PERCEPTIONS OF COMPENSATION FUND EMPLOYEES TOWARDS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree of Master of Social Sciences at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

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Signature:

Date:

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"…Now unto Him (MY EVERYTHING) that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto HIM be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3: 20-21, KJV).

DEDICATION

Completion of this degree has been a life-long ambition. I dedicate this research study to my children Mongezi and Masego-Arona and challenge them to exceed this achievement. To my wife, Busisiwe Roseline Kgapola for never faltering, always spurring me on, patient and understanding, and providing the support behind the scenes. Also in loving memory of my dear mother, **Elizabeth Manyaka Kgapola (neé Masola).** I still wish you were here with me. I know you would be proud of me. I miss you dearly and will always cherish you, until we meet again in Jesus' eternal glory.

Submitted *in memorial* of the thirtieth anniversary of the martyrdom of one of Africa's finest sons, the great **Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe** (5 December 1924 – 27 February 1978):

> You have seen by now what education means to us: the identification of ourselves with the masses. Education to us means service to Africa. In whatever branch of learning you are, you are there for Africa. You have a mission; we all have a mission. A nation to build we have, a God to glorify, a contribution clear to make towards the blessing of mankind. We must be the embodiment of our people's aspirations. And all we are required to do is to show the light and the masses will find the way. Watch our movements keenly and if you see any signs of 'broad mindedness or reasonableness' in us, or if you hear us talk of practical experience as a modifier of man's views, denounce us as traitors to Africa.

"The heights by great men reached and kept, Were not attained by sudden flight, But they, while their companions slept, Were toiling upward in the night"
– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

ABSTRACT

South Africa's legacy of apartheid has created massive social and economic inequalities along racial and gender lines, resulting for instance, in the under-representation of Blacks and women in the higher echelons of industry and at decision-making levels in the public service. In order to eradicate historical discriminatory employment policies and practices in the workplace based on race, gender and disability and redress imbalances, in 1998 Parliament enacted the Employment Equity legislation, which describes measures through which organisations should speed up their transformation efforts. These measures are collectively known as affirmative action. Affirmative action was conceived as a vehicle that would improve the employment and promotion opportunities of Blacks, women and the disabled. However, the goal of transforming South African business organisations and public service from discriminatory structures to ones which reflect the demographic composition and values of South African as a whole has not been without controversy.

Given the racial construction of privilege and discrimination in South Africa, affirmative action evokes strong emotions from 'designated group' and 'non-designated group' members' demographic status, histories of relative deprivation, personal and collective interests and political ideologies leading to a polarisation of attitudes towards affirmative action. While some people view affirmative action as an antidote to past discrimination against Blacks, women and the disabled, others believe affirmative action promotes discrimination against Whites and in particular White males. Social policies that are perceived disproportionately to help Blacks or women, in general, and affirmative action programme, in particular, have emerged as a major socio-political battleground in South Africa. There is a long history of economic and employment discrimination in South Africa, and government-supported interventions, such as affirmative-action programmes, have been designed to increase employment opportunities for Blacks and women in organisational contexts in which they have been historically underrepresented. Although affirmative-action programmes have provided important economic benefits to

Blacks and women, public debate about affirmative action programmes have been framed in terms of race and gender. Affirmative action has emerged as one of the most controversial policies in South Africa and is under attack.

This study was conducted with employees from the Compensation Fund in Pretoria. Sixteen semi-structured interviews, ranging from between 20 and 30 minutes, were conducted with the aid of an in-depth personal interview schedule, using convenience sampling technique. The interview schedule had four sections in line with the problem statements and contained qualitative type questions. The purpose of the present exploratory study aimed to gain insight into the attitudes, experiences and perceptions of the Compensation Fund employees towards affirmative action.

Findings of the study indicate that the dominant perception of the non-designated group (White participants) is that the recruitment, accomplishment and promotion of employees from the designated group is related only to demographic status, rather than qualifications, competences and personal effort as well. Race and gender appear to be operant dimensions along which Whites who could do the job are symbolically set apart from Blacks and women who were supposedly employed in the interest of getting the numbers right. Racial and gender prejudices emerged as the two main themes of the study. The dissertation interprets the participants' racial and gender prejudice in terms of Blumer's Group Position Model. The Group Position Model states that when an in-group perceives it's group position to be threatened it results in racial (gender) hostility towards the out-group. In terms of this research's findings, the non-designated group (White males) constitute the in-group, while the designated group (Blacks and women) constitute the out-group. The model adequately explains the negativity of the non-designated group towards affirmative action.

This study represents a vital step towards a better understanding of the successful implementation of affirmative action and should contribute to more efficient and effective practice of affirmative action in the workplace.

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Chapter 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

There is no freedom in the absence of affinity, agreement and communication. Where an individual falls away from these, his freedom is sharply curtailed and he finds himself confronted with barriers of magnitude – Ron Hubbard

The focus of this chapter is to give a cursory glance at the South African historical events that gave rise to the need of measures for bringing about equity in the workplace, the research problem, aims and objectives of the study and motivation for the study.

History plays an important role in the shaping of individual attitudes and societal norms and institutions. Historians have documented how every attempt by blacks and women to compete in the economic sphere was beaten back by the apartheid state at the invocation of its supporters. To be able, therefore, to appreciate and understand the reasoning behind legislation such as the employment equity, it is necessary to locate the discussion within a particular historical context.

Bendix (1996) says that the labour relations system operating in a particular society is a product of and is structured by that society. A system itself comprises the various participants, the processes employed in the labour relationship and the legislative framework. The most important variable shaping societies — and therefore, their industrial relations systems — is the dominant ideology. Apartheid, as the dominant ideology which previously existed in the South African socio-political system, found its reflection in the industrial relations system.

The absence of blacks and women in the mainstream economy had its origin in the array of legislative measures adopted by successive governments since the

advent of colonialism in South Africa. It is clear that discriminatory labour legislation (and non-labour laws) had their origin not in the coming to power of the Nationalist government in 1948 but much further back. The South African economy was built on systematic enforced racial divisions (Collins, 1994:18). Even before apartheid restrictions were imposed during the 1950s, government policies, rather than market principles, determined many aspects of labour relations in South Africa. The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1942, redefined the term "employee" to exclude most blacks, thereby depriving them from any labour law protection (United States Library of Congress, 2000a: 1). The Industrial Conciliation Act 28 of 1956 enabled the Minister of Labour to reserve categories of work for special groups, which entailed excluding blacks from most senior level jobs and reserving skilled jobs and managerial positions for whites. If the Minister felt that white workers were being pressured by "unfair competition" from blacks, he could categorise jobs for whites only and increase their rates of pay (United States Library of Congress, 2000b:1).

The Nationalist Party built upon what already existed, and implemented these measures with a religious zeal. According to Qunta (1995:8) three types of measures can be identified:

- those that were directed at getting Africans off the land and onto the farms and mining compounds;
- those that controlled their conditions of service once they were employed; and finally
- those that protected white workers from competition of black workers.

Qunta (1995) further asserts that maintaining the job and wage colour bar would not have been as effective were it not for supplementary legislative and administrative measures. The most important of these were the control of movement of Africans and an educational system designed to be inferior. "Influx control was meant to regulate the movement of Africans to the urban 'White' areas. The Stallard Commission of 1922 advanced the idea that Africans should

only be allowed into urban areas to attend to the needs of Whites and should leave once this is done" (Qunta 1995:13).

The most powerful tool in ensuring white domination was an educational system for blacks specifically designed to be inferior to that of Whites. Racism was so entrenched in education during the apartheid period that schooling was segregated along racial lines. This is succinctly captured by Hendrik Verwoerd's now famous words: "w*hen I have control over native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them*" (Mkwanazi and Rall, 1994). Verwoerd remained true to his promise. The Bantu Education Act was, in the words of Verwoerd, designed to prevent blacks from seeking to graze in the green pastures reserved for whites as evident in a statement such as: 'the education of the white child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the education of the black child for a subordinate society' (Union of South Africa, 1936:87).

The consequences of the past discriminatory legislation caused many untold miseries not only to black people and women, but also to the economy in general given the fact that the economy relied on the expertise and skills of very few people, that is, white males. Nkuhlu (1993:23) states that the consequences of discrimination became glaringly evident in the South African economy over time. By the early 1990s, White males, for example, were heavily overly represented in the key decision-making posts and in the skilled occupational categories of both the public and private sectors. In 1994 80% of skilled jobs in South Africa were held by White people, who are the minority, and 80% of the most unskilled jobs were held by Blacks, the majority (Freestone, 1995:16). A survey carried out in September 1996 found that from 1992 to 1996 Black senior management increased by only 4%. Blacks constituted 89% in the lowest grade, while Whites occupied 96% of the top positions (Singh, 1998:17). Human (1993:81), advances this point further by indicating that gender discrimination in employment was also anchored in legislative measures. In this regard, the Wage Act 44 of 1937,

subsequently, 45 of 1957, permitted differentiation between categories of employees on the ground of gender, and laid the basis for discriminatory wage determination, which were also applicable in terms of race.

South Africa has a history of institutional racism and sexism whereby rights and opportunities depended on race and gender. Sociocultural theories defined women as inferior to men and regarded them as minors in the private and public spheres of life. This historic patriarchy influenced formal and informal human relationships and the opportunities accorded women in the workplace (Hendrickse, 2004:2). South African women have generally been employed in a fairly narrow range of occupations, which are subordinate to those of men in terms of pay, power and prestige (Cock, 1991:33). Pillay (1988:730) reiterates this point by indicating that women in this country earn approximately 70% of men's earnings. Black women work mainly in the service and agricultural sectors in the least skilled, lowest paid and most insecure jobs of all. The 1985 census revealed that nearly three quarters of the total female workforce was employed in three categories, namely: service, clerical and professional. Three quarters of all female service workers were domestic workers, and the other three quarters of all professional women were either teachers or nurses at the end of the 1980s. Although all women have undoubtedly suffered from gender discrimination in the past, it should be noted that White women have had access to better-paid jobs, enjoyed higher status with added advantages, whereas Indian, Coloured and Black women tend to be found more in lower-paid and menial jobs (Fischer, 1995). White women were overly-represented in the higher status white-collar occupations (Macconachie, 1985:43). This was as a result of their greater access to schooling and further education.

However, it would be misleading to refer to South African women here as if they represent a homogenous group. There are tremendous differences within this category ranging from the obvious differences of race to major differences that stem from class and geographic location. There is a huge rural/urban divide

between women in South Africa where in rural areas economic prospects are poor. Black women are the most impoverished group in the society (Dubourdieu, 1999). White women were also affected by being excluded from most types of formal employment except clerical and secretarial work. While this exclusion was not legislated, White women were denied access to employment by conservative ideas about women's place in society. For this reason, White women's employment patterns mirrored their roles in the family (Sadie, 1995). Compared to White women, African women occupied much more disadvantaged positions. They only receive employment in very low-paying jobs, as cleaners and tea-ladies in office buildings, while Coloured women may be found working in the food and clothing industries (Adams, 1993).

Gender activists in South Africa have pointed out that although all women suffered under the apartheid system, they suffered in different ways depending on their race, class, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity (Fischer, 1995).

1.2   Research problem

The politics of racial and gender discrimination in South Africa has created a divided workforce which sought to guarantee that Whites remained socially, politically and economically dominant.   The employment opportunities were based on race, ethnicity, gender, colour, religion or cultural background, and residential areas. These (discriminatory) employment practices contributed to disparities in staffing composition in most of the institutions of the country (Van Rensburg and Mokoena, 1995)

South Africa had its first democratic election in 1994. Since then the South African Public Service has gone through a process of transformation. The process of transformation affects both the services that are rendered as well as the people that are employed by the South African Public Service. The publication of the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995, (Notice 1227 of 1995), served as a point of departure for the transformation of the

South African Public Service. In reference to the new dispensation, Nzimande (1996:1) exclaimed "for the first time in South African history, we have a democratically elected government bound by a democratic constitution and commitment to promote equality and accessibility to services and employment to all".

The Compensation Fund, as one of the government departments, also participated in this transformation. Not only was there a transformation in terms of the services that were delivered by the Compensation Fund but also a transformation in terms of personnel.

Legislation aimed at achieving the aforementioned transformation in the workplace includes *inter alia*, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998. The EEA compelled employers to formulate and implement employment policies that promote equity in terms of race, gender and disability. The EEA describes measures through which organisations should speed up their transformation efforts. These measures are collectively known as affirmative action.

Traditionally affirmative action is understood as an anti-discriminatory measure, the purpose of which "is to advance equality in the enjoyment of human rights within societies where there has been in the past systematic discrimination, whether social or political" (Eide, 1992:4). Ramphele (1995:8-10) on the other hand sees affirmative action as purposeful and planned placement or development of competent or potentially competent persons in or to positions from which they were barred in the past, in an attempt to redress past disadvantages and to render the workforce more representative of the general population. Sachs (cited in Human, 1993:1) argues that "affirmative action in the South African context has extremely broad connotations, touching, as apartheid did and still does, on every area of life … affirmative action covers all purposive activity designed to eliminate the effects of apartheid and to create a society where everyone has the same chances to get on in life…" According to Qunta

(1995:1-2), "affirmative action can be described as a systematic, planned process whereby the effects of colonialism and racial (and gender) discrimination are being reversed in all areas of life". It is therefore believed by many people in South Africa that an affirmative action strategy is essential for a successful transition into a new democratic, non-racialised and non-sexist South Africa.

Affirmative action is perceived by Thompson (1994) as a measure which will promote industrial reconciliation and human resource development. But it is acknowledged that affirmative action is merely a tool to be used to achieve equality and is not the solution to inequality in South Africa, "any affirmative action policy must operate as the handmaiden of equality, and not as an end in itself" (Thompson, 1994:21). Affirmative action is merely a policy which focuses on equal treatment and dictates equal results. Such affirmative action policies in individual organisations and institutions would not be sufficient to counteract the racial and gender imbalances inherent in most South African organisations, "laws which promote equality through prohibiting discrimination and providing for positive action will be needed" (Thompson, 1994). Hence the legislation concerning employment equity in 1998.

The terms, 'affirmative action' and 'employment equity' are often misunderstood and confused. They are often seen as the same thing and each seems to be defined in terms that are determined by those that use them. "The terms used for the strategy of bringing about socio-economic parity between Black and White (men and women) populations seem to have been determined by every individual's understanding of the meaning of each term and the acceptance or rejection of what the individual interprets as being the philosophy behind each of these terms and the general acceptability of the term within his (her) own organisational environment" (Wingrove, 1994:2). This is why terms such as 'affirmative action' have been given a negative connotation. Charlton and Van Niekerk (1994) argue that the term 'affirmative action' has invoked emotions across the spectrum, from White's fear (the perception that they will lose

privileges), rage, and even guilt to the Blacks' feeling that the time has now come for them to be given the respect that they deserve. The Labour Department's decision makers decided that a different term was needed to ensure that such negative attitudes were not perpetuated. The South African Labour Ministry therefore decided that 'employment equity' was a better term. There were a number of reasons why this term was selected. "It avoids the associations attendant upon affirmative action; it is positive in its import; there is close antecedence in the domestic labour relations vocabulary; the unfair labour practice concept has been presented in the developing jurisprudence as being conterminous with the notion of equity; and finally, it denotes the particular subject scrutiny: employment and labour relations" (Thompson, 1994:27).

So the difference between affirmative action and employment equity is merely superficial, in that they differ only in terms of practice. Affirmative action is a policy which is used by individual organisations and institutions, whereas employment equity is the law which is enacted by the State to force organisations to implement the policy – affirmative action. Employment equity, therefore, is an institutional mechanism whose goal it is to ensure that structural institutional change occurs. South Africa is aiming to become de-racialised, but in order to do that, quite ironically argue Cock and Bernstein (1998), we have to focus on race. They argue that in order to link the concepts of progress and diversity, we have to understand the various ways in which race, ethnic and other differences between people have both historically and in the contemporary world been the grounds of social practices that have involved disadvantage and denial.

The advent of a new, Apartheid-free South Africa has meant that the racist and sexist laws of the past have had to be dismantled. However, this is not sufficient to ensure a new non-racist, non-sexist labour sector. Hence, affirmative action measures needed to be implemented. However, the implantation of affirmative action measures is not accepted by everyone. South Africa has been racially divided for centuries, economically, socially and politically. Consequently, this

history has provided employment protection and privilege for a minority, the White males. To assume that organisations and individuals will merely accept and comply to implement affirmative action measures, would be naïve. Such measures will inevitably elicit powerful reactions.

Affirmative action is a sensitive, contentious and controversial topic that attracts and evokes a host of emotional reactions in the public domain and has to a larger extent dominated the public discourse ever since it was mooted in South Africa. The very phrase "affirmative action" means different things to different people. "Affirmative action has been hotly debated by proponents and critics. In particular, over the past ten years the subject of affirmative action has been a major political issue. Criticism of the quota interpretation has been strident, claiming the strategy ignores merit or ability. Under a quota strategy it is alleged that the goal is merely 'to get the numbers right'. Proponents of affirmative action believe it is needed to offset the effects of many years of discrimination against specific groups" (Muchinsky, Kriek and Schreuder, 2000:124).

De Witt, Erasmus and Swanepoel (De Witt *et al.*) (1998:4) propound that "research in the early nineties showed that many white male managers at that stage believed that blacks and white women are less capable than white men". Such views can destroy self-confidence and may become a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. Perceptions, fears, stereotypes and beliefs of this kind may, if not managed properly, typically contribute to white resistance to the implementation of affirmative action and may form an important stumbling block in the process of true equity in the workplace (De Witt *et al.*, 1998). Black managers are alleged to still have a negative view of this process. "They are silent firstly because of a deliberate personal aversion to being associated with affirmative action. Following years of tokenism, bad media and a stigma associated with being an 'affirmative action appointee', black managers are at pains to dissociate themselves from affirmative action" (The Black Leader, 1994:21).

It is assumed that the implementation of affirmative-action measures by the Compensation Fund has elicited reactions from employees across personal differences such as race, gender, age, educational background/level and job rank or salary level. There is therefore a need to explore the employees' attitudes towards affirmative action measures in their department.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

With the above brief background, it is evident that South Africa's legacy of apartheid has created massive social and economic inequalities along racial and gender lines, resulting, for instance, in the under-representation of blacks and women in the higher echelons of the corporate world and at decision-making levels in the public service. One of the primary objectives of the post-1994 democratic government was to eradicate discriminatory employment policies and practices based on race, gender and disability and redress these imbalances through measures related to affirmative action.

South Africa has just celebrated a decade of freedom and democracy and it is now about ten years since the EEA has been promulgated in South Africa. The employment equity legislation is intended to achieve equity in the workplace by advancing designated groups through affirmative action programmes. It is a requirement under the EEA to enforce affirmative action. Hence, affirmative action was introduced as a social policy aimed at reducing the effects of prior discrimination.

The study aims at exploring the perceptions of Compensation Fund employees who in general support or oppose affirmative action and hold a particular viewpoint as a result of their experiences and encounters with affirmative action. Issues explored in this study therefore include whether the perceptions of Compensation Fund employees towards affirmative action are influenced by different personal variables such as race, gender, age and educational background/level job rank or salary level.

Knowledge of the impact of affirmative action on employees is of cardinal importance to any organisation. Though much is known and has been researched about affirmative action in the workplace, there seems to be a dearth of documented information about experiences of the employees in the public service. More studies need to be conducted to explore the impact of affirmative action on various groupings within the public service. Most research and discussions about affirmative action has focused on constitutional factors, such as implementation, effectiveness and fairness, while little attention has been given to behavioural aspects, such as the perceptions that affirmative action connotes a system of preferential action where the recipients are passive beneficiaries upon whom the favour of opportunity on the bases of "colour", "gender" or "disability" has been thrust. De Witt *et al.* (1998) succinctly emphasise this view when they posit that recent research findings indicated that perceptions regarding the implementation of affirmative action in South African companies remain poor. The dire need and importance of research into the experience of employees is summed up in De Witt *et al.*'s (1998:21) concluding remarks: "it is also clear that surveys on the opinions of various stakeholders regarding the implementation of Affirmative Action in South African organisations can provide very valuable information that may assist in the process of working towards true employment equity".

1.4   Research questions

Beyond the abovementioned problems, all else seems moot. Therefore, the study intends to explore the following research questions: how do the Compensation Fund employees perceive affirmative action as impacting upon their job opportunities in terms of:

1. how do the attitudes of the various employee groups (race, gender, age, educational background, rank or salary level and tenure/period of appointment) differ with regard to affirmative action,

2. whether Whites, Coloured and Indian employees feel bypassed by Africans in their careers,

3. whether the intention of advancing designated employees is commensurate to reality or practice in the implantation of affirmative action measures,

4. how affirmative action has affected their work life and influenced their commitment to the Compensation Fund.

1.5   Significance of the study

It is felt that the use of a societal sample of the Compensation Fund employees for the study conducted affords the opportunity of presenting the views of an important sector of the public service community. The aim of the study therefore is to explore the Compensation Fund employees' perceptions about affirmative action (that is, whether they perceive it positively or negatively) and the knowledge they have about affirmative action.

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will have implications for the successful implementation of affirmative action measures at organisational levels by identifying possible challenges and how to remedy them. The findings will also provide baseline information that can be used to re-engineer mechanisms to address the challenges of progressively implementing affirmative action measures. Finally, the findings of the study may be used as a basis for further research related to policy implementation.

1.6   Plan of the research

This research comprises eight chapters including this one. The first chapter introduces the fundamentals of this study which will *inter alia* include the background to the study, the problem statement, research statements and plan of the study. The objective is to give the reader an idea what the rest of the study will be addressing. The second chapter outlines the methods used in the collection of data, analysis and interpretation of the data as well as explaining any theoretical considerations in terms of the methodology. The third chapter provides some theoretical framework and literature reviews regarding perceptions about affirmative action. The fourth chapter deals with a review of

literature related to the international meaning and historical background of the concept affirmative action and how it relates to the South African situation. The fifth chapter looks at literature on affirmative action perceptions. The sixth chapter deals with the implementation of affirmative action within the South African public service. The seventh chapter focuses on the results, interpretation, discussion and findings of the study. This discussion will try to relate the data with the research problems and theoretical background. The final chapter incorporates an overview of the study, findings and elaborate on certain limitations and problems encountered in the study. In addition the chapter will wrap up with some personal comments regarding the study.

1.7   Conclusion

There can be no gainsaying that the serious imbalances that characterise South African society are largely the product of explicit racist policies. Gender inequalities, the result of which is perhaps less blatant but equally insidious are also obvious. However, while race and gender discrimination need to be specifically outlawed, a strong case can be made, building on the precedents in other countries, for enacting laws that will evoke prosecution and conviction for practising any discrimination.

Hence, the process of doing away with discrimination in the workplace cannot be left to the benevolence of market forces. State intervention will be necessary because an *ad hoc* or *laissez-faire* approach will not work. However, too much interference will not be desirable. The argument that the 'removal of apartheid laws' and 'free market forces' will eliminate inequalities in the labour market is naïve and problematic in contexts where racial inequalities were statutory or institutionalised in other ways.

Equality of treatment, however, is unlikely to reduce disadvantage; it will merely maintain it. Furthermore, anti-discrimination warranties are not sufficient because of the historic and systematic implementation of discriminatory practices. Whilst

equal employment opportunity is necessary, additional measures are needed to compensate for the effects of past discrimination. The basic assertion here is that special measures or actions need to be taken to ensure that the effects of the past discrimination are redressed. Employment equity, therefore, is any action that is taken specifically to overcome the results of past discriminatory practices. The South African state has always had an active and statutory policy of racial discrimination and exclusion. It would, therefore, be naïve to expect that a *laissez-faire* approach will rid South Africa of these institutionalised inequalities.

According to Hepple (cited in Hepple and Szyszczak 1992), the Race Relations Board gave a classic liberal definition of the aims of anti-discrimination legislation as follows:

1. A law is an unequivocal declaration of public policy.
2. A law gives support to those who do not wish to discriminate, but who feel compelled to do so by social pressure.
3. A law gives protection and redress to minority groups.
4. A law thus provides for the peaceful and orderly adjustment of grievances and the release of tensions.
5. A law reduces prejudices by discouraging the behaviour in which prejudice finds expression.

This suggests that the purpose was not simply to produce symbolic legislation, which would placate the victims of discrimination, but rather to give support to those who wish to resist the pressures to discriminate and to educate those who are prejudiced.

2.1   Introduction

If people believe things to be real, they are real in their consequences – the Thomas Dictum

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodology used to investigate the research problem identified in the opening chapter. Attention will be paid to the focus of research method, design, layout and administration of the questionnaire, sample used, data-collection method (interviews) and limitations of methodology. The qualitative research method of inquiry is fully discussed with emphasis on its appropriateness in this particular study. The researcher gives a step-by-step account as to how the study was carried out under paragraph 2.2 The research structure.

Mouton and Marais (1990:8) describe research methodology as "…a communal activity, by means of which a particular phenomenon is studied objectively in reality in order to present a valid understanding of the phenomenon". They explain the five dimensions of research as follows:

a. The sociological dimension which accentuates scientific research as collaborative activity;

b. The ontological dimension which states that research must focus on an aspect or aspects of social reality;

c. The teleological dimension which regards research as intentional and purposeful and aimed at the explanation of phenomena;

d. The epistemological dimension which is concerned with an understanding of phenomena but also attempts to offer valid and reliable explanations of reality;

e. The methodological dimension which emphasises criticism, balance, unbiasedness, systematism and collaboration to ensure the objective nature of research.

The researcher has endeavoured throughout this research to give attention to all the abovementioned dimensions.

2.2 The research structure

The research plan is the plan along which information is gathered. According to Steyn, Smit, Du Toit and Strasheim (Steyn *et al.*) (2003), a research project is a specific research investigation – a study that completes or is planned to follow stages in the research process. Figure 2.1 below depicts a research project and strategy.

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│                  ┌──────────────────────┐                  │
│                  │ FORMULATION OF RESEARCH │                │
│                  │      QUESTIONS        │                  │
│                  └──────────────────────┘                  │
│  ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐    │
│  │ ANALYSIS OF DATA │              │  EMPIRICAL STUDY │    │
│  │ AND CONCLUSIONS  │              │ (Data collection)│    │
│  └──────────────────┘              └──────────────────┘    │
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│            │ EDITING AND CODING OF DATA │                  │
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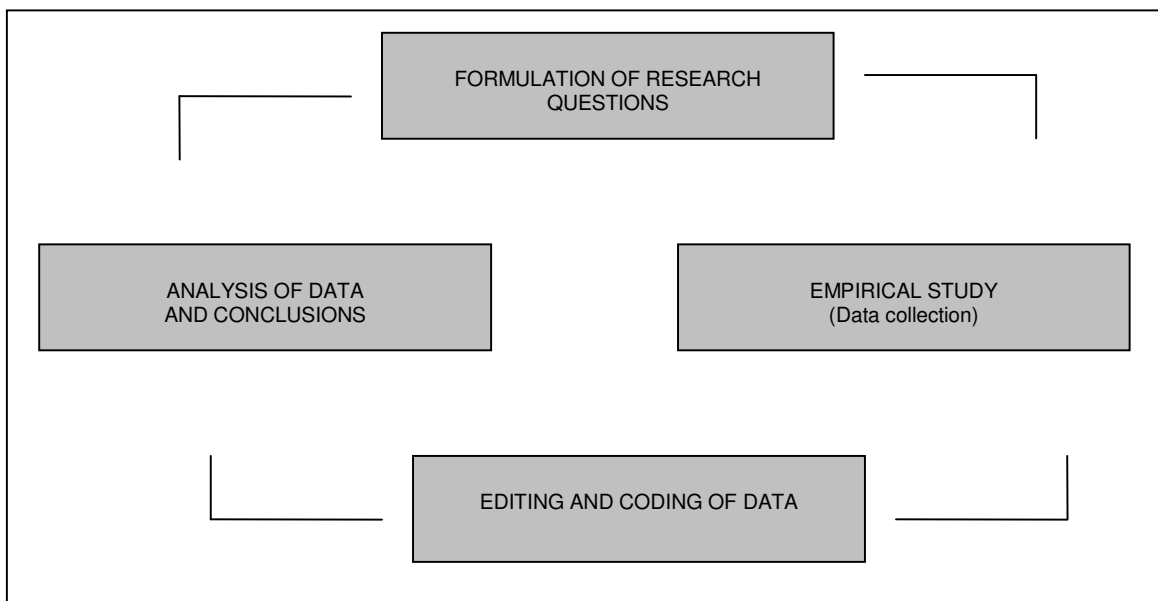
FIGURE 2.1: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Source: Adapted from Steyn *et al.* (2003)

Polkinghorne (1989) posits that the research process follows a general format for the phenomenological investigation of subjective consciousness as follows:

1. Gathering of a number of naïve descriptions from people who are having or have had experience of affirmative action.

2. Engaging in a process of analysing these descriptions so that the researcher comes to an understanding of the constituent or common elements that make the experience what it is.

3. Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear and articulate description of how employees experience affirmative action.

2.3   Qualitative research methodology

Two major theoretical perspectives have dominated the social science scene (Bruyn, 1966; Deustcher, 1973). The first, positivism, traces its origin in the social sciences to the great theorists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and especially to August Comte (1798-1857) and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). The positivist seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena separate from the subjective state of individuals. The second major theoretical perspective, which, following the lead of Deutscher (1973), is described as phenomenological (naturalistic or qualitative), and has a long history in philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology. The phenomenologist is committed to understanding social phenomena from the person's own perspective. The phenomenologist (qualitative researcher) seeks understanding through qualitative methods such as participative observation, in-depth interviewing and other methods that yield descriptive data.

Qualitative data, the use of words rather than numbers, has always been the research method of choice for certain social sciences such as anthropology, history and political science. However, since the 1970s more researchers in basic disciplines and applied fields with traditional quantitative emphasis such as psychology, sociology, public administration, organisational studies and policy analysis, market research and health services to name a few, have shifted to a more qualitative paradigm (Miles and Huberman, 1994:1)

Qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich description and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. This type of data can preserve the

chronological flow, assess local causality and derive fruitful explanations. Sound qualitative data are likely to lead to unexpected findings and to new theoretical integrations. Findings from qualitative studies have a quality of so-called "undeniability". Words when used as incident descriptions or stories have a concrete, vivid meaning that often have a definitive significance which proves far more convincing to policy-makers or other researchers than pages of summarised numbers (Van der Walt, 2002:12).

According to Hakim (1987:26), "qualitative research is concerned with individuals' own accounts of their attitudes, motivations and behaviour". Hakim (1987:26) is of the opinion that qualitative research "offers richly descriptive reports of individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, views and feelings, the meanings and interpretations given to events and things, as well as their behaviour; displays how these are put together, more or less coherently and consciously, into frameworks which make sense of their experiences and illuminates the motivations which connect attitudes and behaviour, the discontinuities, or even contradictions between attitudes and behaviour, or how conflicting attitudes and motivations are resolved in particular choices made". Hakim (1987:26) further says that, "although qualitative research is about people as the central unit of account, it is not about particular individuals *per se*; reports focus rather on the various patterns, or clusters, of attitudes and related behaviour that emerge from the interviews.

Hakim (1987:26) states that, "qualitative research is used for exploratory studies leading into more structured or quantitative studies; as an alternative to opinion polls; and to examine causal processes at the level of the intentional, self-directing and knowledgeable actor which can be lost from view in the over-socialised conception of man in sociology". According to Hakim (1987:27) "given the emphasis on detail and depth of information, qualitative studies normally involve small numbers of respondents".

Hakim's (1987) description of qualitative research is relevant for purposes of this study as it captures the essence of what this study aimed to achieve by obtaining individuals own accounts of their attitudes and perceptions towards affirmative action. A qualitative research approach was employed as it afforded the opportunity to describe an experience from the participant's point of view and record his/her impressions. This sentiment is echoed in Polkinghorne's (1989:45) assertion that "from qualitative research, the richness and profundity of human reality is seen as closely related to the structures and meanings of natural language".

In this study the affirmative action experiences of employees is of cardinal importance and thus the study used the qualitative approach to document and understand what participants said. This approach offered the ability to go into greater depth, and obtain more details. Berg (1998) maintains that qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives. Furthermore, through this approach the researcher was able to focus on the subjective meanings, definitions, metaphors, symbols and descriptions as presented by the participants.

"Qualitative research involves studies that do not attempt to quantify their results through statistical summary or analysis. Qualitative studies typically involve interviews and observations without formal measurement. Qualitative research is often used as a source of hypotheses for later testing in quantitative research" (Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, 2005:17).

Miles and Huberman's (1994:10) approach to qualitative analysis was the approach that was employed in this study. This approach views data analysis as concurrent flows of activity: data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. The interactive model of components of data analysis in figure 2.2 best illustrates the relationship between the various components.
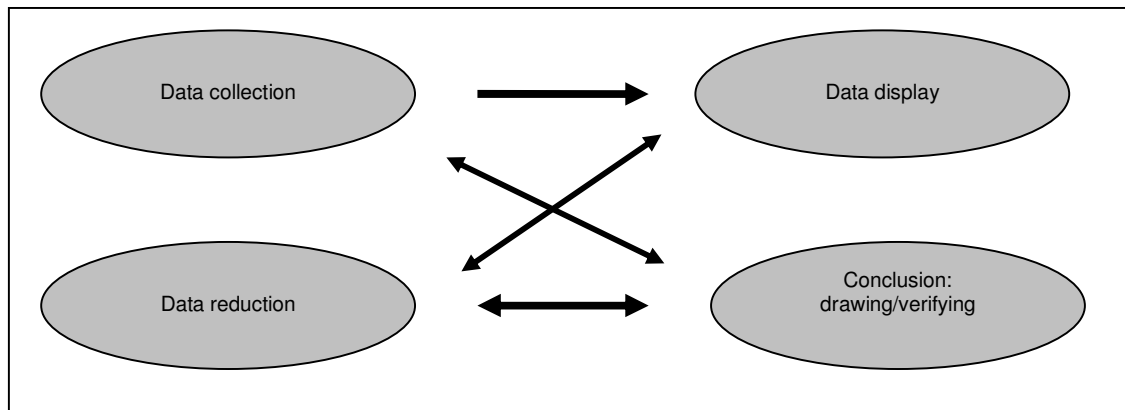
FIGURE 2.2: COMPONENTS OF DATA ANALYSIS: AN INTERACTIVE MODEL
Source: Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994)

2.3.1 Strength and weaknesses

Qualitative research as a method of research has both strengths and weaknesses. Hakim (1987:27) says, "The great strength of qualitative research is the *validity* of the data obtained provided that individuals are interviewed in sufficient detail for the results to be taken as true, correct, complete and believable reports of their views and experiences". Its main weakness according to Hakim (1987:27) "is that small numbers of respondents cannot be taken as representative, even if great care is taken to choose a fair cross-section of the type of people who are the subjects of the study". However, it should be noted that the aim of this study was not to generalise, but to get a deeper understanding of the life experiences of the participants.

In their attempt to provide criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research project Lincoln and Guba (1985:20) use the terms of conventional positivist paradigm, namely internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. However, in doing so they successfully demonstrated how inappropriate these constructs are for a naturalistic or qualitative enquiry. As an alternative they propose four more appropriate constructs: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability which reflect the assumptions of a qualitative paradigm.

- **Credibility**

Credibility refers to attempts to demonstrate that the enquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described.

- **Transferability**

The second proposed construct is that of transferability, in which the applicability of one set of findings to another context must be proven.

- **Dependability**

The third construct is dependability, in which the researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the chosen study as well as changes in the design created by increasing refined understanding of the setting.

- **Confirmability**

The final construct, confirmability, corresponds to the traditional concept of objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985:20) stress the need to question whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another. Evaluation is no longer dependent on the objectivity of the researcher, data themselves have to help confirm general findings and consequent implications of a specific study.

2.4   Aim of the study

As mentioned in chapter one, the aim of this qualitative study was to explore how do Compensation Fund employees of all racial/gender groups perceive affirmative action as impacting upon their job opportunities. The research approach and research method discussed in this chapter, are hereby regarded as best suited to study human experiences. By focusing on the experiences of affected employees, it is hoped that sociologically relevant insights might be gleaned for future use in the field of sociology.

2.5 Research design

The population of this research included all the employees of the Compensation Fund. In line with the requirements of University of Pretoria, Faculty of Humanities: Research Proposal and Ethics Committee, permission was sought from the Compensation Commissioner before the study was undertaken. Permission thereof was granted, notwithstanding that it took almost a year as permission was first sought in a letter dated 29 June 2005 and the permission was only granted in a letter dated 31 May 2006. This was following a letter written to the Department of Labour's Director-General by my promoter and permission thereof was granted following the intervention of the Deputy Director-General: Corporate Services, Mr. S Mkhonto and the Acting Compensation Commissioner, Mr. M P Mothiba. The letter granting permission is included as **Appendix A** to this study.

Since the aim of the study was to seek a deeper understanding and insight into perceptions, feelings, opinions and views of the employees, rather than generalising to a larger population, only a sample of the employees was used.

Sampling is the process of selecting a subgroup of a population to represent the entire population. There are three primary kinds of samples: the convenience, the judgment sample, and the random sample. They differ in the manner in which the elementary units are chosen. For purposes of this study the convenience sampling was used.

A convenience sample results when the more convenient elementary units are chosen from a population for observation. According to Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005:84) "a sample of convenience is simply a potential source of research participants that is easily accessible to the researcher". Convenience sampling (also referred to as accidental sampling) is a non-probability sampling strategy that uses the most easily accessible people (or objects) to participate in a study. Thus, in this study where necessary due diligence was taken in ensuring

that the sample included those employees who hold strong views in respect of affirmative action.

2.5.1 Sample

Non-probability purposive sampling techniques were used to "select a small number of people with specific characteristics, behaviour or experience which may be postulated to offer different perspectives on the research problem" (Walker, 1985:179). From the literature (Walker, 1985) and previous research (Brehm, 1994) utilising the proposed methodology – qualitative research approach – between ten and fifteen interviews were considered sufficient to establish reliable constructs. Walker (1985) suggests that an appropriate sample size is one where very few new insights into the research problem are being added from additional interviews.

Since this was an exploratory study, the goal was 15 – 20 interviews. On this basis using the convenience sampling technique sixteen (n = 16) in-depth interviews were conducted, each lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. The sample was stratified using employment equity criteria, that is, designated employees (Blacks, females and disabled) and non-designated employees (White males). This sample consisted of four African females and males, four Coloured females and males, four Indian females and males, and four White females and males between the ages of 18 and 44.

All participants were employed by the Compensation Fund within the time frame of the present effective affirmative action and it is maintained that participants experienced affirmative action as currently implemented in their organisation. In choosing the participants, the following guidelines offered by Kruger (1988) were observed:

1. All participants had experienced affirmative action as applied in their organisation.

2. All participants were verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to the topic.

3. All participants used the same language as the researcher. For the purpose of this study, interviews were conducted in English, a language most of the participants were also comfortable with.

4. Participants expressed willingness to be open to the researcher.

2.5.2 Data collection

Two methods of data collection were employed in the study, namely, primary and secondary sources related to affirmative action. The secondary data involved a probing literature review as a basis for the examination of the theoretical framework as articulated in international and local articles. The primary data within the qualitative research tradition formed the empirical investigation using the semi-structured (interview) questionnaire that was administered to the participant sample. The qualitative approach is based on the assumption that "the data of interest must be generated from the participants' point of view" (Schmitt and Klimoski, 1991:117) and this approach "is...concerned to identify concepts in the data and to develop a theory which incorporates them" (Walker, 1985:178).

2.5.2.1 Literature review

An extensive corpus of scholarly literature review on affirmative action was conducted within the South African context in both the public and private sector in order to obtain background information for the execution of the present study. Cozby (cited in Smit 1995:9) remarks in this regard: "before any research project is conducted, the investigator must have a thorough knowledge of earlier research findings. Even if the basic idea has been formulated, a review of past studies will aid the researcher to clarify his idea and design the study". An examination of literature made the following contributions to the research study:

• It assisted in identifying the research needs

• Identified previous research that extended the knowledge boundaries regarding the research themes

- It brought the researcher up to date with reference to relevant theories, definitions and theoretical approaches around the affirmative action discourse.

The corpus of literature focusing on affirmative action can broadly be divided into three categories. The first broad category of research mainly centres on emotions evoked by the implementation of affirmative action policies, albeit from different perspectives. These includes studies by Day (1991) "The attitudes of White male MBA students to the advancement of Blacks and White women in business"; Templer and Hofmeyer (1992) "Perceptions of South African managers of the progress made in black advancement"; Van Der Merwe (1995), on Eskom and their affirmative action policy; and also that of Adam (2000), "Affirmative action and popular perceptions: The case of South Africa". The second category of studies revolves around affirmative action in local government. These studies range from the attitudes of White municipal employees to affirmative action at the Port Elizabeth municipality (Nel, 1996).

The third category consists of a number of studies from the public sector. The topics range from an evaluation of the effectiveness of affirmative action in the public service. The studies included Mello and Phago (2007) "Affirming women in managerial positions in the South African public service"; Choudree (1996), "Public service transformation and Affirmative Action perspective in South Africa"; and also Hugo (1989), "Black access to the South African Bureaucracy: an equal opportunity and affirmative action perspective".

A critical analysis of the empirical studies reviewed above suggests that attitudes towards affirmative action are not unrelated to individuals' demographic status, perceived relative deprivation, underlying views about "race" and gender equality, and adherence to a political ideology. An important aspect highlighted by all these studies is that the implementation of affirmative action took place in a psychological and emotional 'climate' in which many public servants were deeply

concerned about their jobs and the prospects in a radical changed dispensation. The study proposes that South Africans' attitudes and judgements towards affirmative action do not exist in a social vacuum; rather they tend to reflect, and be affected by, the norms and values of both the broader society and the organisational settings in which they occur.

2.5.2.2 Interviews

Different methods for the collection of primary data such as surveys, experiments, or observation are available for research (Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch, 1997). The type of data required will largely determine the most appropriate method to be used. In this study, the researcher decided to use the interview method. By means of the interview, participants provide information on their current and previous experiences – attitudes and perceptions.

The qualitative nature of the study constituted a process of enquiry into "a social … problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (Leedy, 1997:105). One method of data collection was employed in the research, namely, in-depth (personal) interviews within the qualitative research tradition. Because of the exploratory nature and the sensitivity surrounding the topic, a qualitative approach in form of interviews was used to collect data that was synthesed into usable information.

Interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to investigate subjective human experiences and views. This was deemed necessary for the study as it explored a very emotive subject. In attempting to understand the perceptions held by individuals, interviews are suitable for they allow perceptions to be expressed freely depending on the type of technique used and the questions asked. Probing techniques was used to encourage participants to freely communicate their opinions and views. This was achieved by establishing a trusting relation and a rapport with the participants and assuring them of

honouring the confidential nature (if any) of all things revealed during the interview. For purposes of guiding the discussion, an interview schedule based on the aims of the study was compiled, however, any inputs that participants felt were important to raise were accommodated. The individual interview guide comprises open-ended questions (Leedy, 1997). Questions covered the following categories: progress to date and perceived problems; management commitment and accountability; consultation and communication; employment practices; special measures for designated groups; and future needs.

The choice of personal in-depth interviews for the administration of the questionnaire was adopted (Welman and Kruger, 2001). A questionnaire was devised to gather data to answer the above-stated research questions. It comprised two sections. The first section queried participants as to their demographic characteristics (race, gender, age, educational level, job/salary, work experience and tenure of service). The second section focused on participants perceptions of the work place in general, followed by specific questions as to the perceived role that affirmative action plays in their careers. The purpose of the interview was to develop constructs and identify issues around employment equity and affirmative action. The research instrument is included as **Appendix B** to this study. All interviews were transcribed and key aspects were highlighted.

2.5.2.3 Pilot study
The researcher compiled a questionnaire and conducted a pre-test or pilot test. "No matter how carefully you design a data-collection instrument such as a questionnaire, there is always the possibility – indeed the certainty – of error. You are certain to make some mistakes: an ambiguous question, one that people cannot answer…" Babbie and Mouton (2001:244). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:244), "the surest protection against such errors is to pre-test the questionnaire in full and/or in part". It was in this light that researcher pre-tested the questionnaire by circulating it to a number of colleagues.

The pilot study yielded interesting empirical results in that there was a significant correlation between participants' views towards affirmative action and demographic characteristics (race, gender, age, educational level, job/salary grading). Thus, it was deemed prudent to carry out further investigation aimed at establishing whether or not these aspects have any effect on the attitudes and perceptions of Compensation Fund employees towards affirmative action and also the extent of this influence.

2.5.2.4 Ethical fusion

For any research to be ethically grounded, it must be conducted according to the generally accepted rules of conduct and anyone embarking on the research path should be prepared to abide by laid-down research standards and ethics. One of the cardinal rules is that research should not cause harm to subjects. According to Ruane (2005:17), "any research activity that harms or poses unreasonable risk to subjects is incompatible with fundamental ethical obligations to safeguard the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of participants and research that carries the risk of subjects harm without offering any clear benefits is ethically untenable". Thus, one of the important principles of ethical research is to seek informed consent from the subject before embarking on any kind of research.

"The principle of informed consent is about the right of individuals to determine for themselves whether or not they want to be part of a research project" (Ruane, 2005:19). Informed consent refers to the right of research participants to be fully informed about all aspects of research projects that might influence their decision to participate. In essence, freedom of choice and self-determination are at the heart of the informed consent principle. No one should be forced or duped into participating in a research endeavour. Informed consent forms should also remind respondents that they have the right to withdraw consent at any point in the study.

Reynolds (1979), cited in Ruane (2005:19), avers that the principle of informed consent consists of four separate elements: the assumptions of competency, voluntarism, full information and comprehension.

- *"Competence* – this element of informed consent presumes that informed consent can only be given by competent individuals, i.e., individuals capable of deciding for themselves if participation in a study is in their best interest.
- *Voluntarism* – this element presumes that informed consent can only be given by individuals who are truly free to say yes or no to a research project and if any hint of coercion exists, the principle of informed consent is violated.
- *Full information* – this element presumes that research subjects will be given all the relevant information they will need to make an informed choice.
- *Comprehension* – this element presumes that in order for individuals to provide informed consent, they must be able to *understand* the information received."

To comply with the requirements of the University Ethics Committee, the informed consent of the participants was sought and ensured that in presenting the information it avoided characterising the study project to unduly influence anyone into participating, either by making offers (any kind), coercing or manipulating. The Letter of Free, Prior and Informed Consent used when recruiting participants is included as **Appendix C** to this study.

Thus, the researcher in essence treated participants with dignity and respect, and endeavoured to uphold and observe research ethics at all times, and where the participant felt uncomfortable with any particular question(s) they were not coerced and/or harassed to answer.

2.6 Rationale for the study

In principle data seemed to replicate the findings of the pilot study in that it emerged that there is a significant correlation between participants' views about affirmative action and demographic characteristics (race, gender, age,

educational level, job/salary grading). Previous research, however, has not examined the question of how demographic variables influence views held with regard to affirmative action in the public service. Thus, it is deemed prudent to carry out further investigation aimed at establishing whether or not these aspects have any effect on the attitudes and perceptions of employees towards affirmative action and also the extent of this influence. The results of this study will therefore add value to the existing body of knowledge of affirmative action which the research community, South African society and business sector (private and public) can build upon and utilise to rectify (un)substantiated perceptions regarding affirmative action.

2.7   Research focus

The study was undertaken at the Compensation Fund, which is a public entity under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labour. It administers the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 1993 (COIDA). The main objective of this Act is "to provide for compensation for disablement caused by occupational injuries or diseases sustained or contracted by workers in the course of and as a result of their employment or for death resulting from such injuries or diseases, and to provide for matters connected therewith".

Tummala (1999:503) says, "as recently as 1994 over 96 percent of all top positions in public service were filled by whites (who constitute only 13 percent of the total population). The selection process was said to be driven by two criteria: ascriptive (white male, Afrikaans-speaking, Christian-Calvinist), and subjective (supporters of the National Party). Thus, by following not simply discriminatory but essentially exclusionary policies, the South African public service was woefully unrepresentative. Not even all Whites were considered privileged. The Afrikaners followed what is known as "Broederbond" – the "Brotherhood" – benefiting only them and excluding all other Whites. Choudree (1996:1-2) says "over the years official pronouncements continued to emphasise that the government was committed to the concept of a 'white' public service where

integration would not be tolerated and in which 'non-whites' would accordingly not be trained for employment". The Compensation Fund was chosen for purpose of this study to represent the public service. Choudree (1996:2) further says, "as far as the Indian and Coloured communities were concerned their participation in administration and public service activities were limited to the service of their own people in their own areas". This principle became a reality when the tricameral parliament system was introduced in 1983. "Although blacks have been employed as teachers, nurses, policemen, soldiers and labourers in White areas (in sheer numbers they constitute the majority of civil servants) the only outlets for managerial posts were confined to the Bantustans" (Choudree, 1996:2). According to Mello and Phago (2007:145), "before 1994 women in South Africa were not provided with opportunities (equal to those of their male counterparts) to express their managerial abilities and expertise, particularly in public service management positions". In terms of the public sector employment policy, women who fell pregnant were forced to resign their jobs and could reapply for employment after childbirth.

The Compensation Fund, as an integral part of the public service, was no exception as it did not remain untouched by public sector discriminatory employment policies and practices. In the past Whites were given preferential treatment and later Coloureds. It was only in 1997 that the first African female was appointed as the Compensation Commissioner. The 1997 Compensation Fund Annual Report, reports that, "the integration of the Funds of the former TBVC[1] states and new appointments have changed the composition of the staff complement. This should continue to change as the affirmative action policy of the Department of Labour is implemented. At 28 February 1997, 44% of the staff were Black and 56% White; 76% were female and 24% male". The Compensation Fund embarked on a process of transformation of eliminating discriminatory hiring practices and it has a well developed employment equity

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[1]Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei

policy. It has a substantial staff complement in Pretoria – its Head Office; this rendered frequent site visits by the researcher easy and inexpensive.

The Department of Labour, in the Programme for Action 1994-1998 (1995), has set the following objectives amongst others: implementation of **affirmative action** as a policy that would promote **race** and **gender** equality in the workplace. The Department of Labour, which is the custodian of the labour legislation formally adopted the principle of employment equity in May 2000 to correct imbalances in the composition of the department's staff complement. It did so according to a provision made in Section 9(2) of the Constitution which states in part that "to promote the achievement of equality; legislative and other matters designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons; disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken". Thus, the Department can only achieve its full mandate through a representative and competent workforce that is reflective of the society it serves.

The Department of Labour committed itself to eliminating unfair discrimination in employment; ensure the implementation of employment equity to redress the effects of discrimination; achieve a competent and diverse workforce broadly representative of our society; and the development and retention of human capital focusing on the designated groups.

2.7.1 Employment Equity Policy
The purpose of the Department of Labour's Affirmative Action and Employment Equity Policy is defined as the corrective steps, which must be taken in order that those who have been historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination are able to derive full benefit from an equitable employment environment. The overall objectives are outlined as follows:
1. To enhance the capacities of the historically disadvantaged through the development and introduction of practical measures that support their advancement within the Department.

2. To inculcate in the Department of Labour a culture, which values diversity and supports the affirmation of those who have previously been unfairly disadvantaged.

3. To ensure the achievement and progressive improvement of the numeric targets and affirmative action measures set out in the Employment Equity Plan of the Department.

4. The scope of affirmative action plan shall apply to designated groups where the term is inclusive of Africans, Coloureds and Indians, women and people with disabilities.

5. Retention strategies will be developed to ensure that the Department does not experience an exodus of critical and scarce skills of both Black and White employees due to affirmative action. These strategies will include among others the establishment of a talent pool and specialized programmes for the extremely competent and above average performers who "walk an extra mile" to embrace change and transformation.

6. Designated group will be appointed on potential as opposed to following the strictly laid down standards.

7. To ensure that the Department does not practice tokenism, the above clause on the following of laid-down standards should not be misinterpreted as tokenism as the latter suggests a blanket system of appointing previously disadvantaged people regardless of the lack of potential or basic requirements for the job.

8. To approve the appointment/promotion of an officer who doesn't meet the requirements of the post, but who has demonstrated potential in line with the Employment Equity Act. Such will happen after full motivation has been submitted.

9. To eradicate all forms of discrimination in the workplace and to create a conducive climate for the successful implementation of the Employment Equity Plan.

10. To put in place programmes to support and develop women and black managers with a view of instilling a new culture and help new entrants into

management positions to explore their potential. Mentorship programmes will also be promoted.

The Department will, therefore, continuously strive to create conditions and initiate corrective measures to ensure equity of opportunities for all applicants and employees. Attention will be focused on designated groups and the Department will provide reasonable accommodation for all employees, including people with disabilities in terms of the inherent requirements of the job and the nature of the disability, across all levels and jobs.

The Department will in terms of its Recruitment and Selection Policy ensure that applications from suitably qualified individuals within the designated groups are given due consideration. Further, the Department will undertake focused development and training for all staff through internal training and other relevant learning interventions thus training and development resources will be made available through bursaries and studying at State expense; mentorship and coaching and to promote understanding and appreciation of their cultural diversity.

The staff complement of the Compensation Fund as at 31 March 2005 is 726 with an additional 230 contract workers supporting the organisation. Table 2.1 depicts the employment equity profile that reflects a significant number of female (71%) and Black (72%) employees.

TABLE 2.1: EMPLOYMENT EQUITY - 31 MARCH 2005

	African		White		Coloured		Asian	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Actual	23	35	5	23	1	12	0.3	1
Targets	40	34	11	9	2	2	1	1
Variance	-17	+1	-6	+14	-1	+10	-0.7	0

Source: Compensation Fund Annual Report 2004

However, the Compensation Fund acknowledged in its Annual Report of 2005, that to date, the numerical goals set down by the Department have not been achieved, though significant progress has been made in achieving the set employment equity targets. Table 2.2 depicts the progress made in respect of affirmative action during the 2005 financial year. An interesting point to note is that for the Compensation Fund to achieve its affirmative action targets, concerted efforts should be made to recruit more males, namely 17% Blacks and 6% Whites.

TABLE 2.2: PROGESS MADE IN RESPECT OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION - 31 MARCH 2005

	Actual number 31 March 2004	Actual number 31 March 2005	Target	Actual % at 31 March 2005
			%	%
African				
Male	127	152	43	25
Female	299	291	37	47
Whites				
Male	31	28	11	5
Female	139	141	9	23
Total	596	612	100	100

Source: Compensation Fund Annual Report 2004

During the 2005 financial year, only one White male was appointed (Table 2.3), which is countered by the resignation of another White male, notwithstanding the fact that the Compensation Fund has set for itself a six percent (6%) target of White males. During the said period, no White male was promoted.

By examining the figures contained in the above tables, what is clear is that most of the racial and gender groups are overrepresented in the Compensation Fund. There is a serious underrepresentation of African males (17%) and White males (6%). This could be attributed to the unavoidable consequences of relying on demographic proportion to arrive at targets and instead of promoting merit and equal opportunities. "The even representation of groups that is taken as a norm is difficult or impossible to find anywhere, while the uneven representation that is regarded as a special deviation to be corrected is pervasive across the most disparate societies" (Sowell, 2004). The figures also indicate that a large

proportion of Blacks and women are locked into low-wage, low-prestige, and somewhat dead-end jobs.

TABLE 2.3: APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTIONS AND TERMINATIONS - 31 MARCH 2005

	Appointments	Promotions	Transfer	Terminations
African				
Male	19	4	6	7
Female	26	10	3	5
Asian				
Male	1	-	-	-
Female	1	-	-	-
Coloured				
Male	2	-	-	-
Female	-	1	-	1
White				
Male	1	-	-	1
Female	-	-	-	12
Staff with disabilities				
	4	-	-	1
Total	**10**	**15**	**9**	**26**

Source: Compensation Fund Annual Report 2004

The questionnaire of Employment Equity (EE) was developed internally by the Chief Directorate: Human Resources Management in order to assist the Department of Labour in compiling an Employment Equity Plan (EEP). The EE questionnaire was distributed to all the 5 135 staff members countrywide at the end of March 2000. Only 2 345 or 45.66% of the questionnaires were returned. The aim of the questionnaire was threefold (Personnel Circular No. H1 of 2000, Employment Equity Questionnaire, 9 March 2000:1):

a) to evaluate the working conditions as perceived by the employees of the Department of Labour;

b) to assess the culture and climate within the Department of Labour; and

c) to evaluate the job assignments.

