Stakeholder ‘conflict’ over Affirmative Action: Considering non-beneficiaries’ perspectives and implications for interpersonal justice

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Business Administration.

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ABSTRACT

Across the globe, Affirmative Action broadly understood as a preferential redistributive policy intended to redress socio-economic inequalities created by past discriminatory labour policies, has been fraught with controversy and immense opposition from those who do not benefit from it. South Africa’s version has faced similar challenges to the extent that it is generally believed that non-beneficiaries’ reluctance to support it is based on their need to protect their long-standing economic advantage.

The purpose of this study was to explore issues underlying the enduring stakeholder conflict over Affirmative Action in the South African context. In doing this, it focused exclusively on non-beneficiaries, investigating their perceptions of the policy. Additionally, the study sought to establish whether non-beneficiaries think Affirmative Action had any implications for the creation of a workplace environment in which all employees feel valued.

The study was conducted following an exploratory approach and a qualitative design. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 non-beneficiaries ranging from business practitioners to public representatives in parliament. Purposive sampling techniques were used to sample participants from organisations that had publically declared their views in opposing Affirmative Action.

Findings showed that non-beneficiaries viewed Affirmative Action as a racist policy with a strict focus on numerically-representative outcomes. The study found that non-beneficiaries view Affirmative Action as a policy whose impact extends beyond workplace recruitment processes. It also showed that the policy is considered to have created negative externalities for the society and hampered business efficiency. The study revealed a belief that the policy has failed to correct socio-economic disparities. It also established that non-beneficiaries were unlikely to support Affirmative Action as they considered it an extractive economic policy. Furthermore, the study revealed that lack of good-quality economy-relevant education and skills were critical binding constraints to effective implementation of any measures to eradicate persistent socio-economic inequalities. An alternative input-based, socio-economic focused framework is proposed to address the fissures identified in the existing policy.

Key words:
Affirmative Action, non-beneficiaries, socio-economic inequalities, scorecard approach
DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Phathiswa P. Magopeni

Date
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... 1

DECLARATION ...................................................................................................................................... 2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ...................................................................................................................... 3

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMMS ............................................................................................. 8

TABLE OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................ 9

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 10

1.1 Research Problem .......................................................................................................................... 10

1.2 Research Purpose ........................................................................................................................... 11

1.3 Research Motivation ....................................................................................................................... 12

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................. 13

2.1 South Africa: The Past ................................................................................................................... 13

2.2 Employment Equity Act Objectives ............................................................................................... 14

2.3 Affirmative Action Measures ........................................................................................................ 14

2.4 Affirmative Action: A Global Overview ......................................................................................... 15

2.4.1 The Reservation Policy in India .................................................................................................. 16

2.4.2 Affirmative Action in Malaysia .................................................................................................. 16

2.4.3 Employment Equity in Canada ................................................................................................... 17

2.4.4 Affirmative Action in the United States of America .................................................................... 17

2.5 Affirmative Action in South Africa ................................................................................................ 18

2.6 Conceptualising Conflict ................................................................................................................. 23

2.7 AA Stakeholders ............................................................................................................................. 26

2.8 Stakeholders and the Enacted Environment .................................................................................... 26

2.9 Justifying Affirmative Action .......................................................................................................... 27

2.9.1 Instrumental Justification ............................................................................................................. 27

2.9.2 Moral Justification ....................................................................................................................... 29

2.10 Challenges Facing Affirmative Action .......................................................................................... 31

2.10.1 Concept Clarity ........................................................................................................................... 31

2.10.2 Implementation ............................................................................................................................ 32

2.10.3 Legitimacy Issues ....................................................................................................................... 33

2.10.4 AA (In) Justice and (In) equality ............................................................................................... 34

2.10.5 The AA Stigma ............................................................................................................................ 36
5.3.1.1 Intervention to Address Socio-Economic Inequalities...........................................62
5.3.2 PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM ......................................................................................63
5.3.2.1 Ulterior Racial Motives .........................................................................................63
(d) Backward-Looking ......................................................................................................65
5.3.2.2 Racial Representativeness ......................................................................................66
5.3.2.3 Racist Quick-Fix Mechanism ................................................................................66
5.3.2.4 A Variation of Cadre Deployment..........................................................................67
5.3.3 AA IMPACT AND CONCERNS .................................................................................68
5.3.3.1 Obsession with Outcomes......................................................................................68
5.3.3.2 Socio-Economic Disparities ..................................................................................70
5.3.3.3 Costly to Society ....................................................................................................72
5.3.3.4 Divisive and Perpetuates Racial Dissonance ..........................................................74
5.3.3.5 Mechanistic Implementation ................................................................................74
5.3.3.6 Statutory-Driven with Bad Outcomes ..................................................................75
5.3.3.7 Lacks a Sunset Clause ..........................................................................................77
5.3.3.8 Hampers Business Efficiency ...............................................................................77
5.3.4 INJUSTICE ...............................................................................................................78
5.3.4.1 No Justice in AA ....................................................................................................79
5.3.4.2 Unfairly Punitve to White Youth ..........................................................................80
5.3.5 THE AA STIGMA ......................................................................................................80
5.3.5.1 Psychologically Damages Beneficiaries .................................................................81
5.3.5.2 Stigmatises Beneficiaries ......................................................................................81
5.3.5.3 Inculcates Entitlement and Dependency ...............................................................82
5.3.6 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS .................................................................................82
5.3.6.1 AA Fuels Tension and Resentment ......................................................................83
5.3.6.2 AA Humiliates Non-beneficiaries .......................................................................83
5.3.6.3 AA Ruins Interpersonal Relations .......................................................................84

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS ........................................................................86
6.1 INTRODUCTION ...........................................................................................................86
6.2 DISCUSSION OF EMERGENT THEMES ................................................................86
6.2.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES ...................................................................86
6.2.1.1 Intervention to Address Socio-Economic Inequalities .........................................86
6.2.2 PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM ................................................................................87
6.2.2.1 Affirmative Action has Covert Racist Motives .......................................................87
6.2.2.2 Flawed Approach Stressing Racial Numerical Representativeness .......................89
6.2.2.3 AA Founded in Haste and Based on Flawed Assumptions ....................................90
6.2.2.4 It is a Variation of Cadre Deployment .................................................................91
6.2.2.5 Conclusion ...........................................................................................................91
6.2.3 AA IMPACT AND CONCERNS .............................................................................92
6.2.3.1 Scorecard Approach that Fails to Address Socio-economic Inequalities .............92
6.2.3.2 AA’s Statutory Approach has Negative Consequences .........................................94
6.2.3.3 It Causes Negative Externalities for Society .........................................................95
6.2.3.4 It Is Divisive and Perpetuates Racial Dissonance ................................................96
6.2.3.5 AA Hinders Business Efficiency .........................................................................98
6.2.3.6 Conclusion ...........................................................................................................99
ABREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA – Affirmative Action
BEE – Black Economic Empowerment
ANC – African National Congress
STATS SA – Statistics South Africa
EEA – Employment Equity Act
EEAA – Employment Equity Amendment Act
CEE – Commission of Employment Equity
EAP – Economically Active Population
SAIRR – South African Institute of Race Relations
TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Trends for top management by population group from 2003 to 2013 .........................19
Figure 2: Distribution Trends for Top Management by Population Group -2013 ......................20
Figure 3: National Economically Active Population (EAP) by Population Group and Gender.....20
Figure 4: Distribution Trends for Top Management Level from 2003 to 2013 by Gender ..........21
Figure 5: Distribution Trends for Top Management by Disability – 2013 ..................................22
Figure 6: Conflict Iceberg Model ............................................................................................... 25
Figure 7: AA Retributive Justice Vicious Cycle ........................................................................ 107
Figure 8: Input-Based Socio-Economic Affirmation (IBSEA) Model ......................................... 108
Figure 9: A Co-creative Education and Skills Development Approach for IBSEA .................... 112
Figure 10: Input-Based Affirmation Virtuous Cycle .................................................................. 118
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Problem

Employment Equity (EE) policies and practices, seeking to promote inclusivity in the workplace and eradicate the effects of past systematic discriminatory employment laws, have been legislated and implemented in many countries across the world, including Malaysia, Zambia, India, Brazil, New Zealand, South Korea, Australia, Canada and the United States of America (Hideg, Michela & Ferris, 2011; McMillan-Capehart, Grubb & Herdman, 2009; Jain, Horwitz & Wilkin, 2012; Saha, 2012; Ainsworth, Knox & O’Flynn, 2010).

However, any reference to the term ‘Affirmative Action’ (AA), commonly used interchangeably with black advancement, empowerment of minorities and women empowerment, depending on the context, seems to trigger multifarious feelings from different stakeholders (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011). According to Archibong and Adejumo (2013), detractors often use disparaging remarks such as lowering of standards and giving preferential treatment to “non-whites” at the expense of white people. Often, critics view AA as “reverse discrimination and racism without a specified time frame for the discontinuance of the policy” (Archibong & Adejumo, 2013; Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011; Hideg, et al., 2011; Shteynberg, Leslie, Knight & Mayer, 2010; Moses, 2010). Haynes (2012, p.372) argues that “reverse discrimination” is a derogatory term that helps detractors to justify their claim that “Affirmative Action is a form of discrimination that can be equated to the injustices that occasioned the ‘supposed’ need for it - while maintaining an appearance of balanced reason”.

Furthermore, despite EE policies and AA measures being instituted as procedures to redress historical injustices and exterminate their legacy, they continue to be perceived as discriminatory and damaging to democracy by fostering divisions along racial categorisation (Berkerly, 2013; Wendricks, 2010). McMillan-Capehart, et al. (2009) support this view stating that, despite their superordinate goals, research shows that AA programmes are frequently perceived to be unfair and are often met with negative reactions. Additionally, Harris (2010) postulates that the unrelenting impassioned argument over AA seems to have created more hostility than to settle attitudes and perceptions about the necessity of the measures.
1.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore stakeholder conflict over AA initiatives in South Africa and the likely implications of the policy for workplace interpersonal justice.

The specific objectives of this study are:

(a) To get insights into the persisting tensions over AA programmes.
(b) To look at possible implications of AA on the creation of an environment in which all employees feel valued.

In pursuit of these objectives, the study will focus on the following:

(i) The underlying causes central to the conflict from the point of view of, primarily, “non-beneficiaries”, referred to as people who do not stand to benefit from EE and AA (Hideg & Ferris, 2013, p.49; Hideg, et al., 2011; McMillan-Capehart, et al., 2009; Haynes, 2012).

The researcher reasons that until such causes are understood, the umbrage and antagonism towards AA will persist and effective appropriate interventions will never be found to reconcile the opposing perspectives.

(ii) Exploring whether AA has any impact on relations between designated employees and non-beneficiaries in the workplace.

The broader objective is to understand if there is any opportunity, however remote, of how AA with its envisaged goals could be embraced by detractors and implemented effectively given the apparent irreconcilable justice-based views that seem to lie at the heart of the conflict over AA (Hideg, et al., 2011).
1.3 Research Motivation

Although studies have been done regarding barriers to implementation of AA (Booysen, 2007), as well as discussions of the issue at public platforms, recent literature regarding this phenomenon in South Africa seems to underplay the apparent complexity of concerns of non-beneficiaries and their importance in successful implementation of AA. This is also reflected in the manner in which the subject has been captured in literature. While research that has focused on overcoming negative perceptions of non-beneficiaries to EE exists (Hideg, et al., 2011), it is the researcher’s contention that the phenomenon under investigation in this study has not been given full attention and direct in-depth treatment.

The rationale for the exclusive focus on non-beneficiaries is that, according to the Employment Equity Act of 1998 (EEA) and its subsequent amendments, white males are the only group within the economically active population that does not benefit from AA. Based on the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) report, which records progress or lack thereof in the implementation of EE and AA initiatives, released in April 2014, as well as its previous versions, the researcher believes that views of non-beneficiaries are vital in decoding the impasse over AA and in understanding the source of apparent reluctance in implementing workplace transformation policies. Moreover, white males continue to dominate top management positions and remain key decision makers in the workplace (CEE Report, 2013-14) and thus, in charge of implementing AA.

From a management perspective, the study should contribute to a better understanding of workplace sentiments of non-beneficiaries around AA initiatives. It should also lead to an increased awareness of the reasons for resistance and result in improved approaches to the effective implementation of such initiatives as interventions for organisational transformation, change and development. A study of this nature should also help managers in their attempts to create and manage a workplace environment conducive to fostering employee collaboration, as contemporary jobs demand knowledge-sharing and cooperation.

From the point of view of public policy, the study should help inform policy formulation, taking into account the incongruent views underlying opposition and rejection of AA initiatives. Moreover, lawmakers should get a better perspective of the enormity of the contradictions facing AA implementation, as they attempt to balance the need to redress inequalities of the past, restore and maintain justice for all, with the imperatives of business sustainability and achievement of commercial targets as well employees interest to attain personal goals.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 South Africa: The Past

When South Africa “emerged from a dark history of legislated polarisation based on race” (Hawarden, Sutherland & Adonisi, 2012, p.1), it ushered in a democratic system of government with its first inclusive election in 1994 (Horwitz & Jain, 2011). The apartheid system had institutionalised subjugation of the black majority by giving the white minority the right to vote. Most significantly, the small white section of the population had enormous control in business and ownership of the land (Hawarden, et al., 2012). When the African National Congress (ANC), led by Nelson Mandela, took over in 1994, it inherited an economy whose comparative performance was at its worst, with the gross domestic product (GDP) in real terms having reached a “low-water mark” in May 1993 (Fosu, 2013).

Fosu (2013) argues that during that period, while the economic growth rate was low, the situation was aggravated by the fact that apartheid laws ensured that the results of whatever growth had been achieved were appallingly disproportionately distributed. In 1994, the Gini co-efficient, a measurement of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country, was one of the highest in the world at 59.3 (CIA, 2010). As apartheid policies denied the black population equal access to education, employment, services and resources, the consequence was economic inequality that had a very strong racial facet (Hawarden, et al., 2012).

The new democratic system required an exhaustive review and to some extent a complete obliteration of oppressive legislation which authorised the "reservation" of many skilled jobs and managerial positions for white people (Byrnes, 1996). This culminated in the enactment of the EEA of 1998 (amended in 2013), with AA being the primary component to effectively correct the injustices of past discriminatory labour laws (Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Booysen, 2007).

It is argued that AA in South Africa was a legal response to acknowledged inadequacies in anti-discrimination legislation. Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011) state that the issue of discrimination was originally raised in the definition of Unfair Labour Practice, but later substantiated and expanded on with the proclamation of the EEA.
2.2 Employment Equity Act Objectives

The fundamental objectives of the EEA were and remain to achieve equity in the workplace by:

(a) Promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination
(b) Implementing AA measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups (black people, women and people with disabilities who were precluded by apartheid policies), to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational levels in the workforce.

(Department of Labour, EEA – Section 2, paragraphs (a) and (b) 2014)

2.3 Affirmative Action Measures

Flowing from the above objectives of the EEA, AA measures were designed to;

(a) Ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational levels in the workforce of a designated employer
(b) Make sure that implemented initiatives must include;

(i) Measures to identify and eliminate barriers, including unfair discrimination, which adversely affect people from designated groups
(ii) Measures designed to further diversity in the workplace based on equal dignity and respect of all people
(iii) Making reasonable accommodation for people from designated groups in order to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities and are equitably represented in the workforce of a designated employer
(iv) Retaining and developing people from designated groups and implementing appropriate training measures, including measures in terms of Acts of Parliament providing for skills development.

(Department of Labour, EEA Section 15, subsections (1) and (2) 2014).
In examining the crux of content of the principal Act, EEA, and AA as its pillar, it can be argued that employment equity, in principle, puts emphasis on the broader envisaged outcome, while AA acts as a practicable strategy that seeks to ensure that EE objectives are attained (Thomas, 2002). Put simply, AA initiatives are employed as a tool to attain equity in the workplace (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008).

When AA was effected in 1998, it was not the first time it had been implemented in South Africa. It is documented in a book produced by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) that “for many years, white Afrikaners (mainly men) were pushed ahead via the Broederbond, the civil service and parastatal employers” (Idasa, 1995, p.3). To this effect, Idasa cites a 1904 Transvaal Mines Commission report, which states that Afrikaners were “incompetent and pathetic indigents” who “can hardly be considered in efficiency the equal of a native” (Idasa, 1995, p.3). Idasa also revealed that some South African companies started implementing AA even before its formal legislation in 1998 (Idasa, 1995). At the time, AA implementation took a voluntary approach as organisations were setting their own targets and measuring their performance with no legal obligations to comply with.

2.4 Affirmative Action: A Global Overview

EE policies and AA measures have been studied extensively independently and jointly as tools to advance and attain employment equity objectives (Hideg, et al., 2011; Archibong & Adejumo, 2013). Hideg and Ferris (2013, p.50) state that the premise of these policies was that intended “beneficiaries had prospered less in the past due to systemic advantages and privileges provided to non-beneficiaries of the policies”. Whereas South Africa’s democratic government first enacted EE legislation in 1998 and subsequently introduced other progressive legislations, other countries had gone that route before. An interesting observation is that many countries that had started implementing AA measures had, at various stages, encountered social and judicial challenges forcing them to review or abolish the procedures viewed as reverse discrimination (Mazwai, 2012; Berkerly, 2013). The following section provides a brief overview of selected countries that have implemented different forms of policies seeking to redress inequalities at the workplace resulting from past discriminatory practices.
2.4.1 The Reservation Policy in India

In seeking to eradicate caste-based discrimination, India instituted what is said to be the world’s first AA programme known as the Indian Reservation Policy (Saha, 2012). When the Constitution of India was adopted in 1950, it sought to abolish discriminatory practices borne by the caste system, introducing quotas in education and employment (Thomas, 2002; Saha, 2012). According to the caste system, some groups within the Indian population – mainly farmers, fishermen and other labourers – were denied access to employment, better job opportunities and privileges that were reserved for higher castes. India’s primary beneficiaries for reservation were categorised as Scheduled classes, Scheduled tribe and other Backward classes (Moses, 2010). Since then, the Reservation policy has undergone numerous reviews and amendments, triggering pleasant and unpleasant responses from the country’s population (Saha, 2012).

2.4.2 Affirmative Action in Malaysia

In Malaysia, AA policies were written into the Constitution under Article 153 of the Constitution, dictating the protection of interests of the Malay and other indigenous peoples of Malaysia, collectively referred to as Bumiputra (Saha, 2012). Despite being in the majority, over decades beneficiaries had very restricted opportunity to prosper compared to the Chinese ethnic group in the country (Hideg, et al., 2011). Malaysia launched its New Economic Policy in 1971 (which ended in 1991 and was replaced by the National Development Policy), responding to racial inequalities that had largely contributed to race-based riots that took place in May 1969 (Lee, 2011).

While preferential policies both in South Africa and Malaysia favoured a politically-dominant but economically-disadvantaged majority group, the Bumiputra in Malaysia, and blacks in South Africa, Saha (2012) says AA in Malaysia established a quota system for entry into the civil service, public scholarship and education.

As with other countries that had implemented race or ethnic-based preferential policies, Malaysia’s AA perpetually generated controversy. Non-beneficiaries, Chinese and Indian ethnic minorities labelled them inefficient and unfair. Preferential policies are also believed to have created structural economic problems as well social costs that are difficult to repair (Lee, 2011). According to Lee (2011) critics believe that AA policies are the cause of enduring corruption in Malaysia’s political economy.
2.4.3 Employment Equity in Canada

In Canada, the Employment Equity Act, first enacted in 1986 and amended in 1995, seeks to create working conditions that are free of barriers, correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment and promote the principle that employment equity requires special measures and the accommodation of differences for the four designated groups, that is, women, aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities and visible minorities (Hideg, et al., 2011; Jain, et al, 2012). It is said that South Africa’s Employment Equity Act (1998) was, to a large extent, crafted on the Canadian version, although it also had leanings on other jurisdictions (Jain, et al., 2012). In its initial form, the implementation of EE in Canada was believed to be slow and at some point had unintended consequences by “increasing the employment of white able-bodied women at the expense of addressing discriminatory practices relating to the racial minority of women” (Thomas, 2002, p.245). It has been noted that the amended version also focuses on organisational culture and systemic discrimination.

2.4.4 Affirmative Action in the United States of America

In the United States of America (US), the term AA was first used to describe government policy designed to address continuing inequalities for African Americans in the 1960s and appeared for the first time in Section 717 of Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Saha, 2012). Whereas South Africa’s AA programmes sought to benefit the black majority, women and disabled people, the intended beneficiaries in the US were racial or ethnic minorities (Krüger, 2013).

Although the US appears to have made progress in the effort to achieve representation of previously disadvantaged groups, the process has been fraught with problems. Vociferous calls have been made for the dismantling of AA, and a significant number of states have started considering abolishing AA due to perceptions that, after decades, it is counter-productive and no longer necessary (McMillan-Capehart, et al., 2009; Harris, 2010). Opponents have used the state ballot-level initiative to abolish AA, with some, including California, Michigan, Nebraska and Washington, successfully banning AA (Moses, 2010).
2.5 Affirmative Action in South Africa

The EEA with its primary implementation tool AA, was first enacted in 1998 and amended in 2013. AA was introduced as a remedial process, as Nelson Mandela explained in his speech during the planning stages in 1991, saying it sought “to redress the imbalances created by apartheid”. He further pointed out that “we are not asking for hand-outs for 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” (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011, p.81). Consequently, South African organisations face legislative pressure to correct effects of past discriminatory practices in the workplace (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011).

According to the EEA (No. 47 of 2013), designated companies, that is all employers, both large and small, are required to report annually to the Department of Labour. Local spheres of Government are also subject to the Act. To this extent, the Employment Equity Act compels all designated employers to set up processes, ensuring that suitably-qualified individuals from designated groups are “afforded equal opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels of the workforce (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011, p.80). Designated groups are defined as black people (African, Indians, Coloured and Chinese), women and people with disabilities who:

(a) Are citizens of the Republic of South Africa by birth or descent
   Or
(b) Became citizens of the Republic of South Africa by naturalisation –
   (i) Before 27 April 1994;
   (ii) After 26 April 1994 and who would have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalisation prior to that date but who were precluded by apartheid policies (CEE Report, 2013-14).

In other words, designated companies are required to establish numerical targets and timetables for adjusting the configuration of their workforce with regard to gender, race and disability.

However, notwithstanding government efforts through CEE to monitor and measure AA implementation by organisations, there remains a strong sense that black people; women and people with disabilities are still relegated to lower level jobs (CEE Report, 2013-14). Arguing that the pace of transforming the labour market is still ‘stubbornly’ slow, Oliphant (2014) noted that the majority of the workplaces were still largely “lily-white at the top and often male over-represented.
with sprinklings of black and women executives”.

The 2013-14 CEE report reveals that, despite continuing AA implementation between 2003 and 2013, covering a full decade, there was still an over-representation of whites with 62.7% (Figures 1 and 2, which is nearly five times the group’s economically active population (EAP), shown in Figure 3, and nearly twice the sum of all blacks in top managerial positions. The report showed that Africans constituted 19.8%, while Indians made up 8.3%, which is more than double their EAP when compared to Africans and Coloureds within the black group, whereas Coloureds made up 5.1% of the representation at the top management level (CEE report, 2013-14).

**Figure 1: Trends for top management by population group from 2003 to 2013**

![Trends for top management by population group from 2003 to 2013](image)

Source: CEE report, 2013-14
Figure 2: Distribution Trends for Top Management by Population Group -2013

Source: CEE report, 2013-14

Figure 3: National Economically Active Population (EAP) by Population Group and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics South Africa, (QLFS 3 2013) (all percentages are rounded to one decimal point)

Source: CEE report, 2013-14
Figure 4 shows that gender representation in top management position remains seriously skewed in favour of males. Although figures show a reduction from 86% in 2003 to 79.4% in 2013, males continue to be over-represented. While there has been a steady incline of 6.6% in female representation from 14% in 2003 to 20.6% in 2013 at top management level, the inclusion of females appears to be painfully slow. It has also been noted that even though white women are included in the category of designated persons and still experience gender discrimination, “their relative position in relation to black women remains relatively privileged” (Horwitz & Jain 2011, p.299).

