicate the degree to which the below statements may represent your feelings towards the specific organisation you work for.*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Moderately disagree</b>	<b>Slightly disagree</b>	<b>Slightly agree</b>	<b>Moderately agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organisation be successful.						
2. I talk about this organisation to my friends as a great organisation to work for.						
3. I feel very little loyalty to this organisation.						
4. I would almost accept any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organisation						
5. I find that my values and the organisation's values are very similar.						
6. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation.						
7. I could just as well be working for a different organisation as long as the type of work were similar.						
8. This organisation really inspires the very best of me in the way of job performance.						
9. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organisation.						
10. I am extremely glad that I chose this organisation to work for over others I considered at the time I joined.						
11. There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this organisation indefinitely.						
12. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organisation's policies on important matters relating to its employees						
13. I really care about the fate of this organisation						
14. For me this is the best of all possible organisations for which to work						
15. Deciding to work for this organisation was definitely a mistake on my part						