The Compensation Fund has as per the requirements of the Department of Labour's Affirmative Action and Employment Equity Policy, established the Local Employment Equity Forum (LEEF), whose representatives are drawn from different constituencies within the department. LEEF's main purpose is the

monitoring and evaluation of the Compensation Fund's implementation of the affirmative action and Employment Equity Policy and to sit during the interviews to observe whether the EEP of the Department forms part of the criteria during the recruitment and selection process.

In summary, the Department of Labour's EEP, which was prepared in terms of Section 23 of the Employment Equity Act, will serve as a tool to among others:

• Redress historical wrongs;

• Eliminate unfair discrimination;

• Ensure proper and effective implementation of employment equity and affirmative action;

• Achieve a diverse workforce broadly representative of the South African community; and

• Promote economic development efficiency.

Further, the EEP sets out to eliminate artificial barriers, which prevent people from certain designated groups from being equitably represented in all occupational categories and employment levels. Potential barriers are listed among others as:

• Non-compliance with EE prescripts;

• Remuneration and benefits framework;

• Training and development;

• Performance and evaluation system; and

• Corporate culture.

2.8 Limitations of study

As an introduction to this section, it is perhaps relevant to take cognisance of Berg's (1998:7) advice that "researchers are to choose procedures keeping in mind the problems that may arise in specific research settings, among certain research groups, and in unique research circumstances". The following research limitations must be borne in mind when interpreting and extrapolating the

findings. Given that non-probability purposive sampling relies on the judgement, insight and skill of the researcher, the sample may not be truly representative of all employees. The size of the sample was a limitation as it made it impossible to generalise findings, but it was sufficient for the purposes of this particular study. According to Harvey and MacDonald (1994), in-depth interviewing usually involves a smaller sample of respondents than survey interviewing. In this case the sample was small, with only 20 people interviewed, but it was sufficient enough to capture the in-depth perception of a small, representative group of the Compensation Fund employees. Interviewer bias may have been introduced in the process of data collection and interpretation as we all have our own paradigms through which we see the world.

The present researcher acknowledges and anticipated that due to the sensitivity of the study, participants may give overly-positive answers for fear of reprisal by their superiors. To ameliorate this tendency, the researcher assured participants of their anonymity and that information provided was to be used for academic purposes only. The fact that participants were working under tight schedules and that the researcher had a full time job elsewhere, may have hampered the establishment of an intimate relationship.

More often that not, respondents were inclined to give the Department's position first before talking about their feelings. As such, the researcher had to be alert to keep the respondent on track and persuade them to talk about their own experiences of affirmative action rather than the Department's. This was largely ascribed to their fears of being reprised by their seniors, notwithstanding the assurance of anonymity by the researcher. This tendency was noticed by the researcher when analysing and interpreting results.

Also of note is the fact that the research was undertaken at a time that there was a simmering tension between the employer and the employees after the latter had embarked on industrial action following the withdrawal of the bonus incentive

scheme. The employer deemed the strike to be unprotected and consequently initiated a process of bringing disciplinary action against those employees who took part in the strike. This acrimonious situation could have contributed to participants either being outspoken due to frustration, or alternatively shying away from expressing themselves lest the employer came to know about their responses.

A further limitation was lack of adequate South African literature exploring employees' perceptions on the subject of affirmative action in the public service. This indicates an urgent need for further studies on this subject within the public service in South Africa.

2.9   Conclusion

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

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Morality cannot be legislated, but behaviour can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless … The law cannot make an employer love me, but it can keep him from refusing to hire me because of the colour of my skin. (Martin Luther King Jr., 1963:34).

This study's theoretical framework is based on paradigms of race and gender discrimination. More specifically it concentrates on Blumer's Group Position Model as described by Bobo and Hutchings (1993), the Realistic Group Conflict Theory as described by Baron and Byrne (1991) and on Grindle's (1980) policy implementation.

Sowell is of the view that, like so many words in constant use, discrimination is seldom defined and hence familiarity takes the place of precision. "Yet, if we are to reason about discrimination in cause-and-effect terms (not merely react to it in moral and emotional terms), then the concept must be made specific. Intergroup economic differences loosely ascribed to "discrimination" result from at least three distinct social phenomena: (1) *antagonism* toward particular groups, expressed economically in an unwillingness to transact with them on terms available to other individuals with the same relevant characteristics, (2) a general *misperception* of the extent to which particular groups possess the economically relevant characteristics, and (3) intergroup *differences* in the economically relevant characteristics, leading to income and occupational results corresponding to such differences" (Sowell, 1981: 33).

Hepple says that a preliminary point is to distinguish between *pre-entry discrimination* and *post-entry discrimination* in the labour market. "Pre-entry discrimination occurs when groups experience discrimination in the acquisition of skills and education prior to starting work and hence cannot compete successfully with those who have not experienced such discrimination. Post-entry discrimination occurs when individuals of the same

level of education, ability, work experience, training and the like — what economists would call 'productivity' — are paid different amounts" (Hepple, 1997:599). According to Hepple (1997) the employment and occupational equity statute cannot deal directly with pre-entry discrimination, but only with employer's decisions 'about employees for reasons that are not related to genuine work requirements'. Pre-entry discrimination, therefore, would have to be remedied through a variety of other governmental and private programmes for education, training, and reconstruction.

In South Africa the moral imperative views employment equity as a necessary instrument of change to influence social and economic equality that impacts on the development of blacks and women. It is contested that the imperative of employment equity rests on the premise that it is espoused as an instrument to redress historical racial and gender discrimination that evolved from stereotyped behaviour, prejudices and attitudes, and from a political perspective, it involves human resource development with substantial funding for the upliftment of the (historically) disadvantaged communities, through the provision of equal employment, social welfare, training, education and development.

According to Hersch (1993) there is no physical basis for treating people of different races differently. But physical differences between men and women are much more weighty, since only women are able to bear children. This unique capacity to bear children has been seen to give women the ability for child-rearing and home-making and to make women unsuitable, by nature, for industry and trade. Feminists have argued that these differences between men and women are superficial as are the differences between people of different races. They argue that these differences should be disregarded in determining the kind of work which women are capable of performing and terms and conditions under which they should work. According to Shaw (1995:215) "as women move beyond being token minority within an organisation and begin to pose a numerical 'threat', they are treated as

threatening in all senses and quality of personal interaction deteriorates". The same could be said for Blacks.

The Self-Interest Model, the Classical Prejudice Model, the Stratification Beliefs Model (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996) and the Realistic Group Conflict Theory explain inter-racial hostility.

3.2   The Self-Interest Model

The simple Self-Interest Model rests on the idea that there is an objective basis for conflict (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). "Hostility between members of two racial groups reflects an underlying clash of material interests, mainly economic interest but sometimes political interests as well" (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996:953) According to Kleugal and Bobo (1993), category membership and association with a group and a sense of shared destiny lead to group-based appraisements of self-interest. Objective personal vulnerability to economic or political deprivation contributes to the direct basis for inter-racial antagonism. For instance, as Waldeinger (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996) argues that as the racial composition of work groups and associates may change, possibly changing anticipated patterns of interaction, performance and reward in the workplace could change.

3.3   The Classical Prejudice Model

The Classical Prejudice Model according to Bobo and Hutchings (1996), is almost the complete opposite of the self-interest model. Allport (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996) points to individual psychological traits as being the basis for inter-racial hostility rather than objective reality. Successively, it is the socially learned emotions of dislikes and hostility, as well as the stereotypes that underlie such feelings that breed racial conflict. Such emotions may have little genuine social or economic basis. The model accentuates the social learning of cultural ideas and affective responses to particular groups. Whereas the self-interest model refers to the material conditions of the individual's current social existence that are kept to drive the level of hostility (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). Allport's model of prejudice

highlights the irrational component of group hostility. The factor in this irrationality is ignorance about members of an out-group. The residue of feelings and stereotypes takes the place of direct experiences and knowledge (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996).

The stratification belief approach holds that opportunities are abundant and individuals succeed or fail largely on the basis of their own efforts and talents. Inequality of valued social outcomes is seen as not only impartial but necessary because of different efforts and abilities (Kleugal and Bobo, 1993).

3.4   The Realistic Group Conflict Theory

As purported by Devine (1995) social and intergroup dynamics can determine the target for prejudice in any given society. In discussing affirmative action, it is important to take heed of Dovidio *et al.*'s (2001) call to recognise the importance of understanding group functions and collective identities about race relations in South Africa. Given that in South Africa blacks are gaining entry into the labour market that was previously white-dominated, it can be assumed that this may serve as a cause for tension, competition and conflict amongst different races. A brief discussion of the "realistic group conflict theory" that endeavours to address the sources of prejudice and discrimination follows in the paragraphs below.

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

Furthermore, the realistic conflict theory suggests that as such competition continues, the members of the groups involved view each other in increasingly negative ways. A classic study undertaken in the United States by Hovland and Sears (in Baron and Byrne, 1991) found that the more negative economic conditions were, the greater the incidence of direct and open conflict by Whites against Blacks.
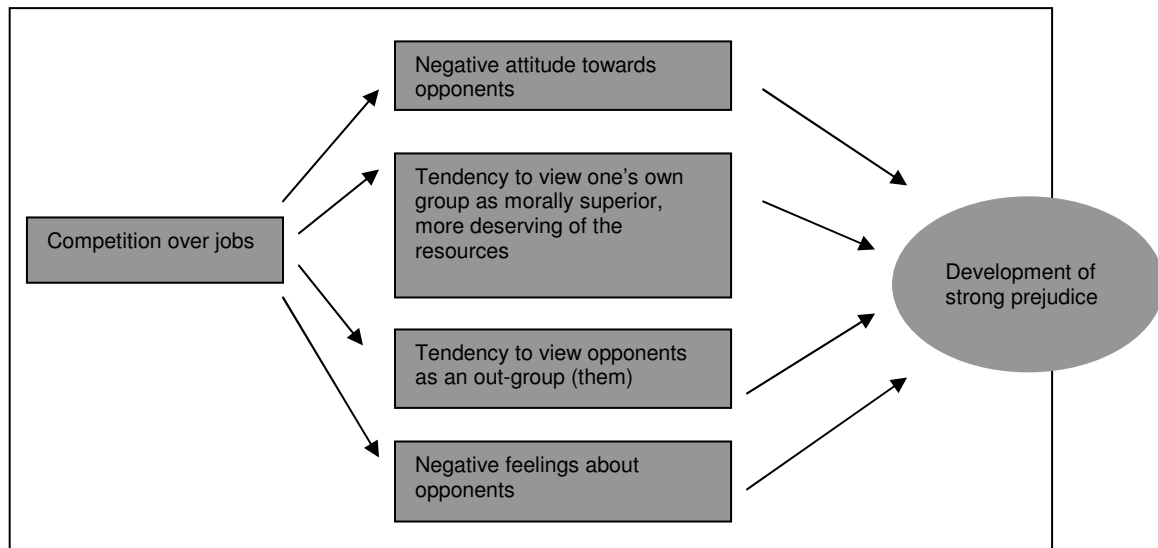
FIGURE 3.1: REALISTIC GROUP CONFLICT THEORY
Source: Baron and Byrne, (1991: 191)

3.5   Material interests

Lawrence Bobo (1998; Bobo and Hutchings, 1996; Bobo and Kluegel, 1993, cited in Konrad, 2001) is one of the foremost proponents of the argument that material interests drive people's attitudes toward affirmative action programmes. Bobo has focused his work on attitudes toward government programmes designed to reduce inequality between African Americans and European Americans. In essence, he maintains that "any social system with long-standing racial identities and institutionalised racial inequality in life chances sets the stage for realistic or meaningful struggle over group interests defined along racial lines" (Bobo, 1998:988, cited in Konrad, 2001). In other words, the facts that (1) racial categories are imbued with meaning in a society and (2) social resources are unequally distributed among those categories lead people to link material self-interest to the fortunes of their

racial group as a whole. Historically dominant groups perceive policies like affirmative action that intentionally shift resources toward deprived groups as threatening. Historically deprived groups, on the other hand, view such policies positively because they are perceived as benefiting their material interests.

The material-interests argument can be applied to the issue of affirmative-action programmes for women. Like racial categories, gender category is imbued with social meaning, and social resources are unequally divided between men and women. Affirmative-action programmes for women are intended to shift resources, status, and privileges to women, and may engender negative attitudes among men who perceive these programmes as threatening their self-interests. On the other hand, women who see affirmative-action programmes as enhancing their material self-interests may develop positive attitudes toward those programmes.

3.6   Standpoints theories

Standpoint theories argue that one's material position in society determines one's consciousness, including values, beliefs, and worldview (Dougherty, 1999; Hallstein, 1999, cited in Konrad, 2001). When social categories are used to channel people into a structured set of life experiences, people's views of society and social relations become limited by their category membership(s) (Hartsock, 1987, cited in Konrad, 2001). In a gender-stratified society, women and men are assigned to experience sets that shape perceptions and outcomes differently, resulting in gender differences in values and worldview (Harding, 1991, cited in Konrad, 2001). As such, standpoints are not immutable or inherent within women and men, rather, standpoints are socially constructed (Dougherty, 1999) cited in Konrad (2001).

Standpoint theory implies that gender will influence people's values and worldview. According to standpoint theory's materialist assumption, women and men develop differing views of the social world because of their different

sets of life experiences. Four worldview aspects have been linked to attitudes toward affirmative-action programmes: egalitarianism, individualism, belief in the existence of discrimination, and traditional attitudes toward women. Konrad (2001) argues, as set out below, that gender may influence each of these and add feminist self-identification as a possible predictor of affirmative-action attitudes.

• **Egalitarianism**

Egalitarianism is defined as the belief that inequality is harmful to a society (Feldman, 1988, cited in Konrad, 2001). Conversely, inegalitarianism is the belief that inequality serves a positive function for society by rewarding individual ability and effort. Because affirmative-action programmes are designed to reduce inequality between groups of people, egalitarians are more likely than their inegalitarian counterparts to support affirmative action (Feldman, 1988; Kluegel and Smith, 1983; but egalitarianism was not a significant predictor according to Bobo, 1998, as cited by Konrad, 2001).

Previous research has shown that women score more highly on measures of egalitarianism than men do (Konrad and Spitz, 1999, cited in Konrad, 2001). There are two theoretical reasons for this gender difference in egalitarianism. First, because women are disadvantaged by the current stratification system, it is in their material interests to reduce inequality. Second, gender ideology may cause women to show a higher level of egalitarianism than men do. Masculine ideology pressures men to value dominance, prowess, success, and status (Thompson, Pleck, and Ferrera, 1992, cited in Konrad, 2001). Women, in contrast, are pressured to comply with feminine ideology, which dictates that they should be nurturing and altruistic (Burn, 1996, cited in Konrad, 2001). Egalitarianism is part of an ethic of caring (Gilligan, 1982, cited in Konrad, 2001), focusing on providing for the needs of all members of society regardless of their "meritoriousness". As such, it is more compatible with the feminine value of nurturing than with the masculine values of prowess, status, and dominance. Compliance with gender-typed norms and values should lead women to embrace egalitarianism more than men.

- **Individualism**

Individualism is defined as the belief that people's life chances are determined by demonstrated ability and individual effort (Kluegel and Smith, 1983, cited in Konrad, 2001). Conversely, nonindividualists (or structuralists) believe that life chances are determined to a significant extent by external factors beyond the individual's control. Individualists are less likely than structuralists to support affirmative-action programmes because they see these programmes as unneeded interference in a well-functioning meritocracy (Kluegel and Smith, 1983; but individualism was not a significant predictor according to Bobo, 1998, as cited by Konrad, 2001).

According to Konrad (2001), the logic of standpoint theory implies that men will be more likely than women to endorse individualistic values. As members of a privileged group, men (particularly white professionals) have relatively few experiences where they are the targets of prejudice or discrimination. For this reason, they are less likely to be aware of the structural barriers to status attainment experienced by women or other groups historically excluded from positions of power. As a result, they are more likely than disadvantaged groups to develop beliefs that individual effort and ability are the major factors influencing life outcomes.

- **Belief in gender discrimination**

Those who believe that discrimination exists in a society are more likely to support affirmative-action programmes. Those who believe that discrimination does not exist do not support affirmative-action programmes because they see no need for them (Bobo and Kluegel, 1993; Kluegel, 1985; Kluegel and Smith, 1983; Konrad and Spitz, 1999; Tougas and Beaton, 1993; Tougas and Villieux, 1990, cited in Konrad, 2001).

Men are less likely than women to believe that gender discrimination exists (Coontz, 1995; Kern, 1994; Konrad and Spitz, 1999; Tougas and Beaton, 1993, cited in Konrad, 2001). One reason for this difference may be the development of self-serving biases whereby members of privileged groups

come to attribute their higher status to their own merit rather than to their unearned advantages (Jacques, 1997, cited in Konrad, 2001). Privileged groups may be unaware of their unearned advantages and assume that all people have access to the resources they need to compete successfully in the labour market (Sidanius, Pratto, Martin, and Stallworth, 1991, cited in Konrad, 2001). Privileged groups also tend to assume that all people are treated with the same deference and respect that they experience in interpersonal interaction (McIntosh, 1990, cited in Konrad, 2001). Because discrimination is not as much a part of their experience, members of privileged groups come to believe that discrimination is not a problem in their society. As members of a marginalized group, women are more likely to experience disrespectful treatment and discrimination on the basis of gender and as a result of their different life experiences, they are more likely to believe that gender discrimination exists.

- **Traditional attitudes toward women**

Those holding traditional attitudes toward women consider women and men to be suited to different types of activities (Spence and Helmrich, 1978, cited in Konrad, 2001). Traditional attitudes toward women are likely to be associated with negative attitudes toward affirmative action. To the extent that people consider women to be less suitable for activities traditionally assigned to men, they are likely to see affirmative-action programmes as placing women into roles for which they will be unfit. According to this logic, the result of affirmative-action programmes is that men experience reverse discrimination and organizations perform more poorly. Previous research has supported the assertion that traditional attitudes toward women lead to negative attitudes toward affirmative-action programmes for women (Konrad and Spitz, 1999, cited in Konrad, 2001). Other research has shown that the related construct of sexism, or prejudice against women, also has a negative effect on attitudes toward affirmative action for women (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, and Zanna, 1998, cited in Konrad, 2001). Research has consistently shown that women are less likely than men to hold traditional attitudes toward women (Twenge, 1997, cited in Konrad, 2001).

- **Feminist Self-Identification**

People who identify themselves as feminists may have more positive attitudes toward affirmative-action programmes for women than do their nonfeminist counterparts. Self-identification as a feminist means identifying women as a social group facing systemic forces that maintain inequality between the genders (Myaskovsky and Wittig, 1997, cited in Konrad, 2001). Nonfeminists, on the other hand, believe that women should be held individually responsible for their lower status relative to men (Renzetti, 1987, cited in Konrad, 2001). Because feminists believe that structural forces play a role in producing gender inequality, they may be more likely to see a need for structural remedies to reduce inequality.

In summary, Konrad (2001) found that the effect of gender on attitudes toward affirmative-action programmes for women was fully mediated by perceptions of self-interests, belief in the existence of gender discrimination, and traditional attitudes toward women. Men were less likely to support affirmative-action programmes for women because they were more likely to view these programmes as a threat to their careers, because they were less likely to believe that women academics experience gender discrimination, and because they held more traditional attitudes toward women.

Konrad's (2001) finding that perceptions of material interests affected attitudes toward affirmative-action programmes supported Bobo's position (1998, cited in Konrad, 2001). Bobo (1998, cited in Konrad, 2001) maintains that people develop a sense of demographic group interests in a society that makes meaningful distinctions among people based on demographics and distributes resources unequally among those demographic groups. Interests had a relatively strong impact on affirmative-action attitudes in our study in comparison to the weak relationships between interests and policy attitudes reported by Sears and Funk, 1990, cited in Konrad, 2001). Perhaps one reason for our divergent findings is the fact that our study participants were highly educated relative to the general public. Highly educated people may be more aware of the content of public policy and the impact of policy on their

interests. Future research should examine whether level of education moderates the relationship between interests and policy attitudes.

Because perceived threats to self-interest seem to affect affirmative-action attitudes, organisations wishing to develop positive employee attitudes toward their affirmative-action practices should communicate advancement opportunities to all qualified employees, base promotions on qualifications, and share information about the qualifications of all people receiving promotions. For high quality employees, demonstrating that career advancement is based on merit should diminish the perceived threat posed by affirmative-action programmes.

3.7   Blumer's Group Position Model

However, the model which accurately captures the in-group / out-group dynamics of the Compensation Fund participants is Blumer's Group Position Model (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). The model argues that hostility does not arise simply from material conditions or from individual learning of negative feelings, beliefs and orientations toward out-group members. Feelings of competition and hostility appear from historically and collectively developed judgements about the positions in the social order that in-groups members should rightfully occupy relative to members of an out-group (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996: 953). The main characteristic in Blumer's model is the subjective image of where the in-group should position itself in comparison to the out-group. Although this model originally referred to a dominant social group's view of a subordinate group, Bobo and Hutchings (1996) advance the framework by focusing on the individual-level dynamics of perceived threat and theories about attitudes of both dominant and minority racial group members.

Blumer's (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996) model precisely consolidates negative feelings and beliefs as well as a concern with the material conditions of group life. As such the model provides the frame for a coherent sociological mixture of the self-interest approach and the stratification belief approach.

Therefore, according to the Group Position Model (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996), individual psychology, cultural values and self-interest are placed in a more complete vision of a 'sense of group position' and the larger social processes that define such shared images of appropriate group status.

Blumer (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996) identifies four elements which are important in establishing the sense of group position. Firstly, a belief about in-group superiority or in-group preference exists, which in traditional social science vocabulary could be called ethnocentrism. Secondly, in-group members see members of the out-groups as outlandish and different which invokes the notion of group stereotyping. These first two elements include the core variables of group-identity, the affective attachment and stereotyping found in the classical prejudice model (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996:953). For Blumer (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996), two additional elements are necessary to make prejudice a dynamic social force. Firstly, the sense of group position involves assumptions of proper or proprietary claim over certain rights, resources, statuses and privileges, those things that in-group members are duly entitled to. Secondly, out-group members desire a great share of those rights, resources and privileges that are understood to belong to the in-group (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996:953).

The interweaving of these factors, group identities, out-group stereotyping, preferred group status and perceived threats constitute the fully developed 'sense of group position' (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). Blumer (cited in Bobo and Hutchings, 1996) held that such ideas emerge as leaders or significant segments of social groups contend with one another through public discourse and political struggle. So, the sense of group position is not reducible to learnt individual feelings of group identity, affect and stereotyping as emphasised by the classical prejudice model. Instead a long-term social and historical process is shaped by the exchange of ideas among organised leadership segments of racial groups. This exchange ignites, hones, disperses and thereby creates shared ideas about where the in-group ought to be placed in the social order comparable to other groups (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996).

The attitudes of the Compensation Fund employees towards affirmative action could also be explained in terms of simple self-interest, as described by Kleugal and Bobo (1993). Self-interest "may account for the vulnerability of policies that deliver benefits to specific sub-group of the population. Individual self-interest is often defined narrowly to mean tangible losses or gains to an individual or his/her immediate family" (Kleugal and Bobo, 1993:445). But self-interest can be defined at a broader group level. Category membership and identification with a group and sense of shared fate lead to group-based assessments of self-interest. As noted in the literature review, "Blacks are consistently more supportive of race-targeted policies and welfare policies than are Whites of comparable socioeconomic status" (Kleugal and Bobo, 1993:445). For Kleugal and Bobo (1993) group memberships and identification, especially racial divisions in the USA, have long been recognised as the bases for the development of perceived interests. On the basis of group self-interest, race-targeted policies should be more popular among Blacks than among Whites (Kleugal and Bobo, 1993).

Kritzinger (1993) avers that if one adopts the perspective that gender and gender inequality are crucially socially constructed, it follows that the social reconstruction of gender and gender inequality is possible. This would involve various levels, for instance, culture inter-personal interaction and notably, individuals' beliefs and attitudes. The Marxist notion of empowerment submits that women themselves have to surpass gender-based attitudes towards and beliefs about themselves as women (Kritzinger, 1993). Patriarchal ideology is not located within the domestic sphere only, but pierces the whole of society and women's inferior position in societal structures is legitimised by powerful ideologies. The social construction of gender inequality within work organisations comprises, to an important degree, the empowerment of women themselves (Kritzinger, 1993).

3.6 Policy implementation

Grindle (1980:3) argues that policy implementation "involves far more than a mechanical translation of goals into routine procedures, it involves

fundamental questions about conflict, decision making and 'who gets what in society'". She believes that policy implementation involves a wide variety of factors. These factors include the availability of sufficient resources, the structure of relations and the commitment to reporting mechanisms in a bureaucracy and finally, accidents of timing, luck and seemingly unrelated events. These factors can have an impact on what type of policy is implemented and the success of the policy (Grindle, 1980).

3.7   Conclusion

According Williams *et al.* (1999) the concept of self and group interests is driven by an economic zero-sum model and by an early sociological model developed to understand the notion of group position. The self and group interests explanation views Whites as rational actors whose individual and group privileges are threatened by redistributive racial policies like affirmative action (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Citrin and Green 1990; Sears and Funk 1991, cited in Williams *et al.*, 1999). Only recently have researchers distinguished between self and group interests, because self interests have tended to be only moderately related to policy resistance (Bobo 1983; Citrin and Green 1990; Sears and Allen 1984; Sears and Funk 1991, cited in Williams *et al.*, 1999). Bobo's research (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Bobo, Kluegel and Smith 1997, cited in Williams *et al.*, 1999) has been especially important in developing the construct of group interests based upon the work of Blumer. "Researchers in this area advocate viewing race relations on the plane of group positioning, and as implicitly contingent upon Whites' in-group attachment. These group positions tend to be economic, but can also be cultural or social. They involve maintenance of the status quo and thereby the superior position of whites as a group" (Williams *et al.*, 1999). The concept of group interests has been operationalised by measures of White in-group solidarity (Dietz-Uhler and Murrell 1993, cited in Williams *et al.*, 1999), perceived threat, and African American encroachment (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Jacobson 1985; Kluegel and Smith 1983, cited in Williams *et al.*, 1999). However, (Bobo and Kluegel, 1993 cited in Williams *et al.*,1999) also caution that the distinction between individual and group self-interests should not be

overdrawn, suggesting that group identities are often related to objective individual characteristics like income, education, and occupation. Jackman (cited in Williams *et al.*, 1999) also warns about the difficulties in measuring self-interest. She argues that Whites have developed belief systems that allow them to be self-serving without appearing blatantly self-interested.

To summarise, this study's findings are to be interpreted and analysed in terms of gender and race discrimination paradigms and Grindle's policy implementation theory. Hersch (1993) argues that there is no physical basis for treating people of different races differently. Moreover, feminists argue that the differences between men and women are just as superficial. But as women and Blacks are employed in positions where they tend to pose a threat to White men they are therefore treated in a discriminatory way. This is what Blumer's group position model argues (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). When a group is threatened by another group there is an establishment of four factors, ethnocentricism, out-group stereotyping, a feeling of entitlement to status, privileges and resources and finally the out-group desires a share of those resources, privileges and status that are seen as belonging to the in-group. It is on the basis of this theoretical framework that responses from the Compensation Fund employees will be analysed and interpreted.

Chapter 4

INTERNATIONAL MEANING AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

4.1   Introduction

If badly applied, the principle of affirmative action may end up having a tense relationship with principles of non-racialism and non-sexism (Innes *et al.,* 1993a:8).

This chapter will explore the meaning and historical background of the concept of affirmative action and how it relates to the South African situation. Affirmative action became a buzz word after 1994. Indeed, the Government of National Unity had good intentions about redressing inequalities of the past through its introduction, but it is evident that since its inception, affirmative action increased the very evil it seeks to cure, that of racial discrimination. Critics of this programme believe that affirmative action is a new form of job reservation. Others believe that it is apartheid reversed or reverse discrimination; and giving jobs by means preferential treatment. Some dubbed it 'rent-a-black' programme.

Affirmative action is a controversial and complex concept with both positive and negative connotations, meaning different things to different people. It is tempting to reject the usual starting point for discussions of affirmative action — namely with its definition — if only because it tends to be a daunting induction for the uninitiated. Writers typically point quite properly to the wide range of pertinent definitions and proceed to examine a sample of them. Despite the intense attention that affirmative action, which is sometimes referred to by euphemisms such as *corrective action, black advancement or positive action*, as a related concept, has received in South Africa in the post-apartheid years, there is little consensus as to the precise meaning of the concept.