Figure 4: Distribution Trends for Top Management Level from 2003 to 2013 by Gender

![Distribution Trends for Top Management Level from 2003 to 2013 by Gender](source: CEE report, 2013-14)

The report also showed that the inclusion of disabled people in top management positions is far behind with just 1.5% representation at this level (Fig.5). In fact, it is said that disabled people accounted for 0.9% of the total number of employees, almost 6-million, reported by all employers in 2013, which could be an indication of problems with effective integration and mainstreaming of the disabled into the workforce.
Although the preceding discussion merely captures transformation of the workforce at top management level, the CEE report (2013/14) does reflect reluctance of employers in implementing AA. Coetzee and Bezuidenhout’s (2011) view “that although significant progress has been made in restructuring and transforming South African society and its institutions, inequalities and unfair discrimination remain deeply embedded in social structures, practices and attitudes, undermining the good intentions of the country’s democracy”, still holds true (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011, p.79).

In South Africa, the lack of appropriate skills among designated groups has been generally cited for the lax implementation of AA. There is a sense among non-beneficiaries that AA ignores the role of inputs such as skills development and education (Hermann, 2013). The skills shortage issue is highlighted in a report entitled ‘Youth employment, Unemployment, Skills and Economic Growth’, 1994-2014, released by Statistics South Africa in September 2014. With regard to the report, the Office of the President (Manamela (2014), admits that while gains have been made in improving employment levels across all age groups for the skilled employed population, blacks still have the lowest increase at 3%. Manamela (2014) says that, “A closer look at the numbers, especially amongst the black African youth aged 20-34, tells a disturbing story. It suggests that there is a generation of black Africans who, through the period of 20 years, lost out in acquiring skills whilst their white and Indian counterparts made major inroads in skills
acquisition. Amongst black Africans, the skills level decreased 3% whilst amongst white and Indians it grew by well above 24%”. Among issues mentioned by Stats SA as causes for the inadequate skills development were apartheid legacy, the closure of teacher and nursing training colleges, weak administration in education (such as the non-delivery of textbooks) and ineffective teaching (SAPA, 2014).

As a long-term approach to effective AA implementation, it appears that addressing skills deficiency and providing designated individuals with relevant quality education are considered the most critical interventions that could help accelerate efforts to eradicate economic imbalances in the country. Hermann (2013, p.42”) cautions that, “If the education of people in the designated group does not improve radically, neither will their position in the labour market”.

However, reflecting their observations about AA implementation in western countries, Burns and Schapper (2008) reckon that inadequate mechanisms to enforce compliance with the initiatives had rendered the entire legislation impotent. They blame this on the significant shift of emphasis to collection of employment statistics. Also, some studies on how corporate perceptions of fairness or political inclination impact compliance with AA, have shown that it is somewhat challenging to attain the envisaged effect of AA when companies lack a sense of obligation and do not fully comprehend, consciously or unconsciously, the underlying motivation for these interventions (Cho & Kwon, 2010).

2.6 Conceptualising Conflict

The intense debate over, overt and covert resistance towards AA continues to characterise its implementation in South Africa, with detractors committing to steadfastly continue to resist it “in the interest of every sane person in this country” (Mulder, 2014). Civil rights groups in South Africa such as AfriForum (2014) have gone further, “launching a full-scale attack on Affirmative Action in court case after court case (Mazwai, 2012). Mulder (2014) had even called for its abolishment, arguing that, after two decades “it cannot still be justified or defended in any manner and that the shelf-life of the divisive and destructive policy has lapsed”. While critics express concerns about its potential to undermine national reconciliation and exacerbate racial tensions, proponents argue that it mitigates racial discrimination and enhances equality” (Moses, 2010, p.217).

It is well documented that incompatibility of goals set for people could lead to conflict and suggestions have been made that all conflicts emanate from two types of difference, that is, difference over goals and ideologies, and difference over territory (Senior & Swailes, 2010).
Robbins and Judge (2013, p.480) define conflict as a “process that begins when one party perceives another party has or is about to negatively affect something the first party cares about”. But a comprehensive definition comes from Anstey (2006, p.6) who proffers that:

“Conflicts exist in a relationship when parties believe their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in their values or interests and purposefully employ power in an effort to eliminate, defeat, neutralise or change each other to protect or further their interests in their interaction.”

The above definition will be adopted for the purpose of this study, as it seems to capture the essence and nature of the phenomenon being investigated.

Flowing from Anstey’s (2006) definition, Senior and Swailes (2010) further differentiate between unitary and pluralist frames of conflict. They argue that the former is premised on the philosophy that organisations have goals to which all parties have to conform and contribute. According to this frame, conflict is considered a deviation from expected conduct. This perspective also holds that conflict is disruptive and undesirable and, therefore, should be avoided and if possible eliminated. The latter is based on the understanding that organisational activities should take the view of ‘coalition of divergent interests that will sometimes result in conflict’ (Senior & Swailes, 2010, p.200). This approach recognises multiplicity of viewpoints and that, when handled constructively, could lead to informed decision-making.

Cloke and Goldsmith (2011) acknowledge conflict as a necessity that should not completely disappear. They believe that it is a time-honoured approach that people use to achieve their goals as well as a method of introducing essential improvements. This view finds support in Katz and Flynn’s (2013) argument that not only is conflict inescapable as a natural phenomenon in organisational life, but it can also play a positive role in it.

With regard to the nature and intensity of conflict, Anstey (2006) further distinguished between conflicts and disputes, stating that the former were deeply embedded in threats to fundamental human needs. He argues that they are not susceptible to compromise, whereas disputes are open to negotiation and a settlement is possible through compromise. He further opines that when the issues at the core of the conflict are recognition, security and development, resolution often requires radical transformational responses.

It is within the context of this characterisation of conflict that the concerns underlying the impasse
over AA will be investigated. Most relevant to this investigation is recognising an assertion by Cloke and Goldsmiths (2011, p.10) that in conflict situations “everyone suffers, everyone feels betrayed, hurt and broken-hearted”. The authors use an iceberg analogy to illustrate the complexity of conflict (Fig. 6). They argue that what is visible; the actual conflict is only a portion of the real problem. The authors suggest that when people engage in conflict, there could be numerous concealed issues that breed intransigence and rigidity in people’s defensiveness.

This study will lean on the conflict iceberg model in attempting to explore and understand the submerged layers as well as reveal the root causes of the conflict over AA. Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2007) support this approach, asserting that using recognised theories to frame investigations provides boundaries for the study and guides all phases of the process, from literature review to presentation of findings.

**Figure 6: Conflict Iceberg Model**

![Conflict Iceberg Model](http://agilevietnam.com/2012/12/25/the-iceberg-of-conflict/)

2.7 AA Stakeholders

According to Crane and Matten (2010), organisations are not managed merely for the interests of their shareholders, but for a wide range of parties, referred to as stakeholders. These are groups that have legitimate interests in the corporation. They authors view stakeholders as individuals or groups who either are harmed by, or benefit from; or whose rights can be violated, or have to be respected in the course of decision-making. This view is of particular importance to understanding the conflict over AA, as it brings to the fore key players and their interests.

While AA beneficiaries, that is, designated groups and government – the custodians of EE and AA are considered central to implementation of the policies, white males as non-beneficiaries should be treated as key stakeholders and to a large extent crucial AA enablers, whose role should not be underestimated or misjudged. It has been noted that despite legislative interventions to create parity in management and ownership of wealth in South Africa, economic power and management of businesses still remain firmly in the control of white males (CEE report 2013-14).

It could be argued that this group is key to ensuring that EE is achieved through effective implementation of AA measures. Also, a critical perspective to be considered is the complex network of laws and regulations enforced by government, which adds another dimension to the conflict. It is within this context that the wrangling over AA seems to escalate as non-beneficiaries perceived preferential policies as threat to their own interests and goals. Mulder (2014) takes this further by arguing for the scrapping of the policies in the interest of the economy and better human relations, while government believes that AA needs strengthening, in order to accelerate socio-economic transformation (Zuma, 2014). Senior and Swailes (2010) provide credence to this incongruence in stakeholder perspectives by stating that in addition to increased competition for resources and changing social and political dimensions, government interventions are potential sources of conflict.

2.8 Stakeholders and the Enacted Environment

The stakeholder conflict over AA initiatives cannot be examined exhaustively without considering the enacted environment. Cummings and Worley (2009) view the enacted environment as the third dimension in the external environment of the enterprise. They point out that it reflects member’s (organisation’s) perception of the general and task environments. This is relevant in the context of this study, because stakeholders’ representation and perception of the general and
task environments could influence how they formulate decisions and responses. How AA non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries perceive changes in the general environment, that is, legal and regulatory, political and socio-cultural shifts could have direct bearing on their choice of response to those changes. It is this interaction between stakeholder perceptions and their response that is believed to be central to the intense conflict over AA and requires investigation.

2.9 Justifying Affirmative Action

Justification is defined as “the explanations given for a decision to affected parties by the decision-makers and used when the decision-maker accepts responsibility for the decision, but does not recognise that the decision was inappropriate due to some overriding goal” (McMillan-Capehart, et al., 2009, p.415). McMillan-Capehart, et al. (2009) suggests that by providing justification for AA, negative reactions towards them could be diminished.

Varying arguments and explanations have been advanced for AA, but the most widely used justification is captured by Haynes (2012) who asserts that they are measures designed to overcome the enduring discriminating effect of past or present practices, policies or other barriers to equal employment opportunity. Furthermore, Moses (2010) reasons that rationales for AA fall under two categories of justifications, which are instrumental and moral. Instrumental justifications interpret AA as goal-oriented in nature and as strictly a means to an end, whereas moral justifications view AA as “appealing to deeper beliefs about what is right and good and how people ought to be treated” (Moses 2010, p.218).

2.9.1 Instrumental Justification

Under the instrumental perspective, economics and diversity orientations are considered.

(a) Economics-oriented Justification

The economics view regards AA as a mechanism to help those disadvantaged by past discriminatory establishments to participate in economic activities. This view finds support in US President Lyndon Johnson’s assertion on AA in the United States, signifying that freedom on its own is not enough, stating that, “You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, “you are free to compete with all the others, and still justly believe that you have been completely fair” (Wendricks,
This seems to be at the heart of the deliberate intent to economically emancipate and empower people who were previously excluded from participating in economic activities.

However, despite the noble intention, suggestions have been made that AA has had unintended consequences in South Africa in that “masses of black people are still untrained and unemployed and that the country’s economic progress is severely hampered by a shortage of skills – affecting millions more blacks than whites” (Hermann, 2013, p.57). While Johnson further asserts that “opening the gates of opportunity is not enough; rather, groups that have been the object of historical discrimination must be given the ability to walk through the gates of opportunity (Wendricks, 2010, p.14), there seems to be an enduring problem in South Africa in that lack of quality education and skills development for designated groups appear to be a perpetual problem.

Harris (2010) also finds problems with the economic-oriented approach in that organisations that view AA as a threat to their economic viability and efficiency are unlikely to support it. In other words, AA could be viewed as having potential to reduce dexterity in business operations if designated employees are appointed to jobs for which they are not sufficiently qualified. This could be compounded further by the increased presence of people previously perceived as of low status. However, Chance (2014) argues that companies must also share some of the responsibility. He states that instead of companies “retreating to well-worn defensive positions and refusing to acknowledge the need for redress, they should come up with innovative ways of restructuring their workforce and professional management, even if it temporarily hurts the bottom line”.

(b) Diversity-oriented Justification

The diversity view considers AA as a tool to facilitate inclusion and increase diversity in the workplace (Moses, 2010). Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011) postulate that AA seeks to restore diversity in society and the workplace by correcting effects of past exclusionary and discriminatory practices. As a principal argument for increasing employee diversity, it has been professed that AA improves creativity, innovation and the problem-solving capacity within an organisation and is therefore a business necessity (McMillan-Capehart, et al. (2009). In fact, this argument goes further to suggest that diversity can help organisations derive sustainable competitive advantage benefits.
However, Burns and Schapper (2008, p.370) consider the use of diversity as justification for AA as problematic, arguing that “managing diversity has developed as the new equity discourse, rapidly supplanting equal opportunity and Affirmative Action”. McMillan-Capehart, et al. (2009) distinguish between AA and diversity initiatives, saying that AA is legally-mandated and often limited to ensuring full representativeness of a company’s workforce, whereas diversity programmes focus on leveraging difference for the benefit of the organisation. Further concerns have been raised with regard to the diversity approach in that it ensures that decisions regarding inclusion of beneficiaries are a managerial discretion and seek to serve “business interests without compromise, constraint or interference from external agencies” (Burns & Schapper, 2008, p.370). Notably, the strongest argument on the dangers of using diversity to justify AA is that while “diversity invokes images of harmonious complementarity and the embracing of difference, fundamentally, it blurs the issue of inequality and expunges highly political, emotive words such as racism, sexism, anti-racism, feminism and discrimination” (Burns & Schapper, 2008, p.370). In other words, diversity could be viewed as more appealing and sophisticated than its emotionally corrosive AA counterpart, while it disregards crucial issues of economic deprivation that AA seeks to address.

2.9.2 Moral Justification

Moral justification is an argument for AA that is perceived by proponents as ethical, forward-looking and largely concerned with democratic participation, with some even suggesting that race and gender-based preferences are morally acceptable and capable of reversing institutional racism and sexism (Wendricks, 2010). Suggestions have been made that even in instances where AA may be seen as reverse discrimination and not justifiable, the measures should, to some extent, be viewed as morally excusable when past discrimination is taken into account (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Moses (2010) highlights two perspectives from which moral justification for AA can be understood, remediation perspective and social justice.

(a) Remediation Perspective

Remediation is deemed to be more compensatory in nature as it regards AA measures as providing restitution for illegal discrimination of the past. Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011) emphasise that AA measures are intended to put individuals on a par in order to make competition for employment fair and just. McHarg and Nicolson (2006) refer to AA in the United States, saying in earlier justifications based on compensatory or restorative justice, it was conceived with the intent to provide restitution to African-Americans for suffering caused by slavery and
discrimination. They argue that in the context of societies compensating for cruelty they caused, AA has significant emotional appeal and moral character.

However, Moses (2010) states that despite remedial justification being related to issues of justice, in South Africa it is applied in a backward-looking manner, assuming a corrective approach in righting past wrongs and their legacy. One of the most popular objections against remedial justice reasoning is that, while non-beneficiaries lose out in the allocation of positions or contracts, paying for the wrongs of the past, “they are generally not responsible for the past discrimination, whereas beneficiaries may themselves have escaped significant discrimination” (McHarg & Nicolson, 2006, p.10). In South Africa, suggestions have been made that young white males who never took part in apartheid activities are being punished by AA measures (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008). But the deliberate and narrow focus on the visible face of the innocent victims disregards the faceless victims of past discriminatory practices. Moreover, it ignores those “who currently or will in the future suffer the lingering effects if Affirmative Action is rejected” (McHarg & Nicolson, 2006, p.10).

(b) Social Justice Perspective

Social justice, on the other hand, takes an integrative approach and considers AA as seeking “to dismantle current barriers to equal opportunity for disadvantaged (racial) groups (Moses, 2010, p.218). The author further reasons that social justice is more concerned with racial integration, eradication of institutionalised inequalities as well as equity in democratic participation. However, AA opponents rejected this argument and viewed race-based preferential policies as “accepting the inevitability of racial separation and abandoning hope for an integrated society” (Wendricks, 2010, p.24).

It also appears that the barriers to equal opportunity are not only a race issue. In addressing non-beneficiaries’ concerns that AA in SA has created a black elite, leaving the majority people desperate and with no hope of redress, Duncan (2013) proposes a consideration of socio-economic status in the implementation of AA. The author argues that it makes no sense to allocate AA opportunities to people who are currently in privileged positions simply based on their affiliation to a racial group that was disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws. In other words, such people could get along well without AA support as such decisions could lead to the creation of new inequalities within designated groups. This would, it seems, defeat the entire purpose of using social justice as a credible and legitimate justification for AA.
A review of literature reveals that various countries that have implemented AA have chosen different justifications depending on their envisaged end-goals (Hodapp, 2008; Wendricks, 2010; Moses, 2010). Although Moses (2010) seems to think that SA has taken a backward-looking approach, it does appear that it is a blended approach, capturing both backward and forward-looking perspectives. In practice, it seeks to integrate previously-disadvantaged groups into the broader economy, by designing the preferential system using past disadvantage as a key determinant for qualification.

2.10 Challenges Facing Affirmative Action

2.10.1 Concept Clarity

In describing AA, Harris (2010, p.78) says that it is, “in a sense, a form of justice seeking for past discrimination that involves taking turns at fairness for those who have been harmed”. However, AA both conceptually and in practice has always generated “fierce opinions” to the extent that views of detractors and supporters seem to be irreconcilable (Haynes, 2012). Hermann’s (2013) concerns about AA highlight a problem that points to a clash between the concept and its practice in South Africa. He believes that while there is an obvious need to correct economic imbalances, in practice, the policy is nothing more than race-based numerical representativeness. This view is consistent with Holzer and Neumark’s (2006, p.466) position that the incessant focus on numerical outcomes characterises AA as attempting to “equalise results or outcomes”. Hermann (2013) further opines that whereas elsewhere in the world the essence of AA has been to protect minorities and to help them access economic opportunities, in South Africa it is not concerned with enhancement or equality but with racial representation. In other words, the remedial measures have an exclusive focus on correcting racial representation numerically rather than addressing socio-economic imbalances. Alluding to racial undertones in AA measures, he further suggests that their political effects are being viewed as “ideological wickedness in South Africa” (Hermann, 2013, p.12).

Haynes (2012) reasons that AA’s divisive power tends to polarise and, to some extent, even humiliate people. Observing the dispute around the AA concept, Burns and Schapper (2008, p.72) postulate that “terminological inexactness has added confusion to the already controversial concept, leading to scepticism at best and to vituperative antagonism at worst”. They further state that in manipulating the obvious fluidity of what is understood by AA, detractors have manoeuvred
with success, equating the concept with deprecatory terms like reverse discrimination, in order to stigmatise it. In addition, McHarg and Nicolson (2006) postulate that unlike ‘positive discrimination’, which can be viewed as a neutral reference to justified discrimination, reverse discrimination denotes a tit-for-tat suggestion that ‘you have discriminated against us so we will discriminate against you’ motive. Haynes (2012) is of the view that the continuing disputes over AA and its meaning have become a source of frustration to its proponents. Consequently, this makes it difficult for any rational argument to be made for AA without resorting to emotional and defensive tactics.

2.10.2 Implementation

Haynes (2012, p.21) submits that “despite its origins as a specific policy, AA has become a blanket term used to describe any number of active policies, mandated or voluntary, adopted by organisations in an attempt to remedy the effects of workplace discrimination”. The author speaks of a primary dimension that distinguishes different implementations of AA, the centrality of merit in the employment decision-making process. Haynes (2012) argues that AA initiatives tend to fall in one of four categories below;

(a) Equal opportunity implementation – an approach that assumes everyone gets an equal chance to compete for positions, with merit as the only basis for employee selection decisions.
(b) Opportunity enhancement implementation – an approach that considers issues of substantive equality but still with merit as the only basis for selection decisions and no consideration of demographic status
(c) Tiebreak implementation – while merit remains central to decision-making in this approach, demographic status is only considered if qualifications are equivalent across candidates.
(d) Preferential treatment implementation – this is an approach in which merit is less central in employee selection decision-making as preference may be given to less qualified designated group members over more qualified individuals.

It appears that structural variables of AA implementation, that is, centrality of merit and consideration of demographic status in the decision-making process tend to predict the acceptability of AA plans by non-beneficiaries (Haynes, 2012). In other words, non-beneficiaries would first assess the point of emphasis on structural variables and conclude whether it is worth their sponsorship or not.
2.10.3 Legitimacy Issues

There is evidence in literature suggesting that whites oppose race-based employment measures, because they associate them with “white disadvantage”, that is, the assumption that organisational decision-making processes are biased against whites (Shteynberg, et al., 2010). Mulder (2014), a fierce AA opponent, believes that although AA is the premise upon which the SA government based its efforts to correct inequalities, it creates new injustices in the process. Elsewhere in the world, similar arguments have been made to the effect that AA policies are associated with undeserved special treatment (Shteynberg, et al., 2010). This view is premised on what Shteynberg, et al. (2010, p.2) called modern racism, that is, “the belief that blacks as beneficiaries are no longer subject to discrimination and instead receive unfair advantages in contemporary society”. According to this view, AA policies disadvantage non-beneficiaries ruthlessly. Conje (2013) presents a contrary view to that which says AA disadvantages whites. He argues, based on data collected by the SA Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), that whites in SA have actually come out better. This is seen as a consequence of whites realising that AA stipulations closed off opportunities for them, thus forcing them to explore entrepreneurial ventures. In furtherance of this perspective Cronje (2013) says; “The point of whites turning to entrepreneurship can be further reinforced by data that suggests that, while a black university graduate is more likely than a white graduate to find a job within 12 months of graduation, white graduates are four times more likely to start and operate businesses”. This seems to suggest a trend among whites towards self-sufficiency.

It is further argued that while proponents view AA measures as levelling of the playing field, which they believe remained skewed in favour of white males, opponents assert that race-based preferential policies in the workplace perpetuate discrimination (Wendricks, 2010). There are also strong positions suggesting that AA causes damaging costs to society, that is, treatment and experiences of those who are unfairly bypassed, because of preference based on past disadvantage, rather than qualifications (Harris, 2010).

However, AA proponents like the Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant, acknowledge the need to develop all human resources in the country, but state that “the achievement of employment equity requires proactive interventions that prioritise the development of the historically neglected populations” (Oliphant, 2014). Hideg, et al. (2011) reason that such polarised views over AA legitimacy are problematic, because for such interventions to be effective, support by both non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries is crucial. Notwithstanding the pragmatism of government
commitments to AA measures, there are clear signs that AA’s credibility and legitimacy as social and economic justice policy is fading (Burns & Schapper (2008). Govender (2010) postulates that AA is permissible if its objective is to empower and capacitate and not be punitive. The author believes that its legitimacy needs to be grounded on its ability to affirm those who were deprived economic opportunities in the past without obstructing white males from accessing such opportunities, stressing that the higher objective is to attain societal good.

2.10.4 AA (In) justice and (In) equality

AA appears to be rooted on the premise that there is an injustice or an inequality, which is at the heart of the matter (Wendricks, 2010). Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011) even believe that no credible argument could be made for AA without reference to justice and equality. Crawshaw, Cropanzano, Bell and Nadisic (2013, p.887) refer to justice as involving a “type of moral appraisal”. They further explain that an action is said to be ‘just’ or ‘fair’ if it conforms to certain standards of ethical propriety.

The founding of South Africa’s corrective employment policies was premised on principles of justice and equity as reflected in Hoffman’s (2012) statement below, quoting from a speech made by Nelson Mandela in October 1991, during the discussions of measures to redress the imbalances of the past:

"The first point to be made is that Affirmative Action must be rooted in principles of justice and equality."

The preceding statement, with emphasis on justice and equality, appears to be the most prominent source of tension over AA and has become a significant rallying point and ammunition for both advocates as well as critics of AA measures. Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011, p.79) surmise that, “in South Africa, no other issue has raised as many concerns about justice as AA”. AA critics like former President of the Republic of South Africa, Frederik Willem De Klerk argue that the implementation of AA had taken the ANC’s “misplaced struggle approach” that deviates from the values in the Constitution (De Klerk, 2014, p.6) by excluding a certain section of the population and violating principles of justice and equality. This constitutionality view seems to gain support from Groenewald (2014) who argues that AA measures directly contravene Section 9 (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Subsection 3 of Section 9 of the Constitution states that;
“The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.”

Non-beneficiaries are of the view that the current application of AA violates this prescript. However, Subsection 5 of Section 9 of the Constitution takes this further to say;

“Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair”.