The basic problem is that not only are there a range of definitions, but there is also no consensually agreed one. The absence of a common definition of

affirmative action means that the initial treatment of the topic can very easily start with an unattractive introduction to a promising area. It is a promising area because it intends to rid the country, and in particular the workplace, of unfair labour practices. Before defining affirmative action in the South African context, it is perhaps important to locate its place in history.

Among those who invoke it as an antidote to the injustice of the past, a number of interpretations exist. There is, however, consensus that affirmative action is intended to assists groups systematically discriminated against in the past, who were denied equal access to skills development, opportunities and to resources. Affirmative action can be understood as a remedial strategy which seeks to address the legalised historical exclusion of a majority. Unlike most other countries in which minorities form the target group, in South Africa a previously disenfranchised majority will be the beneficiary of affirmative action (Adam, 2000:81).

The aim of affirmative action is clearly highlighted in Nelson Mandela's opening address to the African National Congress (ANC) in his capacity as President of the ANC in Port Elizabeth in October 1991 (Dixon, 1994:iii). It is important to note that the statement was made two and half years before he became President of the Republic of South Africa. In this address, he stated:

> The primary aims of affirmative action must be to redress the imbalances created by apartheid… We are not… asking for handouts from anyone. Nor are we saying that just as a white skin was a passport to privilege in the past, so a black skin should be the basis of privilege in the future… The special measures that we envisage to overcome the legacy of the past discrimination, are not intended to ensure the advancement of unqualified persons, but to see to it that those who have been denied access to qualifications in the past can become qualified now, and that those who have been qualified all along but overlooked because of past

discrimination, are at last given their due… The first point to be made is that Affirmative action must be rooted in principles of justice and equality. (Dixon, 1994:iii).

Affirmative action has various pitfalls (De Klerk, 1996:238). What is meant by affirmative action is that when two people have the same merit, the non-white person should be chosen over the white person. The *first pitfall* created thus is that a quota system does more harm than good. In the United States (US), for example, it proved counterproductive since it attacked the self-esteem of blacks. *Secondly*, affirmative action may never forfeit standards and merit. Lowered standards will harm the entire community. *Thirdly*, affirmative action must always bear an educational character. While compensating for perceived lack of justice, it must make people self-confident and self-supportive. It may never be the result a selfish egocentrism, but rather out of conviction.

4.2   The historical development of affirmative action as a concept

While there is some disagreement on exactly where and when the concept of affirmative action first emerged, most writers agree that modern affirmative action was a product of the civil rights campaign in the US. The civil rights campaign in the US took shape in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The campaign constituted a struggle by ethnic minority groups in the US, primarily African-Americans led by Martin Luther King Jr, who endeavoured to end formal legislative discrimination and informal segregation and discrimination.

Portnoi (2003:80) avers that, "… the roots of the concept affirmative action in the workplace may be traced back a bit further. During World War II, United States President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order to bar discrimination (mainly towards women and ethnic minority groups) in federal government and in war industries, and established the first Fair Employment Practice Committee. However, after the war, the position of women and minorities deteriorated again." Portnoi (2003:80) further states that, "a 1995 United States White House report

on affirmative action notes that while the employment of African-Americans and women improved during World War II and while some efforts were made in the 1950s and 1960s, affirmative action did not 'take hold until it became clear that anti-discrimination statutes alone were not enough to break longstanding patterns of discrimination (Section 2.1)."

United States President John F Kennedy is credited with coining the term "affirmative action." In 1961, during the height of the civil rights movement, Kennedy created the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity and issued Executive Order 10925, in which he first used the term "affirmative action" to refer to the practice aimed at assisting women and ethnic minorities who had historically been discriminated against" (Portnoi, 2003:80). Portnoi (2003:80) says, "Though affirmative action initially pertained only to federal government positions or to companies with government tenders or funding, by the time Kennedy was assassinated, he had begun legislating a Civil Rights Bill, which included an expansion of the Equal Employment Opportunity committee. In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was passed under President Johnson's tutelage, and Title VII of the Act sought to end discrimination in all public companies, regardless of whether or not they had federal funding or contracts. The Johnson era Act bolstered and expanded the legislation begun by Kennedy. Amendments to the Civil Rights Act, which were signed into law by President Nixon in 1972, strengthened Title VII, with race and gender-related measures approved by the United States Congress."

Thus, in the US context, affirmative action originated as a response to segregation and the disadvantage of blacks in employment, education and other areas of life. "The emphasis was on taking active measures to ensure that blacks and other minorities enjoyed the same opportunities for promotion, salary increases, career advancement, and financial aid that had been the domain of the whites" (Steinberg, 1996:17). When it was introduced some people described it as 'hiring by numbers', due to its focus on increasing the representation of

designated groups through targeted hiring, and to some extent training and promotion.

From the outset affirmative action in the US was put forward as a temporary measure that was necessary in order to level the playing fields for Americans of every race and hue. Broadly it took two forms, namely, policies to alter the composition of the labour force, and/or policies to increase the public representativeness. Thus, in the US affirmative action is deemed as an extension of the notion of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. It aims to overcome the effects of the past discrimination by enabling the person or group discriminated against either to compete on level terms with the favoured group or, more controversially, to achieve equality outright. According to Hodges-Aeberhard (1999:247), special measures with this aim, whether they are called affirmative action, positive action, employment equity, workplace diversity, maximalisation or inclusion are not new ideas: they were introduced to make up for the past unfair labour practices against union organisers and members and later used to assist war veterans' reinsertion into the labour market. Hodges-Aeberhard (1999:247-248) posits that, "other groups, too, have long benefited from special programmes in employment linked to their special needs, such as persons with disabilities. The use of this form of labour market intervention, however, aroused controversy from the moment it was applied to two particular areas of discrimination, namely race and sex."

4.2.1   Case against affirmative action in the US

According to Hodges-Aeberhard (1999:248), critics of affirmative action – leaving aside those who play the semantic game of calling it a form of "reverse" or "negative" discrimination – claim that the concept has several fatal flaws and that it should be removed from the toolbox of possible instruments for use in adjusting imbalances in the labour market. Hodges-Aeberhard (1999:248), lists the following as some of the criticisms levelled against affirmative action:

- It is variously argued that non-discrimination is such an absolute concept that it can brook no exemption;

- That such measures start out as temporary and narrowly tailored to the goal to be achieved but end up permanent and broad;

- That within the favoured group the benefits of the measure go disproportionately to those already at the top of the group in employment status;

- That in any case there is very little in the way of data on the real successes or achievements of affirmative action;

- That such measures are usually poorly planned and permit cheating on the results; and

- In relation to race-based programmes in particular – that colour-conscious policies are polarising and fuel resentment and violence.

4.2.2 Case in favour of affirmative action in the US

Those in favour of affirmative action argue in return that labour market policies should be realistic and admit that since society is not colour-blind or non-sexist some proactive policies are essential. Hodges-Aeberhard (1999:248), lists the following as some of the arguments in favour of affirmative action:

- That, while the planning might not always be perfect, any measure is better than inaction;

- That data gathering is improving and that cheating, in any system, can be controlled by better monitoring and stronger penalties;

- That such programmes have in fact provided too little rather than too much assistance; and

- That, apart from societal advantage of better utilisation of the full workforce, there are proven economic advantages.

However, behind this debate lies a subtler contradiction. Affirmative action allows disadvantaged groups the chance to get experience and prove themselves, but at the same time it perpetuates the perception that they intrinsically lack the

characteristics for success in employment and will always need special assistance.

4.2.3 The lesson of American experience for South Africa

The American experience is particularly meaningful for South Africa since there are similarities about the two countries. These include an African component of the population namely, African-Americans who historically suffered from racial discrimination, as well as other ethnic minorities such as Hispanic-Americans who were also subjected to unfair practices. In America as in South Africa affirmative action seeks to affirm those who have been historically disadvantaged.

There are differences also between the two countries. In the US, African-Americans are a minority whereas in South Africa Blacks are the majority. Furthermore, unlike in South Africa, racial discrimination has never been official government policy (Qunta, 1995: 2).

While there has been some progress on affirmative action in US, it is argued that it has been relatively slow, with business recruitment and promotion remaining largely restrictive and little major advancement for blacks, women and the disabled. The costs of implementing affirmative action are exorbitant, with little returns. However, the fact that affirmative action has failed in the US is neither here nor there. Rather, the question to be asked is firstly: what is being done in the US that is not right, and need to be avoided in South Africa if affirmative action were to succeed? And, secondly, what is being done in the US that is right, and which could be duplicated in South Africa?

In the US, government regulations and Civil Rights Acts played an important role in opening up employment opportunities to minorities. Without these provisions, the number of minority members employed would have been even lower. Companies would have taken far longer to implement voluntary affirmative

codes, despite the business rationale. Similarly in South Africa, affirmative action legislation is essential to adopt rigorous affirmative-action programmes. Since Africans constitute the majority, it is crucial for the economy that they should furnish the bulk of skilled personnel in due course. Something so important cannot be left to the will of company directors, even if they are aware of the economic imperatives.

There are other more important lessons that South Africa can draw or learn from the American experience which (Human, 1991:11-15) explains as follows:

The first lesson that South Africa can learn from the American experience is education and social development. Education and social development can affect the opportunities of many Black people to obtain significant work. A feeling of inferiority may exist and this could cause workers to withdraw from competitive situations thus reinforcing the prejudice of many white managers and employees. These prejudices include beliefs by white managers that Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and women are less capable than White males. Therefore education is important for the success of affirmative action in South Africa.

The second lesson has to do with training and development. Although training and development are important in the progress of Blacks we cannot simply feed knowledge and skills to black people and expect them to function optimally in a predominantly white world. Training and development take time.

The third lesson has to do with stereotypes and prejudice. These expectations and prejudices of white employees will have to be addressed before affirmative-action programmes are to be successfully implemented. The last lesson has to do with legislation. Legislation does not necessarily ensure the advancement of previously disadvantaged groups. Management should be committed to policies that ensure that the disadvantaged groups are advanced.

4.3   Lessons from other countries about affirmative action

Hodges-Aeberhard (1999:249) says that, "despite this four-decade-old controversy, governments continue to legislate for affirmative action in employment to favour designated groups (most commonly those described as suffering the effects of past discrimination on the basis of their race, colour, sex or disability). Witness the adoption by South Africa and Namibia, near the end of 1998, of legislation requiring employment equity through means including affirmative action (the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 in South Africa and the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act, 29 of 1998 in Namibia)."

Elements of affirmative action have been adopted and adapted in several countries such as in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Employment equity legislation in countries generally contains two main components: weeding out unfair discrimination and putting affirmative action into place to redress injustices of the past. Manhando (1994:10) makes an assertion that in Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and some African countries, affirmative action was introduced to favour victims of colonialism and women who had been disadvantaged by policies that favoured the employment of men, regardless of race and white women who wanted to work and whose husbands would allow them to work. The Namibian Constitution actually guarantees equal rights for women. "In some instances affirmative action has led to reverse discrimination, for example in Malaysia, the majority of the Malaysians achieved economic success while the Chinese and Indian minorities were discriminated against (Adams, 1993:77)" (Manhando 1994:10 -11).

"The term affirmative action is therefore, used in a variety of ways, ranging from the prohibition of racial/ethnic and sexual discrimination in employment procedures (and to entry into other labour market institutions), to the initiation or remedial action to compensate for past racist and sexist practices" (Sikhosana 1993:4).

4.3.1 The Zimbabwean experience

Although job discrimination was never legislated in Zimbabwe, as it was in South Africa, racial discrimination was entrenched in a range of statutory provisions for many decades. The Masters and Servants Act (1901), the Land Apportionment Action (1930) and the Industrial Conciliation Action (1934) are examples of such discriminatory legislation which resulted in huge disparities between black and white Zimbabweans in terms of income, employment and ownership.

As in South Africa, blacks were offered inferior education making it difficult for them to advance occupationally at the same rate as their white counterparts, in both the public and private sectors. A high level of unemployment amongst black people was a structural feature of the pre-independence economy, while for white Rhodesians there was almost full employment (Hofmeyer and Whata, 1991:14).

One of the consequences of racial discrimination in the Zimbabwean economy and education system was that at independence in 1980, with a population of six million people (less than 300 000 of whom were white), white males were heavily over-represented in managerial positions in the public and private sectors and in all skilled occupational categories.

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe grappled with how to effectively develop itself. The newly elected government was driven by a socialist ideology, an ideology that it felt would best fulfil its developmental objectives at the time. In its efforts to fulfil its goal of social justice and social equity, the Zimbabwe government's development mandate was two-pronged: first, to redress the racially inspired inequalities and inequalities inherited from the colonial past and, secondly, to achieve socio-economic development, growth and equity. Thus, one of the first priorities of the new ZANU (PF) government was to redress decades of overt and covert racial discrimination and enhance the power and authority of black people. One way to do this, and at the same time reward party supporters, was to replace white civil servants with black Zimbabweans, that is, the

Africanisation of the Civil/Public Service which had until then been highly European in character (Strachan, 1993). Soon after independence, therefore, a presidential directive on black advancement was issued which directed the Public Service Commission (the body with responsibility for appointments and promotions in the public sector) to recruit staff to all grades in the public service in such a way that brought about a balanced representation of Zimbabwe's population. Rapid advancement was to be given to suitably qualified Africans in appointments and promotions. Furthermore, the Commission was charged with maintaining efficiency and satisfying the career aspirations of existing public officials in carrying out their task (Charlton and Van Niekerk, 1994:43).

The directive was legally binding on the civil service and prison services, and was intended to guide parastatals, state-owed corporations and the private sector, but involved no legal mechanism for implementation in these sectors. White civil servants were encouraged to retire early with the help of generous retirement packages. Many other whites resigned voluntarily, and either left the country, or sought jobs in the private sector. By 1989, only nine years after independence, 95% of the public service was staffed by black Zimbabweans with women generally occupying the lower ranks. The rapid growth in size of the civil service, from 40 000 established posts in 1980 to 90 000 in 1989 facilitated black occupational advancement but adversely affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. Today the public sector appears to be a haven in which nepotism, tribalism, fraud and corruption exist. Mismanagement, inefficiency, disinterest and poor credibility apparently characterise the public service.

At the time of the presidential decree on the public service in 1980, no affirmative action legislation was issued for the private sector. Instead, it was hoped that the private sector would voluntarily follow the example set by the state. Indeed although not compelled, companies in the private sector found it useful to appoint Blacks in personnel and public affairs where they perform a useful liaison role

with the government. The government's "hands off" policy was based on a concern that legislation might precipitate a mass exodus of white skill as had occurred in neighbouring Mozambique.

In any event, progress in the private sector has been significant. Government statistics indicate that the number of black Zimbabweans in professional, technical, administrative and managerial posts increased eight-fold between 1980 and 1987. This means that over 90% of the professional and technical jobs in the private and parastatal sectors now have black incumbents. However, Blacks tend to hold junior and middle management posts, and fill few top level positions resulting in what is called the 'Irish coffee' syndrome – the clustering of Blacks at lower levels and Whites at higher levels in the workplace hierarchy.

Are there any lessons for South Africa that can be learnt from Zimbabwe's experience of affirmative action? Castle (1995:7-12), Hofmeyer and Whata (1991:13-21) and Alfred (1991: 16) identified the following lessons that could be learnt:

- Although helpful, legislation is not the solution for affirmative action. In South Africa there has been an emphasis on eradication of discrimination through legislation. Legislation make certain requests of employers and those who do not fulfil the obligations set out in the legislation are breaking the law.
- Black people in management jobs want to know that they are there because of their qualifications and abilities.
- Affirmative action policies tend to favour already privileged sections of the society.
- The view of top management on affirmative action in general and the promotion of Black managers in particular are decisive for the success of process.
- Window dressing does not promote productivity of business enterprise or the interests of the Black community.

- The training and development of young managers, regardless of race, takes time.

- A well-planned strategy of affirmative action should be followed in order to resist pressure from the community and the government to implement effective measures.

- A high standard of general education is needed for success.

- Business enterprises should be proactive if compulsory affirmative action pressures from the government are expected in South Africa to give legitimacy to the attempts made by these enterprises.

- Affirmative action needs to be linked to broader strategies for economic reconstruction.

- Decisions should be based on business principles and not political rhetoric.

- The human resources management departments of enterprises will be first to experience the pressure to promote black people. They must therefore be trained for this at an early stage.

- Voluntary affirmative action must first be pursued before it is legally enforced.

In South Africa, as in Zimbabwe, both legislation and social practices have to change to ensure access to education, training and development. These are long-term goals. For the short and medium terms affirmative-action strategies are indispensable. Thus affirmative action must be holistically and carefully planned. Creative interventions should be pursued to realise affirmative-action goals and window dressing and/or tokenism should be avoided if affirmative action were to serve its intended purpose.

4.3.2 The Namibian experience

Namibia's experience of colonial occupation and exploitation goes back to 1884 when the territory was known as the German Protectorate of South West Africa. In the post World War One settlement of 1919, Germany renounced its colonial rights and Namibia became a British Mandate first under the League of Nations, then the United Nations. The British government delegated its mandate to the

Union of South Africa, and, although the mandate was formally terminated by the United Nations in 1966, South Africa continued to occupy and effectively rule Namibia until 1990 (Castle, 1996:125).

Up to independence, the South African state retained a monopoly of power in a weak civil society. Namibia's monetary, financial and commercial systems are still dominated by South African institutions, which are themselves vulnerable to external shocks and crises. Like Zimbabwe following independence, Namibia has become dependent on expatriate "experts" and organisations to implement improvements to its educational system and economy. Unlike Zimbabwe, foreign aid has been made readily available to Namibia, probably because its new leaders quickly renounced the socialist orientation advanced by the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) prior to independence.

As with Zimbabwe, at independence, the human resources of Namibia were characterised by the dominance of White males in decision-making and skilled posts in the private and public sectors of the economy. The relative lack of productive and entrepreneurial skills amongst the Black population are a consequence of deliberate neglect and exclusion in the colonial era, including the period after the Second World War when the apartheid system became entrenched. Castle (1996:126) states that other parallels with the Zimbabwean and indeed the South African situations are the relative affluence of the colonisers and poverty of the indigenous population; widespread, structural unemployment, skewed allocation of resources and services favouring the urban elite, and the prospect of white emigration following independence and majority rule, countered by an influx of exiles, including returning soldiers and party supporters, who expected assistance from the government.

At independence in 1990, Namibia adopted a new Constitution, of which Article 10 guarantees the equality of all persons before the law, and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or

socio-economic status. The Namibian Constitution attempts to weld the notions of equality, anti-discrimination and redress of past imbalances. Strengthening Article 10, Article 23 of the Constitution makes the practice and ideology of racial discrimination a criminal offence, and authorises Parliament to enact affirmative action to advance persons within Namibia who have been socially, economically and/or educationally disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws or practices. Parliament is further authorised to implement policies and programmes aimed at redressing social, economic and educational imbalances in Namibian society, including the public service, the police force, the defence force and the prison service (Constitution of Namibia). Article 23 further states that, "the enactment of legislation and the application of any policies and practices shall be permissible to have regard to the fact that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination and they need to be encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation".

One of the interesting things about this legislation is the possibility that it opens up for providing assistance to disadvantaged groups, determined by gender and socio-economic criteria rather than racial or ethnic criteria. An inadequate education, or poor living conditions, are recognised criteria for affirmative action, and it is acknowledged that not all people earn the right to assistance on the basis of their skin colour. Also evident is the interventionist role given to the government to act in the interest of achieving a "balanced" society (Castle, 1996).

According to Charlton and Van Niekerk (1994), a legislative programme, the Affirmative Action in Employment Act, drawn up in consultation with the International Labour Organisation, was enacted in 1994. This Act governs affirmative action in the public and private sectors of the economy, and requires organisations to take action to eliminate, revise or amend discriminatory employment practices. One way in which this is to be achieved is through the provision of special training programmes in companies employing over 50

persons, to ensure that employees in designated groups may acquire skills and qualifications for their advancement. The Act mandates preferential recruitment and the promotion of suitably qualified persons in designated groups to ensure their equitable representation in various positions of employment. Finally, employers are required to set numerical goals, timetables and objectives for affirmative action.

At independence in 1990, white civil servants in Namibia were guaranteed security of tenure, the new SWAPO government taking the view that in the interests of peace and reconciliation, a policy of inclusion of blacks, rather than exclusion of whites should guide the development of the civil service (Castle, 1996:130). However, openings for blacks were few until the size of the civil service was increased (from 57 000 at independence to 63 000 in 1993) with establishment of regional and local authorities. Castle (1996:130) is of the opinion that many jobs in the public sector which were earmarked for Namibians of black descent tend to be occupied by coloured people, privileged by their higher standard of education. As in Zimbabwe, the state has become the largest employer in Namibia. Unexpectedly, coloured people, privileged by their higher standard of education and language skills, have occupied many of the new jobs in the public sector, earmarked for Namibians of African decent.

So, what can South Africa learn from Namibia's experience of affirmative action so far? Although affirmative action in Namibia has not been applied for that long, it still holds certain lessons for South Africa.

The following lessons according to Castle (1996:14-19) and Swanepoel (1992:23-26) can be learnt from the Namibian experience if affirmative action were to be successfully implemented:

• Discriminatory employment practices should be revised and amended;

• Tokenism should be avoided;

• Good educational system should be built;

- Affirmative action strategies should be integrated with business needs and should not simply be a numerical exercise;

- There should be preferential recruitment and promotions of suitably qualified persons from the disadvantaged groups;

- Affirmative action should not be at the expense of business effectiveness and efficiency, but should rather support it;

- The persons appointed should be given real jobs and empowered to take responsibility; and

- Stakeholders should be consulted.

Although the Namibian Constitution has created opportunities for legislative programmes incorporating affirmative action, to date no such concrete legislation has actually been enacted. The Affirmative Action in Employment Bill calls for the necessity to recruit and promote employees on the basis of their qualifications and skills. The implication here is that South Africa can not solely rely on academic qualifications, but has to consider potential and recognise prior learning given that under apartheid South Africa, certain sections of the population only received inferior education.

4.3.3 The Zambian experience

Shortly after independence Zambia embarked on a very drastic process of "Zambianism" in order to eliminate all vestiges of colonialism as rapidly as possible. These included (Gerber, Nel and Van Dyk, 1996:195):

- Partial nationalisation of large multinational organisations;

- Whites were replaced by blacks in almost all jobs;

- Vacancies were created for blacks to fill; and

- Black education was improved.

According to Alfred (cited in Gerber *et al.*, 1996:195), the results of these steps were as follows: Zambia's economy was all but destroyed; education focused on

academic subjects, causing a shortage in technical skills; many blacks were placed in positions for which they were ill-equipped.

The lessons to be learnt by South Africa of the Zambian experiment in black advancement are summarised by Gerber *et al.* (1995:195) as follows:

- Transformation should not be too rapid.
- Black employees, like whites should not be promoted (or appointed) to jobs for which they have not been trained and in which they are incapable of achieving success.
- Education, especially in a developing country, should concentrate on market-related skills rather than on general, purely academic training.
- Economic policies should promote wealth and job creation.
- Redistribution of existing wealth through nationalisation and patronage may be detrimental to the economy as a whole.

The implications for South Africa are that the transformational agenda should not be rapid and the same time at the expense of economic growth. Also South Africa must ensure investment in education, training and development.

4.3.4 The Malaysian experience

In Malaysia, affirmative action is defined in ethnic rather than racial or gender terms. Statutory affirmative action policies favour the Malays, who constitute 55% of the population of 17 million, over the Chinese and Indians (who constitute 35% and 10% of the population respectively). Religious differences coincide with ethnic ones – the Malays are mostly Muslim, while the Chinese are either Buddhist or Pantheist, and the Indians are mostly Tamils (Thompson, 1993).

The Malaysian model is of particular interest to South Africa. Many parallels exist in terms of a majority (Malays) benefiting from affirmative-action programmes and religious differences coinciding with ethnic ones as explained above. Malaysia has made significant strides in implementing affirmative action when the minority

Chinese government and the Malay majority, anticipating a coalition government, set up a comprehensive plan to implement affirmative action while still maintaining economic standards.

Although much credit must go to the political and economic bargains struck in Malaysia, it needs to be borne in mind that affirmative action success was in large part due to a high economic growth rate where resources could be distributed. It is also debatable as to how much the political stability was vital for economic growth and how much economic growth was "fed" by affirmative action. At the end of the day the lesson that South Africa should learn from the Malay model is that both economic and political stability are vital for successful affirmative action (Charlton and Van Niekerk, 1994:41-42).

Castle (1995:19-25) points out the following as reasons why the Malay model is of special interest and relevance for the South African situation:

- The Malaysian affirmative action, just like the South African, is entrenched in the Constitution.
- Affirmative action in Malaysia is defined specifically in ethnic terms (i.e. beneficiaries are Malay people versus the other ethnic groups). This is the case in South Africa in respect of Blacks versus Whites.
- The group that was expected to benefit from affirmative action was also the group with preponderance of political power.
- The procedures of selection are on merit.
- The legitimate interests of other communities are protected by certain guarantees in the Constitution.

The lesson to be learnt from the Malaysian experience would be that affirmative action could fuel racial tension and conflict. According to Van Aardt (1994:96), "there has been a tendency for affirmative action to give rise to tension in the relations between preferred and non-preferred groups. A feeling of contempt is liable to develop between the two or more groups who then become polarised".

This was manifested in Malaysia by the riots of two decades after affirmative action had been introduced. The Malays felt that they were not advanced rapidly enough, while the Chinese felt that they were being cast aside.

According to Dent (1990) in Van Aardt (1994:97), South Africa should "on no account follow the Malaysian example of Bumi Putra by which Chinese are declared strangers in their own country of birth to protect Malays against competition by the efficient Chinese". The lesson for South Africa is that affirmative action which is based on racial or ethnic identity and compensatory discrimination is counter-productive. It does not promote harmonious race relations but encourages racial xenophobia. According to Plaut (1992:43) there is no better way of ingraining prejudice than using a system that allocates jobs and other benefits on the basis of skin colour.

4.3.5   The Sri Lankan experience

Sri Lanka is a country whose population is divided along linguistic and religious lines, with the majority group being the Sinhalese Buddhist and the Tamil Hindu being the minority. "During the nineteenth century missionaries built schools in predominantly Tamil areas in the north and east of the country. As a result of this historical favouring of the Tamils, they held a disproportionate share of government jobs, had higher levels of education and were generally better off than the Sinhalese majority" (Swanepoel, 2000:180). In 1956 a Sinhalese Buddhist political party came into power with the promise of elevating the Sinhalese. Accordingly, "one of the new government's interventions was to replace English as the official language of the country with Sinhalese. This policy produced dramatic results (since very few Tamils could speak Sinhalese): within a decade the Tamil composition of the civil service had dropped from 50% to 15% …" (Swanepoel, 2000:180). Likewise, entrance examinations for tertiary education were no longer to be in English. Furthermore, when authorities saw that Tamils still represented a disproportionate share of tertiary education entrants, a directive was issued in terms of which entrance examination marks

had to be standardised so as to produce Sinhalese and Tamil pass rates in strict proportion to the composition of the national population. Resentment among the Tamils grew as they saw themselves being marginalised in medical and engineering schools, the universities and jobs in the public sector. Furthermore, jobs in the private sector decreased for Tamil school-leavers because the government had nationalised much of the private sector.

Swanepoel (2000:180) is of the opinion that the "Sri Lankan experience is an example of an affirmative action experiment which went horribly wrong. As a direct consequence of the government's affirmative action policy, the country has been involved in a bloody civil war in which thousands have been killed when the young Tamils took to arms and called for the creation of an independent Tamil state and also the economy was adversely affected."

"What is especially ironic and is that during the 1970s a pro labour-market Sinhalese government took office and set out to liberalise the economy, achieving considerable success in privatisation and job creation. Sadly this came late, since many young Tamils were already so alienated from the sociopolitical mainstream that they could not be enticed back into civil society and the armed struggle continued unabated" (Swanepoel, 2000:180-181).

Wiener (1993, cited in Swanepoel, 2000:181) concludes his review of the Sri Lankan failure with the following synopsis:
"... a misguided affirmative action policy proved destructive for the country's political and economic development, and for relations among the country's major ethnic communities. Affirmative action had become an instrument of the majority Sinhalese for using its political power to restrict opportunities for the Tamils; it was not a policy that emerged out of consensus among the major ethnic groups in the country. Moreover special opportunities for some had in effect 'eaten up' equal opportunities for all with disastrous consequences for the country."