The application of Section 9 (3) with (5) became evident when the Constitutional Court ruled against Renate Barnard in an AA case in September 2014. Barnard had unsuccessfully applied for a promotion to the level of superintendent within the South African Police Service (SAPS). SAPS had argued that as a white woman, her appointment would negatively affect racial representation at the level of superintendent. The court ruled that SAPS’s failure “to promote Renate Barnard because she was white did not amount to unfair discrimination and was done in the spirit of the constitution” (Paton, 2014). It argued that SAPS’s “employment equity plan is a ‘restitutionary measure’ envisaged by the constitution and the Employment Equity Act” (Paton, 2014). According to Paton (2014), the court took the view that AA is a restitutionary measure and advanced that;

“To be fair, a restitution measure must pass a threefold test: a) it must target a class of people that has been susceptible to unfair discrimination; b) it must be designed to protect or advance those classes of people; and c) it must promote the achievement of equality”. The court said, “Once the measure passes this test, it is neither unfair nor presumed to be unfair.” (Paton, 2014).

Regardless, detractors continue to view AA initiatives as bearing aspects of prejudice and stereotyping as racial discrimination and the difference being that those who benefitted in the past are now the offended or disadvantaged. Wendricks (2010, p.21) states that according to AA opponents, “equality before the law is what constitutes justice”. He further puts forward that the meaning of the term inequality is at the core of the arguments against AA. This is premised on the belief that when employers give preferential treatment to designated groups, they commit the same injustice against the principle of equality that defines citizenship. Conversely, Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011) offer a moral argument. According to them, equality refers to the principle
of similar treatment irrespective of background or ethnicity. However, while accepting the existence of a tension between equality and AA’s intent to achieve socio-economic equality through eradication of anti-discriminatory practices, the authors purport that in South Africa, AA is viewed as a tool of justice. They argue that as AA seeks to correct destructive effects of past discriminatory practices, its preferential bias should be considered morally excusable.

2.10.5 The AA Stigma

(a) The Stigma of Helplessness

Literature reveals that the noble intent associated with AA as a tool to correct the effects of past injustices could be seen as problematic for beneficiaries in that it strengthens opponents’ views regarding beneficiaries’ inability to care for themselves and the stereotypes that reinforce the stigma of helplessness or inability (Harris, 2010). According to this view, AA perpetuates the helplessness of beneficiaries. It appears that it is this stereotyping that is believed to be the source of self-doubt among AA beneficiaries.

Some even argue that AA portrays “beneficiaries as victims who cast aspersion upon themselves to take advantage of the system” (Harris, 2010, p.80). In portraying it as undermining and downplaying the abilities and achievements of designated groups, critics postulate that AA perpetuates the view that beneficiaries could not compete without the assistance of such policies and brand such measure “a questionable method to achieve equality” (Wendricks, 2010, p.25). Alluding to studies conducted in the US, Harris (2010, p.81) further states that “even high-level blacks hired under Affirmative Action were rumoured to experience this self-doubt”. This is aggravated by the fact that employment decisions informed by AA policies are viewed by critics as representing advantage and preferential treatment rather than employee ability and performance (Woolnough, 2010).

(b) The Stigma of Incompetence

Research suggests that negative psychological consequences exist and well-documented findings provide evidence that AA beneficiaries are subject to a stigma of incompetence (Haynes, 2012). It is believed that preferential treatment is harmful to beneficiaries as their competencies are called into question. There seems to be a general anxiety among non-beneficiaries resulting from a misconception that “able whites will have to make way for less able blacks (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011, p.77). Bikitsha (2014) labels this view racist and speaks of “an unfortunate
and desperate agitation to retain past privilege”. She further asserts that; “The distorted and widely disseminated view, in some circles, is that competence is anathema to black professionals and is the preserve of whites alone”. Literature also reveals job-mismatch as being blamed for hurting AA beneficiaries. Holzer and Neumark (2006) suggest that AA tends to hurt its beneficiaries as they are put in positions in which they eventually fail. They speak of “mismatch” inefficiencies inherent in AA, saying that beneficiaries fail because “they are mismatched with jobs or universities in which they cannot successfully perform” (Holzer & Neumark, 2006, p.468).

This notion of incompetence seems to continue gaining momentum, notwithstanding Nelson Mandela explaining the intention of the special measures in his speech at an ANC conference in 1991 as:

"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 least given their due". (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011, p.82)

According to McMillan-Capehart, et al. (2009), AA beneficiaries felt that their performance and leadership abilities were perceived negatively. Recent studies conducted in the US reveal a tendency among blacks to respond negatively to AA programmes, due to perceptions of stigmatisation and that being hired based on preferential treatment could result in negative connotations (Harris, 2010). It appears that this view is informed to a certain extent by AA opponents who assert that when past disadvantage is considered over merit, inadequately-qualified individuals are given preference and employed at the expense of more qualified non-beneficiaries (Wendricks, 2010). Additionally, detractors denigrate AA employees as incapable recipients who are used as mere tokens to fill numerical requirements and window dressing (Woolnough, 2010). Harris (2010) points to a complexity that arises from such framing, saying that failure by any member of the beneficiary group denigrates all members of the group just by association.

Critics also pontificate that individuals employed under AA tend to fall below formal educational standards required for the position for which they were hired (Harris, 2010). It is this view that appears to depict AA as resulting in the “disparity of credentials and a lowering of standards between employees who were hired under AA versus those who are not; and results in underperformance which, over time, restricts work productivity and efficiency for employers” (Harris 2010, p.84). As such, AA is viewed as promoting inefficiencies in the workplace, as beneficiaries get appointed to positions for which they are not suitably qualified.
2.10.6 Problems with Legal Prescriptions

In South Africa and other countries that have legislated AA practices, organisations are under immense legislative pressure to eradicate past and current discrimination in the workplace (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011). While some lament the slow pace of AA implementation (Ainsworth, et al., 2010), others profess that when AA initiatives were perceived as politico-legal imperatives dictating grounds for compliance, organisations responded by appointing designated candidates “merely to window dress or fill quotas, usually without due consideration of their suitability for the position or the possibility of support and development” (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011, p.77). Responding to SA government’s amending of EEA to improve compliance and ensure that the legislation was more punitive, Chance (2014) criticises the amended EEA as demographic representativeness and blunt AA with cadre deployment being their pernicious instrument. The author believes that these would in fact have the opposite effect of what government intends to achieve. He argues that instead of promoting the attainment of the long-term aspirations and prosperity of beneficiaries, these would result in further inequalities and economic problems. Furthermore, Chance (2014) points to the need for a more “humane and pragmatic approach to affirmative action, which avoids agony, arrogance and lost potential”.

A study on AA and corporate compliance in South Korea found that due to AA being viewed as encroaching on the autonomy of businesses in managing their workforce, it forced companies to find ways to meet the requirement, albeit, superficially (Cho & Kwon, 2010). Such responses could be seen as tantamount to being legally-oriented, rather than in furtherance of justice and fairness objectives. Cho and Kwon (2010) argue that these could further trigger a backlash and disillusionment from intended beneficiaries and, at worst, degenerate into a spiral of mistrust and destructive conflict. Saha (2012) concurs with this view, stating that even in India, the increasing discontent over reservation policies seems to emanate from perceptions of legal coerciveness rather than rejection of moral efforts to achieve diversity.
2.11 Organisational Justice

AA by its very nature is a process that entails transformation of organisations and, in particular, at employee level. Fuchs and Edwards (2012) argue that change interventions fail or underperform, and that failures can be traced back to employee resistance to change. According to Fuchs (2011), scholars in the organisational change domain appear to acknowledge the crucial role that different types of organisational justice play in change interventions. Organisational justice is considered “a key ingredient for employees to change support and low levels of resistance to change” (Fuchs, 2011, p.556).

Organisational justice is understood to be “concerned with the ways in which employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs and the ways in which those determinations influence other work-related variables” (Nabatchi, Bingham & Good, 2007, p.149). It is believed that justification of AA measures influences employee perceptions of whether the initiatives are fair (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008). That means, when employees are convinced that AA measures are essential to redress socio-economic imbalances, there is a better chance that they will embrace them. Whereas one part of the EEA and AA objectives captures the numerical goals, that is, ensuring equitable representation of designated groups in all occupational levels in the workplace, the other part seeks to eliminate unfair treatment, thereby promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008). It is the tension arising from the delicate balance between employing preferential treatment and the desire for fairness that brings focus on organisational justice.

Agarwal (2014) reasons that organisational justice is a crucial source of psychological safety, that is, an environment that permits showing and employing one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career. The author argues that for employees, it is important to be treated fairly, as justice provides for psychological needs such as “control, belonging, self-esteem and meaningful existence” (Agarwal, 2014, p.41). Literature on this topic reflects three dimensions of organisational justice, namely; distributive, procedural and interactional justice (Nabatchi, et al., 2007; Agarwal, 2014; Esterhuizen & Martin, 2008; Coetsee & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Crawshaw, et al. (2013) state that various studies demonstrate that perceptions of these dimensions of organisational justice do predict a variety of pertinent work-related effects. Among these outcomes are emotions, attitudes and behaviour. The next section gives a brief of overview of the three dimensions and their applicability in assessing fairness perceptions of AA initiatives.
2.11.1 Distributive Justice

Distributive justice is concerned with the perceived fairness of outcomes or allocation from a decision-making system (Crawshaw, et al., 2013; Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Studies on distributive justice generally focus on the extent to which outcomes are perceived to be equitable (McMillan-Capehart, 2009). As such, people who are more sensitive to discrimination as AA initiatives are perceived, will consider preferential hiring decisions as unfair if they are overlooked. Esterhuizen and Martins (2008) argue that this form of justice on ‘who gets what’ of AA practices puts a spotlight on the fair distribution of organisational or even societal resources and opportunities. This is particularly important for AA, as any perceived injustice could jeopardise the entire implementation process.

2.11.2 Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to the fairness of the processes, methods and mechanisms used to decide those outcomes or make decisions (Crawshaw, et al., 2013; Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011). It is suggested that with regard to AA initiatives, procedural justice does influence employee perceptions of fairness (McMillan-Capehart, et al. (2009). An example of this would be perceived fairness in processes followed in determining who is deemed suitable for a job or promotion. The challenge for AA in this regard is that, as a corrective mechanism, it is viewed with suspicion and is considered by non-beneficiaries as a threat to their livelihoods and economic success (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008) as the decision-making system disqualifies them.

2.11.3 Interactional Justice

Interactional justice is generally defined as the quality of interpersonal treatment during the enactment of organisational procedures (Patient & Skarlicki, 2010; Chiaburu & Lim, 2008; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). It is believed that interactional justice is particularly important when outcomes are adverse and significant, as recipients of the negative effects are especially attentive to fair treatment as indicators of their social standing and full membership within a group” (Patient & Skarlicki, 2010, p.556).

Interactional justice is further divided into two facets, interpersonal justice and informational justice. Informational justice captures the extent of justification, the quality of fairness of interpersonal exchanges, adequate explanation and truthfulness offered for organisational decisions (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Patient & Skarlicki, 2010). It is said that providing adequate
explanation for negative decisions may reduce unfavourable reaction and consequences that could arise as a result.

On the other hand, interpersonal justice is defined as reflecting the degree of sensitivity, respect, concern, politeness and propriety authority figures use when implementing organisational procedures (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Patient & Skarlicki, 2010; Ferris, Spence, Brown & Heller, 2012; Nabatchi, et al., 2007; Holtz & Harold, 2013; Crawshaw, et al., 2013). In other words, it is concerned with how people feel about the quality of other’s treatment of them and the extent to which the decision-maker shows respect of their rights (Woolnough, 2010). It is also suggested that interpersonal justice has the likelihood of invoking ethical and moralistic responses on employees (Cheung 2013). It should be noted that both dimensions of interactional justice focus more particularly on the behaviour of those who make the decisions than on the structural facets of procedures and allocations (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008).

The next section takes a look at interpersonal justice as key aspect in considering the matter under investigation.

2.12 Interpersonal Justice

It is believed that due to the frequency of personal encounters in the workplace, interpersonal justice takes a more central position than distributive and procedural forms, as it tends to me more relevant and psychologically sensible (Holtz & Harold, 2013). There seems to be consensus among scholars in this area that a fair interpersonal treatment perceived by employees is thought to influence responses to change positively (Fujimoto, Härtl & Azmat, 2013; Fuchs & Edwards, 2012; and Cheung, 2013). This is important for AA implementation as it necessitates transformation of organisations. Nabatchi, et al. (2007) view interpersonal treatment as including interpersonal communication, truthfulness, respect, propriety of questions and justifications, honesty, courtesy, timely feedback and respect for rights.

As co-worker relationships are increasingly becoming essential to accomplishing tasks, with jobs requiring extensive collaboration with colleagues (Forret & Love, 2008), it is believed that the prevalence of self-managing teams and working groups in organisations necessitates that employees work effectively with others. While focus has largely been on studying individual and organisational effects of justice, “perceptions of justice may also extend to co-workers and influence how co-workers interact and relate with one another” (Forret & Love, 2008, p.248).
To narrow down the range of interpersonal justice values for the purpose of this study, Holtz and Harold’s (2013) selection will be adopted. The authors identify respect, dignity, politeness and propriety as core values that constitute the interpersonal justice construct. They outline these as follows:

(a) Respect – Showing consideration, deference or appreciation for and of others
(b) Politeness – Demonstrating concern for others in one’s speech and behaviour
(c) Dignity – Behaving in an honourable manner
(d) Propriety – Behaving in a manner consistent with social norms

It should be noted that fairness of interpersonal treatment is normally viewed in the context of a person in a position of authority displaying conduct that is socially acceptable (Cheung, 2013). Ferris, et al. (2012) are of the view that when one is treated in a manner considered interpersonally just, that is, dignified, respectful and polite, they perceive that their rights are respected and have positive feelings about their position within the organisation. Forret and Love (2008) take this further and suggest that employees who are treated in a respectful manner and with concern by their managers are more likely to have faith in their manager’s decision. Additionally, they advocate that when these employees perceive their managers’ conduct as exemplary, such perceptions should increase their inclination to treat their co-workers in the same respectful manner. This view seems to support Holtz and Harold (2013) regarding alignment with social learning theory. They assert that according to social learning theory, people “pattern their behaviours after behaviour they observe in the environment” (Holtz & Harold’s 2013, p.341). This seems to suggest that any injustice perceived by non-beneficiaries in AA-implementation decisions could affect how they relate to their co-workers who are beneficiaries of preferential treatment.

2.12.1 Interpersonal Injustice and Self-Esteem

Ferris, et al. (2012, p.1789) assert that “if organisational decisions and managerial actions are deemed unfair or unjust, the affected employees experience feelings of anger, outrage and resentment”. It has been found that treatment that is perceived to be interpersonally unjust, derogates the recipient’s status and standing (Ferris, et al., 2012). The authors reason that treatment that is considered interpersonally unjust is linked to low-status, low-value positions or negative relations within an organisation. They believe that such treatment tends to be characterised by feelings of less worth compared to those perceived to be treated fairly. In their
observation of esteem threats as any events that threaten a person’s ego or lower his or her self-esteem, they state that “due to its ability to lower self-esteem, interpersonal injustice acts as an esteem threat” (Ferris, et al., 2012, p.1791). This is particularly significant in the context of perceived reverse discrimination, stigmatisation, stereotyping and labelling often associated with AA measures.

2.12.2 Interpersonal Injustice and Retributive Justice

Holtz and Harold (2013) suggest that when employees perceive unjust interpersonal treatment; they are more inclined to employ behaviour that is damaging to the organisation or individuals in their organisation. In line with this view, Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011) argue that employees tend to reject something, once they consider it as unfair. It has also been shown that when individuals perceive interpersonal treatment as unjust, they tend to act assertively to restore fairness, often engaging in retributive behaviour (Crawshaw, et al. 2013, p 892). This view is supported by Ferris, et al. (2012) who state that recipients of unjust interpersonal treatment tend to retaliate or take revenge for being subjected to an aversive state of diminished self-esteem. This also appears consistent with Holtz and Harold’s (2013, p.341) assertion regarding retributive justice, according to which “a transgressor who commits an injustice deserves to be punished”, with the belief that punishment brings equilibrium and restores the subjective balance of justice. This school of thought suggests that perceived unfair treatment and injustice lead to moral outrage and the desire to punish perpetrators. In other words, notwithstanding the apparently noble intentions of AA, the associated perception of unfairness is frequently met with hostility. It is within this context of interpersonal justice that the implications of AA on workplace relations will be considered.

2.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, the review of literature has revealed that despite AA measures being created to diminish the adverse effects of past and present discriminatory workplace policies, the current justification and arguments for AA, both instrumental and moral, seem insufficient to persuade and alter perceptions of non-beneficiaries about their unfairness and bias (Moses, 2010). They continue to be viewed as practices that violate merit principles and fail to reassure non-beneficiaries that reverse discrimination is not happening (McMillan-Capehart, 2009).

Berkerly (2013) states that even though AA is grounded on honourable intentions, “selection on
the basis of race is neither a fair nor an efficient way of doing so”. He argues that AA replaces old injustices with new ones and that rather than uniting society, it divides it. He further suggests that governments should tackle disadvantage directly, without reference to race. Hideg, et al. (2011) postulate that such negative reactions to AA measures may lead to demotivation, alienation and hostility. They raise concerns over these reactions, arguing that they could have crucial implications for organisations. According to these authors, the intended consequences of such negativity could be a backlash leading to employees failing to support and promote AA initiatives and resulting in unsuccessful deployment of such measures (Hideg, et al., 2011). It is this complexity that continues to mar AA implementation that this study seeks to understand through exploring perspectives of non-beneficiaries.
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With due consideration of the difficulties facing the implementation of AA initiatives generally and South Africa in particular, as revealed in the literature review, the purpose of this study is to get insights into the conflict over AA. It seeks to understand issues that underlie their vociferous rejection from the point of view of, primarily, non-beneficiaries. Secondly, it aims to assess the likely implications of AA measures on interpersonal justice in the workplace. In fulfilling these objectives, the study seeks to answer the following questions.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How do non-beneficiaries perceive AA initiatives?

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What are non-beneficiaries’ primary concerns regarding AA initiatives?

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How do non-beneficiaries understand the concept of justice in the context of AA?

3.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4

Do non-beneficiaries consider the implications of AA initiatives for interpersonal justice in the workplace?
CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The study aimed to investigate the issues underlying the stakeholder conflict over AA. This was an exploratory qualitative study which employed in-depth interviews aimed at exploring the perspectives of non-beneficiaries on AA and the likely implications of the policy on interpersonal justice in the workplace. This chapter details the research methodology that was used in the study and sets out key limitation of the study.

4.2 Philosophical Approach

Guided by the research questions and objectives as well as the research design chosen, the study followed an interpretivist philosophical paradigm. This paradigm was considered appropriate for the inquiry as it is concerned with how the "social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted" (Mason, 2002, p.3). In line with this view, this study took an "emic" perspective according to which "research takes its departure point as insider perspective on social action" (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky; 2001, p.53). As the objective of this study was to understand the thinking and perspectives of non-beneficiaries with regard to AA, data gathering, processing and analysis captured and reflected non-beneficiaries’ individual understanding and reasoning processes.

Furthermore, the interpretivist philosophical paradigm was considered appropriate because qualitative data is usually linked to it as it requires the researcher to “make sense of subjective and socially constructed meaning expressed” by the participants about the subject being studied (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.546). Saunders, et al. (2012) further note that as meaning in qualitative studies relies on social interpretation, the data is likely to contain ambiguity, pliability and complexity. To this extent, they highlight the importance of clarity and care in exploring qualitative data as meanings are primarily derived from words that could exhibit multiple layers of meanings.
4.3 Research Design

As indicated in the previous section, this study was underpinned by an interpretivist approach and followed a qualitative research design. Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.77) speak of qualitative enquiries as approaches used when researchers seek to “understand phenomena from the participants’ perspective and to explore and discover, in depth and context, what may have been missed when studies were done with predetermined assumptions”. Mason (2002) asserts that while executing qualitative enquiries is challenging, such approaches allow the researcher to navigate diverse dimensions of the social domain. She further adds that these could include the texture and quality of everyday life, the “understanding, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social process, institutions, discourses or relationships work and the significance of the meanings they generate” (Mason, 2002, p.1). This is the perspective that informed the choice of a qualitative design. It was employed primarily for its ability to bring to life the participants’ interpretation and understanding of AA. Moreover as Creswell (2009) puts it, “qualitative research occurs in natural settings, where human behaviour and events occur” (2009, p.195).

More appropriately for the matter under investigation, the design allowed for exploring where and why, from the point of view of AA non-beneficiaries, “policy, local knowledge and practice were at odds” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.90). Furthermore, a qualitative design was chosen, because it allowed for in-depth investigation and helped in gaining a better understanding of the complexities embedded in the conflict over AA. For a study of this nature, which focused on individuals’ lived experiences, a qualitative design was thought to be of utmost relevance, because, as Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.91) advocate, “Human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them is understood”.

4.4 Research Approach

The inquiry followed an exploratory approach. Saunders and Lewis (2012) state that exploratory studies are about discovering general information regarding a topic that was not understood clearly by a researcher and to gain insights on a new phenomenon. They further argue that the approach is appropriate for studies “that aim to seek new insights, ask new questions and assess topics in a new light” and that endeavour to venture into unknown territories and discover new evidence (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p.110).
In the South African context, the researcher could not find existing empirical qualitative inquiry into the reasons underlying non-beneficiaries’ rejection of AA measures. The exploratory approach was chosen because of the need for empirical evidence-based understanding of the issue. However, Saunders and Lewis (2012) believe that while exploratory research provides insights into and fuller understanding of an issue or situation, definitive conclusions should only be drawn with great caution.

4.5 Population

A population in research is generally understood to be the complete set of data sources that includes all possible respondents in a research project (Saunders, et al, 2012; Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Mason, 2002). For the purpose of this study, the population was defined as including all non-beneficiaries who are members or are associated with organisations that have publicly declared their views as opposing AA and individuals who have done so in their personal capacity (City Press, 2014, June 6; TimesLive, 2011, February 8; Swanepoel, 2009 & SowetanLive, 2013, April 29). With the exception of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), a conservative independent think-tank, these were groups that represented non-beneficiaries in various platforms such as politics, trade unions and civil rights activities. Moreover, the participants drawn from SAIRR were employees, while others were voluntary subscribers to their organisations. Whereas the participants from SAIRR could be construed as speaking on behalf of the organisation, the institution employs researchers from various racial and social backgrounds and does not represent a strictly-defined population group or interests. An important issue for clarity here is that participants were interviewed in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their organisations. In particular, participants were purposively chosen from the organisations given below.

(a) Solidarity

According to its website, Solidarity is a trade union dating back to 22 June 1902 when the Transvaal Miners’ Association was founded. The union currently services approximately 140 000 members. Its main role is to protect its members, individually and collectively in various industries in South Africa. The union believes that imbalances created by past discriminatory laws must be rectified without creating new forms of imbalance. It believes that all South Africans should be exempted from AA and other discriminatory economic practices. As its mission, it intervenes on
behalf of people who are being unfairly disadvantaged by AA. The union has been publically vocal in its opposition to AA with some of its cases landing in courts and at least one being considered by the Constitutional Court (https://solidariteit.co.za).

(b) Freedom Front Plus

In addition to its political objectives, the Freedom Front Plus (FF Plus) positions itself as the only political party that has taken a stand against racist legislation, that is, AA and Black Economic Empowerment. Furthermore, it aims to fight for minority rights and self-determination (www.vfplus.org.za).

(c) Afriforum

Afriforum as a civil rights organisation seeks to protect the rights of minorities and specifically, the rights of Afrikaners, “a community living on the southern tip of the continent”. However, the organisation says its membership is not exclusive and that “any person who associates with the contents of the Civil Rights Manifest of the organisation, may join” (www.afriforum.co.za). As its mission, Afriforum works to ensure that the basic prerequisites for the existence of Afrikaners are met, by acting as a credible Afrikaner-interest organisation and civil rights watchdog. It deals with the impact of the current political realities facing Afrikaners, while working simultaneously to establish sustainable structures through which Afrikaners are able to ensure their own future (www.afriforum.co.za).