The developments in Sri Lanka mirror the situation in South Africa with young Afrikaners viewing the call for English as a medium of instruction in previously Afrikaans-speaking institutions of learning as an onslaught against the language (that is, Afrikaans) and also resenting affirmative action as it alienates them from appointment and/or promotions in employment.

Swanepoel (2000:181) lists the following as the lessons that South Africa can learn from the Sri Lankan experience with regard to affirmative action:

- In an ethnically divided society a strong modality of affirmative action may lead to serious civil unrest if it takes place in the context of slow economic growth (because each affirmative-action appointment is at the cost of someone from the marginalised groups).
- Policies amounting to outcome quotas (which is what, in effect, the university entrance examinations in Sri Lanka became), may spawn deeply felt resentment.
- If a minority group feels itself excluded from sharing in the social good on offer (such as government jobs and tertiary education opportunities), it might seek its salvation in violent means.
- The harm done by an ill-considered affirmative action policy is very difficult to undo (and may prove impossible in the case of Sri Lanka – secession of the eastern and northern regions of the country in an independent state may well be the only long-term solution to the civil war).
- A government's use of affirmative action as a political weapon to suppress minorities rather than as a way to create employment opportunities for all may backfire, with disastrous consequences for society as a whole.

The Sri Lankan experience shows us that we should never loose focus of the fact that equality of opportunity is the objective of affirmative action and the establishment of majority control in all institutions and every sphere of social and public life. For instance, the demand that all universities should reflect the demographics of society would inevitably result in each and every university in

South Africa having to be English and black in character, with scant regard for minority groups' cultural interests.

4.4 Conclusion

There is no uniform model of affirmative action. In the US, the issue is highly controversial. It proceeds from the majority to a minority, has no secure constitutional foundation, and gets caught up in electoral politics. We certainly do not need to import all the complicated arguments specific to the American situation into our debate. What most commentators seem to accept is that although affirmative action in the US has undoubtedly helped a black professional class to grow and enabled women to advance their professional careers, it has not significantly improved the lives of the mass of poor black people, nor in any major way counteracted sexual oppression.

In India, affirmative action has certainly helped members of the "untouchables" and other oppressed groups. Yet it has been criticised for giving people a stake in identifying themselves as members of a group simply because it gives them material advantages – in this case, quota access to universities and state employment. A similar point has been made about affirmative action in Malaysia, where it has helped in a significant and visible way to open up the economy and the civil service to the majority Malay population, but at the price of encouraging a communal rather than national consciousness.

When considering affirmative action in South Africa, important lessons could be drawn from the experiences of the abovementioned countries, if it were to succeed without alienating any sector of society. However, it should be appreciated that there is no one-size-fits-all international affirmative action programme, thus each strategy should be based on the unique national and organisational needs. Thus, it is prudent for South Africa to draw lessons from these eclectic experiences from selected countries, but allowing the material

conditions to dictate the ultimate format and shape of affirmative action to be adopted.

Lastly, as noted above, affirmative action has been practiced in a number of countries and as a result thereof valuable lessons could be drawn by South Africa in terms of what is required for the successful implementation of this policy. Malaysia is perhaps the closest comparator for South Africa in the sense that statutory affirmative action policies have been adopted in favour of the Malays who constitute the majority of that country.

The next chapter discusses in detail the literature review on perceptions about affirmative action.

LITERATURE ON THE AFFIRMATIVE-ACTION DISCOURSE

5.1   Introduction

To millions affirmative action is a beacon of positive expectation. To others it is an alarming spectre, which is viewed as a threat to their personal security and a menace to their integrity of public life (Nelson Mandela)

The preceding chapter gave a cursory glance at the historical evolution and understanding of affirmative action in various countries. It is against this rich historical background that the study will now turn the focus to the literature on perceptions of affirmative action and associated problems.

As noted in the preceding chapter, the concept affirmative action owns its origin to the United States of America (US). According to the American Psychology Association, "affirmative action is appropriately defined as a remedy for both past and continuing discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender. Affirmative action plans seek to put in place voluntary and mandatory efforts by federal, state, and local governments, private employers, and schools to combat discrimination and foster fair hiring and advancement of qualified individuals" (American Psychology Association, 1999). Affirmative action plans are based on an analysis of how well women and minorities are represented in targeted areas, such as employment settings, and the percentage of qualified individuals from these backgrounds who are part of the larger pool of potential employees. At their core, however, affirmative action plans are designed to create opportunity and to eliminate both conscious and inadvertent discrimination.

In the US, affirmative action sought to redress the injustices and racial imbalances that existed in the country despite the constitutional guarantees and laws banning racial discrimination. It was anticipated, from the outset, that affirmative action would be a temporary measure to be employed mainly to level

the playing field for all Americans irrespective of racial groupings (Msimang, 2001). Skedsvold and Mann (1996:1) say that, "Many supporters view Affirmative Action as a milestone, many opponents see it as a millstone, and many others regard it as both or neither – as a necessary, but imperfect, remedy for an intractable social disease. Our own view is that the case against affirmative action is weak, resting, as it does so heavily, on myth and misunderstanding".

5.2   Research on people's perceptions of affirmative action

Research on people's perceptions of affirmative action policies has been limited to studies in the US. Crosby (1994) argues that an important belief underlying attitudes toward affirmative action in the US is the perception that it is needed to remedy discrimination. It is proposed that African-Americans and affirmative-action supporters are more likely to believe that without this remedy discrimination in the hiring of African-Americans would be common, while White Americans and affirmative-action opponents are less likely to believe that discrimination would be common if affirmative action is abolished. This belief in a 'fair world' regarding hiring decisions may be a strong predictor of attitude towards affirmative action, particularly the more controversial race-based preference in hiring.

Kravitz and Platania (1993) conducted a survey on the attitudes of American students towards affirmative action. The sample consisted of 419 undergraduates. The sample embodied; male and female, White, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Asian-Americans. The researchers hypothesised that "attitudes towards affirmative action will vary with beliefs about what it entails" (Kravitz and Platania, 1993:928). The aim of the research was to find out why people support or oppose affirmative-action policies. Their research aimed to determine the demographic differences in attitudes towards affirmative action and the students' knowledge about what the term actually means.

The researchers found that participants responded more positively to affirmative-action programmes aimed at women and the disabled, than to those aimed at minorities. Kravitz and Platania (1993), argue that the reason why disabled people are seen to be deserving of affirmative-action policies is related to the difficulties they experience which are seen to be beyond their control. However, minorities are seen by White males to be deserving of the economic difficulties that they experience because they are perceived to be lacking in intelligence or are uneducated. Kravitz and Platania (1993) found that women and Blacks are more positive about affirmative action than White men, even when the policies are not aimed at them. "In general these results were consistent with both self-interest and racism explanations, with Whites responding least favourably and Blacks responding most favourably" (Kravitz and Platania, 1993:934).

The researchers concluded that eradicating and dissolving misconceptions about affirmative action could reduce opposition and conflict involved in affirmative-action policies. Furthermore Kravitz and Platania (1993) recommended that explaining the underlying philosophy of the policies could effectively decrease opposition to policies and laws. Secondly, they argued that negative reactions to affirmative-action policies can be minimised by emphasising the importance of qualifications in the hiring and promotion decisions. Finally, they believe that support for affirmative action policies can be accrued by stressing that special efforts would be taken in recruiting and that training would be executed before and after recruitment. Kravitz and Platania (1993) stress that conflict and disagreement over affirmative action can be avoided by effectively structuring a policy in such a way as to minimise opposition and by expelling misconceptions about affirmative action. Further, the psychological and behavioural research on affirmative action-related attitudes in the United States reviewed by Kravitz and Platania (1993), suggests that people judge affirmative action more positively when they are perceived to give precedence to "universalistic contributions", such as merit and other capacities that may influence performance, over "particularistic contributions", such as race, ethnicity, or other individual attributes that are not

seen to directly influence performance. Negative judgements were most often based on claims that affirmative action results in reverse discrimination, and forces organisations to act unfairly by recruiting and promoting candidates on the basis of demographic status rather than individual merits.

Bobo and Kleugal (1993) surveyed White opposition to policies which target race such as affirmative action, to see whether it is caused by self-interest, stratification ideology or racial attitudes. "We hypothesise that opposition hinges on the explicitness of the race-targeting and whether the policy's goal is opportunity enhancement or equality of outcomes. We also hypothesise that the influence of individual's self-interest, beliefs about inequality and racial attitudes on opinions, differs by whether or not a policy is race-targeted and by a policy's goal" (Bobo and Kleugal, 1993:443). They analyse opinions towards race-targeted versus income-targeted opportunity-enhancing polices (training and educational programmes) and toward race-targeted versus income-targeted equal outcomes (specific hiring quotas) policies (Bobo and Kleugal, 1993). The researchers used the data from a 1990 General Social Survey, which covered a full probability sample of English-speaking Black and White adults, living in households in the United States.

Bobo and Kleugal (1993) found that race targeting tends to decrease Whites' support for social policies. This reduction in support is even larger when comparing policies that aim to equalise outcomes for Blacks and Whites. Moreover the authors found that lower-educated respondents expressed stronger support for income-targeted policies than for race-targeted policies. Bobo and Kleugal (1993) argue that this is explained by the association of education with racial attitudes. It is believed that people with higher levels of education will understand and have a greater knowledge of the reasons for affirmative action programmes and will therefore support such programmes. With regard to group self-interest, it was found that there was opposition to race-targeted policies if the respondents believed that race-targeted policies would assist Blacks to the

detriment of the working class Whites. The strongest aspect of group self-interest seems to be a simple calculation by Whites that members of their own group will not benefit.

In the same way as that was used in the US, affirmative action is being employed in South Africa to facilitate meaningful transformation of the society, to bring about equality and social justice and redress the effects of past imbalances and injustices caused by successive apartheid governments. In the US, affirmative action has been associated essentially with minorities, whereas in Africa in general and South Africa in particular affirmative action is aimed at the majority, and high on the list of disadvantaged groups who will benefit, is that of black people, and women, who make up 90.4 % and 52.2% of the population respectively (Census 2001: 13, 8). South African citizens face very different challenges. In the USA affirmative action is viewed as a strategy to achieve individual advancement, whereas in South Africa it is understood as a way in which collective empowerment can be reached (Cock and Bernstein, 1998).

From its inception in the body politic of South Africa, the term "affirmative action" became both a buzzword and a battle cry. Proponents of affirmative action speak glowingly of its potential to wipe out the effects of prior discrimination and raise the historically disadvantaged groups to their deserved status in society. Opponents speak disparagingly of how "the quota system" not only penalises individuals who played no part in perpetrating the prior discrimination, but also stigmatises those who are theoretically benefiting from it. The tension that characterises the affirmative-action debate is centred on the question of whether affirmative action is in fact an appropriate mechanism for achieving equality for historically disadvantaged groups in the workplace, or instead, a subtle but definite form of the type of discrimination that the South African Constitution and other legislative instrument, were designed to prohibit.

Arguments are propounded that affirmative action does not have any economic benefits and impedes economic efficiency and growth – these include the argument that affirmative action leads to lowering of standards and the subversion of the merit principle and entails a departure from the normal process of appointment and promotion according to merit (Albertyn and White, 1994:58). The South African Institute of Race Relations classified the Employment Equity Act as employing similar methodologies and has a similar interventionist mindset to apartheid legislation – it requires race classification and extensive bureaucratic policing (Christianson, 1998:32).

Affirmative action has become the cornerstone of most discussions. Opinions are divided and feelings run high, as manifested by the accompanying statements, which summarise the arguments in favour for and against affirmative action. In presenting an argument in favour of a legislation that sought to introduce affirmative action, Godfrey Oliphant, an ANC MP and chairman of parliament's portfolio committee on labour, argued that, *"you cannot redress past injustices if you deny history. The Bill (Employment Equity) therefore recognises groups in order to provide an effective framework to, among other things, de-racialise our society."* Tony Leon, the leader of the Democratic Party/Alliance, countered by arguing that, "[It] *is a pernicious piece of social engineering, pious in intention but destructive in effect"*.

To its supporters, affirmative action is seen as the most comprehensive anti-discriminatory legislation in the world. Its vocal detractors however condemn it as a re-introduction of the principle of apartheid and racial favouritism. Like most debates, there is merit in the arguments of both sides — much of which is presently clouded in political rhetoric and emotive statements. There is probably no concept that has unleashed as much anxiety in the corporate world as the concept of "affirmative action". Attempts at political correctness by changing the term to that of "equity" have generated even more anxiety than the intended objective of effecting a change in perceptions around the concept. The apparent

reason for anxiety is arguably the socialisation and beliefs associated with racial attitudes inherited from the previous socio-political order. President Mbeki recently noted that, "so wide, historically, is the gulf between black and white, that in reality we have different perceptions of South Africa, depending where you are, this side of the street or the other" (Young, 2001:22).

Leonard (2005:2) argues "reactions to and perceptions of affirmative action in the South African context are varied. These reactions are often categorised as emotionally charged and/or explosive. Many people fear the implications of affirmative action, specifically the impact thereof on their individual positions within the workplace. Those who feel threatened by these measures, tend to question the political and ethical legitimacy thereof. Those who stand to benefit from these measures often dislike the labelling associated with these measures". Leonard (2005:2) further says that "the sources of conflicting reactions to affirmative action stem from individuals, groups and cultural beliefs and values which were both shaped by the political realities of the previous regime and the ideas people cherish for themselves in the current dispensation".

Media coverage fans the flames of controversy, but seldom does this coverage enhance the public's ability to make a reasoned analysis of the various perspectives of this issue. Affirmative action is a multidimensional construct, and because both media and political debates tend to frame issues in terms of conflict between polarised supporters and opponents, the underlying areas of agreement may be obscured and the real areas of substantive conflict not addressed. In the ongoing debate on race-based affirmative-action programmes, black people and whites are often portrayed as polarised. This study proposes that both those who claim to be supporters and those who are opponents of affirmative action may actually support some type of affirmative action procedures, such as recruitment activities directed at increasing the number of designated groups. In addition, both supporters and opponents may actually be against preference-based employment procedures that are used in some affirmative-action programmes.

The general public perception of affirmative action as "reverse discrimination" and/or "hiring quotas" is widespread and provokes intensely negative reaction among Whites. Today, it is highly unlikely that most Whites would deny equal employment opportunity to any of their fellow South Africans, regardless of race or gender. Yet, at the same time, Whites do not want to be discriminated against either. That is why it is questionable whether the concept of South African-style affirmative-action programmes, with numerical quotas by racial/gender groups, will meet with any enthusiasm by the White population. While there is no extant research to prove it, many White South Africans probably agree with controversial author, Don Caldwell, who writes: "(A)ffirmative action leads to unintended (but easily predictable) consequences. It increases group conflict, as resentment by the punished groups grows and the demands of the beneficiaries increase. It emphasises group differences, rather than eliminating them. It discourages effort by the beneficiaries, who come to expect special privileges. And it destroys equality at law" (Enterprise, 1992). Without doubt the concept of affirmative action is controversial and frightening to many White South Africans. They would likely regard affirmative action as reverse discrimination which they may feel will place the criterion of race before that of merit (South African Institute for Race Relations, 1994). In a recent best-selling book by a Black South African, 'fear of affirmative action' was underscored by its author as the number one fear of White South Africans (Mbigi, 1995). Although providing no documentary evidence to support his claim, the author claims the fear of affirmative action is greater than previous White fears with respect to a blackled South African government (Mbigi, 1995:57).

However, actual affirmative-action practices can range from increased recruitment efforts to preferential selection. These varying definitions of affirmative action are one likely source of the wide variance in attitudes. Evidence of past discrimination in an organisation and information about the competence and qualifications of a designated employee are moderate variables that influence evaluations of affirmative-action fairness. In addition, there may be a

discrepancy between the theory of how affirmative action is supposed to be implemented and how it is actually practiced in an organisational setting. Affirmative-action advocates may be supporting the affirmative action "ideal", while affirmative-action detractors may be attacking implementation practices that stray far from the ideal. While some may believe that affirmative-action opponents are motivated by racism, self-interest, or a desire to limit Blacks' employment opportunities, it is also possible that many who oppose affirmative action believe that Blacks should be hired based on merit and that the majority of employers would not intentionally discriminate against blacks. It is suggested by researchers that beliefs about people, organisations, and management programmes, tend to be consistent with attitudinal behaviours related to them (Human, 1991). This premise has encouraged efforts to link various attitudinal antecedents to the impact of affirmative-action programmes. Kluegel and Smith (1983) have identified symbolic racism as a possible source of Whites, hostility to affirmative action. This belief embraces political conservatism and racial prejudice, and is seen to engender animosity towards blacks. Employee attitudes have been identified as one of the major determinants of the effectiveness of affirmative-action programmes aimed at blacks (Day, 1991). The presence of employment discrimination was more obvious prior to 1994 due to the apartheid policy, however today social norms inhibit public and to some degree private expression of racist attitudes. Sitas (1994) states that affirmative action has a deeper and more profound meaning: it is the creation of equal life-chances between people. Read differently, it is the eradication of racism and racial blockages (and sexism) from every nook and cranny of society. Affirmative action is not merely an intervention to put blacks and women into managerial positions, but it is affirming concretised action to train and develop them internally for managerial roles. This intervention by the state and non-governmental organisations in the reorganisation of the economic processes will have to promote the equitable ownership and participation of all members of the society.

Mhone, Humber, Gault, and Mokhobo (1998:7) argue that:

> given the 'racial' construction of privilege and discrimination in South Africa, the differences among affirmative action 'target-group' and 'non-target-group' members' demographic status, histories of relative deprivation, personal and collective interests, and political ideologies may lead to a polarisation of attitudes towards affirmative action plans with the one group perceiving them from the perspective of 'beneficiaries of past discrimination', and the other from perspective of 'bearing the burden of the actions of their forefathers'.

In October 1991, former President Nelson Mandela made the speech which set the tone and became a guide in the application of affirmative action measures:

> We are not … asking for handouts for anyone, nor are we saying that just as a white skin was a passport to a privileged past, so a black skin should be the basis for privilege in the future. Nor … is it our aim to do away with qualifications … The special measures that we envisage to overcome the legacy of the past discrimination are not intended to ensure the advancement of unqualified persons, but to see to it that those who have been denied access to qualifications in the past can become qualified now, and those who have been qualified all along but overlooked because of past discrimination, are at last given the due … the first point to be made is that affirmative action must be rooted in principles of justice and equality (Sunday Times, 31 August 2003).

Thomas (1996) reports that in the beginning of 1995, 213 South African Companies were surveyed about their attitudes towards affirmative-action policies. Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and Human Resources Directors (HRD) reported that their staff lacked personal identification with and commitment to affirmative action and there were even cases of overt and covert sabotage of

affirmative-action programmes (Thomas, 1996). Moreover Thomas (1996:37) stated that "it appears that programmes of induction and orientation have not received as much attention and it could be anticipated that new affirmative action appointees may initially be left in the dark when joining the organisation". Thomas (1996) found that new employees were merely forced to forget about their differences and just to fit in with the rest of the crowd. But this is easier said than done.

Mkwanazi and Rall (cited in Qunta, 1995), commented on research conducted on companies in 1987, which provided evidence that Whites' attitudes to African advancement were negative, which would restrain the establishment of a healthy working environment. But in 1992/3 it was found that the tables had turned and that Whites' attitudes to African advancement were more positive (cited in Qunta, 1995). There are, however, problems with this research. The survey was not random and the companies who agreed to be researched had paid quite a bit of attention to African advancement. Moreover, the research was done at a time when political transformation was occurring, so it is possible that White employees' attitudes improved as the political climate improved. Mkwanazi and Rall (cited in Qunta, 1995) did find negative attitudes amongst Whites, which they argued would be to the detriment of African advancement and to the organisation's atmosphere. They argue that "consultants and companies may well focus on numbers and be prepared to improve them, however, not enough attention has been given to creating a climate inside companies conducive to developing the enormous skills and potential of Black professionals" (cited in Qunta, 1995:38).

Lea, Bokhorst and Colenso (1995) investigated racism among school children in terms of symbolic racism and traditional racism. 150 school children from two secondary private schools in Cape Town were surveyed. Questionnaires were administered which looked at demographic information, two validation items testing political party allegiance and their broader socio-political outlook, a 10

item Subtle Racism scale, and anti-Black scale was used to test traditional racism (Lea, Bokhorst and Colenso,1995).

These authors argued that, "the theory of symbolic racism contends that white resistance to social policies such as affirmative action is rooted in prejudiced attitudes towards black people and represent a more sophisticated form of racism than traditional or red-necked racism" (Lea, Bokhorst and Colenso, 1995:224). They explain how theorists believe that old-fashioned racism, which focuses on the belief of White supremacy, Black inferiority and racial segregation, has fallen by the way side. But in its' place, a 'new' racism has taken over, this racism has been called, "symbolic', 'sophisticated', 'modern' and 'subtle'. They explain that symbolic racism is created through early socialisation and is alleged to be revealed in a set of convictions, such as the opposition to affirmative-action polices, that are explained in on a non-racial basis but that preserve the racial status quo (Lea, Bokhorst and Colenso, 1995). So, symbolic racism adopts Whites' rejection of the principles of racial injustices simultaneously with their continued resistance to social policies designed to address such injustice (Lea, Bokhorst and Colenso, 1995).

Hofmeyr and Templer (1991) report on a study of the perceptions of 340 South African managers of the progress made in black advancement, prior to 1992. 90% of the sample was White and 6% Black managers. Both Blacks and Whites believed that little progress had been made in achieving equality, specifically in the areas of training opportunities and equal pay for equal work. The respondents were asked to rank in order, six factors that prevented companies from advancing Blacks into management jobs. Black respondents placed 'fear of White employee reaction' as the second most important, ahead of 'perceived inability of Black workers to be managers' and behind 'poor education of Black employees'. The differential perception of White employees, fears is further illustrated in the answers to two additional questions. Seventeen percent of White respondents agreed that 'Whites will suffer' and 38% agreed that 'work standards

will fall' as a result of Black advancement. In contrast no Black respondents agreed with either statement.

Nel (1996), in her investigation into affirmative action in the Port Elizabeth municipality, questioned selected White management officials. She found that 70.5% of the respondents agreed that affirmative action is important in order to achieve equal employment opportunities in municipal departments; 54.1% believed that the main objective of affirmative action is Black advancement; 63.3% believed that it discriminated unfairly against individuals who are not members of disadvantaged groups; 58.4% of the respondents believed that affirmative action would lower the standards in municipal departments; and 53.4% did not believe that affirmative action meant giving preference to unqualified members of disadvantaged groups when making employment decisions (Nel, 1996).

Another case study was conducted by Van der Merwe (1995) on Eskom and their affirmative action policy. Fifty-three in-depth structured interviews were conducted with mainly White males and females. It was found that communication and dissemination of Eskom's affirmative-action policy was quite weak, and top management recognised this problem. Management blamed line managers for their lack of cooperation in disseminating the information, but line managers argued that they did not understand enough about the policy. Specific strengths of the affirmative-action policy most frequently mentioned in the interviews included the existence of a policy with targets and accountability structures, the appointment of 3 Black executive directors to the management board and the appointment of a Black power station manager (Van der Merwe, 1995). Van der Merwe (1995) found that the areas that still needed to be worked on included making the cost of not complying with the policy more visible and developing creative mechanisms to deal with persistent covert discrimination within the organisation. More specifically, several senior human resource

managers were concerned that the affirmative-action programme was being interpreted simply as a numbers game (Van der Merwe, 1995).

In April 1999, the Gauteng Post Office held a workshop for its midlevel staff (Schmidt, 1999). The intention of the workshop was to determine the reasons why there had been 4200 internal conflicts that needed mediation, of which the majority were racially motivated (Schmidt, 1999). The Post Office invited Zimbabwean motivational speaker, Professor Mbigi, to improve race relations for it, in turn to improve efficiency in the Post Office. The workshop began with Blacks and Whites expressing how they felt about each other. White middle-management said that Blacks: "Picked their noses and were incapable of eating properly, were murderous, barbaric and unable to take responsibility, were messy, argumentative litterbugs and were unable to comprehend or reason properly" (Schmidt, 1999:5). Blacks, in turn stated that Whites, "had a superiority complex and were patronising, were unsociable, racist gossips who only pretended to like Blacks, smelled bad and were dirty, and were inhumane spies with no sense of ubuntu" (Schmidt, 1999:5). Whites stated that they enjoyed apartheid because the crime was lower, there was job security for Whites, there were no squatters and because Blacks knew their place. Blacks said apartheid gave them a sense of unity, that their health was better and they could rely on their culture and tradition (Schmidt, 1999).

An analysis of recent opinion surveys reveals that race remains one of the most significant variables in determining attitudes on most political, economic and social questions. Questions relating to Blacks' economic empowerment and affirmative actions are no exception. According to the F W De Klerk Foundation (2005), surveys conducted by Research Surveys and Markinor found that Black and White South Africans differ fundamentally on the question of whether affirmative action is necessary to make up for the wrongs of the past.

- In 1997 72.3% of Blacks agreed that there was a necessity for affirmative action contrasted with only 19.6 % of Whites who agreed with this proposition. The two races also appeared, if anything, to be moving further apart on this question: the previous year the figures had been 71.8% and 24.6% respectively. The White attitudes did not reflect a general unwillingness to work with Black South Africans since approximately 60% of Whites who disagreed with affirmative action also supported integrated schools and communities.

- 77% of Whites also opposed the idea that people from previously disadvantaged groups should be given preferential treatment in the allocation of employment opportunities. More than 60% of Blacks, 43% of Coloureds and 47% of Indians agreed that such treatment was necessary.

- Interestingly, most South Africans agreed that people who had suffered under apartheid had received sufficient financial compensation. 34% of Blacks agreed and 29% disagreed while 69% of Whites agreed with the proposition while only 8% opposed it.

- In a 2003 survey 47.4% of Blacks agreed that it was fair that the people who discriminated against others during apartheid should feel what it was like to be discriminated against – compared with 14.8% of Whites.

5.3   Problems associated with affirmative action

With the introduction of affirmative action, people who were against it claimed that the ANC government shares two obsessions with the National Party (NP) government, namely racial ideology and state control. Like the apartheid government, it was accused of seeing the government in racial terms, hence the introduction of affirmative-action programmes. As the NP had been condemned for ruling the country along racial lines, the ANC government also experienced criticism about the introduction of affirmative action and was seen as operating on racial lines too. Schreiner (1996:18) says, "it must be understood that affirmative action is an agent of equitable relations, but it is not equality or equity in itself. For South Africa, affirmative action should be understood to be part of

the transformation away from apartheid, poverty and exploitation." Blanchard and Crosby (1989:3-7) lament that some affirmative-action programmes are problematic, but not irremediable. To recognise the reasons why people resist affirmative action is not to advocate abandonment of the policy. On the contrary, people need to improve and strengthen affirmative-action programmes so that they can be and appear to be fair and effective. They argue that affirmative action should not benefit only a chosen few. The argument by those who opposed affirmative action, advocated that the wrongs of the apartheid government in discriminating in the labour market do not now become right under the present ANC government. They asked whether the ANC was suffering from the syndrome called 'it's my turn to make the same mistakes'. These people claimed that two wrongs do not necessarily make a right. They believed that affirmative action in the workplace, where a Black or Coloured person gets preference for a job offer, is discriminatory.

> Those competing for the jobs find it unfair and employers often feel dissatisfied because in most cases best candidates for those jobs are not the ones who get appointed. This statement shows that there is a deeply racist element to the reasoning against affirmative action. This element is based on the contention that Whites naturally inherited positions of dominance because of superior skills and heritage, while the opposite holds for blacks (Sonn, 1993:1-5).

Those opposed to affirmative action argue that its introduction is bad for business because appointing staff according to criteria other than merit reduces productivity and hamper South Africa's economic recovery and ability to compete in the world economy. In the Sunday Times (19 December 1999) Jon Qwelane indicated that both black empowerment and affirmative action failed the people. He stated that the two concepts are not accompanied by any practical enforcement such as legally binding definitions. Affirmative action having been stigmatised by its detractors by likening it to wholesale blackening of the

workplace, the programme never had a credible start. He further argued that affirmative action was grounded in the political and historical context of South Africa. Many of the emerging elite used it to advance their personal interests. Affirmative action should not just be about putting black people in positions they were previously denied, but it should deal with the inequalities.