(d) South African Institute of Race Relations

The South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) is an independent organisation that produces research, policy critiques and risk analysis on South Africa. Among others, its main areas of focus include the economy, business, labour, and education as well as government affairs. SAIRR also engages in a significant range of research and policy projects whose results are made accessible to government, political parties and the media (www.sairr.org.za). The institute has made pronouncements against AA and even called for its abandonment (City Press, 2014, June 6)
4.6 Sampling

Regarding the subject of this enquiry, it would be impossible to interview all AA non-beneficiaries within the given time frame and available financial resources. Therefore, selecting a sample from the entire group made practical sense. According to Mason (2002), qualitative enquiries are about depth, nuance and complexity; focusing through sampling makes it more practical to achieve research objectives. This view also holds that sampling improves the attainment of the overall accuracy rather than trying to study the entire population (Saunders, et al., 2012).

(a) Sampling Technique

Data sources, also referred to as cases or elements (Mason; 2002; Saunders, et al., 2012) are selected from a defined relevant population or universe, using a sampling technique. For the purpose of this study, the non-probability sampling technique known as purposive or judgemental sampling was used in identifying and selecting research participants for the research sample (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This technique is known to be useful where the researcher seeks to identify cases that will best enable the answering of the research questions and objectives. It is also regarded as relevant when working with small samples and when the intention is to focus on cases that are particularly informative (Saunders, et al., 2012). As a non-probability technique, purposive sampling is not considered statistically representative of the total population, and this is viewed as a trade-off for selecting information-rich cases (Saunders, et al., 2012).

As the intention of the study was to sample white males within groups that had publically rejected AA measures, and who were tacitly categorised as non-beneficiaries according to AA legislation, the consequence was a homogeneous sampling process focusing on one particular subgroup in which all the sample members shared similar qualifying characteristics. Therefore, the choice of the purposive sampling technique appeared to be the most appropriate to answering research questions and fulfilling research objectives.

(b) Sample selection

To sample participants within organisations purposively identified as relevant for this study, broadcast media programmes, electronic media discussions and print media publications were scanned for individuals who had contributed or participated in debates on AA. The purposive sampling technique was used to identify and select individuals who were considered sufficiently
suitable and informative based on their public engagement on the subject under investigation. To gain access to the individuals, media contact lists and websites were used and where this was not possible, organisations were contacted directly for contact numbers of pre-qualified individuals. From the four organisations identified, individuals were approached telephonically and via email to determine their willingness and request their permission to participate in the study. It was also made clear to the participants that they will be interviewed in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their organisations.

(c) Sample Size

Saunders, et al. (2012) suggest that the minimum non-probability sample size for in-depth interviews is 5-25 cases. The size of the sample for this study was set at 20. The sample size decision was consistent with the basic intention of qualitative exploratory studies in that their findings are not meant to be generalised, but to get insights into the matter under investigation (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Initially, 24 qualifying individuals were identified and approached. They all agreed to participate. The additional 4 candidates we added to allow for sudden unavailability and last-minute cancellations. But it was decided that the interviews be capped after the 20\textsuperscript{th} interview due to time constraints and in line with the original sample size decision.

4.7 Research Instrument

Taking into consideration the nature of research questions and objectives of this study, face-to-face in-depth interviews were used for gathering data. Research interviews are defined by Saunders, et al. (2012, p.372) as “purposeful conversations between two or more people, requiring the interviewer to establish rapport, to ask concise and unambiguous questions, to which the interviewee is willing to respond”. The premise for choosing interviews for this study was based on Marshall and Rossman’s (2011, p.144) view that “the participants’ perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as participants view it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective). This proved particularly crucial during the data gathering process as the purpose was to let participants express their views and narrate their experience with minimal interference by the researcher. Interviews proved to be of utmost importance for this study as they allowed for exploring participants’ thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and assumptions about AA.

Additionally, as data collection tools, interviews were chosen for their ability to generate
responses to research questions thoroughly and thoughtfully, while allowing sufficient data to be collected within the limited time available for the study. Furthermore, the in-depth interviews helped to probe further where participants gave vague, ambiguous and brief responses. Also, the face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to integrate the context, extra-linguistic information such as body language and tone of voice to understand the deeper meaning of participants’ responses.

4.8 Interview Schedule

The in-depth interviews were based on what Marshall and Rossman (2011) call interview guide or topical approach, an equivalent of semi-structured interviews (Appendix 2). Considered the most often used form in qualitative studies, interview guides – also known as schedules – are typically a list of key questions prepared ahead of the interview, but usually not shared with the participant beforehand (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The decision to use an interview schedule was based on the belief that it is effective in ensuring that issues considered pertinent to achieving research objectives and answering research questions are raised and given adequate treatment.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) recommend the use of interview guides, professing that while they provide flexibility to explore predetermined general themes, asking follow-up and elaborating questions in unearthing the participant’s views, they respect the way the participant structures and articulates responses. The interview guide was tested with colleagues at work. The purpose of pre-testing it was to establish ease of comprehension and eliminate any ambiguities that might have been overlooked during its compilation. It was also to test full functionality of the audio-recording device. The pretesting process did help the researcher in taking full control of the process as all interviews proceeded and were completed without incident.

4.9 Conducting In-depth Interviews

In collecting data for this study face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted at the participants’ place of work during weekdays. The interviews were conducted between July and September, 2014. Two interviews took place in Johannesburg, two in Cape Town and 16 in Centurion. These were done at times and dates determined by the participants. Although participants were informed about the objectives of the study and the interview process during the sampling process, these were revisited and explained prior to the commencement of the interviews as shown below.
• Introduction of the study and the purpose of the interview
• A consent form was handed to them explaining their voluntary participation in the study
• Participants were informed about their right to opt out at any time when they felt a need to do so
• Permission was sought to use an audio-recording device and the rationale for doing so was given
• Participants were informed that their identities would be kept confidential
• The duration of the interview was indicated to the participants
• The interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes

An audio-recording device was used during the interviews, albeit with consent from the participants. The decision to use an audio-recorder was due to it being considered appropriate for in-depth interviews for its sensitivity and minimal disruption to the participant and the setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). When operated correctly, it is further regarded as suited to collecting data that is intact, complete, organised and easily retrievable for transcription. In addition to the audio-recording device manual note-taking was used to capture issues that were considered as highlights as the interview proceeded. The interview schedule was employed to provide structure and frame the one-on-one conversation. The data collected assumed a conversational structure and storytelling narrative as presented in the results section.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

The researcher’s understanding of the importance of establishing trust with participants, maintaining good relations, respecting reciprocity and consideration of ethical issues was particularly important in conducting face-to face interviews on a contentious subject like AA. This was done in line with Marshall and Rossman (2011) who suggest that while interviews are a great tool in data gathering, necessary care should be taken, because such interviews are usually intimate encounters that depended on trust. It was important to establish and display trust from the onset so as to create a psychologically safe environment for participants and make them comfortable to share their views without fear of being judged and trapped. This was of particular relevance in this study because AA in South Africa remains an emotive and highly-politicised issue.
In this study, ethical conduct of the researcher and treatment of participants during the interviews was considered a matter of paramount importance. In practice, the researcher had to be conscious of the statements and questions that had potential to offend, upset or be misconstrued as accusatory by the participants. Without shying away from asking pertinent questions, care was taken to ensure that these were phrased in a way that conveyed respect towards participants. Also, the advantage of conducting one-on-one, face-to-face interviews served a good purpose in that the researcher could read the participants' body language, gauge their tone of voice and detect when they were not prepared to go further in discussing a particular issue. Gentle probing became a critical skill in such instances, and it worked.

4.11 Time Dimension

Practical considerations were also taken into account in selecting an appropriate research design that could be executed with adequate success despite existing time constraints. Due to limited time available for the completion of the study, it took the form of a cross-sectional investigation. The interviews were conducted in once-off sessions with participants. A cross-sectional design is defined as “one in which data from participants is collected at only one period in time” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p.123). Such a design was considered suitable by the researcher as it also allowed data to be collected using qualitative methods.

4.12 Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis for the study were individual views of participants regarding their experiences, insights and perspectives on AA. This was done in order to surface deep-seated individual issues of an economic, social, psychological, moral and emotional nature. Fundamental to this rationale was an attempt to guard against organisational standpoints on AA becoming the dominant view. This was done thorough the inclusion of direct questions on personal experiences as reflected in Appendix 2.

4.13 Data Preparation and Analysis

As the purpose of this study was to understand issues that underlie the stakeholder conflict over AA by exploring deep-seated perceptions of non-beneficiaries using a qualitative approach and in-depth interviews, the resultant data was rich, thick and non-standardised. Applying a qualitative
data analysis process espoused by Creswell (2009), the following steps were taken:

(a) When data collection was completed, the audio-recordings were transcribed individually until all 20 had been captured.

(b) A qualitative content analysis was adopted for the purpose of this study for its ability to allow the researcher to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner. Content analysis is defined as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Babbie, et al., 2001, p.492). To obtain a general sense of the data and make sense of the overall meaning of the data, all transcripts were read through repeatedly. This process helped to establish overall depth and thickness of the data as well as potential patterns.

(c) Key terms were used as the level of analysis and were predefined based on existing literature. New themes were also considered as they emerged.

(d) The raw transcribed data was coded manually. Coding is defined by Babbie, et al. (2001, p.493) as involving a “process whereby certain segments of your text are attached to certain meaningful key labels or codes”. While the key terms were used for coding, the process was not specific to data which appeared exactly as the code. A decision was taken to generalise around the content of the data in line with Babbie, et al. (2001), who state that this allows for the inclusion of all meaningful occurrences of a specific code’s data.

(e) During the coding process, three levels were defined, that is, sub-codes, codes and themes. Categories at the highest level of abstraction, called themes, were deduced from the literature and research questions. The intermediate level of abstraction reflects codes which were derived from the existing theory, research questions and data. The sub-codes emerged during the process of data analysis. Table 1 shows the final coding structure and hierarchy. It is noted that while traditional approaches in social sciences allow the codes to emerge, applying predetermined codes “that address a larger theoretical perspective in the research” (2009:187) can be helpful. The coding process for this research applied a blend of predefined and emerging classifications to achieve the three levels of data categorisation.

(f) The coding process applied both inductive and deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning was used in the early stages of data preparation. It is through inductive reasoning that
categories and themes were allowed to emerge from the raw data by following a continuous iterative data interrogation process. As research questions and objectives for the matter under investigations were derived from existing theory presented in Chapter 2, these were used in establishing a framework to analyse the data. This deductive approach is in line with Saunders, et al.’s (2012) suggestion that where existing theory had been used to formulate research questions and objectives, theoretical propositions applied to generate these may be used to establish a framework to organise and direct data analysis.

(g) In line with the sample size of this qualitative inquiry, the coding was done based on existence of the codes rather than the frequency of their occurrence. The decision was informed by the fact that it was considered immaterial to introduce quantitative observations, as the sample size was too small for the findings to be generalised.

(h) A narrative approach was used to present the findings of the analysis. This was done by presenting themes with subthemes using quotations illustrate the points and as evidence. These are presented in the next chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>SUB-CODE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic Inequalities</td>
<td>Remedial Intervention</td>
<td>Need for effective intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Racism</td>
<td>Ulterior Racial Motives</td>
<td>Targeting whites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Racial categorisation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political tool for settling scores</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Backward-looking approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subjugation of minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Representativeness</td>
<td>Numerical representativeness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racist Quick-Fix Mechanism</td>
<td>Easy route to equality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Hastily founded on false assumptions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cadre deployment</td>
<td>A variation of cadre deployment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA Impact and Concerns</td>
<td>Obsession with outcomes</td>
<td>Skills concerns</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Educations concerns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Socio-economic disparities</td>
<td>Not empowering beneficiaries</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unsustainable tool to eliminate inequality</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creates economic class rifts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hurts designated majority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costly to society</td>
<td>Negative consequences for society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Corruption and incompetence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Loss of expertise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Perpetuates racial dissonance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanistic implementation</td>
<td>Mechanistic application</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statutory-Driven</td>
<td>Encourages bad conduct</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Window-dressing and tokenism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private sector hostility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunset clause</td>
<td>Lacks a sunset clause</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Efficiency</td>
<td>Free labour market practices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational strategic matters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injustice</td>
<td>AA is unjust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No justice in AA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfair to white youth</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Stigma</td>
<td>AA demean</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologically damaging beneficiaries</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stigmatises beneficiaries</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inculcates entitlement and dependency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relations</td>
<td>Tensions and resentment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuels resentment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliating</td>
<td>Humiliates non-beneficiaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relations</td>
<td>Ruins workplace relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statutory-enforced integration</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 4.14 Validity and Reliability

To achieve validity of the research findings, Creswell (2009) suggests that the researcher checks for the accuracy of findings by employing validity strategies. These include ways to mitigate different types of biases, including confirmation bias. He argues that researchers could use rich and thick descriptions to convey the findings to ensure that readers could access the interview setting and provide an element of shared experience to the discussion. This was done through extensive use of comprehensive quotations from the data in presenting the findings. Also, the presented data was linked to and tested against existing theory.

The “elite” bias suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was avoided by the spreading out of respondents to reflect a wide-ranging sample in terms of age, experience, education, occupation and professional levels. Additionally, perspectives of participants with contradictory views were captured to ensure legitimacy and authenticity of the study. These measures were employed to
safeguard “natural validity”, defined by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.278) as “the idea that events and settings studied are uncontrived, unmodified by the researcher’s presence and actions”.

Saunders, et al. (2012) state that reliability is attained through employment of data gathering methods that generate consistent results. The use of the interview guide during interviews helped to establish and ensure consistency in the data. It is the structure and predictability that the interview guide provided which helped to achieve that reliability. Creswell (2009) refers to a number of steps that can be taken to ensure reliability of approaches. The following steps were employed;

(a) Transcripts were checked by following a continuous iterative process to ensure that they were accurate and reflected the contents of audio-recorded data.

(b) Triangulation was done, employing different data sources such as publications, pronouncements made by participants in the media, government and business sector statements consistent with or contradicting the data. These included a report on Youth Employment, Unemployment, Skills and Economic Growth, 1994–2014 (Statistics SA, 2014, September 15 & Manamela, 2014) and commentary on and reportage of the Constitutional Court ruling on an AA case against the South African Police Service (Paton, 2014).

(c) Discrepant information that contradicted the themes and main data was also reflected. This is in line with Creswell’s (2009, p.192) assertion that “by presenting contradictory evidence, the account becomes more realistic and hence valid”.

4.15 Research Limitations

Qualitative studies by their nature have limitations. This section identifies key limitations of this research and its methodology.

(a) The limited time available for this research meant that only a small sample of non-beneficiaries was investigated. Generalisations for the entire population can therefore not be made without an extensive inquiry.

(b) The sampling technique applied limits the relevance of the findings to the chosen sample.
The researcher’s background and experiences are likely to have affected the interpretation of participants’ responses. Sufficient care was taken to minimise such biases. This is even more important for the subject of this inquiry because the researcher is a designated individual.

(d) The researcher may have influenced or led the responses through the manner in which questions were asked.

(e) It is also noted that views of non-beneficiaries on AA are not homogeneous and therefore cannot be seen to represent the general view of the group.
CHAPTER 5. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to investigate issues underlying stakeholder conflict over AA. This was done by exploring perceptions held by AA non-beneficiaries. A discussion guide (Appendix 1) was used to inform the in-depth one-on-one face-to-face interviews with participants. This chapter details the research findings captured during the primary data-gathering process for the purpose of answering research questions and addressing the objectives of this study. The findings are presented around themes that emerged during preparation and categorisation of the data. The results are presented as themes with subthemes generated through data analysis discussed in Chapter 4. Quotations from the interviews will be used to demonstrate and support the findings. This section reflects the profile of research participants, the context and climate in which the interviews were conducted and the findings.

5.1 Profile of Research Participants

Data was collected from a sample of 20 participants, white males, selected from four different organisations, using purposive sampling techniques as outlined in Chapter 4. The age of the participants ranged between 24 and 67 years. Table 2 presents a summary of the demographic profiles of the participants interviewed for the study.

TABLE 2: Research Participants’ Profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Role/ Expertise</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Level completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Municipal Councillor</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Research &amp; Policy Consultant</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Community Safety Officer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Civil Rights Activist</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Deputy CEO</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5.2 The Context of the Interviews

As a designated person, female and black, the researcher went into the interviews open-minded about interviewee perceptions of her. This meant psychologically dealing with anticipated perceptions regarding the race of the interviewer and gender of the interviewer prior to the interviews, as these were believed to shape participants’ responses. Part of the preparation included reading Schein’s (2013) “Humble Inquiry”. The researcher believed that for the interviews to be effective and productive, this inquiry would have to be adopted for this study. Schein defines the humble inquiry as “the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person” (Schein, 2013, p.2). For this study, this was critical in setting the right tone, presenting the right posture and unassuming demeanour during the interviews. Schein (2013, p.10) further emphasises the gentle art of asking questions instead of telling, stating that “this form of asking shows interest in the other person, signals willingness to listen, and, thereby, temporarily empowers the other person”. In line with this view, establishing rapport with participants, as noted in Chapter 4, was key to ensuring that the interviews did not degenerate into stereotyping and a blame game, as it was the tendency in public conversations on the subject of this research (Mulder, 2014; Bikitsha, 2014; City Press, 2014, June 6 & Oliphant, 2014).

It was observed that while most of the interviewees seemed comfortable with the subject at the start of the interviews, some were not quite so, but relaxed as the interview process unfolded. In one case, an interviewee wanted to establish upfront if there was an ‘agenda’ that the researcher was pursuing. After explaining the purpose of the research all over again, the participant expressed that he simply wanted to be comfortable that there was nothing sinister behind the interview. Another participant gave the researcher two options right at the start of the interview, by asking whether she wanted to hear views she would rather hear or the honest truth about what...
non-beneficiaries think AA is and is not. The researcher opted for the latter as choosing the former would have served no purpose towards achieving the purpose of the study. Prior to the formal commencement of one of the interviews, one participant casually said that his overall perception of AA was that it was “a massive expensive trauma-counselling programme for designated individuals”. This caught the researcher off-guard as the interview had not even started when this statement was made. It took the researcher quite a while to recover from that statement. While the researcher thought she had taken enough care to prepare for such instances, the impact remained until the interview was concluded. But, relying on Schein’s (2013) “humble inquiry”, the researcher remained alert to the importance of maintaining an unassuming and non-judgemental and non-accusatory deportment for the interviews that followed a few hours later.

Furthermore, because the decision had been taken to conduct the interviews at participants’ own offices as they had preferred, the researcher believed that familiarity and the sense of being in safe territory made the candidates feel in control and confident in their responses. Also, any expressions of disenchantment by the interviewees were interpreted to be directed at dealing with the subject under investigation. These included questions about the researcher’s social background and upbringing, level of education, views on AA and the treatment of whites in general. The researcher gave frank responses as this was considered important in maintaining trust with respondents. It was also crucial to let the respondents make up their minds about the researcher’s views.

5.3 EMERGENT THEMES

The following are themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews.

5.3.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

This theme surfaced in response to Question 1(a) of the interview schedule (Appendix 1). To illustrate it further, direct quotes are provided in the narrative presentation.

5.3.1.1 Intervention to Address Socio-Economic Inequalities

On the subject under investigation, participants generally agreed that there was a need for an effective process to redress socio-economic inequalities created by past discriminatory labour practices. A 43-year-old Member of Parliament (MP) said, “In South Africa, many people do need
a hand. We have got a problem of poverty and inequality...that is something we do recognise. Most of the poor people are black and that is a fact”. This was reinforced by a 32-year-old advocate who said, “We are for the whole idea of substantive equality, I believe in fact that we cannot implement a formal equality mode, we must have a measure of substantive equality because there is definitely a need that we need to fulfil, we need to support people”. Another participant, a lawyer (39), added that, “The whole notion of redress and AA is internationally recognised and it is fair, you know, if it is applied in a lawful manner”. A labour lawyer (47) expressed that, “We are supposed to still help those who have been left behind”. A local government practitioner (29) concurred, “Affirmative Action is only one of the very few tools in South Africa, empowering tools to put people who were previously disadvantaged in a position to break the cycle of disadvantage”. All participants acknowledged the necessity for government efforts to implement AA as a corrective measure to ensure inclusivity in economic participation, but differed on whether this was happening or whether the way in which it was being done was correct.

5.3.2 PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM

This theme surfaced in response to Question 1(b) and (c) of the interview schedule (Appendix 1). To illustrate it further, direct quotes are provided in the narrative presentation.

5.3.2.1 Ulterior Racial Motives

(a) Targeting White People

Concerns were expressed regarding the real intention of AA measures. Participants said that it was negatively targeting white people and sought to dislodge them from participating in the economy. They believed that AA was devised to deny white people economic opportunities and that their skills were rejected solely on the basis of colour. An MP (43) said, “Positions are left open, there is a white person that is capable of doing it, not because the white people are better than the black people, but the white person has got experience....but because he or she is white, they are kept out of the system”. Another MP (56) expressed, “At the moment (AA) is being perceived by the non-designated people as punishment....It is being perceived as a form of punishment for whatever happened in the past”.

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(b) Racial Categorisation

There was also a sense that AA as it stands enforced racial categorisation. A Deputy CEO (28) asserted that “The policy is trying to address the issue of inequality, but it is doing so by categorising people along racial lines and it is not an effective measure”. It was also stated that AA uses race as a proxy for disadvantage. A lawyer (39) said, “At this stage, the proxy for disadvantage in South Africa is race”. Participants indicated that while acknowledging that it was the black majority that suffered mostly, it could not be argued that all blacks needed AA and that no whites needed to benefit from it. In line with this, an interviewee said, “It is scientifically incorrect to say inequality is simply an issue of that whites are rich and blacks are poor, it is not that simple. White poverty is a reality, it is a big reality, it is not the same extent as poverty in black communities, but it is a reality and we have black billionaires as well”. Speaking about the dangers of implementing the policy based on preconceived racial generalisations, one participant said, “The policy says if you’re white you are rich or advantaged and if you are black you are not, so I think that is one of the ways in which the policy is ineffective”. An MP (59) concurred saying that, “You cannot advantage a specific previously disadvantaged group by creating a new disadvantage”.

Divergent views were also expressed with regard to AA disadvantaging white people. A CEO (37) said, “I cannot see how Affirmative Action hurts white South Africans. I think it has the opposite effect. I think it has the effect of forcing them to become entrepreneurs, stand on their own feet, become independent, especially as they left civil service and I think they are better off than they were before”. A research and policy consultant (67) concurred with him saying that, “Whites have got enough capital, they have got enough education, they have got enough skills, and they have got enough entrepreneurship opportunities to look after themselves. The people that get hurt are blacks”. This sentiment was echoed by a community safety officer (24) who operated a safety patrol enterprise for the farming community. He articulated that, “They have gone into their own niche and started doing things where they could make profit regardless of what government is saying…which is clever”.

(c) A Political Tool for Settling Scores

There was a feeling that AA was being used as a political tool by the ANC and government. An interviewee uttered that, “I think, they are continuing with this policy, because it is in their political interest, because it gets them votes, but it is not really addressing the problems they are hoping
to address”. There was also a sense that AA was a way to avenge whites for past discrimination. A civil rights activist (26) said that, “At this stage, it feels to me like it is tit-for-tat. During apartheid, it was white guys who got all the opportunities and now at this stage it is the blacks getting all the opportunities”. It was said that as AA was applied strictly on racially-defined parameters, it sought to victimise white people. A participant (24) uttered that, “You know, according to me it becomes a reverse discrimination thing”. One advocate (32), echoed the sentiment saying AA created new discrimination and that it “is not really AA, it is more a social engineering project…..it does not really have something to do with correcting a wrong, but it has to do with establishing some new social order”.

(d) Backward-Looking Approach

Views were expressed with regard to AA being backward-looking. Participants believed the policy placed too much emphasis on correcting past wrongs, but doing that in a way it ignored the future of the country. An MP (56) said, “It is a mess, it is a complete mess. Why are we always looking backwards? Can we not talk about the future? That is where real things are happening. There is a real world where things are happening… not in the past. So to me the essence is, it is not forward-looking, it is not future-looking and… you cannot…..with measures that are experienced as punishment, get people to cooperate and be positive and enthusiastic to get the country moving forward”. An environmental affairs practitioner (29) agreed with him saying that, “I cannot see it working. I cannot see South Africa moving forward and I actually see racial discrimination instead of seeing people who work hard at getting to the top”. An MP (43) concurred stating that, “As far as Affirmative Action is concerned, we must go back to the drawing board and devise a system that works for us in South Africa. We need to be innovative and creative in terms of our policies going forward. The ANC talks about an inclusive economy, but what is happening is that the economy is not inclusive. You find many white people cannot apply for jobs, because they have now been reserved”.

(e) Subjugation of Minorities

There was also a view that there was a greater hidden agenda to AA. A participant referred to what he called “intolerance towards minorities from government’s side”. Submissions were made that AA was just one of the tools being used by government to force minorities to blend in. An interviewee (29) stated that in his view, “The primary objective is actually the problem and that problem is trying to assimilate minorities into the majority in organisations, at universities and in society. I think that it is where it becomes a much bigger issue than just a policy to empower a
Another participant (59) remarked that there were plans to amend employment equity legislation so that “white women can also not be seen as part of the disadvantaged group. They are going to change it now”.

5.3.2.2 Racial Representativeness

While all participants were in favour of measures seeking to correct socio-economic inequalities created by apartheid legislation, they said that the current implementation approach to AA focused exclusively on achieving racial representation based on numerical targets. An advocate (32) noted that, “It is based on representativity and it is more focusing on representativity than eradicating inequalities and poverty…all one needs to do is to make this representative and have black faces there and that is your focus”. It was also said that AA had abandoned its original intentions and developed into an ideology. A CEO (42) remarked, “From people to numbers and Affirmative Action developed into an ideology and the ideology is an ideology of representativity”. He went further to call the diversion to numbers the “tyranny of representativity where everything is measured against the numbers and suddenly the numbers became the principle”. An advocate (32) remarked about the “fallacy of numbers” saying that, “We want to achieve these numbers because we think we are going to achieve some form of equality, but in the meantime we are actually getting further and further away from equality and we are creating conflict”.

It was stated that AA had no focus on the problem that needed to be addressed, but only on getting the numbers right, with a CEO (42) saying, “It is not whether it will enhance service delivery that is to the benefit of the masses, it is whether it will help enhance representativity, and then it became absurd”.

5.3.2.3 Racist Quick-Fix Mechanism

(a) Easy Route to Equality

Views were expressed that with the current approach to AA, government was taking an easy option that meant taking short cuts. One advocate (32) said that, “What I get from government is the sense that they are taking the easy route, and the easy route is just to set a fixed number and say we want to achieve that number. The difficult route would be a route to say that due to our past, we need to see to it that we uplift, support and advance people that are previously disadvantaged”. This sentiment was echoed by another participant who said, “It is a quick-fix
solution from the government’s side”. A local government practitioner (29) expressed what he called, “A little bit of sympathy, because of the pressure put on the new government to bring forth something of a promise, a future promise for the chance to be involved in the economy was rushed and the time for them to probably map out a plan for the future of South Africa was too quick”.

It was also said that the rushed approach to implementation did not take into account the existing skills capacity and what was required to make AA work. To this extent, suggestions were made that the focus on racial representation led to rejection of white expertise. A 65-year-old municipal councillor said, “There were stupid things done, as I said about skills being lost, etc. They should have made 100% use of the knowledge and the skills that were there, everywhere, that they got rid of. That was wrong. We are not the enemy anymore…..I always say that whites in South Africa are the biggest asset this bloody government has, they must just realise it”.

(b) Hastily Founded on False Assumptions

There was also a view that government had made false assumptions in hastening the implementation of AA. One interviewee said that, “I think that the problem is it being rushed and it is as though government has a view that if you fill a position, then the job will be done, and it does not work that way”. A CEO whose organisation provides risk advisory services to more than 150 businesses operating in South Africa pointed to a miscalculation with the quick-fix approach saying, “It was naive from the start to think that you could get white business to do what you want it to do and the idea that it would give away bits and pieces and create space and think it was going to happen. I think it became dangerous in the sense that business started to control the process of transformation. So, it became, well, what percentage”. Another issue he raised in line with this was the complication the policy caused in determining the balance of power, putting business in charge of transformation. The respondent expressed that, “The power to run transformation was put in the hands of the white establishment, because they had to agree to the targets basically”.

5.3.2.4 A Variation of Cadre Deployment

It was expressed that the first 20 years of democracy had shown that AA did not work and was impracticable. Poor performance usually, correctly or wrongly, associated with AA candidates was also linked to the ruling party’s cadre deployment approach. The ruling party’s cadre deployment policy conflated with and viewed as a permutation of AA was criticised for the socio-economic problems that persistently afflicted the black majority of the population. An MP (59) said, “It is
quite clear to me that Affirmative Action is a smokescreen for cadre deployment”. As evidence, one participant pointed to embattled public enterprises like power utility Eskom, national carrier South African Airways and telecommunications provider Telkom. An MP (43) expressed that, “The ANC has allowed that system to be used to deploy their own cadres, politicians who are not trained to do certain jobs that they have been appointed to do…what is actually true is that the ANC has put people in positions that they are not capable of performing. Not everybody, but in many respects they are set up to fail”. Respondents also criticised cadre deployment in that it meant overlooking qualifying black candidates in favour of those who were loyal to the ANC. An advocate (45) said that, “I often see that very competent blacks are very often overlooked for promotion in favour of an incompetent cadre who happens to be politically connected, so Affirmative Action itself is a noble cause, but it has been tainted by cadre deployment as a political tool of the ruling party. It has been tainted by racism”.

There were also remarks that AA was being used to accomplish things that were never part of its original intent. A participant (47) remarked that, “Nepotism….some appointments are made …..and then they hide behind Affirmative Action…so something else has been done in the name of Affirmative Action….that we do see quite a bit”.

5. 3.3 AA IMPACT AND CONCERNS

This theme surfaced in response to Question 1(d) and (e) of the interview schedule (Appendix 1). To illustrate it further, direct quotes are provided in the narrative presentation.

5.3.3.1 Obsession with Outcomes

It was expressed that AA had an exclusive emphasis on racially-determined numerical outputs rather than inputs as a means to that end.

(a) Skills Concerns

Assertions were made that racial representativity ignored the demographic composition of the country’s skills base. A CEO (42) said that, “The problem with that is that the skills base in South Africa is not representative of the national demographics and now you force companies to apply the national demographics, but the problem is that the skills are not representative, so you cannot”. A point was made that the failure or reluctance to implement AA was to a significant
extent caused by a shortage of skills as an input. A CEO (37) suggested that, “Everyone who has ever tried to employ anyone in South Africa knows that there is a skills shortage”.

Participants believed that for the measures to be effective, an input-based approach needed be adopted to address the skills shortage. The need to create a skills pipeline that reflected the country’s demographics was expressed. One CEO (42) said that, “An aggressive part of Affirmative Action must be to create the necessary skills so that we can help to make the skills offer in South Africa demographically representative. That will be real Affirmative Action, aggressive training and development”. Another participant (47) supported this view and further said that, “There are some genuine, good programmes….and those you can recognise from a distance, because they are properly researched, it is proper data, and there is a lot of investment in training and upskilling. You upskill those who have been left behind, but do not completely block those who are there already, they are also given the chance”. The majority of participants emphasised the need to invest in training and development programmes at input level to build a significant skills pool.

(b) Education Concerns

Another factor identified as critical by the participants was lack of relevant, good quality education. Participants consistently identified education to be at the core of the problem of AA implementation. They said that until that aspect was resolved, no amount of legal coercion on business would provide solutions to existing economic inequalities and poverty. A deputy CEO (28) said, “The true problem lies in education…you can take any problem in South Africa and if you narrow it down, at the end of the day, the answer is education and I think in Affirmative Action and the issue of inequality especially, the answer lies in education”. A lawyer (39) concurred with him stating that, “You cannot have Affirmative Action on the one side and have a dysfunctional schooling system and not supply the skills on the other side of the pipeline. So it is a synthetic system that, you know, does not contribute to really empowering people”. Another, a CEO (42) suggested a need to, “Change the approach from an output where you focus on numbers to an input where you focus on training and development. That will lead to a natural output”.

It was articulated that without education, AA was an artificial effort that did not empower beneficiaries. One participant said, “It gives opportunities, but you have to empower people to make use of those opportunities through the education system”. In agreeing with view, another participant (24) offered that, “You need to educate people and you need to give them the necessary experience so that they can do their jobs effectively”. The need to have an educated
workforce in implementing AA effectively was also echoed by an employee relations practitioner (61) who emphatically said, “Anybody with a bit of intelligence will agree that the education system at this point in time is probably the biggest mess in the whole world”. While a CEO (37) concurred with him saying that, “We run a rubbish school system, but that is because it is badly managed”.

5.3.3.2 Socio-Economic Disparities

(a) Not Empowering Beneficiaries

Despite recognition by participants for the real need to address socio-economic inequalities, they indicated that in its current form AA was not advancing designated individuals at the desired scale and momentum. A Deputy CEO (28) remarked that, “The policy is not achieving what it aims to achieve and I think the policy is destructive in the sense that it has all these negative consequences that have been created while it is implemented”. There was a general sense that the policy had not done what it originally sought to do as there were persistent and glaring inequalities in the work place and the society in general. A lawyer (39) said, “It is not a sustainable system if it does not have real empowerment of those that really need it”. Another respondent agreed with this view saying that, “The problem is that we equate equality with representativity, which according to me is also a huge problem”.

(b) Unsustainable Tool to Eliminate Inequality

It was also suggested that the current implementation of AA was unsustainable, as it focused on just reallocating the current economy without growing it. An MP (43) said that, “What is happening now is we are just re-apportioning the existing economy, we are not creating new ones”. Another participant (27) reinforced this perspective saying that, “They want to transfer white wealth to black wealth, while the common ground is probably just to create new wealth”. A CEO (37) added to this view saying that, “You can have a moral argument about Affirmative Action, a social argument about it, but a very different discussion is to have a realistic discussion about it. The realistic discussion has to say the way we are doing it is not working and it is never going to work”. Another respondent (29) suggested that in order for AA to be effective, there was a need, “To create new opportunities and not taking the current ones away, because now you are taking a job from someone else and giving it to another person”. In line with this, another interviewee (47) remarked that even, “If you take all the whites out of the employment sphere right now, only a few blacks will benefit. There are not many in there. So we need to upskill and we need to make the slice bigger for everybody”.

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Respondents also pointed out that the policy’s failure to address socio-economic inequalities resulted in frustration among both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. They expressed that non-beneficiaries got exasperated because they were being told they could not get jobs, because they were white, while beneficiaries were enraged, because they did not see the problems of inequality and poverty being resolved. A Deputy CEO (28) expressed that, “We have this frustration and the core reason of this frustration is the fact that we have an ineffective policy. The inequality issue is not really being solved, it is still a problem, there are millions of people living in squatter camps and so they are angry about that”.

(c) Creates Economic Class Rifts

There was also a sense that AA artificially created a black elite and was failing to trickle down to the majority that needed it most. One respondent asked, “Has it really helped to affirm persons downstream, the lower echelons? Is it working? I do not think it is working because the model is simply wrong”. Another participant concurred with this view (61) saying that, “The people that are supposed to benefit from this exercise are not getting the benefit. There is nothing in it for them. It is a small group of people who are becoming extremely wealthy. Whether they can do the job or not, that is irrelevant”. The respondent further expressed that AA was creating class rifts saying that, “There is a lot of animosity among black people… you have got the voters, which is simply the dirty votes, and the dirty votes hate the people who are growing wealthy”.

(d) Hurts Designated Majority

Participants also noted that AA’s fixation with race resulted in the lack of focus on socio-economic needs. One said that, “If you are going to say no, we are going to give the opportunities to people who are poor, there will not be an easy race quick fix. The vast majority of people who would get those positions would still be black, but they will not get them because they are black, they would get them because they are poor”. Participants said that there was a need for programmes to eradicate inequalities and uplift people from poverty with a determined focus on poor people rather than racial outcomes.
5.3.3.3 Costly to Society

(a) Detrimental to the Poor Majority

AA was understood to have created further economic inequalities and being detrimental to the lives of the majority of people it was meant to help, instead of benefitting them. A CEO (42) said, “The cost of Affirmative Action for the previously disadvantaged community is higher than for whites. That is the paradox of Affirmative Action. In an effort to create equality you create more inequalities, for instance, in an effort to create equality through representativity, you transform so fast in the public service on higher levels that it leads to service delivery problems and the people who pay the price of that is the majority of poor South Africans, that is 95, 90 percent black. That is the paradox of Affirmative Action. The people who pay the price are the people who are supposed to enjoy the benefit of Affirmative Action”.

Respondents expressed that AA resulted in poor delivery of services in public institutions, because people were employed on the basis of their colour rather than on merit. They remarked that this was due to the fact that people who were appointed as AA candidates were incompetent. An employee relations practitioner (61) said, “We are achieving a number of people put in as puppets in jobs, they cannot do the job”. Others referred to a water contamination incident blamed on poor performance in municipalities. It was reported to have led to the deaths of babies in May and June, 2014, in Bloemhof in the North West province. An environmental and water affairs practitioner (29) said, “If people are put in a position to clean water appropriately and they do not know what they are doing, people die because of consuming water that is not fit for human consumption. Bloemhof is a great example where those three babies died unfortunately. But it is because people just do not know what they are supposed to do and it is sad”.

An MP (59) reinforced the sentiment referring to the same incident saying, “Children died because of Affirmative Action, where they did not fill vacancies where there were qualified people who applied for the jobs, but they did not want to appoint them just because they are white. That is the problem…..It is a disaster, people are dying because of Affirmative Action, bridges are falling, buildings are collapsing because of Affirmative Action. People say they are engineers, but they are not engineers. Lowering of standards, Affirmative Action, with great respect is a major reason why standards are actually lowered…..I do not want to live in a country where standards are constantly lowered. Not even black people want to stay in that, we all are human beings, we want to live in a country that prospers, where standards are getting higher, where you can improve
A community safety officer (24) concurred saying that, “If we go and look at government, in community safety positions, everywhere, every single department where someone has been employed … because of colour or even not because of qualifications, simply because of his culture or colour. It is a mess”. A CEO (37) echoed this sentiment saying, “This misapplication of the policy as it was intended, putting in bad managers, especially into local government hurts poor people badly”.

(b) Breeds Corruption and Incompetence

A lawyer (39) blamed the impetuousness in implementing AA for rampant corruption in the public sector. He said, “Look at the levels of corruption, the levels of dysfunctionality in service delivery, which also has some bearing on the public sector, on the hastiness with which Affirmative Action was applied and there was almost a cleansing”. A municipal councillor (65) expressed that when government started getting rid of white people and replaced them with candidates from designated groups, expertise was lost and as a result service delivery in some municipalities collapsed. He said, “They took out the expert and put in an amateur and gave him a good salary and he now has the job and everything, but he cannot do the job”. In line with this, another participant expressed that the appointment of unqualified persons as a result of AA was not good for the country asking, “Who is going to pay the price? The person who is appointed there is earning a hell of a lot of money, short term. All right, who is paying for it? The people who are being neglected or hurt at the bottom. Is that fair? No, it is not fair.

(c) Affirmative Action Leads to Loss of Expertise

Participants raised their concern with regard to the consequences of white people with expertise in specialist areas being displaced by AA. A labour lawyer (47) made reference to ex-colleagues who served with him as qualified emergency servicemen at a local municipality before 1994, who had since, including himself, left their posts due to being blocked by AA saying, “Half of them sit overseas in lucrative posts in overseas emergency services….New Zealand, Australia and Canada have taken them….So the experts are gone”. A municipal councillor (61) made a similar observation saying that AA had chased away doctors and nurses to countries like Canada.
5.3.3.4 Divisive and Perpetuates Racial Dissonance

Some participants believed that AA was nothing but an artificial social engineering process. They highlighted contradictions in what government says about creating an inclusive economy while, in their view, AA had become a ‘job-reservations’ policy for blacks. It was said that, “Many white people cannot apply for jobs, because these have now been reserved”. An MP (56) said, “So we have perpetuated race as the cornerstone in South Africa”. One CEO (42) went as far as calling AA a divisive tool saying, “Affirmative Action’s problem is that it divides. It divides South Africa into designated and non-designated groups and that creates tensions. It brings tension into the workplace”. Another participant said, “It is creating racial friction, it is creating racial tension, and I mean what is the positive? What is the benefit thereof; I can make a long list disadvantages of why it is bad idea. I do not think it serves any purpose. It is just worsening the situation and it is worsening racial friction in the country”. A communications practitioner (27) concurred with this view saying that, “I think the whole nation-building thing and South Africanism deteriorates, because now being South African you do not feel that government has your best interest at heart”.

However, a CEO (37) rejected this view saying he does not understand why South Africans were obsessed with social cohesion amid rampant socio-economic inequality. He said, “I think social cohesion is actually an insulting concept, because it is almost in this economy to say that we, the wealthy whites can get the blacks to like us from their lower social standing. You should not even talk about social cohesion until black South Africans are as wealthy as whites”.

5.3.3.5 Mechanistic Implementation

Concerns were raised regarding the implementation approach that AA measures have taken. It was expressed that it was too simplistic and mechanistic and had no humanitarian essence or relevance. A respondent (42) stated that it was, “An absolute mathematical approach to Affirmative Action, seeking to create a synthetic society”. He also criticised what he called a score-card approach saying that, “Because it is measured against a very clinical mathematical scorecard and so I think that AA lost its original meaning. It was supposed to be a people-driven process and it became a number-driven process with absurd realities”.

Echoing this view, an advocate (32) spoke against the numerical emphasis, alluding to a case involving one of his clients against the South African Police Service (SAPS). The client, an Indian female, had applied for a senior position, categorised as Level 14 and lost it. The participant used an example of a calculation that SAPS used to determine the race and gender allocation based
on national demographics, saying: “19 positions on Level 14 are multiplied by the national demographic figure for a specific race group, e.g. 19 positions x 70% Africans = 15 out of the 19 positions must be filled by Africans. The 15 x 70% = 11 positions to be filled by African males, the current status of 7, meaning there is a shortage of 4 African males. For Indian females, the calculation is 19 x 2.5% = 0.5 positions to be filled by Indians. Then 0.5 x 30%, because they want 70% males and 30% females = 0.1 Indian females, and that is rounded off to Zero”. In relation to the above calculation, the participant also said that the mechanical approach had become, “So radical and so drastic that even beneficiaries are limited or denied due to the fact that it is implemented in such a mathematical manner”. Views were also expressed that AA had lost essence and drifted away from being a humanitarian intervention to just a purely numerical exercise. One participant said that, “It developed from where it was supposed to address inequalities; it developed into a mathematical exercise. So where it was supposed to focus on people and how to help and develop people, it developed into numbers”.

5.3.3.6 Statutory-Driven with Bad Outcomes

(a) Encourages Bad Conduct

AA legal stipulations were believed to be rigid and encouraging companies to behave badly. There were views that businesses were implementing AA just to improve their racial numerical targets and to be able to do business with the government. One advocate (32) said, “Affirmative Action has now become a business operational requirement. You know, it has become a financial thing instead of a humanitarian thing of uplifting and so on. It has now become a thing of – if I get my numbers correctly, I can get that tender, I can get that contract and so on, which is so far from what it was supposed to be”. Some participants pointed out that AA legislation placed too much emphasis on statutory-specified outcomes, thereby encouraging transactional rather than transformational behaviour. To this extent a municipal councillor (65) said that many companies were doing it, “Where they hire people, because they were black …and in the meantime there was nothing, it was just for window dressing”.

(b) Window-dressing and Tokenism

It was expressed that companies did not comply with the policy with the intention of empowering and developing employees, because it was good for business. A CEO (37) put forward that black appointees were being used as door-openers saying, “I have seen a lot of South African companies, a lot of foreign companies – let us say they are looking for a corporate affairs head,
they will talk to us and they will say, look, we need a black corporate affairs head and we will say, well, what will that do? And they will say, but then government will listen to us if this person is black… I mean there is a deep-seated belief that if you are black, government will listen to you; if you are white, government will not listen; it does not matter who you are”. The participant further explained that; “If you walk into these companies a couple of months later, the man that opens the door is a young black man, he is the head of corporate affairs. He will not say anything else in the meeting. The Indian woman is the head of human resources and everyone else is who they used to be before”.

Another CEO (42) expressed that AA was seen as an uncontrollable legal requirement saying that South African companies, “See Affirmative Action as an external locus of control, a transactional approach, where they say that because of the system I must do that. They are not really engaged”. A CEO (37) added to this sentiment saying, “You cannot actually push the private sector around. Business and the private sector are cleverer than governments, if you tell them find 10%, they will find it easily and nothing will change”.

Talking about the negative consequences of the legalistic approach, another participant (61) said that due to companies being forced to comply with the policy, they did not really commit to it. He submitted that, “I am saying to you that it is all artificial. The companies are putting people in jobs and they have other people doing the work….. Everybody needs black engineers for employment equity figures…not because they want the guy, not because they want him to do the job, they simply need him because of the figures. I am saying to you, you are hurting your own people”.

(c) Fuels Private Sector Hostility

Another view shared by the participants was that the statutory approach was causing businesses to become antagonistic and intransigent. It was stated that government needed, “To stop threatening business”. A CEO (37) said that businesses, “Do not like the fact that there are officials and agencies that tell them they are not making an effort. That makes them recalcitrant, so they stop doing it”. In reference to the recently enacted Employment Equity Amendment Act of 2013, he further suggested that the short-term drive to stricter enforcement was going to generate, “A hell of resistance movement from business in the private sector, the whole thing is going to end up badly; the two sides are going to scream at each other”. He also indicated that signs were already showing that no amount of pressure will make businesses comply in the way that government wants. The respondent said, “The problem now is that business has got the government by the balls, because the economy is not growing. You cannot push them now. If you
push them now, they will say bugger off”…You cannot push them…and now with economy as it is, pushing them will be seen to be an attack on business and growth and investment. So government has got to know where they stand. The state is 20 years later in a much weaker position to push Affirmative Action than it was 20 years ago”.

5.3.3.7 Lacks a Sunset Clause

It was expressed that AA could not be implemented in perpetuity. There was a strong view that there needed to be a cut-off point and that South Africa could not carry on with AA forever. A civil rights activist (26) said that, “I strongly believe that there should be a sunset clause, there should be a point where they say okay, listen here, and this is where we are ending it”. An MP (56) reinforced this view saying that, “You cannot just go on with policies and things that make people feel that they are strangers in what they perceive to be their country, where they want a future for their children”. Another MP (59) added that, “There should have been a sunset clause of Affirmative Action”. He further expressed that, “If we want South Africa to work, as far as I am concerned, I think we are at a stage where we can abolish Affirmative Action”. An advocate (32) expressed anxiety regarding the open-ended implementation of the policy saying, “Affirmative Action is going to be with us forever in South Africa, because targets which government sets are flexible…they change each year…I would definitely be better for a measure of Affirmative Action if it is to establish or correct a specific role which is measurable or that can be achieved and if it is for a limited period – so if you achieve your measure then you move on”. One participant (27) added that, “The ANC, when they talk they see Affirmative Action as a never-ending story……..It is as if government is afraid to allow a natural process to follow”.

5.3.3.8 Hampers Business Efficiency

(a) It Interferes with Free Labour Market Practices

AA was thought to be against the free-market system and was costly to business. Respondents pointed out that AA violated free labour market principles, and it was wrong and unworkable to force enterprises to be representative of the demographics of the country. A lawyer (39) said, “You are forced as business to make certain decisions against what the free market dictates, against what you normally would have done. I think it is where the interference in the economy has a high cost”. An employee relations practitioner (61) echoed this view and suggested that it does not make sense to enforce racial representativeness in business as it hampers
He said that, “If you look at what skills are available and you are looking at really conducting business, you know, in a manner that is competitive, then you go for skills and merit, you do not go for race. He further added that, “The economy as it is here requires skills and the skills that it requires have no race attached to that. It is skills”.

It was also said that because companies hired on the basis of merit and sought candidates that could walk in and add value instantaneously, AA put them in a precarious position. One advocate (37) expressed his view saying, “You are going to be forced if you really mean business, to appoint whoever you think is the most meritorious candidate, and it is not because whites are better, it is simply because they had the skills”. Another respondent (61) endorsed the sentiment saying, “I am a businessman and why am I in business? I am not in business for politics, I will leave that to politicians, I could not give a damn about politics….So why am I in business? To make money. What do I need to make money? I need expertise and I could not give a damn whether it is an Indian guy, Coloured guy, black guy, I need expertise…Individual skills is what I employ. I am not employing you, because you are black, Coloured or white. I am employing you because of your skills. I pay you for the work you do”.

Respondents remarked that businesses do not exist to serve government interests and that any cooperation is usually motivated by commercial interest. An MP (56) said, “You’ve got to get people to want to cooperate…people do not just cooperate because they are nice, people want to know what is in it for us. What is in it for me and my business, what is the benefit, what is the incentive? Another participant (27) believed that it created complications for the culture within organisations, saying, “It creates cultural problems for companies, because a culture is created….of giving positions to people based on their colour…trying to headhunt just certain people. Especially if there are a lot minorities or white people in the company…..I think it drastically changes the culture for the worse”.

5.3.4 INJUSTICE

This theme surfaced in response to Question 3 (a) to (e) of the interview schedule (Appendix 1). To illustrate it further, direct quotes are provided in the narrative presentation.
5.3.4.1 No Justice in AA

Respondents expressed that Affirmative Action was unjust and unfair, because it was race-based. One participant (24) said, “I do not think Affirmative Action should be related to the word justice. I think it is being misused by politicians….I kind of get annoyed. I am irritated by it, because everything that I have seen with Affirmative Action was unfair and I have so many cases where I included, and friends of mine and family of mine have been mistreated, because they are not the chosen colour or they are not black to get the job”. An advocate (45) echoed the sentiment saying, “As far as I am concerned it is not fair, that is not justice”. This perspective was also reinforced by a research and policy consultant (67) who said that, “If you hire a person rather than another person and you hire person B because he is black or white or Jewish or green or whatever, rather than because he is the most qualified person for the job, you are doing an injustice to the other person and so I think it is an unjust policy”. Another respondent (28) stated that, there was no justice in AA even though it was meant as a corrective process saying, “On the issue of justice, I do not think it is serving any purpose. It is just worsening the situation”. A participant (29) expressed a concern with regard to an across-the-board approach to AA that says, “Everybody who was advantaged, therefore, will now totally be disadvantaged when it comes to job application, I feel it is an unfair application. A blanket application of anything I feel is unfair”. A labour lawyer (47) concurred with this view saying, “It is injustice to deprive some people ….who had been blocked out…… they have been worked out of the workplace. It is a perception of justice that we are dealing with”. Another respondent remarked that both black and white employees experienced injustice in as far AA is concerned, saying, “I think I have never met a black South African who said that ‘I think Affirmative Action led to the result that black South African are now in a better position’, they will always say that we are still not there, so they experience injustices….but white South African experience that as well. They now talk about the new disadvantaged community”.

Issues were raised around the determination of fairness in AA as stipulated by the Constitution. Participants remarked that subsection 3 of Section 9 of the Constitution which deals with equality was a problem. An MP (59) said, “Discrimination on one or more grounds listed in subsection 3 is unfair” and subsection 5 says unless it is established that the discrimination is fair”. The MP said his concerns with regard to fairness as stipulated by the Constitution revolved around the adjudication of fairness asking, “How do you determine when discrimination is fair or unfair?” He stated subsection 5 of Section 9 was open to subjective interpretation that could be used against non-beneficiaries.
Some participants acknowledged the unfairness inherent in remedial measures such as AA with one advocate (32) saying, “The inherent consequence of Affirmative Action is unfair, because it means giving something to one individual which another individual might have deserved more”. Respondents suggested that the impact on the recipients of that unfairness depended on the way in which the measures were implemented.

5.3.4.2 Unfairly Punitive to White Youth

There was a view that AA could not be extended to white youths who had nothing to do with discriminatory policies of the apartheid era. Participants said that people who were born after 1994 were being punished or blamed for deeds that had nothing to do with them. Some participants felt that it was unfair to visit the acts of the past political order on today’s youth. A community safety officer (24) expressed that he was only 4 years old when South Africa attained its democracy and could not understand why he was being lumped together with white people who voted in the old order. He said that, “I did not know anything about apartheid; it had nothing to do with me. I did not make any decisions, but I am still being mistreated for what happened then. This view was also echoed by another participant who asked, “Why do I have to serve under the same justice and the same system, when I had nothing to do with the past?”

Articulating concerns about the future of his grandchildren, one participant (61) said, “Things that happened in the past, sure were wrong and should be rectified. But do it the right way and do not penalise my children’s children. My child, my daughters were born after apartheid, okay. Now how can you penalise their children? That I think is wrong. An MP (43) concurred saying that, “All of the children born after 1994, most of them would be 20 years old now, when they enter the market place there should be no bar against them for applying for a job and getting that job”. Another MP (56) reinforced this view saying, “There should have been a cut-off date, it should have been said that born-frees at some stage…..let us give our young children and young people an equal opportunity to grow together, to compete together and to take South Africa forward. Do not create new centres of unhappiness”.

5.3.5 THE AA STIGMA

This theme surfaced in response to Question 2(c) and (d) of the interview schedule (Appendix 1). To illustrate it further, direct quotes are provided in the narrative presentation.
5.3.5.1 Psychologically Damages Beneficiaries

Participants believed that AA was causing psychological damage to beneficiaries. They claimed that it impacted the dignity and pride of beneficiaries badly. A respondent (24) said, “It tears away their dignity as well, because they have a certain amount of pride. They also want to perform well and they want to feel that they deserve to have that position. They want to feel that they deserve to be where they are, and it will be unfair of government to then say no but you are only there because of the colour of your skin”. A CEO (37) concurred saying that, “It undermines the guys who are in these jobs even when they are good”.

Another MP (43) said that appointing people to perform tasks that were way beyond their competency levels was hurting them, stating that, “If you put somebody in a position that he or she is no capable of performing, you set them up to fail….So it becomes a perpetual problem and it is not good for their self-confidence and it becomes a vicious cycle”. Another respondent (61) pointed out an oddity in the preferential treatment associated with AA was harmful, saying “You do not do somebody a favour by pushing him into doing something that he is not equipped to do. I have seen it… I have seen people getting psychologically damaged”.

5.3.5.2 Stigmatises Beneficiaries

Respondents also articulated that AA stigmatised beneficiaries, because they are not seen by others as capable and competent, but as having been given preferential treatment through legislated interventions. An advocate (45) said, “Once people believe you have been appointed because you are something other than the right person for the job, people tend to lose confidence”. A participant (29) said of the AA stigma, “They are perpetuating an idea of black inferiority and that is one of the worst ripple effects I think on black people themselves….. the idea perpetuated by the apartheid government that blackness and inferiority and incapability and incompetency are synonymous words is being perpetuated by telling people …..I am going to give you a better job, because if I do not legislate you into a job, there is no way that you are going to get it…it gives people the idea that being black makes you less competent…that you need a hand-out”.

An MP (50) commented that, “I have participated in a couple of programmes on television and on Affirmative Action, and the interesting thing is, black young people say ‘we do not want Affirmative Action’. That is what they are telling me, because they think they are second class if they get the
position because of Affirmative Action. They say I want to get the position, because I am the best”.

5.3.5.3 Inculcates Entitlement and Dependency

Respondents believed that AA created a sense of entitlement and dependency among blacks. An employee relations practitioner (61) said, “The perception out there …is that blacks in general expect to be favoured. They want special treatment in everything because of what happened thirty years ago…20 years ago, before they were born. That is bullshit…the people of South Africa have the ability, we have to stop teaching them wrong habits…teaching them that they can have things for nothing”. Expressing his views regarding what he termed a dependency culture created by AA, a research and policy consultant (67) said, “We have got companies, big mining companies, small businesses forced to give part of their equity to blacks. All of this means that blacks are dependent on what the state does for them directly or on what the state tells whites to do for them directly. So where is the spirit of entrepreneurship? Where is the willingness to start your own business and take a risk, if the state is going to do it all for you? I do not think any country, any community can actually build economic success down the road on that kind of dependency. I think it is a disaster”. Another participant (29) said the unintended consequence of AA on designated employees was that, “Incentives put in place by the system for somebody to charge for excellence are not necessarily there, because they know that even with less excellent results they still have an advantage when it comes to applying for a job”.

A CEO (37) invoked the philosophy of Black Consciousness Movement leader Steve Biko, saying that he would have felt that the AA approach, “Which is really going to beg whites for a piece of their action was never actually going to work and it needed a fundamentally different approach, one that said, black man you are on your own”. He went further to say “These are hard truths, uncomfortable truths and things that people do not want to face, so I think, if blacks want to become middle class, they have got to do it on their own, black man you are on your own, it is true and it remains true”.

5.3.6 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

This theme surfaced in response to Question 4 (a) to (c) of the interview schedule (Appendix 1). To illustrate it further, direct quotes are provided in the narrative presentation.
5.3.6.1 AA Fuels Tension and Resentment

There was a strong feeling that in its current form, AA destroyed trust, human relations and caused racial tensions in the workplace. A point was made that white individuals believed they were denied jobs and promotions regardless of the skills they possessed. An employee relations practitioner (61) said, “I have worked for a company for 25 years, I am in a senior position and all of a sudden I am either brought down or bumped out of my job to create space for somebody else. Do you think I am going to love that person? He cost me my career, my opportunities”. Another participant said that, “It is clear there is tension between specific groups, because the feeling that was created is that no matter how good you are, what your skills and qualifications are, if you are not from the correct group, then you are not going to be appointed”.

There was also a view that AA was causing resentment among both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, because the former believed there was a lack of commitment to it, while the latter thought they were being denied opportunities to advance their careers. A lawyer (39) said, “There is resentment on the white side, but there is also an entitlement from the people on the other side, from those from the designated group”. Another participant (27) said, “It makes finding common ground very difficult, especially if people start to blame each other, whether it is the black person who blames the white person for not having enough or the white person blaming the black person for not getting an opportunity”. An MP (59) agreed saying that, “Well, it is bad for relationships. In fact it is emphasising racial tensions and that is what it is. We are not solving racial differences and tensions, in fact, we are increasing them. That is the problem”. A labour lawyer (47) added to this saying, “It is just to drive racial divisions in the workplace”.

5.3.6.2 AA Humiliates Non-beneficiaries

Participants said that AA was humiliating non-beneficiaries and reducing their sense of worth. An advocate (45) participant related his reaction to an AA-related incident which resulted in him leaving corporate employment, saying, “Well, it was disappointing and obviously it is quite a humiliating experience as well. You feel a degree of anger for the firm that you worked for, but more than that you feel anger for the system that has been created”. Another participant (24) agreed saying that, “I think it makes you kind of hopeless”. An MP (56) concurred with this view saying, “I think white males, Afrikaans speaking are the most emasculated people in this country at the moment. Our points of view are not taken seriously, we are last in line in terms of anything and our contributions are not necessary”. Another participant (27) said, “People do not see people
as people anymore. They do not think of …you…know…a white person as a person with emotions, feelings and dreams”.

An advocate (32) referred to a case of a white employee who had acted in a position for a number of years, but was not shortlisted and instead a black candidate was appointed on a permanent basis. But the white employee felt that she still had to do most of the work. The participant quoted the white employee as having said that, “I am sick and tired of, you know, doing all the work, but not getting recognised and rewarded for my work”. A local government expert (29) added that, “White people do not sit around tables as colleagues and friends in the way they normally could, because there is this volatility, emotional volatility that you feel that you are unwanted as a minority…you feel that you are unwanted…minorities feel they are not valued; they feel that they are not welcome in the workplace”.

5.3.6.3 AA Ruins Interpersonal Relations

(a) 1 AA Spoils Workplace Relations

It was suggested that AA or lack of it was causing problems for interpersonal relations in the workplace. Participants said that employees treated each other with suspicion and had preconceived ideas that they were less favoured than those of a different race. One participant (24) expressed his view as follows, “I think it kind of ruins relationships sometimes…I think that in certain cases, almost a hatred and kind of anger at each other, between different race groups”. There was also a sentiment that workplace relations had worsened compared to what they were before and that government’s enforcement of AA had polarised employees along racial lines. One participant said that AA “Keeps portraying us whites as bad people”. Another participant (29) said, “One of the big things in South Africa is that we have politeness versus respect. People are polite to each other…they do not necessarily respect each other”. An MP (59) noted, “If we want to prosper in SA, we must have respect for each other and that respect means it does not matter what colour you are”. Another participant (47) added that, “It has got a lot to do with the way the companies communicate it and implement it”. He alluded to communication, that, “Hurts, that kills your soul…by saying…we are over-represented, we do not belong here, were are second class citizens, we must be put aside whereas, you know, you can just put it differently”.

(b) Statutory-enforced Integration

It was also expressed that AA was forced integration and that it had negative consequences for interpersonal relations. One participant (24) believed that workplace relations were to a certain
extent influenced by tensions in the external environment saying, “It is just going to worsen integration. You cannot force integration”. An MP (56) concurred saying, “You cannot arrange interpersonal relations by way of policy, you cannot do that…If you want genuine interpersonal relations between people, allow them to interact in a normal way”. Another respondent (61) said that, “Unfortunately, the social environment infects the workplace. Like the smallest …just a little seed, something small happens and it blows over to racism from both sides and unfortunately whites withdraw. They simply withdraw, because they know that the system is against them”. An MP (43) added to this saying, “White people get victimised…their workplace becomes disharmonious for various reasons, so that they do leave eventually. So….they get pushed out”. Another participant (27) expressed that AA, “Creates an awkward relationship between blacks and whites”.

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CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings presented in Chapter 5. Included in this discussion are key themes and subthemes that emerged from the results of the study and conclusions drawn from the findings. This discussion will link the findings with theory presented in the literature review section, Chapter 2. Remarks are also made with regard to the extent to which the findings were able to answer each research question of the study. Additionally, the extent to which the answers provide insights into the persisting stakeholder conflict over AA is examined.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF EMERGENT THEMES

6.2.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

6.2.1.1 Intervention to Address Socio-Economic Inequalities

The study reveals an acknowledgement by respondents for the need for an effective process to eradicate socio-economic disparities resulting from past discriminatory practices and create workplace inclusivity. The findings show support for ways to address problems of inequality not only at a formal level but substantively. This view is captured in an expression by a 32-year old advocate who said that “We are for the whole idea of substantive equality, I believe in fact that we cannot implement a formal equality mode, we must have a measure of substantive equality because there is definitely a need that we need to fulfil, we need to support people”. This is consistent with the original intent of AA, which is seeking to promote inclusivity in the workplace, eradicating the negative effects of discriminatory labour practices (Hideg, et al, 2011 & McMillan-Capehart, et al., 2009. Also, in line with literature on instrumental and moral justifications for AA (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011; Moses, 2010 & Harris, 2010), the study also reveals a need for measures to put individuals on a par in order to make competition for employment fair and just. There is a recognition that legislating equality is not sufficient on its own. The findings suggest practicable solutions to ensuring real inclusion and effective participation of previously disadvantaged groups in the economy.
6.2.2 PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM

6.2.2.1 Affirmative Action has Covert Racist Motives

Despite the general acknowledgement by respondents for the need to address endemic socio-economic inequalities in South Africa, the findings reflect a general sense of apprehension and confusion regarding what AA actually represents. There is a view is that AA is aimed at crippling the socio-economic standing of white people. The perceptions, as captured in the findings, demonstrate that respondents view AA as threatening their economic position and career development trajectories. This section provides a detailed discussion of the key perspectives reflected in the findings.

(a) Racial Categorisation

The findings show a consistent perception that the respondents view AA as a racist policy that balkanises the South African society. AA is perceived as a race-based exclusionary policy whose intention is to exclude whites from participating in the economy. The results demonstrate a belief by respondents that whites have no place in the country and AA is just one of the mechanisms to incapacitate them. This is seen as intended to inflict maximum harm. The notion that AA enforces racial categorisation is captured in the expression that race is used as a proxy for disadvantage and therefore wrong. In furtherance of this point, respondents say that in the current implementation approach, AA assumes that all black people are economically deprived and need intervention and that all white people are rich or in better position and therefore non-deserving. The results show that this view is inappropriate and they hold that the colour-coding of economic inequality is incorrect and damaging to non-beneficiaries. Respondents believed that one’s race should not be used to determine one’s status as deserving of assistance for socio-economic advancement. Also, it seems that the intention to categorise people by race is to ensure that economic privileges that have always been enjoyed by whites in the past are taken away. The study further shows that respondents perceive the widely circulated and prominently articulated intention that AA seeks to empower designated groups as just a facade. They fear that the real intention is to dispossess and suppress white people. The findings are consistent with Berkeley (2013) and Wendricks’ (2010) assertions that despite the objective of AA measures being to redress historical injustices and exterminate their legacy, they were still perceived as discriminatory and damaging to democracy by fostering racial categorisation.
(b) Reverse Discrimination

Results show that respondents have negative perceptions and low expectations of AA. It appears that the application of AA strictly on racially-defined parameters induces apprehension among respondents as they see it as ruthless and vengeful. The fact that AA is perceived as a tit-for-tat exercise in this study supports findings by McHarg and Nicholson (2006) who argue that compensatory justification of AA initiatives tends to be interpreted by non-beneficiaries as enforced pay-back. As this study shows, respondents believe that AA initiatives are nothing but reverse discrimination. One could surmise that AA is perceived as bearing political inferences of fault and causality because it concludes that the economic predicament of designated groups is a direct result of non-beneficiaries’ discriminatory conduct. This view apportions collective responsibility and puts all non-beneficiaries at fault. The findings support Hermann’s (2013, p12) assertions that embedded in AA are political undertones that have negative effects on non-beneficiaries, and calling this “ideological wickedness”. However, Bikitsha (2014) rejects such utterances arguing that the insinuations are a conscious effort to “delegitimise and demonise a law that is not only just and fair but also necessary”.

In essence, respondents believe that there is a possibility to devise AA measures that seek to address inequalities but strike a balance between the corrective approach and minimising perceptions of accusatory connotations. This is in line with McHarg and Nicholson (2006) who argue for the need for well thought-out strategic approaches to AA, that take into account the benefits of positive measures in effectively promoting real equality, but which consider political sensitivities and the risks involved.

A divergent perspective that emerges from the findings with regard to reverse discrimination is that the objective of AA has never been about making white people worse-off. In fact, one of the respondents said emphatically that, “Affirmative Action is not about whites”. This perspective appears to be grounded on the notion that whites have become better off and more independent as a result of AA, through pursuance of own entrepreneurial ventures. This view finds support in Cronje’s position (2013) who proffers that whites are in a better position now than they were in the past. He states that whites have found other commercial means for survival, making them more self-reliant than their black counterparts. However, very few respondents actually supported this view. The majority believed that AA is being used as a sword to destroy non-beneficiaries.
According to the results, respondents perceive AA initiatives as backward-focused, giving prominence to what they consider historical wrongs, looking for past causation instead of dealing with inequalities within the current context. They think that, while appealing to beneficiaries, the rear-view-mirror approach denies the country the opportunity to set clear achievable objectives aimed at creating a new equal society, without making them feel guilty of past discriminatory practices that they say were never consciously and voluntarily part of. This is consistent with the findings by Moses (2010). The author believes that the strong emphasis of SA’s AA policies in correcting the wrongs of the past was considered backward-looking compared to other countries that have taken similar steps to address inequalities. According to this view, such an approach hinders any chance of progress as beneficiaries keep referring to past harm, in most cases, out of frustration emanating from intractable views of non-beneficiaries on AA. Bikitsha (2014) criticises this perception as wrong, asserting that “proponents of these warped and revisionist views of Affirmative Action also tend to be the first to argue that we should not talk about the past”.

6.2.2.2 Flawed Approach Stressing Racial Numerical Representativeness

The literature review reveals that SA’s AA implementation approach has a strong focus on racial numerical representativeness. Hermann (2013) suggests that there is a chasm between what AA seeks to do and its actual race-based implementation. The author submits that conceptual and practice dimensions as they stand are irreconcilable. While the study shows that non-beneficiaries would support some initiatives to redress economic inequalities, there are deep concerns about how AA is implemented. The evidence shows that respondents are concerned with what they call the “tyranny of representativity” and a race-based scorecard approach to AA. They suggest that the focus on numerical targets has produced an implementation approach that discards any information that speaks of merit. The rejection of AA evidenced in this study is a display of opposition to what non-beneficiaries view as a complete disregard of the centrality of merit as an important structural variable in AA implementation and a strict adherence to demographic information, that is, race and to a certain extent, gender and disability.

The findings are consistent with Haynes’ (2012) study on individuals’ beliefs of how AA plans are implemented. Her findings showed that consideration of structural variables in implementation
such as centrality of merit in employment decisions concerning designated candidates tend to generate support for the plans, rather than when individual variables like demographic information and psychological aspects like prejudice carried more weight in determining the outcome. Considering this perspective, one could conclude that Haynes’ (2012, p.21) submission that “the more weight given to merit in a particular implementation, the more favourably it is evaluated” by non-beneficiaries, is correct.

6.2.2.3 AA Founded in Haste and Based on Flawed Assumptions

This study reveals that respondents believed that AA was not properly planned and was implemented prematurely by the government. They reasoned that when employment equity policies were considered at the fall of the apartheid regime, the focus seems to have been largely on propagating legislation expeditiously, without a thorough plan having been drawn up with regard to how this was to be executed, monitored and measured. The heavy reliance on balancing numbers, as perceived by respondents, seems to assume that once the numerical goals are achieved, equality will automatically follow. In this study assertions are also made that AA was legislated in haste without considering the economic context, political scope and resource availability, in essence what it would take to make it work. The findings suggest that imprudent decisions were made in discarding white expertise when this could have been integrated into the plan to enable training and passing on of skills.

The findings also reveal that decisions to transform workplaces and create an environment conducive for previously disadvantaged groups to participate in the economy through accessing jobs that were previously reserved for whites were and still continue to be based on flawed assumptions. It seems that forethought regarding complexities that would arise from the fact that whites are expected to implement a policy that is in conflict with their own interests, appears not to have been exhaustive. This suggests that government had expected non-beneficiaries to orchestrate their own joblessness and the demise of their careers by absorbing designated candidates into the workforce and transferring their skills without any incentive for their own personal development and growth. The apparent reluctance to implement AA supports findings presented in the latest report by the Commission of Employment Equity (CEE 2013/2014). Remarkably, the reliability and validity of CEE reports have always been called into question by non-beneficiaries, claiming flawed methodology. No literature could be found to support or disprove the finding that SA’s AA lacked proper grounding and comprehensive due-diligence planning from inception. The reason could be that the perception of AA being a quick-fix mechanism to achieving equality is a consequence of a complex historical political process that
is idiosyncratic to South Africa.

6.2.2.4 It is a Variation of Cadre Deployment

The findings show that AA is seen in the same light as cadre deployment. Respondents seem to conflate AA and ANC’s policy of cadre deployment, which is the appointment or deployment of party-loyalists to positions of influence both in the public and private sector instead of appointment based on merit. This apparent confusion, deliberate or not, could be a consequence of the race-based perception of AA, as the deployed candidates tend to come from AA designated groups. Although the ANC, whose membership is predominantly black, has made efforts to justify the deployment of its loyalist to senior government jobs, the findings support Chance (2014) who stated that cadre deployment was EEAA and AA’s “pernicious instrument”. The separation of cadre deployment from AA can only be achieved with some level of success by drawing attention to the fact that the remedial policy is legislated while cadre deployment is discretionary and the ANC’s prerogative.

6.2.2.5 Conclusion

The findings provide a sufficient answer to Research Question 1 regarding the perceptions held by non-beneficiaries about AA. These perceptions could be taken as negative enough to fuel the conflict over AA and subsequently hinder the effectiveness of AA implementation. To this extent, the findings provide insights into such conflict. Literature suggests the existence of a discrepancy between perception of the macro-environmental dimension, in this case, the legal/political provisions and their actual intent. Cummings and Worley (2009) advocate the existence of the enacted environment, saying it reflected decision-makers’ perceptions of the general and task environments. The authors highlight the importance of understanding this dimension as they believe that individual perceptions and interpretations of the external environment tends to influence how decision-makers or stakeholders formulate responses to the perceived realities. This study confirms this view in that participants seem to perceive AA and its objectives differently from what it actually stands for, or at least its original intent.

Also, the conclusion that respondents seem to draw with regard to AA, based on their perceptions, appears to be the source of the tensions fuelling the stakeholder conflict over AA. The findings are also in line with Anstey’s (2006) conflict theory, where parties believed that their aspirations
could not be achieved simultaneously and where there was perceived divergence of interests, conflict tended to exist. It also showed that the yearning for control and dominance motivated individuals to protect their group interests. This could be assumed to be the case here as respondents’ objections to AA are generally viewed by proponents as an attempt to protect white privilege and retain economic control.

6.2.3 AA IMPACT AND CONCERNS

This study revealed concerns that AA has failed and continues to fail to address socio-economic inequalities both in the workplace and the broader society. The views of participants show profound concerns with regard to the negative effects AA has on the very same designated groups it seeks to support. Below is a detailed discussion of the concerns as reflected in the findings and conclusions drawn from these views.

6.2.3.1 Scorecard Approach that Fails to Address Socio-economic Inequalities

(a) Fixation with Race Disregards Socio-economic Disparities

Literature (Wendrick, 2010) shows that AA initiatives have been justified as a mechanism to economically emancipate and empower those who were previously excluded from participating in economic activities. In SA, it was the democratic government’s effort to eradicate the effects of apartheid’s discriminatory legislation whose consequence was economic inequality that had a very strong racial facet (Hawarden, et al., 2012). Contrary to this, the findings reveal a concern that AA’s excessive emphasis on attainment of racial numerical outcomes ignores the fundamental objective to advance socio-economic development of those in designated groups. Respondents argue for AA implementation to shift the focus from race-based numerical targets to a more nuanced humane approach as a means to achieving those targets. They view the current approach as cold and clinical to such an extent that it even fails the same people it seeks to uplift. Instead, they point to another weakness in that AA has created an elite class of black people. To address this discrepancy, Duncan (2013) suggests that socio-economic status be considered in AA applications. The author argues that it is ludicrous that people from privileged backgrounds were considered for AA opportunities purely on the basis of a group-determined disadvantage, when they could achieve economic enhancement without such intervention. This view held that instead of AA being seen as cosmetic changes, it needed to be about smoothing
the way for the really disadvantaged.

The study also suggests that the reason for AA failure to address socio-economic disparities is that it is not a sustainable scalable tool and certainly not the right one to do so. The concern around its sustainability is informed by the fact that AA is redistributive in nature. Rather than focusing on creating new opportunities by growing the economy to benefit the wider population, it reallocates existing opportunities to designated groups. The findings suggest that this extractive characteristic points to a serious deficiency in AA and exposes it as unworkable. The results are consistent with Coetzee and Bezuidenhout’s (2011) view that despite progress being made in transforming the South African society and its institutions, “inequalities and unfair discrimination remain deeply embedded in social structures, practices and attitudes (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011, p.79).

(b) Skills Shortage

This study reveals that besides the apparent resistance to AA on racial grounds, there are further concerns that the vast majority of people within designated groups remains unskilled and in particular, the African segment. The skills deficiency problem is identified as a key factor in aiding business reluctance to implement AA. Skills are viewed as a critical input in determining effective implementation of AA. Respondents are also concerned that the lack of skills has a negative impact on the growth and development of the economy due to the fact that people tend to rely on employment opportunities rather than creating their own businesses. The findings are consistent with Hermann (2013), who professes that the majority of black people remained unemployable, without skills and the economy was severely hampered by the dire shortage of skills.

While such views do not take into consideration the historical and structural problems that the country is grappling with, the results show that after 15 years of AA implementation, SA should be showing signs of improvement in skills development. This concern confirms Statistics South Africa’s report released in September 2014 on employment, skills and unemployment in South Africa. It showed that between 1994 and 2014, Africans did not acquire sufficient new skills compared to their white and Indian counterparts. Specifically, among the African group, the skills level actually decreased three percent while among whites the growth in further skills was well above 24 percent (Manamela, 2014). Suggestions are also made that there needs to be a concerted effort to develop appropriate skills that are relevant to the needs of the economy.
(c) Education

The view that education is a primary input to the effective implementation of AA came out strongly in the findings. The findings demonstrate that lack of relevant quality education is a hindrance to the economic advancement of designated groups. Respondents proffer that designated candidates lack the know-how required to deliver either public or private goods, adding that AA does not empower them to do so. A participant said, “It gives opportunities, but you have to empower people through the education system to make use of those opportunities”. This is in line with suggestions that employees hired under AA “tend to have lower educational achievements and fall below the formal educational requirement for the positions for which they were hired” (Harris, 2010, p.94).

This study suggests a need for an effective intervention to improve the quality and standard of education – currently believed to be in a mess. While literature showed that US President Lyndon Johnson spoke of the need to give those who had been subjected to historical discrimination the ability to walk through the gates of opportunity, by legislating remedial initiatives (Wendricks, 2010), this study shows that policy interventions on their own have been insufficient in SA. It reveals a serious concern and an urgent need to address this aspect. This view is consistent with Govender (2010) who asserts that education is a fountain that feeds into other rights, as it empowers people to exercise their rights to attain their objectives. The author states that AA by itself could not result in the attainment of substantive equality without effectively functioning enabling inputs like education.

6.2.3.2 AA’s Statutory Approach has Negative Consequences

The results of this study show AA as a coercive stipulation that places emphasis on the achievement of statutory-prescribed race-based outcomes. The legalistic approach that AA has assumed in its implementation seems to make it difficult to accept it as a morally-justified approach to eradicate the effects of past discriminatory practices. It is seen as a rigid hostile tactic that leaves no room for manoeuvring by organisations. While the original intent to legislate is said to be motivated by the desire to protect previously disadvantaged groups and ensure that the process of restitution was taken seriously, the literature review showed that AA-dictated grounds for compliance makes organisations adopt a crass transactional rather than a transformational application of the policy (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011).
In line with this, the findings reveal that where companies find themselves under pressure to attain racial representativeness in employee profiles, they opt for hiring beneficiaries as tokens and door-openers with no strategic decision-making authority. This approach renders the appointees mere window-dressing posters to external stakeholders like politicians and government. They are further regarded internally as incapable, ill-equipped and without the appropriate skills to find effective solutions to commercial problems. It could be inferred that compliance with AA is seen as a grudge political insurance purchase. This is revealed by the extent to which companies seem to go out of their way to find designated candidates for positions that are considered important to create a politically-correct image to government and the public. The findings support Cho and Kwon’s (2010) study in South Korea who found that due to AA being perceived as government encroachment on the autonomy of businesses in managing their workforce, companies tended to circumvent the legally-institutionalised requirements, only meeting them superficially without considering AA as furtherance of economic justice for beneficiaries. This is also consistent with Saha (2012), whose study shows that reservation policies are believed to be coercive prescriptions and triggers of mounting discontent, rather than a rejection of morally-justifiable measures to address economic disparities.

6.2.3.3 It Causes Negative Externalities for Society

The literature review provides evidence that AA is grossly unfair to all those it touches, directly and indirectly, non-beneficiaries, beneficiaries, enterprises and the society at large (Holzer & Neumark, 2006). In his study, Lee (2011) finds that AA measures produce structural economic problems, create social costs that are hard to fix and are the cause of persistent corruption in Malaysia’s political economy. In line with this view, this study shows that non-beneficiaries interpret the purpose of AA in the broader societal context of delivering public value, rather than a mere focus on recruitment practices in the workplace. It is within this context that the implications of the policy for the wider society are scrutinised. In this regard, AA is understood to cause negative externalities for society. This seems to suggest that when incompetent candidates are put in positions of authority, the effect of such decisions on third parties are not taken into account by those who make the decisions. This suggests that the perceived incapacity of designated employees to perform their duties causes them to be viewed as destroying public value. Ultimately, the brunt of beneficiaries’ poor performance is borne by the poor majority in society. This unintended consequence is referred to as the “Paradox of Affirmative Action” in that the policy destroys the very people it is meant to help.

Taking the above into consideration, the concerns reflected in the findings show that AA is
perceived as exceedingly inefficient and inequitable as it allocates opportunities on the basis of race and hurts its beneficiaries. The evidence given in this study for the negative externalities that AA causes to society includes collapsing bridges and fatalities of babies in 2014 that resulted from water contamination. As these incidents were part of the national discourse, fingers were inevitably pointed at what were considered dangerous flaws in AA of putting incompetent people in positions where they expose unsuspecting communities to danger. The findings also showed that the exclusion of non-beneficiaries from the workforce has led to the loss of expertise in the public sector with some experts opting to leave the country, implying that they were chased away by AA. There is also a suggestion that persistent corruption and mismanagement of public funds is a direct consequence of AA. However, while Lee’s (2011) findings showed blame for AA as causing social and structural problem in the Malaysian economy, and anecdotal evidence was given in SA’s national discourse, no empirical and systematic evidence exists proving that AA candidates are unable to perform their duties merely on the basis of their demographic characterisation. There is also no observed evidence and proven reported linkage that failures to perform tasks or rampant corruption by beneficiaries are a direct consequence of a single variable, that is, incapability. Consistent with views that AA results in negative externalities for societies, the literature review showed that the policy had been challenged on the basis that it was counter-productive and no longer necessary (MacMillan-Capehart, et al., 2009; Harris, 2010).

6.2.3.4 It Is Divisive and Perpetuates Racial Dissonance

(a) Perpetuates Racism

The findings reveal that respondents believe AA is nothing but an artificial social engineering process. It is suggested that AA’s insistence on allocating opportunities based largely on race, makes it a form of a modern job reservation programme, akin to that used during the apartheid regime to exclude blacks from meaningful participation in the economy. The preferential approach to implementation fuels the beliefs that AA fosters corrosive racial divisions and produces toxic race relations. The study further suggests that in the long run, AA will cause incalculable damage to the society as it perpetuates racial intolerance. There is also a view that AA damages nation-building efforts and endeavours to establish social cohesion. The findings are consistent with Harris (2010), who puts forward that persistent squabbling over AA appears to have created more hostility than settle attitudes and provide clarity on perceptions about the need to implement it. It is also in line with Haynes’ (2012) view that AA has divisive power that tends to polarise people. However, the findings also suggest that it is implausible to expect social cohesion in an
environment afflicted with crippling economic inequalities. This view holds that social cohesion cannot be premised on the attainment of racial harmony alone.

(b) Sunset Clause

The literature review showed that AA is perceived as reverse discrimination and racism with no specified timeframe for the termination of the policy (Archibong & Adejumo, 2013). In line with this view, Coetzee and Bezuidenhout (2011) argue that in order to retain credibility and fairness in justifying AA, a cut-off-point is needed. The authors submit that no organisation or country could afford AA in perpetuity, suggesting that at a certain point in time, AA beneficiaries have to take responsibility for their own socio-economic advancement.

Consistent with this notion, this study suggests that AA needs a cut-off-point and cannot go on forever. It shows that the open-ended implementation is neither desirable nor sustainable. It can be inferred from this that based on the perceived societal harm that AA is believed to cause, it is feared that its continuance could result in further structural economic problems. The study also reveals a sense that the decision to leave AA without a sunset clause is deliberate, as government is using it as a tool for political control and dominance. It is suggested that this is to ensure that AA inflicts maximum damage on non-beneficiaries specifically and the white population in general. In disputing this, Govender (2010) submits that the rational assumption that educational, health and other empowerment inputs would be in full swing and productive within a reasonable period of 20 years, could have led policymakers to ignore prescribing timeframes for a cut-off point for AA implementation.

The findings reflect differing views with regard to AA timeframes. Some argue that it needs to be stopped immediately, while others believe it could be phased out in five to ten years’ time, contingent to a thorough appraisal of the policy and modification of the implementation approach. However, the latter suggests that government needs to pronounce lucidly on the exact period needed to conclude implementation. Judging by the tightening of employment equity legislation through the amendment of EEA which became effective in August 2014, making it more punitive for non-compliance, indications are clear that AA is still going to continue in its current form. The move appears to have been necessitated by the apparent reluctance by the private sector to comply with AA requirements.
6.2.3.5 AA Hinders Business Efficiency

The literature review revealed that businesses have low expectations of AA effectiveness and are unlikely to support it if they consider it a threat to their commercial viability (Harris, 2010). It is reasoned that employees hired under AA are likely to show poor performance on the job compared to those hired on merit. It is further suggested that lowering of standards as a result of preferential criteria result in underperformance which, over time, restrict productivity and efficiency for employers (Harris, 2010). This study’s suggestion that AA hampers operational efficiency by forcing the hiring and employment of people who are considered less capable confirms Harris’s (2010) assertions. However, Chance (2014) cautions against the propensity by companies to retreat to well-worn self-protective positions and their refusal to acknowledge the need for redress. He further states that companies should find ways to make AA work, even if that means hurting their bottom line temporarily.

The findings also reveal that AA is viewed as an unnecessary artificial intervention in the labour market and enterprise management, dictating to employers how to conduct their businesses and in particular, stipulating recruitment practices. AA’s colour-coded recruitment prescription is criticised as inappropriate and unwarranted, as skills are what businesses in particular, and the economy in general, need to prosper. The issue of inadequate skills that reflect the country’s demographics being available to enable companies to meet AA requirements is also argued strongly.

The findings further show that the AA-induced human resource management approach breeds mistrust and hostility between government and the business fraternity. The results confirm Cho and Kwon’s (2010) study on corporate perception of AA implementation in South Korea, which found that the measures were viewed as invading the autonomy of businesses in managing their employees and interfered with internal recruitment processes. This view holds that where initiatives are viewed as political interference in business strategic and operational matters, they are more likely to be rejected.

It should be noted that the business efficiency concern ranked low in findings in terms of frequency. This could be attributed to the fact that the policy is largely seen by the majority of the participants as a race and politics issue rather than a workplace concern. It could also be due to the fact that the sample did not contain many participants who were key decision-makers in business. But those who raised the point argued passionately about the negative impact of
government policy interference as reflected in the findings.

6.2.3.6 Conclusion

The findings provide a comprehensive answer to Research Question 2 that non-beneficiaries have serious reservations and concerns about AA. It seems that if these are not attended to, they could perpetuate the very challenges that continue to plague AA implementation. In assessing the concerns in the context of the conflict over AA, by applying conflict theory as discussed in Anstey (2006), one can surmise that they are deeply embedded in AA threats to fundamental human needs, and in this case, both the needs of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. However, from the point of view of non-beneficiaries, Anstey (2006) posits that when the issues at the core of the conflict were recognition, security and development, resolution often required radical transformational interventions. These suggest that an exhaustive appraisal of the current AA implementation approach needs to be considered. The concerns raised in this study reflect that the shortage of skills and quality education usually rejected out of hand by government as a self-fulfilling prophecy and self-generated problem by business, seem to be uppermost in the effective impactful implementation of AA. Overall, the concerns are consistent with Cloke and Goldsmiths’ (2011, p.10) assertion that in conflict situations “everyone suffers, everyone feels betrayed, hurt and broken-hearted”.

6.2.4 INJUSTICE IN AA

This study reveals a belief that AA is unjust or unfair to non-beneficiaries. This perception is based on the current AA implementation approach that is seen as exclusionary and extractive. Remarkably, they consider this injustice as not only afflicting non-beneficiaries but beneficiaries as well. Below is a detailed discussion of the findings and conclusions drawn from them.

6.2.4.1 Affirmative Action is Unjust

Justice or injustice in AA is covered extensively in literature (Coetzee & Bezuidenhout, 2011; De Klerk, 2014; Wendricks, 2010; Cropanzano, et al., 2012). It is shown that while AA is considered
by proponents as a deliberate systematic inclusion of previously disadvantaged groups, non-beneficiaries continued to view AA as unfair. Macmillan-Capehart, *et al.* (2009) state that notwithstanding their superordinate goals, AA measures are constantly perceived to be prejudicial and are often met with negative reactions.

As evidenced in the findings, AA is considered unfair by respondents. This is arguably due to the fact that the policy is inherently unfair as it assumes a preferential approach that disadvantages one group in favour of the other. The fact that race-based determination excludes non-beneficiaries from accessing apparently logically deserved opportunities means that the policy would continue to be seen as actually working against promoting fair distribution of opportunity. While non-beneficiaries argue that AA is unfair and violates Section 9 (3) of the SA Constitution which prohibits any form of unfair discrimination, Section 9 (5) makes provision that allows such discrimination if it can be determined that it is fair. It is this determination of fairness that is believed to expose Section 9 (3) to subjective interpretation to the detriment of non-beneficiaries.

In line with this, the literature review shows that AA as a form of restitution is fair. A demonstration of this could be found in the Constitutional Court ruling against Renate Barnard made in September 2014. Barnard, a white woman, had applied without success for a promotion within the SAPS (Paton, 2014). The court concluded that the application of AA in this instance fulfilled the requirements of a three-fold test, which is, (a) targeting people who have been susceptible to unfair discrimination, (b) protecting and advancing their interests and (c) promoting the achievement of equality. The court surmised that SAPS had made the correct decision in declining her promotion on the basis that a positive consideration of her application would have affected racial representation negatively at the level of superintendent (Paton, 2014).

Another argument that could be raised with determination of fairness in a situation that is considered to be unfair is that perceptions of fairness generally are subjective in nature and often impervious to impartial empirical scrutiny. The findings are consistent with Lee’s study (2011), which shows that non-beneficiaries in Malaysia, the Chinese and Indian ethnic minorities believed the country’s AA policies were inefficient and unfair (Lee, 2011). It is believed that the extractive nature of AA policies make it unfair.

### 6.2.4.2 It Unfairly Punishes White Youths

The study raises concerns about the punitive effect that AA has on white young males. It reveals
that respondents are concerned about what they see as unfair and unwarranted retribution against young white males. A concern was expressed by a 24-year-old participant, stating that he was only four when South Africa attained its democracy and therefore he should not be lumped together with those who participated in discriminatory practices. Other respondents were anxious about the future of their children and grandchildren. These concerns are consistent with Moses (2010) who posits that one of the fiercest objections to AA’s remedial approach, which assumes a compensatory process, is that it deprives young non-beneficiaries who were not responsible for past injustices against beneficiaries. This is also in line with Esterhuizen and Martin’s (2008) assertion that young white males in South Africa feel unfairly discriminated against.

However, McHarg and Nicolson (2006) warn against what they call a narrow focus on the visible face of the innocent victims, arguing that it disregards the faceless victims of past discriminatory practices. Their strongest argument against this is that such a posture by those who view AA as unfairly punitive to white young males disregards the previously disadvantaged victims “who currently or will in the future continue to suffer the lingering effects, if AA is rejected” (McHarg & Nicolson, 2006, p.10). Also, the view that young white males should be excluded from AA provisions appears to consider solely the restitution aspect of the policy, disregarding previous advantages in terms of access and exposure to quality education, skills development and in general economic opportunities. This is in line with Govender (2010), who submits that while AA could be viewed as unpleasant and jarring, it was defensible morally to expect those who benefitted from discriminatory laws, directly or indirectly, to endure such burden as the country struggles to restore socio-economic balance.

6.2.5 THE AA STIGMA

This study reveals that AA has negative psychological effects on beneficiaries. The findings show that respondents believe that the preferential treatment inherent in AA leads to the stigmatising and stereotyping of beneficiaries as incompetent and helpless. This section provides a detailed discussion of the findings and conclusions.

6.2.5.1 Incompetence and Psychological Effects

The literature review revealed a well-established view that AA leads to stereotyping and stigmatising of its beneficiaries. This view suggested that the policy had demoralising effects on
the psyche of beneficiaries (Harris, 2010; McMillan-Capehart, et al., 2009; Woolnough, 2010). The results show that respondents believe AA has damaging psychological effects for beneficiaries. They believe that the appointment of beneficiaries to positions in which they could not perform (due to lack of appropriate skills) impacts their self-esteem and dignity in the workplace. This confirms Holzer and Neumark’s (2006) assertion that beneficiaries are getting hurt as a result of a job mismatch because they find themselves in jobs that required competency levels that are way beyond their capabilities.

The notion that AA has a denigrating effect on beneficiaries appears to originate from the fact that, primarily, beneficiaries are perceived to be incompetent due to being recipients of preferential treatment appointed on the basis of their colour instead of merit. The findings endorse Archibong and Adejumo’s (2013) assertion that detractors often use disparaging remarks towards beneficiaries such as causing a lowering of standards by giving preferential treatment to “non-white” at the expense of white people. However, Bikitsha (2014) finds problem with such perspectives, saying that it is utterly wrong for detractors to give the distorted impression that “competence is anathema to black professionals and is the preserve of whites alone”. One can construe that the source of such views is the fact that decision-making with regard to appointment of beneficiaries tends to ignore the structural variable of merit in implementing AA. The stigma of incompetence as revealed in the findings also confirms Hayne’s (2012) view that explicit provision of details with regard to the centrality of merit in AA programmes does impact both attitudes towards the programmes and how beneficiaries of that initiative are perceived in terms of competence.

Notably, the unintended consequence of this is the tendency by non-beneficiaries to automatically associate AA appointees with inferiority and incompetence as reflected in the findings. This view supports Harris’ (2010) assertion that the wickedness of preferential treatment is that it tends to perpetuate the insinuation of inferiority. The study suggests that beneficiaries of AA are castigated beyond what would be normally predicted by stereotyping. Additionally, it can also be inferred from the findings that the apparent demeaning effect of AA on beneficiaries, depicting them as less able, seems to be a matter of both perception and retributive justice by non-beneficiaries in retaliation for losing out on economic opportunities.

6.2.5.2 Inculcates Helplessness and Dependency

The study reveals a belief that beneficiaries lack the capacity to take care of themselves. It reflects a sense that beneficiaries cannot develop their careers without the intervention of AA. This view
seems to be grounded on the founding principles of the measures that bear connotations of ‘help’, in advancing socio-economic empowerment of those who were disadvantaged by past discriminatory practices. As a result, beneficiaries are seen as people who could not by themselves attain the positions they hold but rely on hand-outs to advance their careers. As evidenced in the findings, the stigma of helplessness seems to be the most aggressive and disparaging as it bears insinuations that say ‘without AA, beneficiaries are nothing’. The results are consistent with assertions that AA policies are viewed as representing advantage and preferential treatment rather than employee ability and performance (Woolnough, 2010).

The findings also showed that the support provided through AA has led to the development of a sense of entitlement and dependency by beneficiaries. It is said that beneficiaries are not taking active interest in developing themselves and building their careers, but have left it to what could be interpreted as legislated corporate welfare for their socio-economic advancement. The findings are consistent with the assertion that AA “has become a crutch that forces employers to patronise minorities by expecting less of them and caused minorities (beneficiaries) to expect less of themselves” (Harris, 2010, p.80). Overall, these pernicious stereotypes and prejudices against beneficiaries seem to prey on the cumulative effects of previous discrimination that persistently pour scorn on their person.

### 6.2.5.3 Conclusion

The research findings answer Question 3 adequately. The critical issue of fairness in AA as captured in the findings proves to be hard to explain qualitatively in a manner that will find acceptance of non-beneficiaries. The inherent injustice in AA can neither be summarily wished away or ignored without causing damage to either side of the debate. Viewed in the context of Cloke and Goldsmith’s (2011) iceberg analogy in conflict theory it can be inferred that AA is grossly unfair to non-beneficiaries as it obstructs them from pursuing their interests and destroys any opportunity for them to fulfil their needs, desires and dreams. Also, the fact that non-beneficiaries feel deprived, their demeaning conduct towards beneficiaries could be viewed a way of settling scores. Moreover, the stereotypes perpetuated by non-beneficiaries are most likely to continue as it is the case in other countries, discussed in the literature review.
6.2.6 AA IMPACT ON INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

The findings show that AA has negative implications for interpersonal justice in the workplace. Perceived as an unfair raced-based preferential treatment by non-beneficiaries, AA is believed to violate the principle of distributive justice, adversely impacting interpersonal relations in the workplace. The results show that the unfairness inherent in its allocation of opportunities, AA exacerbates racial tensions and perpetuates interpersonal retribution among employees. The results are discussed in detail as well as conclusions drawn from them.

6.2.6.1 Fuels Tensions and Resentment in the Workplace

In literature it is shown that observations of fairness of outcomes or allocations from a decision-making system (Crawshaw, et.al., 2013, Coetzee & Bezuidenhout; 2011) tend to affect how recipients, at different ends of the scale, relate to each other in terms of respect, dignity, propriety and politeness. It is further revealed that while studies on workplace justice always tended to be centred on individual and organisational effects of perceptions of justice, this could be extended to include co-workers and affects how co-workers interact with one another (Forret & Love, 2008). This study shows that AA causes racial tensions and fuels resentment among workers. In its current application, AA is believed to sow suspicion and destroy trust and human relations. AA’s treatment of non-beneficiaries as less deserving seems to be a sore point and propagates feelings of rejection as an out-group. This is a result of perceived injustice in AA and its rigid application, making it experienced as insensitive and with less concern for the predicament of non-beneficiaries.

The findings are consistent with Ferris, et.al. (2012) who submit that when organisational and managerial actions are perceived as unjust, the offended employees experience feelings of anger, outrage and resentment. They believe that workplace tensions and resentment tend to result in retributive behaviour by non-beneficiaries who feel disparaged and affronted by the system. This could be observed in uncomplimentary and condescending behaviour directed at beneficiaries who are labelled inferior, helpless and hopeless, and most often without evidence. This perspective is consistent with Holtz and Harold’s (2013) assertion that when employees perceive unjust interpersonal treatment, they tend to develop a strong inclination to engage in behaviour that is damaging to the organisation or individual in the organisation.
It should be noted that the findings also show that both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries experience interpersonal injustice in AA. This is likely because non-beneficiaries detest the unfair allocation of opportunity and believe that preference of beneficiaries over them is callous, while beneficiaries view their stereotyping and rejection as mere acquisitions for political insurance as gross interpersonal injustice. Additionally, such injustice towards beneficiaries could trigger anger towards a system that is deemed to fight to retain white privilege and therefore unwelcoming to them. In such instances, the interpersonal justice values of respect, dignity, politeness and propriety are compromised or completely eroded.

6.2.6.2 AA Humiliates Non-beneficiaries

The findings suggest that non-beneficiaries continue to lose hope with regard to future gainful employment, particularly in the public sector. The study shows that AA humiliates non-beneficiaries and impacts their sense of self-worth. AA’s apparent lack of consideration and appreciation for others, generating feelings of hopelessness, is perceived as a direct attack on non-beneficiaries’ dignity. This is consistent with Govender (2010), whose view is that non-beneficiaries tend to feel deeply aggrieved by AA and perceive it as insulting and an attack on their dignity. The feeling of emasculation as well as the rejection of their views and contribution by government as reflected in the findings, seem to hurt non-beneficiaries’ self-esteem acutely. This is in line with Ferries, et.al. (2012) who state that interpersonal injustice has the ability to lower one’s self-esteem and therefore is perceived a threat. It is also this AA-induced esteem threat that triggers negative behaviour towards beneficiaries as they are perceived as primary generators of the injustice, albeit indirectly. The authors further suggest that recipients of unjust interpersonal treatment tend to retaliate for being subjected to an aversive state of diminished self-esteem.

6.2.6.3 AA Ruins Interpersonal Relations

This study reveals that the AA race-based preferential approach causes strain in workplace interpersonal relations. It shows that AA has made relations among employees worse than they were before as it polarised them along racial lines. Whereas AA was founded as a tool to attain economic inclusivity, its balkanising effect seems to eliminate any chance of racial integration and harmony in the workplace. Being viewed as statutory-enforced integration, AA is believed to have resulted in awkward relationships between blacks and whites in the workplace.
Considered in the context of Nabatchi, et al.’s (2007) characterisation of interpersonal justice as including interpersonal communication, justification, truthfulness and respect for rights, the findings suggest that communication of AA procedures to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries appears void of quality and is lacking adequate explanations and honesty about the imperative to implement AA. The perspective that emerges is that beneficiaries understand AA as their turn to access opportunities to the exclusion of whites, while non-beneficiaries view it as a cue to having to give up their opportunities to AA beneficiaries. It is this extractive re-apportioning, turn-taking approach to AA that seems to damage interpersonal relations. Also, this injustice is seen as a violation of rights by non-beneficiaries and tends to invoke ethical and moralistic responses (Cheung, 2013). This view is consistent with Ferris, et al. (2012) who surmise that when employees are treated in a manner considered interpersonally just, they tend to believe that their rights are respected.

Contrary to known general retributive behaviour to perceived injustice, the findings also show that even when non-beneficiaries feel aggrieved, instead of engaging in behaviour that could impact interpersonal relations negatively, they select to walk away as AA automatically condemns them as racist and bad people. This is in line with Holtz and Harold’s (2013) view that retribution is not the only means of restoring subjective balance of justice. They state that victims could decide not to act upon their punitive desires. They profess that “by refraining from seeking revenge, a victim of injustice can indicate a higher status or moral superiority to the transgressor” (Holtz & Harold, 2013, p.341).

6.2.6.4 Conclusion

The results for Research Question 4 show that non-beneficiaries do consider the impact of AA on interpersonal justice and that AA negatively impacts employee interpersonal relations. They show that the creation of a workplace environment where all employees feel valued cannot be achieved in such a context. The resentment, hostility and mistrust among employees stand in contrast with values of respect, dignity, politeness and propriety that make up interpersonal justice. Assessed in the context of Cloke and Goldsmith’s (2011) Conflict Iceberg Model, the unfairness inherent in AA seems to be a direct attack on non-beneficiaries’ perceptions of self. According to this study, AA diminishes their self-esteem and humiliates non-beneficiaries emotionally. The extent to which such emotions are expressed outwardly is reflected in the intensity of the conflict over AA as manifested in the national discourse and public humiliation of beneficiaries.
The findings reveal a vicious cycle of retribution. Both AA proponents and those who oppose it seem to take turns in seeking to attain subjective balance of justice. The very existence of AA as a remedial intervention presupposes the existence of an injustice against beneficiaries. However, the introduction of AA is also seen as injustice towards non-beneficiaries. AA detractors then retaliate by criticising the policy as racist and disparage its beneficiaries as inferior and incompetent, resulting in an endless spiral of retribution. Figure 7 below captures the vicious cycle of retributive justice in AA.

**Figure 7: AA Retributive Justice Vicious Cycle**

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how non-beneficiaries perceive AA measures as inadequate to address rampant socio-economic inequalities in the country. It has also captured their concerns about AA and how it is in their view negatively impacting not only individuals but different spheres of society. The effect of AA on workplace interpersonal relation has been demonstrated. This chapter has shown that according to respondents, AA perpetuates racial tensions and balkanises employees by breeding mistrust and suspicion. Also, the unfairness of
AA initiatives on both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries as perceived by respondents is captured. An effort has been made to contextualise the findings by discussing them within the parameters of existing literature.

From the research findings it is abundantly clear that in its current form AA will continue to be fraught with problems of perception and implementation. But, if government’s intent to redress socio-economic imbalances is to be realised, a new approach has to be found. Given the research outcomes presented in Chapter 5 and conclusions reached in the present chapter, this research concludes with a proposal for an alternative implementation model. The model Input-Based Socio-Economic Affirmation (Fig. 8) attempts to take a holistic view to AA, which considers variables contingent to its effective implementation. The critical success factors highlighted are education, skills development, policy consideration and incentives.

Figure 8: Input-Based Socio-Economic Affirmation (IBSEA) Model
Table 3 provides implementation details for the IBSEA model proposed above. The framework highlights key areas of intervention, long- and short- to medium terms. It also provides indication where either government or business has to take full responsibility for an intervention and whether some interventions require cooperation.

**TABLE 3: RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE IBSEA MODEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVENTIONS</th>
<th>ACTION RECOMMENDED</th>
<th>GOVERNMENT</th>
<th>BUSINESS</th>
<th>SOCIETY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LONG-TERM: Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong focus on provision of quality of education that is relevant to the needs of a developing economy.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Integrated education focusing on vocational and artisan streams</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Apprenticeship programmes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Personal development guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT– MEDIUM-TERM: Skills Development</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intense development of economy-appropriate skills based on the needs of high-growth industries and knowledge-driven services industries.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Upskilling and focused-development of designated individuals already in employment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• On-the job training for newly appointed designate persons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mandatory coaching programmes for personal development and growth</td>
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<td>POLICY</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Structured mentorship programmes for new employees</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continuous skills-oriented learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review regulatory stipulations in line with current realities to address education and skills concerns as well as AA perceptions of being exclusionary and racist.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incentives to encourage full commitment to implementation in the private sector</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less emphasis on race-based numerical scorecards.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong emphasis on holistic impactful transformation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creating an environment conducive to wide authentic political support of the policy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Setting up clear processes to support implementation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducting information sessions aimed creating</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ENTREPRENEURSHIP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entrepreneurial Incubation</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Support for innovation and breakthrough initiatives</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The IBSEA model is distilled from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, research results presented in Chapter 5 and the findings discussed in Chapter 6. The framework is presented merely as a starting point to establishing a paradigm that captures the needs of and challenges peculiar to the South African context. Further research needs to be conducted to test its validity and applicability.

The collaboration diagram (Fig.9) suggests that the IBSEA model requires a co-creative approach to effective provision of quality education and development of economy-relevant skills. The model is premised on the view that successful AA implementation should be a product of co-creation by all stakeholders. It suggests a three-pillared collaborative approach involving government for policymaking and creation of an enabling environment; business for provision of necessary resources and capacity-building; and the broader society for co-generation of essential support and partnership.

**Figure 9: A Co-creative Education and Skills Development Approach for IBSEA**
It is believed that effective implementation of the IBSEA model could resolve some of the issues that continue to hold back efforts to uplift those who still bear consequences of past socio-economic exclusion.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a summary of the study with regard to its achievements of the objectives. It further highlights the contributions the study makes to academic literature. It also offers recommendations for spheres of society impacting or impacted by employment equity policies and in particular AA. The chapter concludes by making recommendations for further research.

7.1 Summary of Key Research Findings

The study took a qualitative exploratory approach into the stakeholder conflict over AA. The primary purpose was to get insights into the AA conflict through exploring issues that underlie it. To fulfil this objective, perspectives of non-beneficiaries on AA were probed. Additionally, non-beneficiaries' views were solicited with regard to the implications of AA on interpersonal justice in the workplace, that is, the creation of an environment in which all employed feel valued and treated with fairness, respect, politeness, dignity and propriety.

In this study, the researcher sought to establish whether the conflict over AA was intractable and therefore not amenable to effective resolution. Informed by the findings, the study culminated in an alternative model for AA implementation, presented in Chapter 6, which takes into consideration historical, social, political and economic challenges peculiar to the South African context.

Below is a summary of the key findings of this study.

7.1.1 Racial Inferences make it Difficult to Accept AA as Morally Justified

Despite acknowledging the necessity to redress socio-economic disparities, the study has found that race-driven apportioning of blame that is characteristic of AA makes it hard to successfully justify the need to implement it. The supposed remedial measure is viewed as racial categorisation and orchestrated social re-engineering. It is further seen as divisive and perpetuating the balkanisation of the nation on racial grounds. Notwithstanding that white women are classified as designated, the perception that AA is aimed at dispossessing whites as a group comes out strongly in the study. Additionally, the study found that AA is perceived as reverse discrimination meant as retribution against whites for past discriminatory practices that prohibited
blacks from participating in the economy.

7.1.2 Racial Representativeness does not Automatically Translate to Equality

The study has found that achieving racial numerical representation is not the same as attaining substantive equality. It showed that getting the employee racial balance correct by adjusting numbers is not by itself a transformative process. From the findings, it is clear that the race-based numerical scorecard approach has exposed AA to distortion and sabotage with negative consequences for beneficiaries. The appointment of designated candidates as mandated by employment equity legislation has led to beneficiaries being used as tokens, window-dressing canvasses and for political insurance purposes by organisations under pressure to meet legally-stipulated numerical targets. In the process, the original intent to empower beneficiaries has been abandoned.

7.1.3 Incorrect AA Implementation Produces Negative Externalities for Society

Another key finding is that AA is seen as causing negative externalities for society. The study found a paradox accompanying AA in that it destroyed the lives of the very people it initially intended to advance socio-economically. This seems to be informed by the fact that employee selection decisions are based almost entirely on individual demographic variables such as race and assumed potential. This is seen to be done to the exclusion of the structural variable in AA implementation, that is, the centrality of merit. The study found that the selection of employees without merit considerations leads to the appointment of candidates who lack the requisite know-how and expertise to execute their duties. It is this ineptitude that is understood to be damaging to society as it results in costly mistakes and sometimes fatal errors. Additionally, corruption is also highlighted as one of the costs to society arising from lack of administrative and managerial expertise by non-beneficiaries.

7.1.4 AA is an Extractive Political-Economic Intervention

This study has also found that the redistributive approach to AA implementation, that is, reapportioning of existing economic opportunities and reallocating them on the basis of race, introduced an extractive characteristic to an otherwise noble intention of economically advancing previously disadvantaged individuals. In other words, instead of creating new opportunities and ensuring that the business environment is conducive to economic growth and development, AA
sanctions the taking of existing opportunities from whites and reallocates them to blacks. It is in this context that AA is said to be unfair. Consistent with Acemoglu and Robinson’s (2013) view on extractive and inclusive economic institutions, it seems that the damage left by pernicious institutional installations of the past is being redressed, using similar extractive institutions in the form of AA. The initiative is believed to have evolved from an inclusive intent to being extractive in that, instead of removing constraints to the economic advancement and inclusion of designated groups, it restrains the progression of whites. This extractive characteristic is also blamed for effectively removing the incentive for whites to transfer skills to designated groups. The study also apportions fault to this approach in that by legislating extractive practices, government has created dependency in beneficiaries to the extent that there is no incentive for them to innovate and set up their own enterprises.

7.1.5 Statutory Compulsions in AA are Bad for Business and Employee Relations

The study has established that AA legislative stipulations are coercive and encouraging bad practices. The numerical targets that companies are required to achieve are said to be in contrast with skills and expertise available among the designated groups in the country. In trying to escape punitive measures for non-compliance, companies take short-cuts and hire people who are not adequately qualified. The consequence of failure to perform is the stigmatisation of beneficiaries as incompetent, helpless and inferior with damaging long-term psychological effects on AA appointees.

The study also found that AA is an unnecessary intrusion by government in organisational strategic matters. In essence, AA is viewed as stipulating and prescribing recruitment processes to companies. This is seen as hindering business dexterity as companies are forced to employ people who are considered incapable of making commercially sound decisions. The impact of AA on interpersonal relations is also highlighted in the study. AA is believed to cause mistrust, suspicion, labelling, resentment, tensions and a cycle of retributive behaviour as it promotes the preference of one race group over the other.

7.1.6 Critical Inputs Needed for Holistic and Effective AA Implementation

Finally, the study concludes that any efforts to address socio-economic inequalities in South Africa in a qualitative and impactful manner require aggressive focus on providing quality economy-relevant education. Focus on education cannot be treated as a luxury in a country that is battling stubborn levels of poverty and ranked among the worst in the world with regard to inequality. As
stated by Colander (2013) regarding developing economies, it appears that the type of education that SA provides, largely due to colonial and apartheid heritage, is practically irrelevant to economic growth and could be detrimental to the majority of the population. As with other economies that are progressing from primary to secondary and tertiary industries, owing to globalisation and technological advancements, SA needs to catch up with global trends in making skills provisions for modern knowledge-driven industries. As observed in this study and elsewhere in the national discourse, binding constraints such as education policies and skills development efforts that are not directed at addressing the needs of the economy and the labour market can become a colossal hindrance to socio-economic advancement of designated groups. Consistent with Bernstein’s (2013) assertions, addressing skills shortage has long been recognised as a precondition to accelerating economic growth. Technological innovations require skills that are different to what the education system produces currently. In South Africa it is common knowledge that the majority of unemployed graduates have very limited market-relevant and transferable skills. Therefore, any efforts to address socio-economic disparities cannot be blind to these realities and cannot be reduced to mere altering of the complexion of the workforce.

As reflected in the proposed alternative AA implementation model, IBSEA, presented in Chapter 6, education and skills are products of co-creation and a joint responsibility of government and business, and to a significant extent, the entire society. Figure 10 depicts a virtuous cycle that could arise from the effective implementation of the IBSEA Model. It is believed that if the model were to be implemented, it could bring some sense of harmony to the seemingly irreconcilable standpoints on AA in SA. To a certain extent, it could lead to AA evolving from an absolutely race-based preferential approach to considering merit for tiebreak AA applications referred to in Chapter 2.
7.2 Implications for AA stakeholders

In line with the proposed alternative AA implementation model, IBSEA, the following recommendations are made to key stakeholders.

(a) Government

It is evident from the study that an effective implementation of AA requires a complete overhaul, and if not possible, an extensive adaptation to align it with the objectives of redressing socio-economic disparities. A review of the policy and other related legislation affecting or affected by it would have to take into account critical success factors like education, skills development and policy adjustment to ensure that the envisaged revamped policy gets the political, social and business support required to make it succeed. This also means creating incentives for cooperation and compliance by other stakeholders.
(b) Business

Instead of viewing AA as an unnecessary intervention, enterprises should find ways to work with government. While efforts have been made to develop skills in the country through sector education authorities, the 2014 report by Stats SA paints a dreary picture. As indicated in the study, education and skills development are largely a product of co-creation between the public and the private sector. Therefore, cooperation is required to ensure that skills produced through the country’s education system are relevant to labour market and economy demands and address actual labour market shortages. Additionally, as shown in the proposed model, companies could offset the expected competence shortfall of non-beneficiaries by improving recruitment and screening efforts during employee selection processes. Provision of comprehensive training schemes supplemented with enhanced assessment tools on the job could also go a long way in addressing some of the expertise deficiency concerns. As this study suggests, companies need to realise that while not making financial sense in the short term, improving the lives of communities in which businesses operate contributes to the greater good of generating social value while ensuring future sustainability of enterprises.

(c) Beneficiaries and Non-beneficiaries

In the long run, it is going to be increasingly difficult for the government to continue legislating provisions for the empowerment of previously disadvantaged groups. This is likely to be the case as businesses come under pressure to deliver value to shareholders and are battling to remain competitive in a rapidly changing trading environment. In ensuring that the public mandate is fulfilled, it is important for government to create an environment conducive for investment to ensure that the economy continues to grow for the benefit of the entire population. Therefore, it is also incumbent on beneficiaries to exploit any opportunities available for up-skilling themselves and for personal development but most importantly, to guard against sliding into complacency and a sense of entitlement.

With regard to non-beneficiaries, it is equally important to acknowledge that incompetence, complacency and dependency traits are not exclusively intrinsic to black people. It is, therefore, crucial to reserve judgement where there is little or no evidence justifying the stereotyping and stigmatising directed at designated candidates. The general tendency to exceptionalise white incompetence is not going to help resolve the country’s current challenges and does nothing to give credibility to the opposition of AA on competency and merit grounds.
7.3. Contribution to Academic Literature

Without overstating the contribution this study makes to literature development, from an academic perspective, it has been a worthwhile effort to consider the views of non-beneficiaries on AA to produce empirical evidence. The researcher believes non-beneficiaries are critical to understanding the stakeholder conflict over AA. Also, exploring the views of non-beneficiaries with regard to the implications of AA on employee interpersonal relationships brought to light some important issues on perceptions of interpersonal and, to some extent, distributive justice in the workplace. The implications could still be investigated further to examine the effects of AA on organisational justice in its totality.

7.4 Research Limitations

As discussed in Chapter 4, the sample for this study was small and limited to 20 non-beneficiaries. As the sample was selected using non-probability methods and non-statistical techniques, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire population, but may only be transferred. Also, because the sample was too small and aimed at exploring complexities in AA, the findings would have to be validated through a quantitative inquiry.

It should also be noted that in qualitative exploratory studies, the quality of the research is largely dependent on the researcher’s skills and can be influenced by the researcher’s personal bias. The fact that the researcher is a designated individual, that is, black and female could have influenced the process due to historical issues and personal AA encounters, pleasant and unpleasant. While care has been taken to remain as objective as possible throughout the project, instances of prejudice and bias are possible to have manifested themselves unconsciously in the researcher’s interpretations.

The study also focused on non-beneficiaries who have made their views public with regard to their opposition to AA. This means that views of other non-beneficiaries have been excluded. While the study focuses on implementation of AA in South Africa, through the literature review, it has been established that there is no one-size-fits-all approach as country contexts differ. However, the uniformity of results, when matched with those of other international studies, does reveal certain transferrable features that may prove true to other markets.

And lastly, while care has been taken to preserve the ethical integrity of the inquiry, the researcher’s presence during data gathering, an unavoidable issue in qualitative face-to-face
interviews, could have affected participants’ responses both in expression and in essence.

7.5 Further Research

Since the findings of this study cannot be generalised due to the size of the sample used, there is an opportunity to conduct a quantitative study to test the veracity and generalisability of the results.

Secondly, an investigation could be conducted to establish approaches to recruitment strategies that consider both the need to achieve business efficiency and competitiveness, and affirmative action imperatives.

Thirdly, another research opportunity would be to test the applicability of the proposed alternative model to address workplace and broader socio-economic inequalities. This could be done by focusing either at long-term and short- to medium term implementation.

Lastly, another study could look at exacting and quantifying the effects of AA failures on society. So far, the effects are based on anecdotal evidence and claims that are based on the content of national discourse. Such an investigation would also help in finding ways to avoid or minimise such impact.

7.6 Conclusion

The stakeholder conflict over AA has persisted in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, despite its implementation taking place over decades. A number of persuasive arguments on the call for its abandonment have been made by detractors and these are being counter argued by proponents. While some states in the US have abolished AA and other countries are reviewing their AA policies and implementation strategies, following legal and social challenges, SA has remained steadfast in its race-based preferential restitutonary approach.

The objective of this research was to get insights into the AA conflict and understand the issues that inform the fierce opposition to it. Through 20 one-on-one face-to-face in-depth interviews, perspectives of non-beneficiaries were explored. The implications of AA on interpersonal justice at work were also considered from the point of view of non-beneficiaries. It is the findings from the interviews that revealed the essence of the opposition to AA as presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6. Overall, this investigation has successfully achieved its objectives set
out in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3. Through the assessment of the issues raised by non-beneficiaries in the context of existing literature, using scientific research techniques applicable to qualitative inquiries, the study provides insights into the conflict over AA.

It is concluded that South Africa is a unique country, in a different context and with unique challenges determined by its history and heritage. Therefore, any efforts to resolve socio-economic disparities in and outside workplaces have to take the country’s context into account.
8. REFERENCES


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Appendix 1: Informed Consent Letter

I am conducting research into stakeholder conflict over Affirmative Action, exploring issues underlying it as well as its likely implications for the creation of an environment in which all employees feel valued. I request your participation and help to enable me to achieve the objectives of this research. The one-on-one interview is expected to last about 45 minutes at a venue suited to your requirements. The interview is geared towards understanding your views with regard to the implementation of Affirmative Action initiatives in South Africa. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Of course, all data will be kept confidential. If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name:
Email: 
Phone: 

Research Supervisor Name:
Email: 
Phone: 

Signature of participant: ________________________________
Date: ________________

Signature of researcher: ________________________________
Date: ________________
Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Introduction
Thank you for granting me the opportunity to interview you for my project. This study seeks insights into the stakeholder conflict over Affirmative Action. It attempts to explore issues underlying it as well as its likely implications for the creation of an environment in which all employees feel valued.

Explaining interview structure

This is a semi-structured in-depth interview but will be guided by a set of core questions.

Proceeding with the interview
1. (a) What is your understanding of Affirmative Action?
   (b) What do you think AA objectives are?
   (c) In your view, what does Affirmative Action represent?
   (d) In your view, is Affirmative Action doing what it was originally intended to do? How?
   (e) What, according to you, is a problem with Affirmative Action?

2. (a) How has Affirmative Action affected you personally?
   (b) Your career specifically?
   (c) As a manager at work?
   (d) What has been your experience in working with black people?

3. (a) What does justice mean to you?
   (b) In your view, does Affirmative Action uphold/undermine justice? How?
   (c) What does fairness in the workplace mean to you?
   (d) How important is fairness to you?
   (e) Do you see Affirmative Action as being fair?

4. In what way do you think your views on Affirmative Action impact:-
   (a) propriety
   (b) respect and
   (c) dignity among employees in the workplace?