The other main argument against affirmative action in South Africa is the fact that it is viewed as discrimination in reverse because it implies preferential treatment of certain racial, ethnic and/or gender groups. The charge is usually that the policy discriminates against persons who were not the actual perpetrators of past discrimination. A political analyst, Van Zyl Slabbert, speaking at the launch of a report titled *The Revival of Racial Classification in Post-apartheid South Africa* said that the government's effort to empower blacks through affirmative action reflected a racial mindset similar to that of apartheid and was doomed to fail. He further said that South Africa should move away from its "stubborn" obsession with race and focus on socio-economic backgrounds of people to transform the country (Pretoria News, 29 June 2006).

Equally, some Coloured persons and people of Asiatic extraction (Indians) harbour resentments by indicating that sometimes they are neglected when affirmative action is implemented. They sometimes state that, in apartheid days they were not considered white enough, and now in the ANC-led government they are not considered black enough. A respondent in a study by Adam (2000:52) commented that, "while Coloureds and Indians are also considered as affirmative-action candidates they do not get top priority. First prize it would seem, would be given to hiring a black African as an affirmative candidate".

Richard van der Ross, an academic, says he fully supports the implementation of affirmative action in South Africa. However, what frustrates him is the plight of the Coloured people in the whole advancement of affirmative action. He indicates the following about affirmative action:

The need for affirmative action is not denied, nor the need for a policy of equal opportunity for Africans. There is also widespread resentment that Africans are in so many cases given unfair advantage over our sons and daughters [that is Coloured people]. The general cry is that before 1994, we were not white enough; now we are not black enough. Oppression by whites must not be replaced by oppression by Africans (Sunday Times, 28 September 2003).

This perception is strengthened by an incident in 2006 at Eskom, when Leon Christianns a Coloured man was allegedly told he is 'too white' to benefit from the company's affirmative-action programme. Only Christianns, a Coloured male and an African male were short-listed and interviewed for an advertised position. Both met the minimum requirements, but Christianns was awarded higher points. He was recommended for appointment by the selection panel but senior management awarded the position to the African male. Christianns referred the dispute to private arbitration, alleging unfair discrimination and/or an unfair labour practice relating to promotion. He argued he was part of the EEA's designated group and was part of a population group which had been previously disadvantaged and that Eskom had unfairly discriminated against him on the grounds of his race when he was informed that a promotion that had been offered to him had been withdrawn and the position offered to an African candidate. Eskom maintains that the decision is in line with the company's Employment Equity Policy, which specifically allowed for the appointment of an African male. On 13 April 2006, the Cape Town private arbitration in its award on the matter said African people must be selected over Coloured and other ethnic groups in terms of affirmative action and further the court found that Coloured people were less disadvantaged in the past than African people and this is why Africans should benefit more from affirmative action. In practice, this arbitration award could have far-reaching consequences for other minority groups who are part of the designated group as in future it might result in the exclusion of

Coloured people, Indians, the disabled and White women from affirmative action. Not only does this arbitration award have legal consequences, but it also has social ramifications as it might be the catalyst to worsen race relations in an already polarised society.

It is alarming to see affirmative action used in a contra-affirmative manner to impose exclusion on Coloured people and South Africans of Indian origin. Even if their status was relatively privileged compared to Africans they were subjected to various forms of discrimination and are entitled to be the beneficiaries not the victims of affirmative action. They are largely still treated as second-class citizens. Few are to be found in higher reaches of national or local government. Tummala (1999: 506) makes a critical observation that:

> …there appears to be a trend in South Africa where fair-skinned "coloureds" who previously called themselves "white" to obtain better pay, or at least escape from the dreadful apartheid practice, are now rushing to be classified as blacks to reap the benefits of the new affirmative action policy ("Out of the Colored Closet," 1998).

The ANC was accused by amongst others an anti-apartheid activist, Dr. Allan Boesak, of reintroducing the "language of racial categorisation", thereby polarising South African society. Thus, at present there is great public uncertainty about the role of Coloured persons in affirmative action.

The researcher is of the view that, if one is going to make use of racial categories for policy purpose, one needs to specify exactly how those categories are defined and what biological and physical characteristics would be used. As with any policy, the definitions of all concepts used must be explicit and unambiguous. The definition and classification of racial groups by discernible characteristic is not performed at any point within the Employment Equity Act. The importance of

this point has been made by Professor David Benatar in a newspaper article tilted, "*My critics have failed the rigorous test reason*", in which he says:

> Given that a criterion for racial classification is absolutely essential for any racial preference policy it is very revealing than none of [my critics] has risen to that challenge. There is an obvious explanation for this – they are fearful of picking up this hot potato. They cannot use self-classification as a criterion, because then anybody could classify himself as "black" and be eligible for preference. Yet any objective criterion would be far too reminiscent of apartheid-style classifications. Defenders of racial preferences are being less than honest with us. They want a race-based policy, but they cannot provide workable criteria for determining people's 'race'. They are reliant on people's classifying themselves according to apartheid-style criteria. This is not an acceptable basis for public policy (Cape Times, 20 June 2007).

5.4   The numbers game: lowering of standards and tokenism

Tied to the whole notion of affirmative action is the quota system, or the setting of targets. According to Sachs in Adams (1993:141), "racial quotas are so ugly that they can only be justified on the grounds that the alternative, that of permitting continual racial disadvantage, is even more distasteful". The idea of quota system, or setting of targets, however, has been met with opposition from certain quarters. Charlton *et al.* (1994) are of the view that the classical objection relating to the quota system and the consequent 'lowering of standards' is based on the incorrect premise that affirmative-action programmes only concerns itself with or address issues of quantity (quotas) while allowing quality to suffer. In the US, quotas are used as penalties against companies or institutions for some, but not all, proven discriminatory practices. Even in cases where quotas or timetables are enforced, employers are not obliged to employ a person who is less qualified than, for instance, a white male candidate. According to Nathan (1994:142), affirmative action should be designed and implemented in a manner that takes

into account the arguments raised by its opponents, that putting inexperienced people into positions of authority will inevitably compromise standards, and undermine the morale of both black and white personnel. The primary aim of affirmative-action programmes should be to train Blacks rather than fill quotas. Nkuhlu (1993:12) on the other hand states that affirmative action would be futile if its only aim was to compensate for the wrongs of the past.

"The Institute of People Management (IPM) believes that those who accuse affirmative action of resulting in a lowering of standards are either presuming 'an inherent lack of ability by Black people''' (1994:5), or confusing affirmative action with the practice of tokenism" (Hayward, 1995:73). The Black Management Forum (1993) states that the use of the lowering of standards as an excuse against affirmative action "can also be an excuse used by those presently in authority to justify their remaining there." Furthermore, standards are often irrelevant, as companies artificially inflate the qualifications for entry into specific jobs, in order to block the entry of women and blacks (Hayward 1995:74).

While tokenism (a situation where members of target groups are employed or promoted, regardless of their existing or potential qualifications, experience or abilities, in order to fill a quota, or to conform to social or political pressures regarding target groups) is a problem associated with affirmative action, the fear of being seen as a token causes members of target groups to resent affirmative action, as it nullifies their real achievements. Venter (1994a:35, in Hayward, 1995:78) quotes a black internal auditor at a blue chip company as saying that "They must stop their games with titles and entrust blacks with meaningful work. Companies are living in a paradigm of 'whites work better!'" Dr. Caroline White in Focus (1998:17) says that black people are rarely given responsibilities commensurate with their capabilities. Thus, although the post still carries a grand-sounding title it is stripped of its decision-making powers to ensure that the token black or women cannot inflict too much damage on the organisation. According to Padayachee (2003) this form of affirmative action, if it can be

labelled as such, is particularly pernicious in that it denigrates the designated black incumbent in the eyes of his/her colleagues and subordinates. This is more so if colleagues are aware of the changes that the post has undergone since the new incumbent was appointed.

Ramphele (1994:12) identifies two types of tokenism. The first concerns the appointment of individuals from previously disadvantaged groups to specific positions in order to create a better staff profile. Innes (1993:15) describes this as "window-dressing to look good in the eyes of either the international community or black consumers". The second concerns affirmative-action programmes that are introduced for socio-political expediency rather than a genuine attempt to transform the human resources practice within an institution. That is, an organisation engages in a practice in an attempt to appear politically correct rather than for the common good of the workforce and ultimately the whole country. The first type can take on one of two forms. In the first form, positions are created for the sole purpose of being filled by members of the previously disadvantaged groups. Generally such positions have little or no important function within the organisation. The second form includes promotions or appointments of individuals to positions that are beyond their level of competence for the explicit purpose of creating a better staff profile.

Padayachee (2003:61) argues that apart from being unproductive for the organisation both these practices can be very damaging to the individual beneficiary, in that they make it difficult for the individual concerned to assume a meaningful and productive role in the organisation. Under-performance, at whatever tasks assigned to them, becomes the norm. This is generally due to lack of necessary skills or experience which in turn results in further undervaluing and negative feedback. This culminates in a vicious cycle of failure which serves to reinforce existing and past prejudice against those from designated groups.

Human (1993) views affirmative action as a temporary intervention designed to achieve equal employment opportunity without lowering standards and without unduly trammelling the career aspirations or expectations of current organisational members who are competent in their jobs. Human (1993:12) further says that, "when affirmative action is discussed, someone is sure to ask: Doesn't affirmative action mean that standards will fall because race and gender are being substituted for merit (qualifications plus experience) as the criterion for appointment or promotion?" According to Sikhosana (1993:8), quotas provide a measurable and clearly defined means of evaluating affirmative-action programmes. Any programme or system needs to be evaluated in order to ascertain the extent of its success or failure, and furthermore, to provide a basis for adaptation and refinement of the programme. According to the IPM (1994), targets would serve the following functions:

- they would serve as a guide to the organisation of where to go, in the long term (strategic);
- they would be a measure for the monitoring of progress, or, in other words, provide a benchmark;
- they would be a guide of when to end the affirmative-action programme, and allow equal opportunities to persist.

Furthermore, Sikhosana (1998:8) believes that the setting of goals, in the form of quotas, is beneficial in that it would "avoid leaving the implementation of Affirmative Action to the goodwill of the very people who are threatened by it." In other words, in order to avoid the subjective influence of white, male executives, who may have a fear for their own position, or have other vested interests, there is a need for a fixed measure in the development of affirmative action programmes, in the form of quotas. Sachs, in Human (1993:3) goes on to argue that, in the short term, quotas and timetables, "could have an important role to play, if they are well-targeted, neatly tailored, participatory, limited in duration, and do not unduly or gratuitously trample on the rights of others."

The Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut warned that indiscriminate enforcement of affirmative action could have an adverse effect on the competitiveness of the organisations in South Africa and lead to increased joblessness. It supported the development and implementation of affirmative-action plans to facilitate a change in organisational profiles, but opposed the promotion of "numbers rather than trained employees who can contribute to the performance of the company" (Business Day, 20 February 1998).

5.5 The fallacy of merit

An accusation which is often levelled at affirmative action is that it undermines systems of promotion on the basis of merit. In answer to this accusation, the Black Management Forum (1993) argues that:

- "It is wrong to assume that people in any society are always appointed solely on the basis of merit. All over the world, societies reproduce themselves by promoting certain individuals and groups within the broader society who will perpetuate a particular set of values and power relations. There is no such thing as the 'best person for the job' in an objective sense because 'best' is always defined, at least in part, in terms of cultural, religious, race and gender criteria.

- There is a need to re-examine the ways in which merit has been traditionally defined and assessed in this society. It must be possible to analyse someone's 'merit' within the context of South Africa's particular history. We must acknowledge the need to use the new, post-apartheid period to combat specific social evils that have limited people's ability to achieve the levels of merit now being expected of them.

- Merit should not be viewed as the ability to do the job here and now. The potential to do the job in the future, given appropriate training and motivation, should be considered" (Hayward 1995:79-80).

Hayward (1995) says that promotion on the basis of merit is not necessarily undermined by affirmative action, seeing that merit is often arbitrarily defined,

according to the needs, values, beliefs, and culture of the organisation. Thus, the criteria for determining merit ought to be closely scrutinised, to ensure that unacceptable bias, or arbitrary criteria are eradicated. It is also important for merit determinants to include consideration of potential to do the job, alternative learning, and alternative leadership experience as articulated by the IPM.

Makwana (1994, in Hayward, 1995:80) states that: "The definition of what constitutes 'best' is always defined in part by what transpires in a country or community at a certain point of a people's development. The definition of merit should go beyond the ability to do the job here and now to include the potential to do the job in future, given appropriate training and motivation".

5.6   The implementation of affirmative action

Given the fact that the concept of affirmative action since its inception has been dogged by controversies and inherent in this are the associated problems that come with it. According to Bendix (1996:592) most of the controversies and problems surrounding affirmative action arise not from the principle as such but from the manner in which affirmative action is implemented. "Wrong implementation occurs because organisations see affirmative action as a political imperative with which they have to comply, and not as business objectives in total — one of which would be to have as effective and competent a workforce as possible. Consequently, persons are appointed in 'affirmative action positions' or imposed on the organisation merely to window-dress or to fill quotas, usually without due consideration of their suitability for the position or the possibility of support and development" (Bendix 1996:592). Such arbitrary appointments leave other employees dissatisfied and are unfair to the appointees themselves, since they are placed in meaningless positions or cannot handle their specified tasks, thus perpetuating the myth that affirmative-action appointees are 'no good'. Bendix (1996) says that unless affirmative action is tied to valid selection procedures with test-relevant competencies or potential and are accompanied, where necessary, by a development programme, the myth becomes a reality.

Another problem with affirmative action, especially where higher-level jobs are concerned, is the fact that the available pool of previously disadvantaged persons able to fill and fulfil the requirements is extremely small. For example, in organisations where a need has been identified for greater representation of Africans at managerial level and where one of the requirements is a tertiary qualification, the selectors are most certain to encounter problems. The 1994 statistics show that just over one percent of the African population is possessed of a tertiary qualification. The result is that there develops a small, highly sought after group of elite candidates who, as has already been proved, are continually 'poached' by one organisation from another. Thus only this elite group advances, while the rest of the black African population remains where it was before (Bendix, 1996:593). This position is reiterated by a leading academic and politician, Themba Sono who says affirmative action has failed the masses and further describing it as a "recirculation of the same usual suspects" – mostly members of the urban elite.

Another problem of affirmative action, particularly in the South African context, is that the original United States policy was designed to deal with the advancement of minority racial/ethnic groups. In a critique of the conceptualisation of affirmative action in South Africa, Mamdani (1992:16, in Sikhosana, 1993:15) says:

> ... no one seemed to ask whether a strategy designed to address the grievances of a racially oppressed minority could be adequate to dismantling the apparatus of domination which strangled a racially oppressed majority. In other words, no matter how open the access to minority white institutions, in the name of 'affirmative action', will this not simply alter the racial composition of that minority with little consequence for the oppressed majority except to legitimise their exclusion as based on merit this time round? In the final analysis, will not embracing the language and vision of 'affirmative action' obscure the very task that must be central to

democratisation in a 'new' South Africa, that of institutional transformation?

According to Sikhosana (1993) there are some objective problems intrinsic in the policy which, in the South African and other colonial contexts, limits its effectiveness in addressing inequalities. There is an assumption that affirmative-action measures will benefit the poor. That seems to be an implicit premise of it. Remedial steps are urgently required, but a remedy for the underclass is not what these affirmative-action measures encompasses. What the poor need most are jobs, combined with appropriate interventions by the State, but the affirmative-action measures are likely to act as disincentives against job creation. It might inflate, yet further, an already strong demand for black people, with the skills required for middle and senior positions in the private sector, but it will, unfortunately, be irrelevant to the unskilled underclass, who have no prospect of appointment at these levels in any event. Experience in other countries where affirmative action has been applied confirms that the poor do not benefit from these kinds of measures. In India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the United States, to name but a few, there is considerable evidence that affirmative action has benefited a relative elite within the disadvantaged, and that the underclass has derived no real assistance from intervention of this kind.

5.7 The case against affirmative action

Charlton and Van Niekerk (1994:13) identify three main arguments against affirmative action.

- The first, an economics-based argument, is that putting less qualified people into positions will damage our already ailing economy. This case refers not only to competence but also to potential demotivation of "better qualified" White people who may be passed over for promotion and who consequently may leave the country in search of greener pastures. The obvious retort to tokenism is that accelerated development programmes are essential precursors to placing people in responsible positions, and if this is done

correctly, these fears will be allayed. It is also pointed out that the talented whites won't get hurt and that competition will force people to shape up or ship out.

- The second argument is based on principle. Affirmative action, or positive discrimination, it is felt, just like apartheid, perpetuate racial discrimination and exacerbates tensions. To benefit Blacks with quotas a government must hold down Whites. Consequently, there is always a loser in the process, particular where quotas are rigidly applied.

- The third argument proposes a more revolutionary option: why fine-tune a system by promoting a few women and blacks when we should really overhaul the system itself? If the system doesn't work — change it.

5.8   Resistance against affirmative action

Nzimande (1991, in Sikhosana, 1993:9) cites three ways in which white resistance to African occupational upward mobility manifests itself. "The first is explicitly racist, and is based on the belief that African people are innately incapable of managerial and mental work. The second way in which racism manifests itself is more sophisticated. The main argument of many white managers is that African managers do not advance rapidly because their cultural background does not adequately prepare them for managerial positions in the corporate world. The third manifestation of white resistance is through the ideology of meritocracy. White managers often argue that 'black advancement' promotes or places blacks in positions which they do not deserve or for which they are unqualified."

Any affirmative-action programme has to be accompanied by a process of human resource development to offset the problem of quality. In any case, discrimination against blacks and women is not restricted only to the unskilled or unqualified. Maphai (1992:74, in Sikhosana, 1993:9) argues that "whilst affirmative action aims to raise the level of qualifications so that underprivileged groups can compete on merit, it is difficult to delineate what counts as qualification. In South

Africa, where 'standards' and 'qualification' are equated with white or western values, these can be used as a convenient means of exclusion rather than of providing services of real value."

Human (1993:4) says that, "in some instances, organisations expect more of blacks and women in particular positions than they do of white men in similar positions. Affirmative action, as part of a revised attitude to human resources management, demands that we look consistently at the outputs of people undertaking similar work and provide constructive performance feedback. It is surprising how often managers work with impressions of particular subordinates rather than looking at their actual outputs."

5.9   The case for affirmative action

According to Charlton *et al.* (1994:13) Development Bank chairman Wiseman Nkuhlu sees the most potent rationale for affirmative action as being that "future prosperity depends on the economic productivity, management and technological capability of blacks". The demographic factor certainly support this view, as does the *World Competitiveness Report* (2000) finding that a critical factor in progress is the development and utilisation of human competence — in South Africa these humans happen to be Blacks and women. "The upgrading of people skills, then, is simply a matter of pragmatic business sense, quite apart from the implicit political threats of quotas and moral correctness. Consequently, people development demands a commitment of time, money, and skills to level the economic playing fields by increasing opportunities for people (many of whom will be black and/or female) to become competent" (Charlton *et al.,* 1994:14).

5.10   Success of affirmative action

The success of affirmative action in South Africa, one may argue, depends very much amongst others on the willingness of the white male managers – who for many years arrogated to themselves the role of gatekeepers – to open up their domain so that black and female managers can be appointed. Director of

BusinessMap, Jenny Cargill notes that "there is a perception that the white old-boys network has been replaced by a black version…" making it difficult for women to advance through affirmative action and economic empowerment strategies with same effectiveness as Black men (Financial Mail, 30 April 2004:21). She further says that, to date, there is less commitment from White male managers to appoint Black and female employees into decision-making positions. She says this fear of white managers may be attributed to the following possibilities: they may lose their positional power, and they could encourage bigger competition for more senior positions, their incompetence may be exposed and their inability to manage senior black and female managers may also be exposed.

5.11   Conclusion

In the South African context, affirmative action has to be in harmony with the central goal of bringing about meaningful socio-economic and political participation of all the members of the society in the affairs of the country. This requires that the concept be used in its proper context as a means to an end and not an end in itself. It has to meet the demands of the disadvantaged for complete integration in the affairs of the society. The main thrust of affirmative action should be directed towards the advancement of the Black people and women who were by far the most oppressed by apartheid. Yet this does not mean that the principles of diversity and capacity building should not be used to promote as well the advancement of others (for example White men) in every sphere of life in a quest to achieve a genuine egalitarian society. If well handled, affirmative action will help heal the wounds of the past injustices, bind the nation together and produce benefits for everyone. If badly managed, it will simply re-distribute resentment, damage the economy, national cohesion and destroy social peace. If not undertaken at all, the country will remain backward and divided at its heart.

This literature review represents the perceptions held by Blacks and Whites of affirmative action in organisations in the US and South Africa. The main findings of these studies showed that White men have negative attitudes towards affirmative action policies. Furthermore, these negative attitudes are caused by a threat to their self-interest. Whites hold racist perceptions of Blacks, which results in them stereotyping Blacks in a negative manner. Blacks, on the other hand, perceive Whites' to still hold racist perceptions.

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Chapter 6

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AFFIRMATIVE ACTION WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

6.1   Introduction

We are faced with the challenge: whether it is better to proceed on different roads, each alone, that become increasingly narrow as we travel, or whether it is possible to build one road through which we can all travel forward faster together (Thabo Mbeki)

The preceding chapter gave a cursory glance on the affirmative-action discourse focusing on research studies of people's perceptions of affirmative action. This chapter will now turn the focus to the implementation and practice of affirmative action within the South African public service context.

As the idea of a democratic dispensation became a real possibility in South Africa, debates and concerns around policies of redress have increased. This is a result of the large extent of race and gender-based inequalities created by apartheid. In particular, the racial and sexual division of labour in the South African labour market is cause for concern. In both the private and public sector, blacks (in particular Africans) tend to be concentrated in manual, unskilled and semi-skilled jobs whilst whites are over-represented in white-collar, managerial and professional occupations. As a result, the South African economy was historically based on a sharply differentiated organisation of the labour force.

South Africa's constitutional order was the product of negotiations, which inevitably required the negotiators to find mechanisms for addressing the legacy of the past. They anticipated that, given the historical legacy of inequalities, rules pertaining to equality and redress would have to be established. Some of the most important ones would be those that have bearing on employment. The interim Constitution of 1993 provided a first set of rules, soon to be superseded by the Constitution of Republic of South Africa, 1996. The most relevant were sections 9 (on equality) and 195 (on employment criteria in the public service).

Section 9 (1) provides the more or less standard formulation that "everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law". This is immediately followed by the proviso (section 9(2)) that "equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken." These two subsections form one of the constitutional cornerstones of the government's affirmative-action policies. The other cornerstone is provided by section 195, which deals with the composition of the public service. Section 195(1)(i) reads that the "public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation." For the purposes of this section, the domain of the public administration is defined very broadly, including every level and sphere of government, and public enterprises.

The Constitution provides the platform for redress, but did not itself stipulate the mechanisms for doing so. The cumulative impact of the inequalities that had built up over decades of apartheid was considered to be so huge and so deeply cemented into the structure of South African society – and hence so difficult to dismantle – that, even after the formal transfer of power to the ANC, the then Vice-President Mbeki was prepared to describe South Africa in terms of his two-nation thesis:

> We therefore make so bold as to say that South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white and relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal… except for the persistence of gender discrimination against women, all members of this nation have the possibility of exercising their right to equal opportunity…. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor… this nation…has virtually no possibility of

exercising what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of its realization…. And neither are we becoming one nation. Consequently, also, the objective of national reconciliation is not being realized… the longer this situation persists…the more entrenched will be the conviction that the concept of nation-building is mere mirage, and that no basis exists, or will ever exist, to enable national reconciliation to take place.

According to Section 197(1) of the Constitution within the public administration there is a public service for the Republic, which must function, and be structured, in terms of national legislation, and which must loyally execute the lawful policies of the government of the day. Section 8 of the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994) states that the South African public service constitutes all persons holding fixed positions or permanent additional appointments in the service, and the State educational institutions excluding members of the National Defence Force, the National Intelligence Agency and the South African Secret Police.

Hugo (1989) observes that considering the alacrity and consistency with which successive South African governments have passed racially exclusive legislation encompassing all facets of daily life, legislation on employment in the public service presents a curious anomaly. In the private sector, laws such as the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924, the Wage Act of 1925 and the Mines and Works Act of 1926 explicitly disadvantaged Blacks on the one hand and promoted Whites on the other. Yet not one of the Public Services and Pension Act of 1912, the Public Services Act of 1984 and Commission for Administration Act of 1984 has racial connotations. In fact, Section 11(3) of the former Act stipulates a number of non-racial attributes based on qualifications such as inter alia, merit and efficiency relative to appointments and promotions. However, the

reality of the situation is that Blacks (and women) were denied access to the South African bureaucracy. It is an undeniable fact that as a result of discriminatory employment practices this led to the under-representation of Blacks and women in the public service and this will be unacceptable in a future public service. A study by the public service in 1995 showed that 85% of senior managers were White men, 10 percent were African men, 2 percent White women and 0.6 percent African and Indian women, while Coloured women were not represented at all (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1996). The public service in the post-apartheid South Africa would have to reflect the demographic profile of the country.

6.2   Transforming the South African public service

Over and above being fragmented according to the logic of apartheid, one key characteristics of the public service in the apartheid era was its highly discriminatory nature. Race, gender and physical ability as critical bases for recruitment, led to a total erosion of its legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of South Africans. The effects of discriminatory exclusion are still seen today in the difficulties that groups have in competing for employment in certain occupational categories in the public service, and the extent to which the lack of experience impacts on overall capacity within the public service. Thus, the post-apartheid government sees the transformation of the public service as a priority. Nonetheless, the transformation of the public service is complicated. What complicates the matter is an agreement made between the National Party and the ANC in 1993, that the jobs of all civil servants would be protected for a period of five yeas (Castle, 1996:123).

The ANC, during its July 1991 Conference, expressed the idea that affirmative-action programmes should be seen as a temporary and transitional mechanism to redress past inequalities. The ANC also perceived affirmative action to be particularly important in the civil service. The ANC is of the opinion that there will have to be changes in the civil service in line with the ANC's commitment to

affirmative action. The Public Servants Association in turn expressed the view that affirmative action in the civil service will have to conform to certain requirements, namely that there should be equal rights for equal qualifications, and legal protection against discrimination (Van Aardt, 1994:101-102).

In 1995, the Department of Public Service and Administration published a White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service which reiterates the importance of representativeness, declaring it to be "one of the main foundations of non-racist, non-sexist and democratic society" and that it was also "a necessary precondition for legitimising the public service" (White Paper, 1995:10.1). The term affirmative action itself was defined as: Laws, programmes or activities designed to redress past imbalances and ameliorate the conditions of individuals and groups who have been disadvantaged on the grounds of race, colour, gender or disability (ibid., 10.3).

It also defined those groups who were to be the main beneficiaries of affirmative action, that is, to say "black people, women and people with disabilities" (ibid., 10.4) although it is recognised that the factors that continue to discriminate against these groups are not uniform, "the effects of patriarchal values and other forms of gender bias and discrimination, for example, is clearly something that does not disadvantage Black males" (ibid.).

The White Paper also called for a change in the rather narrowly defined, culturally determined and exclusive view of qualification, experience and achievement, rather than on a broader and more inclusive view of relevant competencies (ibid., 10.2). Thus, there is to be a shift in recruitment policies, with the stress being put on potential, rather than on formal qualifications which many black candidates simply do not have and if the government were to continue to demand the same formal qualifications as in the past this would simply "have the effect of perpetuating discrimination" (ibid., 5.2.3). There is also a call for accelerated and intensive training of those affirmative-action candidates that

have the potential, but not the necessary qualifications or experience to be appointed, as well as advertising campaigns to promote the public service as a career amongst these under-represented groups.

To give meaningful effect to the White Paper, the government in 1998, gazetted the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (1998), which states that, "the goal of Affirmative Action in the Public Service is to speed up the creation of a representative and equitable public service and to build an environment that supports and enables those who have been historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination to fulfil their maximum potential within it so that the public service may derive the maximum benefit of their diverse skills and talents to improve service delivery" (2.1). Further, the White Paper on Affirmative Action provides guidelines to departments on how to affirm the previously disadvantaged.

The White Paper on Affirmative Action spells out the targets of 50% black people and 30% women in decision-making levels, as well as the special measures to be implemented in reaching these targets. In March 2005, the public service workforce stood at 1 073 033 employees, showing a net increase of 29 336 employees from December 2004 (State of Public Service Report, 2005). Of these figures blacks represented 86.5% of the workforce, while women represented 53.3%. Bodibe and Mhango (2004) say that the public service, which employs over a million people, has predictably been a pacesetter in the implementation of employment equity and has made substantial progress in achieving employment equity goals.

- Black representation in the public sector increased from 76% in 1995 to 86% in 2001.
- By 1998, 60 000 public servants – including many senior and middle level white officials – had accepted retirement packages from the Public Service. By 2002 this figure had increased to 120 000.

- Between 1995 and 2001, the proportion of Black managers in the public service increased from 30% to 51% and that of Coloured and Indian managers, from 10 to 12%.

- During the same period the proportion of senior Black managers increased from 37% to 55%, and the proportion of Blacks in middle management from 41% to 64%.

- The proportion of women managers increased from 17% in 1995 to 35% in 1999. This figure, however, dropped between 1999 and 2001.

- By 2001 the overall composition of the Public Service closely reflected the composition of the population as a whole.

Gender equality became legislated as an important concept of affirmative action and deserved high priority in order to empower women to achieve equality and economic advancement. "Gender equality is a concept related to 'equal conditions', 'equal treatment' or 'equal benefits' in a male dominated society" (Kehla, 1995). This ensures that both women and men are equal before the law and are treated equally. Gender equality at work eliminates all discrepancies between women and men in terms of salaries and benefits (Sadie, 1995).

In terms of women in management, as at 31 March 2005, while women made up 53.3% of the public service workforce, they only constituted 29% of Senior Management Service (SMS) positions. However by March 2006, of the total 6 727 SMS employees, 2 017 (i.e. 30%) were women, indicating that the target set by Cabinet in 2003, has been met within the public service. On 30 November 2005, Cabinet adopted a revised employment equity target of 50% women at all levels in the SMS by March 2009 (Cabinet Memo 86A of 2005). In addition, Cabinet also supported the development of a Gender and Governance plan of action that would ensure substantial progress is made on women's empowerment and gender equality in the public service. Gender in the Professional Occupations indicates that while there are 64.8% women in the professional occupation category, they tend to be concentrated at lower levels of

the occupational category. Women account for 34% professional and middle management terminations. Gender in the administrative and clerical levels is slightly more than one-third (i.e. 37%) of women employed in the public service and they are concentrated in the production level jobs.

Mahlangu (2007) says that the public sector needs to focus on employing more people with disabilities. According to Mahlangu (2007), the 1998 White paper on transformation of the public service sets targets for affirmative action which had not been met in the case of people with disabilities. By 2005, only 0.5% of public sector employees were people with disabilities instead of the target of two percent.

Cabinet reviewed and retained the minimum of 2% employment equity target for persons with disabilities in the public service to be achieved by 31 March 2010. In addition, Cabinet approved a 2% minimum target for Public Sector Education and Training Authority learnerships for unemployed persons with disabilities, to be achieved by 31 March 2008, in order to facilitate the attainment of set targets within the public service. The current status of representation of people with disabilities in the public service stands at 0.17%. This indicates that significant strides need to be taken in order to achieve the set target within the given timeframe.

6.3   Unintended consequences

According to Hermann (2004), notwithstanding the substantive progress made in attaining employment equity goals in the public service, the public service has experienced some management and delivery problems:

- a quarter of the government's procurement budget is spent on consultants (who are often retrenched former public servants);
- a third of the state's 163 agencies were not in a position to present their accounts to the Auditor-General; and

- the welfare department has lost more than 15 billion rand through fraud and corruption.

Twala (2004:135) says, **"**aligned to the cry on the implementation of affirmative action, some critics believe that it is the way of endorsing black domination and English mono-lingualism by the ANC's government. In the public service the English language is made the workplace language as many blacks who are appointed on an affirmative action basis mainly speak this language. Therefore, through the introduction of affirmative action, the English language dominates at the expense of other languages. This move is termed the 'Anglo-African *gevaar*' (italics mine) by Koos Malan, an ardent supporter and protector of the Afrikaans language. According to Malan South Africa's peculiar brand of Afro-nationalist affirmative action is not designed to achieve diversity, but entrench uniformity, and that is the opposite of what affirmative action is meant for."

Despite the substantial progress made in attaining employment equity in the public service, it should be noted that it was not without challenges. Below are some of the challenges encountered in implementing affirmative action in the South African public service.

In her written reply to a parliamentary question, the Home Affairs Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula has conceded that her department's top management team, comprising solely of "Africans", was not representative of the South African society as it does not correspond with the Employment Equity Act. Mapisa-Nqakula said two of the five African Deputy Director-Generals were women, which confirms that steps have been taken to address gender equality. "The department… is busy at the moment to review its Employment Equity Plan and targets set in line with the Employment Equity Act," she said.

In an article, *SA police still 'too white*' in Die Beeld newspaper on 1 January 2007 (News24), it is reported that the South African Police Service (SAPS) must be

below 10% "white" by 2010. The article says that by 2010, the police service must consist of 79% blacks, 9.6% whites, 8.9% coloureds and 2.5% Indians. As at the time of this report, the SAPS had 156 180 members, of whom 29 401 were white, that is, between 18% and 19%. Freedom Front Plus (FF+) spokesperson Pieter Groenewald alleges that standards were sacrificed in favour of this exercise and police training courses are shortened in order to reach affirmative quotas.

If this were to be carried-out, it is clear that the police service is going to loose the much needed skills needed to curb the spiralling crime that is currently holding the country to ransom, scaring away much needed foreign direct investments and might scupper the country's chances of hosting the prestigious 2010 Soccer World Cup.

News24 website reported on 30 June 2003, that the Military Police Agency (MPA) could face a crisis when affirmative-action appointments replace as many as 105 senior police officers, most of them with between 15 and 25 years experience in military policing. Colonel John Rolt, Defence Force spokesperson, said these changes are part of the Force's Affirmative Action Policy as dictated by the national government. Rolt further said that the MPA's racial composition at the time did not reflect that of the South African population.

"Accusations of racism are being levelled against Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk – ironically by white employees disgruntled at the appointment of blacks to senior management positions in his department and gave rise to claims that he is appointing Black managers to curry favour with the African National Congress in Parliament" (Mail & Guardian, 8 to 14 April 2005). These accusations follow the appointment of a certain Monde Mayekiso to head the Marine Coastal Management (MCM). There is consensus that Mayekiso may have weaknesses as a manager, but is a respected scientific researcher and has extensive knowledge on how the fishing industry works.

Those in favour of the appointment point out that in the past five years MCM has been managed by Whites and a sprinkling of Coloured managers.

Basil John King, a senior magistrate at the Justice College in Pretoria has criticised the Department of Justice's affirmative action policy and plans to take the issue to the Equality Court (Pretoria News, 06 June 2006). King, who has 23 years' experience in the legal field and trained would-be magistrates, was one of the candidates who was not on the Magistrate Commission's shortlist to be interviewed as a magistrate to serve on the bench. Several posts for magistrates to serve in courts across the country were advertised in November 2005. He applied for 14 of the advertised posts in different areas as a Regional Court magistrate. The requirements for these posts included a LLB degree (which he had) and at least seven years' post-university experience in law (he has 23 years). According to the Magistrate Commission, the criteria for shortlisting included experience, qualifications and the need for the judiciary to reflect the racial and gender composition of South Africa.

In court papers, King said the Magistrate Commission used a score sheet system to develop a shortlist of candidates. In terms of this system, the qualifications of candidates who were not the right gender or race were not considered, he alleged. "I was not even considered in the compiling of the shortlist, purely based on my race and gender," he stated (Pretoria News, 06 June 2006).

Squire Mahlangu, a Public Service Commissioner in an address on the challenges of implementing affirmative action in the public services said, "if correctly applied affirmative action is not about discriminating against white people" (IOL, 19 April 2007). Further he said that, "the state of the public sector after apartheid was such that at the top you had white Afrikaner males only and at the bottom you had black cleaners" (ibid.) He suggested that the public sector must employ Whites, particularly in positions previously seen as domain of Blacks. Mbabane (1998) is of the view that there is a terrible dearth of trained

Black public servants. The few Blacks who are qualified have quickly learned to hop jobs, getting better and better individual deals. This practice of selling one-self to the highest bidder has become so endemic it is now known derisively as "affirmative auction".

6.4 Affirmative action in the public service: objectives and principles

The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (1998) states that the objectives of affirmative action in the public service are:

- to enhance the capacity of the historically disadvantaged through the development and introduction of practical measures that support their advancement within the public service;
- to inculcate in the public service a culture which values diversity and supports the affirmative action of those who have previously been unfairly disadvantaged; and
- to speed up the achievement and progressive improvement of the numerical targets set out in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service.

Associated with the objectives the White Paper points out that the core principles underpinning all affirmative-action programmes in the public service are:

- Integration with human resources management and development – affirmative-action programmes must be integrated with other human resource management and development practices, especially the management of diversity.
- Productivity and improved service delivery – affirmative-action programmes must promote the development of more innovative work practices which maximises productivity and increases customer-responsiveness.
- Cost effectiveness – affirmative-action programmes must focus on steps which optimise the public service's human and financial resources.
- Communication – the purpose of affirmative-action policies and programmes must be fully communicated to all public servants.

- Participation – affirmative-action programmes must be developed with the active participation of employees at all levels, and with representatives of organised labour.

- Transparency – affirmative-action programmes and practices must be open to scrutiny within and outside the public service within reasonable limits.

- Accountability – accountability for the delivery of affirmative action must be vested at the highest level of the organisation, with all line managers being vested with the responsibility of driving the process.

- Reasonable accommodation – affirmative-action programmes must strive to eradicate barriers to employment and advancement in the physical and organisational environment and provide support for all members of the target group.

- Relative disadvantage – affirmative action must take into account the relative disadvantage status of groups, their needs within the target group and the needs of the organisation.

6.5   Conclusion

With respect to representativeness, the public service has come close to meeting the targets set by the government in its 1995 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, particularly with respect to race. The South African Year Book (2003/04: 365) notes that as of 31 March 2003 Africans now make up 72.5%, whites 14.7%, coloured 8.9% and Asians 3.6% of the Public Service at all levels. With regard to gender 52.5% were female and 47.5% male. At the senior management level 56% were African, 25.6% were White, 10.1% were Coloured and 8.2% were Asian. Notwithstanding the continuing skewed gender representation, Boola (2004) and others have observed a significant increase in the representation and influence of women in all spheres of government.

It can undoubtedly be argued that affirmative action in the public service has been implemented with relative success, notwithstanding the unintended consequences and challenges. It is against this background that the next chapter

will focus on the Compensation Fund employees' perception regarding the implementation and practice of affirmative action at the Compensation Fund.

Chapter 7

RESEARCH RESULTS

7.1   Introduction

Simply observing and interviewing do not ensure that the research is qualitative; the qualitative researcher must also interpret the beliefs and behaviour of participants (Valerie J. Janesick, 2000:387)

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the study. The findings of this study are based on the data that were collected as it was described in the methodology of this study in Chapter 2 and in line with the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3. The results of this present study will be compared with those of other studies.

7.2   Data source

In an attempt to explore the attitudes, experiences and perceptions of employees with regard to affirmative action, data were collated from a convenience sample of the employees from the Compensation Fund, with the exclusion of management employees.

Prior to initiating the data collection process, permission was sought and the researcher could only proceed with data collection once it was granted. Introductory discussions were held with each participant prior to the commencement of the interviews, to discuss the purpose, scope and benefits of the study, as well as confidentiality aspects and the concept of volunteerism.

Sixteen semi-structured interviews, ranging from between 20 and 30 minutes, were conducted, with the aid of an in-depth personal interview schedule, using convenience sampling technique. The interview schedule had four sections in line with the problem statements and contained qualitative type questions. All participants were asked for a language of preference and all opted for English,

however participants were encouraged to express themselves in any other language they were comfortable with.

7.3 Data analysis

Sixteen employees (n = 16) were interviewed during the process of data collection. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. This type of interview process allows the participants to freely express themselves without any complications or distractions. The personal interview is in many ways a manifestation of human interaction. Additionally, the interviewer has the opportunity for any follow-ups and may seek clarification of vague information.

Table 7.1 below depicts a brief biographical profile of all the employees interviewed as part of the sample: Code, Race, Gender, Age Range, Disability, Education Level, Salary Levels (SL) and Number of Years Employed by the Compensation Fund (CF). Sections in which employees are stationed were purposefully excluded to protect the identities of the employees.

TABLE 7: 1 PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Code	Biographical Information						
	Race	Gender	Age Range	Disability	Education Level	Salary Levels	Years employed in CF
CF1	African	Female	18-34	None	≥ Gr. 12	4-6	0-5
CF2	African	Female	35-44	None	Gr. 12	7-9	11-15
CF3	African	Male	35-44	None	≥ Gr. 12	7-9	0-5
CF4	African	Male	18-34	Physical	≤ 10	4-6	0-5
CF5	Coloured	Female	45-54	None	≤ 10	7-9	21+
CF6	Coloured	Female	35-44	None	≥ Gr. 12	7-9	16-20
CF7	Coloured	Male	18-34	None	Gr. 12	7-9	11-15
CF8	Coloured	Male	18-34	None	≤ 10	4-6	6-10
CF9	Indian	Female	18-34	None	Gr. 12	7-9	0-5
CF10	Indian	Female	18-34	None	Gr. 12	7-9	6-10

CF11	Indian	Male	18-34	None	≥ Gr. 12	7-9	0-5
CF12	Indian	Male	18-34	None	Gr. 12	7-9	6-10
CF13	White	Female	35-44	None	Gr. 12	7-9	11-15
CF14	White	Female	18-34	None	≤ 10	7-9	6-10
CF15	White	Male	35-44	None	≤ 10	4-6	21+
CF16	White	Male	35-44	None	Gr. 12	7-9	16-20

After the interviews had been completed, information obtained from the sample of employees was transcribed and analysed using the Huberman and Miles approach, as described by Poggenpoel (1998:340). Interviews were transcribed and encoded – Compensation Fund (CF) 1 to CF 16. The task was further augmented by using qualitative data analysis techniques described by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). This process involved initially editing, segmenting and summarising data. The next stage involved coding, memoing and related activities such as finding themes, clusters and patterns. The researcher identified themes and sub-themes and similarities in the responses and all statements were classified into categories, that is, research areas. Two main themes emerged from the Compensation Fund employees perceptions of affirmative action. Firstly, policy implementation problems and secondly, gender and racial prejudice. The analysis concentrated primarily on the racial and gender perceptions of the participants. Appropriate categories were determined on the basis that the responses provided.

The responses of the participants were carefully selected for inclusion based upon their relevance to the question posed. The information was reported verbatim whenever possible in order to minimise potential author bias. Additionally, the author sought clarification when any concept or idea was ambiguous.

7.4 Results

Consolidated trends that emerged from individual interviews are presented below under the two identified themes which are further listed under identified categories. Themes presented here are primarily focused on the experience of affirmative action by participants.

Generally, participants commented on the need for affirmative-action measures to redress the injustices and inequalities of the past discriminatory employment practices and bring about parity in employment practices in respect of race and gender in the Compensation Fund. In this study it was agreed by a significant majority of participants that affirmative action is a good intervention to rectify the previous inequalities.

However, even though these participants realise that the affirmative action measures has to be implemented, they are opposed to the manner of its implementation. This is apparent from the responses of the White, Coloured and Indian participants. They claim that the implementation and practice of the policy is riddled with problems and inconsistencies.

7.4.1 Policy implementation problems

The employees in the Compensation Fund who were interviewed believe that there are problems with the implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy. These problems are related to the poor communication of the policy to all the employees, the lack of training, the ill-defined recruitment and selection plan and finally, the main problem that emerged was the lack of commitment and accountability by management.

- **Poor communication of the policy**

The poor communication of the policy was viewed as a problem as many participants, male and female of all race groups, claimed not to understand the policy or indicated that they were either moderately aware or unaware of the

Compensation Fund's Affirmative Action Policy while few indicated that they had some good knowledge. CF16 expressed the problems with communication: "*Many of us have not been trained on the policy. It's only a selected few who had an opportunity to attend workshops and as a result lot of people are not aware of it and they don't understand it*". This was echoed by CF6 who said, "*Not many efforts were made to disseminate information on the policy and educate the employees about it*".

It has also emerged that little information with regard to affirmative action is being communicated. The most common general method of communicating information in the Compensation Fund is by circulars/memoranda. While this is an acceptable method of disseminating information given that it relatively requires fewer resources, it does not necessarily have the greatest impact where employees are too busy with their core duties. High exposure to workshops and follow-up workshops would have a much greater impact in the dissemination of information regarding affirmative action, notwithstanding the amount of preparations and resources required.

The employees' perception that the Affirmative Action Policy is poorly communicated is similar to the findings of other research reviewed. For instance Van Der Merwe (1993) found in her case study at Eskom that there was a poor communication of the affirmative action policy and hence respondents did not understand the policy. This lack of knowledge often leads to hostile opposition of a policy. The fact that significant low number of participants indicated that they had a good knowledge of the Affirmative Action Policy is a cause for concern. A cause for concern in that Nell and van Staden (1998:18) claim that "ignorance readily becomes rejection". Benokraitis and Feagin (1978:51) found that in the US those who were ignorant of what affirmative action entailed, were obsessed with the belief that hordes of less-qualified women and others from disadvantaged groups would displace qualified White males and, therefore, developed resentment for such a policy. This mindset could also apply to those

Compensation Fund employees who do not have a thorough knowledge of the Affirmative Action Policy. This is supported by the view of Naidoo *et al.* (2001:42) who were part of a task team that undertook 'A National Survey of the Progress of Institutions in the Formulation of Employment Equity Plans' in South Africa. They claim that "in the absence of such understanding, [of principles, intentions and process of the Employment Equity Act] adequate acceptance and compliance among staff could not be achieved".

Hence, Kravitz and Platania (1993) recommend that misconceptions about affirmative action programmes should be eradicated to reduce opposition and conflict. This involves the thorough communication and dissemination of information to all employees.

- **Lack of training**

All participants commented that there was a need for training for the advancement of designated employees and that the policy had not adequately provided for the training of designated employees. Comments from white participants were mainly about having no perceivable career path due to lack of upskilling and about the department's failure to fill jobs from within, including unfair promotions and favouritism. Inadequate training or lack of the right kind of training was cited by the majority of participants as a major impediment for their future (career) growth within the department. Below are some of the participants' comments:

> *"I am disappointed that I am not able to take advantage of certain training opportunities because they do not apply to my current position. I want to be able to grow and learn about all the department's operations, but they limit you to only the training that relates to your current job."*

> *"Training is only restricted to certain positions and certain people."*

> *"Managers are concerned only about their careers, not the career growth of their employees. Training is approved only if it relates to the employee's current position (that is, competency gaps identified in the Personal Development Plan), and disapproved if it relates to preparation for future opportunities."*

> *"Management and supervisors seem to only care for themselves and don't care about the growth or advancement of their subordinates."*

One participant did not mince his words as is evident by his disparaging comment, *"there is no training at all".* According to him, he has being applying over the years for a bursary to further his studies without success. He alleges that each time his application was turned down without being given reasons and as a result he could not further his studies, as he cannot afford to pay for himself given his salary and his other financial responsibilities. He perceives his non-progress within the Compensation Fund to lack of post Grade 12 qualification could be a basis for this forward comment.

Mkwanazi and Rall (cited in Qunta, 1995) argue that South African companies have concentrated on reaching their targets instead of creating a climate which is conducive to developing the skills and potential of Black professionals. The White participants blame the recruitment and selection process and the poor training of African employees for the decreasing standards of efficiency in the Compensation Fund. This is similar to the perceptions held by those opposed to the affirmative-action measures. They say designated employees, in particular Black employees, need to be sufficiently trained prior to being employed or promoted to senior positions.

- **Ill-defined recruitment and selection process**

Another problem that emerged was the fact that White and some Coloured and Indian participants believed that there was a lack of well-defined recruitment and selection processes, which allow officials in charge of recruitment and selection to employ who they wish and not because of the candidates' qualifications or experience. The study found that affirmative action, like most racial issues, sharply divides whites and blacks. Not surprisingly, the categories of persons identified as those most likely to benefit from affirmative action, namely Africans, were largely of the opinion that designated people are appointed and/or promoted based on merit as opposed to being appointed and/or promoted due to attributes other than merit. Similarly, those least likely to benefit from affirmative action, namely, Whites, Coloureds and Indians were of the opinion that appointments and/or promotion are not based on merit. This view is expressed by participants who commented that:

> "We cannot be promoted because we are white. Several posts were recently advertised. Only blacks [meaning Africans] were called for interviews and only blacks are promoted. People of other races are very unhappy and disillusioned"

> "We always think that we are too White for promotion. Why did I study for so many years? What motivates me to be a loyal and dedicated employee? What am I doing here if I shall never be eligible for promotion?"

However, these were contradicted by an African participant who said that White managers are still kingmakers in determining who gets appointed and/or promoted by stating that, *"You have White managers who are influential in terms of making decisions on who should be promoted and who should not."* Participants were, however, united in opposing the hiring of unqualified applicants. This is succinctly captured by a participant who said, *"The best person should get the job [on merit], irrespective of race or gender."*

A significant number of Coloured and Indian participants – who together amount to 50% of the total sample – were sceptical about the recruitment and selection processes. This could be attributed to the absence of Coloureds and Indians in the management echelon and further that despite them being part of designated employees nothing or little was done to advance them in terms of being considered for promotion. The following comments are worth noting:

> *"I would prefer that appointments/promotions were based on merit irrespective of race or gender"* and *"During apartheid we were denied opportunities because we were not white enough and now still we do not as we are not black enough. This is absurd as we [Indians and Coloureds] also suffered during apartheid. "*

Grindle (1980) argues that ambiguous and vague policy goals will lead to the failure of the policy. The employees' perception that the recruitment and selection processes are not fair is a result of poor policy implementation. Such ambiguity will lead to confusion and conflict (Grindle, 1980). This kind of mistrust of the recruitment and selection processes can result in conflict and opposition.

- **Lack of commitment and accountability**

Mixed views emerged from the participants on whether management is committed to ensuring the success of affirmative action in the Compensation Fund.

The general consensus amongst all the participants is that their line managers (i.e. immediate supervisors) are hamstrung, as the function of shortlisting candidates for vacant positions is delegated to senior managers. As one participant indicated, *"Blame should be put squarely on the shoulders of senior managers for failing to delegate the function of recruitment and selection to supervisors … As a result, line managers play a passive role during recruitment and selection processes. It is the ideal that line managers who are at the coalface of production are best suited to be in the know of the composition of their staff*

matrix in terms of race, gender and skills and thus should play an active role in recruitment and selection process".

The Employment Equity Act (EEA) requires employers to take reasonable steps to consult and attempt to reach agreement on the conducting of an audit or analysis, on the preparation and implementation of the employment equity plan. The EEA, further, requires that employers must assign one or more senior managers to take responsibility for monitoring and implementing an employment equity plan.

It further emerged that employees were not adequately prepared to accept and embrace change and diversity by working together as equals and as a result, subtle and/or covert (racial) tensions were experienced in the workplace because of a lack of common understanding. This indicates that there is no organisational commitment to ensuring the success of affirmative action. Thomas (1996:8) says that organisations should not introduce affirmative action in isolation to organisational environment where managers believe that a few black or female faces will make the organisation look politically correct, and further recommends that organisations conduct programmes aimed at understanding, and valuing differences amongst its personnel. Human, Bluen and Davies (1999) are of the view that employment equity should be a key performance area for managers and employees alike. If this were to be the case, it will bring about a sense of urgency in management committing itself in ensuring the success of employment equity, as the stakes will be high for them.

These perceived problems with the affirmative action policy's implementation by the participants must be viewed in the context of Grindle's (1980) warning that a policy's success will depend on how it is formulated and implemented. The availability of sufficient resources, the structure of relations and the commitment to reporting mechanisms are important factors involved in the success of policy implementation. The participants' perception that the communication of the policy

is poor, that the recruitment and selection process is ill-defined, that there is a lack of training or the right kind of training, lack of commitment and accountability, and concern for how the policy is to be implemented would, according to Grindle (1980), impede the success of the Compensation Fund's Affirmative Action Policy.

7.4.2 Racial and gender prejudice

Racial and gender prejudice emerged throughout the responses of White and some Coloured and Indian participants. African participants, however, remained positive about the Affirmative Action Policy and the gender and race relations of the Compensation Fund. The findings will be compared to other research studies on affirmative action.

a. Racial prejudice

The White respondents, in particular the male participants are in of fear losing their jobs and of not being promoted, suspect reverse discrimination and remark on the drop in service standards. The Coloured and Indian participants fear being overlooked for employment and promotion. The African participants, however, are more optimistic. Prejudice, demoralisation and stereotyping are the main themes in the responses. The participants' attitudes are determined by their race and gender and in relation to how the policy affects them. Their prejudice is caused by a perceived group threat. For Pettigrew (cited in Quillian, 1995:1), "prejudice against a group is antipathy accompanied by a faulty generalisation". Prejudice is characterised by irrational (a faulty generalisation) and emotional evaluation (antipathy) (Quillian, 1995).

- **Frustration**

Whites and some Coloured participants expressed frustration with the implementation of affirmative action. As one participant commented: *"My problem with affirmative action is the air of entitlement that non-whites have."* The other participant commented that, *"I have been doing this job for many years and my*

job responsibilities are not challenging. People with less service [meaning experience] and who cannot do the job properly are being promoted. This is frustrating".

This frustration is caused by the in-group (White males) who perceive affirmative action as a threat to their self-interest. Whites now realise that they will not benefit from the Affirmative Action Policy and are therefore frustrated. A sense of group position has grown out of a history of unequal power relations between Whites and Blacks. The greater the sense of threat to their prerogatives, the more likely are they are to express prejudice against threatening outsiders. These perceptions of the participants reflect the fear that Whites and to a lesser extent Coloureds, have of losing power and therefore feel frustrated.

- **Demoralised**

In addition to feeling frustrated, Whites, Coloureds and Indians are feeling demoralised by the implementation of affirmative action. A participant commented that, *"There is not much opportunity to move up. You get entrenched in a position and you're stuck there. I have seen several supervisors being appointed ahead of us – all of them from outside the Department."*

The majority of the Coloured and Indian participants believed that they are not benefiting from the policy, in that only Africans are targeted for appointment and promotion. This has left them feeling demoralised. As one participant said, *"It is another form of apartheid. During apartheid Coloureds were treated badly and even now they are still treated badly. Nothing has changed."* In a survey on 'affirmative action and popular perceptions', Adam (2000) found a strengthened perception that black Africans deserve preferential treatment over other previously disadvantaged minorities. This perception rests on the view that the Indian and Coloured middle groups enjoyed some privileges denied to other Africans under apartheid.

Habib (2003) argues that the influence on racial tensions is the racial character of the attempt to remedy the past as characterised by the post-apartheid government's transformation agenda, encapsulated in its programmes and policies that are largely based on race. He also argues that the negative side of this process is that the benefits of this redress policy have been monopolised by a small elite minority within the black population. Moreover, some white, Indian and Coloured citizens perceive the redress project as unfair discrimination, and this in part accounts for the significant increase in emigration. Habib (2003) further argues that the racial character of the redress project has also led to tensions within the black population, as well as between people of African and Indian ancestry.

Blumer's Group Position Model would argue that the reason why Whites are feeling demoralised and at the same time scared is because of their historically developed judgements about what position they should occupy in society. As described in the literature review, Whites have occupied the higher and more prestigious positions in society and more specifically in the workplace. Hence, the Whites perceive that they will not benefit from affirmative action. Similarly, Coloureds who somehow benefited from past discriminatory employment practices in the public service are therefore feeling demoralised the same as the White employees are.

- **Reverse discrimination**

All White participants felt that affirmative action is a form of reverse discrimination. White males interviewed said they had been denied a job or promotion because of their race and gender. White females said they had faced employment discrimination because of their race. A White male participant said that, "*Whites who work hard and/or are more qualified or experienced are not appointed or promoted simply because they are White. Your race or gender doesn't say anything about how capable you are, so it's totally unfair to base employment on it.*"

Neva Makgetla in a newspaper article titled, 'B*ehind the myth that Affirmative Action is hurting White prospects',* writes that, "It seems that some circles cling to the belief that affirmative action has devastated the prospects for young White people and – to a lesser extent – Coloured people. Yet however, much some people cherish this perception, the data show it is simply wrong" (Business Day, 7 April 2006). Makgetla argues that, even if Africans find employment they are less likely than whites to hold powerful positions. In 2004, Africans constituted two-thirds of all employed people while Whites made up a seventh. But Africans held just 14% of senior management positions in the private sector … Coloureds and Asian contributed 17% and Whites 54%. Even in the public sector, senior management was far from representative. The public sector accounted for about fifth of all employees. Africans held 47% of senior management positions, Coloureds 15%, and Whites 39%. In other words whites were overly represented by a factor of two (ibid.). Further she says that in 2004, only 7% of Whites earned less than R1 500.00 a month compared with 61% of Africans and 31% of Coloureds. Meanwhile, Africans accounted for only a fifth of the top 5% of income earners, while Whites made up nearly three-quarters. It is against this data that Makgetla asks, "Why does the myth persist that affirmative action has had a tremendous effect on whites?" One factor is that some individuals view the loss of privilege, not as a requirement for equality, but as a loss of entitlements. They resent the fact that they can no longer rely on an assured career with the competition suppressed by law.

Nell and Van Standen (1988:19) argue that, "reverse discrimination is often viewed as being synonymous with affirmative action and has consequently given affirmative action a negative connotation. The finding of this study is consistent with the findings of previous studies. Policies and practices such as affirmative action have the effect of excluding white men (Hunter, 1992; Innes, Kentridge and Perold, 1993). While a continued focus on issue of "race" in South Africa can potentially lead to stigmatisation of historically disadvantaged groups in society, and perceptions among historically favoured groups that affirmative action leads

to reverse discrimination, the current demographic weighting of disadvantage in South Africa makes it a crucial necessity for affirmative action to focus on "race" in order to achieve equity across all levels of industry (Mhone *et al.,* 1998). White in general and in particular White males may perceive their work situation to be threatened by affirmative action because affirmative action is changing the work circumstances of Whites who historically have been the beneficiaries of apartheid. Affirmative action now places Whites in direct competition with Blacks for jobs and promotion, and pose a potential threat to their relatively privileged economic position. It is thus reasonable to assume that Whites may foster oppositional attitudes to affirmative action when they perceive themselves to be disadvantaged.

Further, it can be argued that the Whites oppose affirmative action because it strives to change a racial *status quo* that is in their interest. The Whites' resistance to change in the racial status quo may not be racism; it could be a natural hostility that results from Whites' perceptions that Blacks pose threats to their well-being. This line of reasoning is derived from the Realistic Group Conflict theory. According to this theory, Blacks and Whites are in competition for scarce resources. This perception of threat by Whites creates hostility directed towards the source of the threat – Blacks. Following this line of reasoning then, the driving force of this hostility is scarcity of resources. If this theory holds, this would mean that Whites oppose affirmative action because they perceive Blacks as competitive threats for valued socio-economic resources.

The findings of the present study are corroborated by those of Jansen van Rensburg and Roodt (2005:60), who indicated that, in comparison with Black employees, White 'employees were the least positive in terms of their perceptions of Employment Equity'.

- **The lowering of standards**

A potpourri of views emerged from participants on whether affirmative action will result in the lowering standards and reputation of their Department. The White participants expressed their fear and discontent with affirmative action in terms of the dropping of standards. The majority of the other participants agreed that standards will drop if the employees are not employed and/or promoted on merit. There was a general consensus amongst the other participants that if unqualified or inexperienced individuals are being employed and/or promoted for the sake of affirmative action, standards will be negatively affected. One of the participants agreed that standards may be lowered "*If rapid and speedy employment or promotion of incompetent Blacks and women for political expediency or patronage is the only concern*". However, he hastened to add that "*if designated employees are appointed (solely) on merit and given the necessary support, the long-term benefits of appointing them will far outweigh the short term cost*". The following comment by one of the participants gives an overall view of how affirmative action might result in lowering of standards: "*By setting lower standards for hiring or promotion, we are lowering the level of accountability. Hard work, discipline and performance achievement should be rewarded. An employee should not be rewarded simply because he or she is of a certain race or gender, nor punish another employee simply because they are White.*"

White participants realise that equality needs to be achieved and that the past imbalances need to be corrected. However, they are still opposed to affirmative action. Their justification of the opposition lies in their belief that affirmative action will lower standards of service delivery efficiency. Similarly, Nel's (1996) case study on the Port Elizabeth municipality found that Whites believed that the service standards of the municipality had decreased because of Black advancement. A survey during 1992 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) polled 5320 members of the Public Service Association, a union which until lately mainly represented white civil servants at the time. The survey

(Wessels and Viljoen, 1992) made some interesting findings in that a significant number of those polled believed that after the transition:

- merit would disappear from civil service appointments and promotions;
- political appointments would be made to replace existing (white) staff;
- civil service would become less efficient and effective; and
- their career security would come under pressure.

The White participants' perception that affirmative action will lead to the lowering of standards constitutes symbolic racism. Lea, Bokhorst and Colenso (1995) argue that symbolic racism is created through early socialisation and is evident in the opposition to affirmative action policies that are expressed on a non-racial basis but that preserve the racial *status quo*. So Whites reject the principle of racial injustice while simultaneously resisting social polices designed to address such injustices.

Related to the belief by the White participants that the standards of the Compensation Fund will be adversely affected by affirmative action leads to another theme expressed by the participants. In arguing that the standards of the Compensation Fund are being lowered, they tend to stereotype Blacks. One participant reflected his negativity of affirmative action in his stereotyping of Africans: "*They are too loud and argumentative, have very little respect and are inconsiderate of others and cannot make deadlines. Their work ethic is questionable*".

The Group Model (1996) argues that the perception of the White participants that they still deserve positions can lead to ethnocentrism. This has further lead to the stereotyping of Africans as not deserving and as not qualified to take on positions that they are being offered. Templer and Hofmeyer (1992) study the perceptions of South Africa managers on the progress of Black advancement. They too found that Whites tended to stereotype Blacks. They commented that White respondents believed that Black people were poorly educated, incapable

of being managers and that standards would inevitably fall because Blacks were being hired and promoted. Vallabh and Donald (2001) (cited in Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, 2005) reported on the following perceptions of Black managers:

- They place a high value on being trusted and recognised for their work, though their values are not recognised.
- They are placed in positions that do not meet their academic backgrounds.
- They do not have opportunity to use their knowledge and skills.
- They are second-guessed by their colleagues and supervisors.

Furthermore Schmidt's (1999) report on the attitudes of the Gauteng Post Office employees mentioned that White employees have similar prejudiced attitudes towards Black colleagues. The stereotypes that were mentioned by the White respondents, as reported by Schmidt (1999), were that Blacks were unable to reason or comprehend properly that White's jobs were now insecure and Blacks did not know their place, meaning that they deserved a subordinate position to the Whites. Similarly, Van Der Merwe's (1995) case study on Eskom, found that there was a great deal of resistance from Whites against affirmative action policies. Stereotyping arises because of a perceived group threat. Whites' self-interest are being threaten, they fear losing their jobs or being denied further promotions and employment, their prestigious status that they once enjoyed is being threatened by the implementation of Affirmative Action Policy.

- **Tokenism**

The White participants believe tokenism and favouritism has taken over in the employment and promotion of Black and female employees. All participants of all races and genders feel that tokenism has occurred in some way. In some cases affirmative action is "misused" to confirm stereotypes – where "token" unqualified people are put in positions to confirm and illustrate the unscientific generalisation that certain races (and gender) can never perform beyond certain levels. In some sections, unsuitable people are deliberately brought in, through affirmative action,

to keep transformation in its theoretical and rhetorical status with no practical implementation. In such situations only their signatures and rubber-stamping are needed. "Unaffirmative action" (Mail & Guardian, 13 August 1999) was a report on the monitored progress of affirmative action, and it challenged tokenism. A spokesperson from the Community Growth Fund was quoted as having expressed concern about the slow progress, "this concern stems from our experience that many Black managers are appointed to positions that carry little or no decision-making power…" He went on to say "we attribute these disappointing observations to 'knee-jerk' reactions of companies to the new dispensation – in other words they appoint a few Blacks in order to get contracts."

Tokenism or window dressing is understood by participants as the appointment of employees in positions while not being given the associated power and authority attached to that position or not possessing the requisite experience and/or qualifications. One participant referred to such appointment as token or glorified appointments. Owing to the perception that positions are unearned, one participant felt that a number of Black managers are not given sufficient responsibilities and accountability and are therefore often undermined by their White colleagues. This derives from the view that such individuals have limited capacity and would not succeed without someone else's generosity. One participant indicated that there is a tendency in their Department to appoint Black people in "soft" positions such as in support functions (for example, Human Resources, Communications) as opposed to line functions (for example, Finance).

De Beer and Botha (1996:4) say:

> it is a fundamental error to equate affirmative action with preferential treatment of underserved persons, and such an approach if offensive towards people from the relevant target groups. The Black Management Forum (BMF) has clearly stated

that affirmative action should **not** undermine merit-based recruitment or promotion.

If this is true – the perception that affirmative action is tokenism – it has severe repercussions for the Compensation Fund in that the literature is replete with evidence that token appointments result in inefficiency and a drop in standards.

Although anecdotes can be traded, there is little evidence to suggest that there is any truth in the perception that affirmative-action recipients are less qualified than their colleagues. Many people have argued that affirmative action stigmatises designated employees. Although the data support this contention, it should be acknowledged that stigma and negative stereotypes associated with race and gender existed in this country long before affirmative action was implemented. This does not mean that stigma and negative stereotypes are acceptable, but rather that they exist independently of affirmative action.

Related to the issue of tokenism is favouritism. Participants believed that it is natural for employers to employ employees that are the same race as them.

The White participants belief that tokenism is occurring is an attempt by them to justify their opposition to affirmative action. This, Lea, Bokhorst and Colenso (1995), call symbolic racism. Opposition to affirmative action is explained on a non-racial basis in order to keep the racial *status quo* of White superiority. They believe that affirmative action will result in the recruiting of Blacks to fill quotas, instead of recruiting Blacks on the basis of their qualifications or experience.

b. Gender prejudice

A significant majority of the participants commented that much effort has been done in addressing the gender inequalities. Women participants, especially Africans, have endorsed affirmative action because it offers them an opportunity to curb gender inequalities. According to Madi (1993), a complete understanding

of the variation in women's attitudes towards affirmative action seems to lie at the juncture of relative deprivation theory, social identity theory and procedural justice theory. More specifically, women who feel a discontentment with their position would endorse affirmative action if it offers them a fair remedy to discrimination. One African female participant boldly and unashamedly stated that, *"Affirmative action has helped me as a woman as women are the most people who are being discriminated."* A male participant commented that, "W*omen's choice to have children was the major explanation for inequality, as they tend to take some time off to do childbearing*". In terms of the repealed discriminatory employment legislation in the public service, women had to resign when they fell pregnant. True women emancipation and empowerment can only be accomplished when all barriers to advancement are eliminated.

Male stereotyping is one key obstacle to the advancement of women. Gender stereotyping occurs when employees are judged according to traditional stereotypes based on gender. Culturally-based prescriptions of acceptable gender behaviour are salient features of such discriminatory attitudes. Women are traditionally socialised to be passive, deferential and soft-spoken while men have traditionally been socialised to be aggressive, forceful and dominant. Individuals not conforming to these attributes are subject to criticism, outright prejudice and hostility and therefore it becomes difficult for women to find a place in top and senior management positions in the public service (Kelly, Young and Clark, 1993, cited in Mello and Phago, 2007:152-153). Furthermore, employment decisions, from appointments to promotions, involve a variety of objective and subjective factors, and decisions are often made by males whom the female candidate will be joining (Mello and Phago, 2007).

One female participant said that the Department is making concerted efforts to employ more women, "*but she stopped short and raised the complaint that the Department only promotes young women.*" This could be as a result that the department in its drive to bring about equity employed more women most of

whom were young and had attained post Grade 12 educational qualifications. A number of studies have included demographic variables such as age, education and income as predictors of affirmative-action attitudes. Demographic variables have been of interest because they are thought to reflect underlying factors such as socialisation (in case of age and education), social status (education and income) and potential for having personal experience with unequal treatment (race, gender, marital status). Walburg and Roodt (cited in Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, 2005) reported that younger groups (<35 years) feel progressively more positive about Employment Equity [affirmative action] than older groups (35 – 50). The older group (>50) again felt more positive about Employment Equity. Tenure is strongly related to age. The reason for the group in their mid-careers to be more negative about Employment Equity may be related to their career demands and typical mid-career crises as pointed out by Walburg and Roodt (2003).

Müller and Roodt (cited in Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, 2005) found women to be more negative than men about affirmative action, because they have fewer opportunities. In their study Berezowski *et al.* (cited in Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, 2005), found that male participants argued that they are receiving unequal rewards in the labour context because of their gender. Contrary to this, Van Zyl and Roodt (cited in Janse van Rensburg and Roodt, 2005) found women to be more positive than men about employment equity. This inconsistency is probably attributable to the differences in the country's development stages.

Hersch (1993) says that feminists argue that the superficial differences between men and women should be ignored in determining the type of work which women are capable of doing and terms and conditions under which they should work. Kritzinger (1993) therefore argues that gender inequality must be socially reconstructed. The social construction of gender inequality within work organisations comprises, to an important degree, the empowerment of women

themselves. According to Shaw (1995) as more women are employed in organisations, the more they become a numerical threat to men and are treated by these men as a threat. As a result, the quality of personal interaction deteriorates. Feminist scholars, such as Reskin (cited in Kritzinger, 1993) believe that the basic cause of the income gap between men and women is not segregation per se, but "men's desire to preserve the advantaged position and their ability to do so by establishing rules to distribute resources in their favour". This desire by men to preserve their position illustrates clearly the role of patriarchal ideology within work organisations (Kritzinger, 1993).

The relationship between the genders was a continuum from equality to domination by one gender or another according to Bonvillain (1995, cited in Corder, 2001:65). The degree of equality depended on the type of society, its level of complexity, and on the strength of the ideology supporting traditional mores. In primitive foraging societies there was potential for equality where there was equal access to resources. However, when man became the hunter he took a more dominant role. In more complex societies, division of labour also led to economic specialisation and emphasised gender differences, usually in favour of men. In contrast, Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990, cited in Corder, 2001:65) predicted that the 1990's would be the decade of women in leadership, especially in the business world. They sensed that women are 'ready to break through the "glass ceiling," the invisible barrier that has kept them from the top'.

7.5   Conclusion

Recognising the inequalities of our past and its consequences is not the same as accepting the immutability of race or the inevitability of race consciousness. Unless affirmative-action policies target unfairly disadvantaged individuals rather than demographically defined groups, race will continue to be the central factor in the distribution of opportunities and the promise of the new South Africa will be found hollow at its core. The study share the sentiments of Spies (2006) that, "…if affirmative action is going to rectify the mistakes of apartheid, it needs to

transcend it, not emulate or perpetuate it. And it cannot be allowed to contravene the explicit promise of our constitution, 'to heal the divisions of the past'".

Affirmative-action policies based on race must use racial attributes to be implemented. This reinforces negative stereotypes, racial tension and a stigmatisation that thwarts the efforts of members of the preferred groups to pursue their goals on merit and hard work rather than preferential treatment. Jafta (1998) asserts that the American affirmative-action landscape is littered with stories of abuse of affirmative action provisions, simply because race has become a proxy for disadvantage. "In his book, *No More Martyrs Now*, Don Caldwell cites the example of Harvard University's financial aid to all minority students irrespective of need. When one of the beneficiaries was asked whether he had to maintain a certain standard of performance to receive the financial aid of the programme, he responded: 'No, I have to prove I am still black!'" (Jafta, 1998:5).

Race-based affirmative-action policies encourage a culture of entitlement that undermines initiatives, self-confidence and self-reliance. The beneficiaries of racial preference may always have to do more to prove their worth than others because of lingering suspicions of undue advantage. Even the beneficiaries themselves often wonder whether they are in demand because of their abilities or because they happen to be the "right" colour.

Shelby Steele, a Black professor of English at San Jose State University in California, abhors the message that current affirmative action policies send to young American Blacks: "*that extra entitlements are their due and that the greatest power of all is the power that comes to them as victims. If they want to get anywhere in American life, they had better wear their victimisation on their sleeves and tap into white guilt, making whites want to escape by offering money, status, racial preference, anything – in return. Is this the way for a race that has*

been oppressed to come into-their-own? Is this the way to achieve independence?"

Should an argument against race- and gender-based affirmative action therefore be construed as an argument for the *status quo*? Certainly not. Efforts should be made to find ways in which all South Africans would be made better off, but especially the truly disadvantaged – those with the least access to employment, food, security and productive assets. Since the poorest of the poor are found predominantly in the rural areas and are more often than not women and youths, a sustained effort to help the rural poor to help themselves could go a long way towards solving problems of marginalisation and inequality. All South Africans must have access to rewarding employment, sufficient education and skills acquisitions: these are non-negotiable requirements. But we cannot allow different standards based on race or gender. Building capacity through hard work and patience will take longer, but it will certainly be a better use of resources than the attempted short-cut of affirmative action.

The empirical findings of the present study hold some implications with regard to the determining factors which influence the Compensation Fund employees' attitudes held towards affirmative action, and the resultant impact that these may have on the successful implementation of Affirmative Action Policy. According to Rosenberg *et al.* (1993), those attitudes which are least structured are the easiest to change, while formed and established attitudes tend to be sustained. This implies that, if attitudes are to be modified or changed, then it is important to address negative perceptions of affirmative action when attitudes become structured and rigid. Given that employee perceptions towards affirmative action are very important to the success of affirmative action, the findings of the study suggest that more effort about educating employees about affirmative action is needed.

8.1 Introduction

If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want ten years of prosperity, grow a tree. If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people (Chinese proverb).

Affirmative action is a concept imported from the US, which was designed to enable minorities to access opportunities previously denied to them because of their social positions and means different things to different people. It is a concept which may have had a place in the US, but we have to ask ourselves whether it has a place in South Africa, and if so what its appropriate place is. There are two main differences between South Africa's social conditions and those of the US. Firstly, the US has a majority White population which in the politics of the 1960s was expected to affirm a minority Black population. Secondly, there was not any questioning by most Americans, Black or White, of the fundamental tenets of the US socio-economic system, beyond its racism. Ramphele (1995:1) makes an assertion that, "the American dream was, and still is, seen as the basis of their socio-economic system, and the clamour is not to transform the system but to gain access to it and share in the dream".

Thomas (2002), drawing from the experiences in Malaysia, India, the United States, Canada, Britain and Zimbabwe, notes that 'best practices' in Employment Equity for South Africa include a strong and inclusive consultative process with all stakeholders; numerical target setting with regular monitoring by a credible authority; a focus beyond the numbers to include comprehensive training, development, mentoring and coaching process; clear communication and top management commitment to the initiative.

8.2   Summary of empirical findings

The following is the summary of empirical findings of this study:

While participants view affirmative action as an antidote to (past) discrimination against Blacks and women, racial and gender prejudice emerged as the main concerns of participants. The dominant perception held by White participants is that they are not in favour of affirmative action. Blacks in general and in particular Africans on the other hand, are more optimistic and positive about affirmative action. Significant majority of participants commented that sufficient progress has been made in advancing women at the Compensation Fund.

The research study proved that even though Affirmative Action Policy has been implemented for almost ten years, it is still perceived in a negative light by Whites as a form of reverse discrimination and that it will result in poor service delivery. As Furh (1993:18) states, "the call to redress the imbalances of the past through a process of affirmative action instils fear into the hearts of many White managers and supervisors. It brings with it frightening notions of lost control, lowering of standards, reverse discrimination and revenge. It strikes at the very heart of White prejudice". Indian and Coloured participants who argue that they were also disadvantaged and marginalised in the past and, therefore, should also benefit from affirmative action as intended by the Employment Equity Act and the Department's Affirmative Action Policy, displayed some resentment towards affirmative action as they perceive it to be more in favour of Africans. Further, poor communication, dissemination of information and lack of training was perceive by all participants as a contributory factor to their (limited) understanding or lack thereof of the concept affirmative action and its intended objectives. Also, the responses indicated that the majority of participants perceived the lack management's commitment to ensuring the successful implementation of affirmative action.

Racial and gender prejudice were interpreted in terms of Blumer's Group Position Model. Blumer maintained that racial prejudice was best understood as a general

attitude or orientation involving normative ideas about where one's own group should stand in the social order vis-à-vis an out-group. For Blumer, dominant group outlooks exhibit four features. The first feature is a feeling of superiority on the part of dominant group members. The second feature is a belief that the subordinate group is intrinsically different and alien. The third feature involves a sense of proprietary claim over certain rights, status, and resources. The fourth feature involves a perception of threat from members of a subordinate group who harbour a desire for a greater share of the dominant group members' prerogatives. "Perceptions of threat are driven by a group's feeling of racial alienation within the larger social order. The more that members of a particular racial (gender) group feel collectively oppressed and unfairly treated by society, the more likely they are to perceive members of other groups as potential threats" (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996:27). Blumer's model views inter-racial hostility as caused by the in-group's perception that their self-interests are being threatened. This results in the in-group becoming ethnocentric and stereotypical of the out-group. The in-group believes that they have a right to certain privileges, status, and rights while the out-group desires a share of those privileges, status and rights.

Grindle (1980) argues that a policy's success will depend on how it's formulated and implemented. The structure of relations and commitment to reporting mechanisms are important factors involved in the success of policy implementation. Hence, the problems that participants perceive of the implementation of affirmative action may restrict its success.

8.3 Goal and aims of the study

The goal of the study was successfully reached as it provided information on employees' views regarding affirmative action and its implementation at the Compensation Fund. With regard to the aims, a theoretical framework describing the implementation of affirmative action and its impact at the Compensation Fund

was presented. The employees, who participated in the study, their views and/or beliefs regarding (the implementation of) affirmative action were explored.

Notwithstanding the limitations of this study, all in all the study achieved its overall objective in obtaining information regarding the extent to which the implementation of affirmative action at the Compensation Fund has shaped employees' perceptions towards affirmative action. The study received the support of the Department of Labour. The student relished the process as a challenge and is excited by the knowledge that the goals set in the study were achieved and further that this will make (an invaluable) contribution to the body of knowledge on the subject of affirmative action.

8.4   Concluding remarks

Since 1994, the government has done much to deal with the legacy of apartheid discrimination in the public service. Despite the progress, some clear challenges remain. The issue of affirmative action will always be an enigma and 'a political hot potato' if it is treated as a political rather than a business issue. It should be clear by now that affirmative action can be both right and wrong. It all depends on the reasons behind embarking on it and how the whole implementation is handled. For the sake of South Africa's young democracy with all its condiments, such as non-racism, non-sexism and reconciliation, creative ways will have to be found so as to cement this fragile process of transformation.

Affirmative-action programmes must play an important part in improving effectiveness, efficiency and productivity by maximising the contributions of a more diverse workforce in the public service in general and in particular at the Compensation Fund. Given our past, this employment equity can only be achieved by producing a workplace which goes some way towards reflecting the demographic characteristics of our country. But how we produce this workplace is another matter. Do we go the synthetic route of racial/gender quotas or do we

opt for the organic route, which would entail a full commitment to skills development and patience to wait for the fruits of this programme to blossom?

Affirmative action has been and still is a controversial topic. Still, because of implicit negative attitudes it means that its implementation is going to be met with resistance. It was clear from the present study that employees have many erroneous conceptions of affirmative action. How can these conceptions be changed? What must be done so that employees can consider affirmative action in general as a business imperative? And finally, why do employees oppose affirmative action? The present study proposed three answers to this question: prejudice, lack of adequate information and self-interest. This being the case, it is important for the topic of affirmative action to be further studied.

Understanding the reasons for demographic group differences in policy attitudes is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, it is important to move beyond the treatment of demographics as either proxies for theoretical constructs or sources of error variance that must be controlled. To make this kind of progress, research must identify the theoretical reasons why demographic groups are expected to differ and incorporate measures of the relevant theoretical constructs. Practically, it is useful to identify the sources of demographic group differences in policy attitudes in order for research to make a contribution beyond the dictates of simple common sense. Identifying the factors that explain demographic group differences in policy attitudes can help policymakers develop ways of presenting information that will be effective for building coalitions and generating support for various points of view.

In conclusion, affirmative-action policies are sorely needed as is supporting research to guide its implementation and guard against negative consequences for intended designated employees and the organisations that implement these policies. Research such as the present study that adds to the understanding of why affirmative action is opposed can be used to guide its implementation. As it

stands, the "bottom line" is this: People tend not to oppose fair affirmative-action plans. Since, without information, people tend to assume affirmative action is unfair and reverse discrimination. When an affirmative-action programme is being implemented, care should be taken to provide information highlighting the fairness and reasons for the affirmative-action programme. It is also important to empirically determine how to lessen misconception of affirmative action because of the effects these misconception have on the designated employees. According to Heilman, Simon and Repper (1987), when designated employees are made to believe that they were selected primarily on the basis of their race and/or gender, they tend to withdraw from the task or job for which they were selected and perform worse on the task than counterparts who believe they were selected primarily on the basis of merit. Researchers could provide supporting research on the best way to achieve this goal. In this way, researchers and practitioners can work together to ensure that affirmative-action policies continue to be used well into the future. It is only when we have a better understanding of how affirmative action is perceived that we can confirm whether the intentions of affirmative-action policies are, in fact, positive.

Lastly, two recommendations for future studies are proposed. Firstly, future studies can build on this study's efforts by collecting data from a larger representative sample or at least from other organisations to see if the findings of the present study are replicated. This will yield richer (and thicker) responses to the interview questions and comments. Secondly, future studies should include focus-group discussions. Responses emanating from such discussions would serve to strengthen data obtained from personal interviews.

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APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The interview questions are divided into four sections in line with the problem statements.

Section 1: Progress to date and perceived problems

1. What is your rank/title and how long have you been employed by the Department?
2. Do you think you are gainfully employed?
3. Are you satisfied with your progress so far?
4. Please could you discuss major problems you have experienced with regard to employment equity in your Department?
5. Can you identify any opportunities that the introduction of practices to achieve employment equity afforded you in the Department?

Section 2: Management commitment and accountability

6. Does your Department have an affirmative action policy? If so, give a brief description?
7. Who do you believe is responsible for the actual driving and implementation of practices to achieve employment equity?
8. Does the Department have a group that monitors the implementation of practices to achieve employment equity?
9. Do you believe that supervisors drive the employment equity process in the Department?

Section 3: Employment practices and organizational culture

10. Are you aware of any special effort(s) made by your Department to recruit designated groups for positions in management and administration? If yes, give a brief explanation.

11. Are top management in your Department fully committed to developing and advancing designated groups to management positions? If yes, give a brief explanation.

12. Do you support affirmative action programmes that help designated groups to get ahead? If yes, give a brief explanation.

13. Do you think affirmative action will result in a general lowering of standards and productivity?

14. Do you agree or disagree that affirmative action in nothing else but window dressing or tokenism?

15. In your opinion, is affirmative action a boon (benefit) to those already more privileged in that affirmative action cannot claim to have advanced employees in low-income bracket or employees who have been with the Department for long?

16. Do you agree or disagree that the Department should not hire a black applicant if there is a more competent white one who wants the job. Give a brief explanation.

17. Has affirmative action caused Whites to loose their jobs or not get promoted in your Department?

18. Did affirmative action create any racial disharmony in your Department?

19. Are you aware of any incidents of discrimination in your Department during the last 12 months regarding job applicants and promotions?

20. In your opinion, is affirmative action discrimination in reverse? Explain.

Section 4: Future needs and career aspirations

21. Explain the kind of support that you get or require from the Department to enhance your career path / future career needs in the Department.

22. Does your Department have a mentoring process in operation?

23. What is your long-term career aspiration?

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF PERMISSION

- 1 -

DEPARTMENT: LABOUR
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
COMPENSATION FUND

Enquiries	P. Mothiba
Tel. Direct	(012) 319-9458
Reference	31 May 2006

Dear Mr. Kgapola

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE COMPENSATION FUND:
KGAPOLA LESLIE

You are hereby granted permission to conduct a research at the compensation fund towards completion of your dissertation in partial fulfillment of a Master of Social Science- Labour Studies.

You are kindly requested to contact Ms. Poovendre Govender at telephone number (012) 400-8508, or email address poovendree.govender@labour.gov.za for logistical arrangements and assistance in this regard.

I regret the inconvenience caused in the process of your request to use our institution for purposes of your studies. Please accept my apologies in this regard

I further would like to wish you success in your studies and hope we will be of assistance and support in this regard

Sincerely yours

MP Mothiba
Acting Compensation Commissioner

P O Box 955, Pretoria, 0001, Tel: (012) 319 9111, Fax: (012) 323 8627 / 326 7889 / 325 6686 / 323 6986
Compensation House, Cnr Hamilton and Soutpansberg Road, Website: http://www.wcomp.gov.za

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CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION