

*Attitudes to Affirmative Action and the  
Perceived Impact of Affirmative Action Programmes  
in the South African Business Environment :  
A Comparative Study based on Race and Gender.*

by

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## ABSTRACT

Affirmative action is a sensitive and controversial topic evoking a host of emotional reactions regarding tokenism, reverse discrimination, lowering of standards, quota systems and a disregard for meritocracy (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992). It is also a topic receiving considerable attention in the context of a changing South Africa and will be one of the first steps taken in the labour arena under a new government (Charoux, 1991).

The goals of the research were firstly, to detail and compare the attitudes of men and women, black and white to affirmative action and secondly, to examine the perceived impact of an affirmative action programme on beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries.

The research was of a quantitative and qualitative nature, so as to provide the scope and depth desired in such an investigation. A survey was conducted using the data collection techniques of a mail questionnaire (quantitative focus) and individual in-depth interviews (qualitative focus). A pilot study was conducted. The majority of the questions in the questionnaire conformed to the conventions of the Likert Scale (Oppenheim, 1992) and data was analysed using percentile frequencies. Data from the interviews was analysed using the qualitative methods of noting themes and patterns, and clustering as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984). The research was conducted in one large organisation in the information services industry, situated in the PWV area. Four key sample groups of white men, white women, black men and black women were used.

The results of the research indicate that respondents perceive affirmative action as a policy to primarily address the educational disadvantages of black people in South Africa. Initial attitudes to affirmative action reflected a negative orientation amongst whites but a positive orientation amongst blacks. However, probing into the issues indicated that whilst there is an acceptance of the philosophy of and the need for affirmative action for black people, disagreement existed over which implementation methods of affirmative action (preferential treatment and quota systems) were acceptable and at what interfaces (hiring, training and development, promotion), implementation was acceptable. Attitudes on these various issues were often not divided along racial or gender lines and considerable divergence of attitudes also existed within the sample groups. Gender in affirmative action received less consideration by all four sample groups. Results also indicate that beneficiaries of affirmative action do not perceive affirmative action policies and programmes as stigmatising or negatively affecting their self-esteem. Non-beneficiaries communicated that affirmative action could result in white resentment if blacks benefit at the expense of whites. Low levels of resentment were evident in the research. The organisation's affirmative action programme was seen to be ineffective due to the lack of communication about the programme, no evidence of its progress in terms of significant representation of blacks at senior levels in company XXX and the inequities that were seen to be still pervading the organisation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Affirmative action is a sensitive, contentious and controversial topic. It is an issue which evokes a host of emotional reactions regarding tokenism, reverse discrimination, lowering of standards, quota systems and a disregard for meritocracy (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992). Attitudes to affirmative action differ widely, ranging from those who view affirmative action as a "worldwide disaster" (Sowell, 1989) to those who understand affirmative action as crucial to fair, non-discriminatory employment practise (Clayton & Crosby, 1992). However, strong reactions to affirmative action often occur in the face of a general lack of understanding with what affirmative action means (Clayton & Crosby, 1992; Holoway, 1989). Affirmative action is an issue fraught with complexities (Dixon, 1991) and has the added disadvantage of being perceived in a negative manner when only a limited and superficial understanding of the term exists (Crosby, in press).

Crosby (in press) questions why it is that the issue of affirmative action elicits such strong and divergent reactions :

Is it simply that those who benefitted by the status quo fear scrutiny and change from the present system, while those who have been harmed feel otherwise (Tongas & Beaton, 1992)? Is resistance to Affirmative Action simply the contemporary and acceptable expression of racism and sexism (Dovidio, Mann & Gaertner, 1989)?

However, this argument does not explain the arguments against affirmative action, posed by men of colour and women, the very beneficiaries of affirmative action policies. The most well-known criticisms offered by men of colour include Sowell (1989), Steele (1990) and Carter (1991). The thrust of their argument concerns the perceived impact of affirmative action programmes on its beneficiaries. Steele(1990) and Carter(1991) argue that affirmative action programmes have hurt rather than helped African Americans.

Affirmative action is an issue that is demanding increasing attention and deliberation in the context of continuing change and development in South Africa (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992). According to Charoux(1991), one of the first steps that will be taken in the labour arena under a new government will be the passing of affirmative action legislation. His advice to corporate South Africa is to prepare now and not to wait for legislation. Failing to do so will mean a scramble to meet targets, find and develop talent with the corresponding threat of initiatives resulting in window-dressing and tokenism (Charoux, 1991).

The Black Management Forum (BMF) has recognised this need to be proactive and has become actively involved in encouraging organisations to deal with the issue of affirmative action. The recent formation of the National Affirmative Action Alliance (NAAA), linked to the BMF, bears witness to this initiative (Malunga, 1993). Consisting of a cross section of organisations (from the Black Lawyers Association, the South African

Institute for Management to the Professional Women's Coalition and the National Council of Trade Unions), the aim of the NAAA is to "break away from the traditional monotony of paying lip service to Affirmative Action " (Malunga,1993,p.11).

The BMF is also at the forefront in contributing to the formulation of affirmative action legislation. It is soon to release a blueprint on affirmative action which is expected to form the basis of affirmative action legislation under a new government (Ryan,1993).

In addressing the complexities of the subject of affirmative action and implications of such a policy for South Africa, cognisance must be taken of the successes, difficulties and weaknesses of such policies and programmes elsewhere in the world. However, it must be borne in mind that whilst lessons can be learnt from neighbouring countries (Zimbabwe and Namibia) and those further afield (U.S.A., India and Canada), the South African context is unique in many ways. Accordingly, a new and different model is needed in the determination and implementation of any affirmative action policy in South Africa.

According to research undertaken in 1992, limited progress has been made in South Africa. A survey conducted by Quest Personnel (1992) with seven hundred and fifty companies in South Africa, indicated that forty one percent i.e., three hundred and eight companies claimed to have an affirmative action programme. Of these three hundred and eight organisations, fifty-one percent judged their programme to be of only "moderate success". Statistics such as these are disturbing as they suggest firstly, the absence of an affirmative action programme in more than half the organisations and secondly, a disenchantment with the implementation of such a strategy in half of those companies who do have such a programme.

Affirmative action is a reality in corporate South Africa and organisations need to make it a priority. It needs to become their strength as they seek to manage the diversity of their workforce effectively. The first step in achieving this is to understand the attitudes of South Africans to affirmative action. It is only in doing so that effective affirmative action programmes can be designed and implemented (Crosby, in press).

Whilst the literature on affirmative action is copious, it is primarily based on the attitudes and experiences of Americans. There is a dearth of literature and research assessing attitudes to affirmative action and the perceived impact of such programmes within the South African context. Literature and research on black advancement in South Africa is available but one may argue that whilst these terms are used interchangeably in the South African context (Human,1991a), black advancement and affirmative action are different terms. Affirmative action is a multifarious issue and to equate it with black advancement is to limit its scope and undermine its complexity. The research conducted sought to focus on this lack of adequate literature and research and provide a understanding of South African's attitudes to affirmative action and the perceived impact of such a programme.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1. Understanding Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is a term which demands the provision of a definition because firstly, there is a general lack of familiarity amongst the general public and social scientists as to what affirmative action entails (Clayton & Crosby, 1992) and secondly, because much of the debate over affirmative action can be attributed to the misdefinition of the term (Clayton, in press). In clarifying the meaning of affirmative action, it is useful to distinguish between (a) the principle and the practice of affirmative action, (b) affirmative action and equal opportunity, and (c) affirmative action, black advancement and managing diversity. Through examining these different philosophies, the underlying tenets of affirmative action are more explicable.

### *(a) The Principle versus the Practise of Affirmative Action*

According to Crosby (in press), it is possible although not common to differentiate between the principle or policy of affirmative action and the implementation or practise thereof. However, such a distinction does enhance clarification as to what constitutes affirmative action as opposition to the policy is largely based on whether or not it works i.e., the effectiveness of its implementation (Clayton & Crosby, 1992). Furthermore, the distinction of principle versus practise is warranted for as research in the United States of America (U.S.A) has indicated, the majority of white people support the concept of affirmative action whilst disagreeing with implementation issues such as preferential treatment (Dovidio, Mann & Gaertner, 1989).

As a philosophy, affirmative action can be broadly defined as those "positive measures taken to remedy the effects of past discrimination against certain groups" (Clayton & Crosby, 1992, p.2).

Stated in another way :

Affirmative action can be defined as attempts to make progress toward substantive, rather than merely formal, equality of opportunity for those groups, such as women or racial [groups] ... which are currently under-represented in significant positions in society, by explicitly taking into account the defining characteristics -- sex or race -- which has been the basis for discrimination (Mullen cited in Crosby, in press).

Thus affirmative action seeks to address the two issues of under-representation and discrimination of certain groups, where the former is a direct result of the latter. The overarching goal of affirmative action is to ensure that African Americans and white women achieve full representation at all levels of the institutions from which they were once barred (Blanchard, 1989).

In practise, affirmative action programmes vary considerably ranging from a "mere commitment to non-discrimination and equality of opportunity, all the way through to a system of rigid quotas which dictate the exact racial and sexual composition of an entire workforce" (Campanella, 1993, p.20). Thus affirmative action strategies and programmes exist in degrees or levels. The South African Chamber of Business (SACOB) policy on affirmative action outlines five levels.

The first level of affirmative action includes all intentional steps taken by employers to ensure that any form of discrimination is eradicated. It is different from the establishment of formal equality of opportunity as it acknowledges that informal or inadvertent discrimination occurs and that additional measures of affirmative action are required.

The second level of affirmative action is termed input-based affirmative action and involves all measures taken to "boost the capacities or competitive abilities of members of the target population" in order that they may compete on equal terms with others (SACOB, 1993, p.2). Such measures would include bridging programmes, coaching, mentoring, training in social and organisational skills and so forth. The implication inherent in this level of affirmative action is that once this preparation process is complete, the beneficiaries are expected to compete on an equal footing with members of other populations.

The third level of affirmative action is referred to as the initial preferential policy, whereby active measures are taken to recruit and train/prepare members of the beneficiary group, in preference to members of other groups. However, following their inclusion in the organisation, their performance would be judged with strict impartiality.

The fourth level of affirmative action also embraces the notion of preferential recruitment or promotion. However, in contrast to the third level of affirmative action, there is a relaxation of standards or criteria of performance. This is termed as the ongoing preferential policy.

The fifth level of affirmative action is known as output-based affirmative action, where the quota system is implemented. The objective of this system is to secure a demographic composition of the organisation that more accurately reflects that of the population at large.

SACOB deems that these levels are cumulative in their implementation. This means that the implementation of the next level includes the implementation of the measures outlined in previous levels (SACOB,1993).

However, one needs to question this structure as well as the notion that the levels are cumulative in implementation. What is offered is a simplistic analysis and infers that the levels are interdependent. This however, is not the case where for example, a quota system can be implemented at any level and is therefore, independent of the other levels of affirmative action. Furthermore, the simplistic nature of the structure and analysis, implies that affirmative action is primarily preferential treatment. It fails to take into account affirmative action initiatives that can take place at the hiring and promotion stages but that do not constitute preferential treatment.

However, in its simplicity, SACOB's structure of the levels of affirmative action does provide a starting point for understanding that affirmative action is not a monolithic policy. Rather, it can be implemented at different levels whilst entwining with the human resource practises of recruitment, selection, promotion, transfer, retrenchment, firing, training and salary packages (Crosby & Clayton, 1990).

#### *(b) Affirmative Action versus Equal Opportunity*

Equal opportunity means not discriminating against a certain group or individual because of that group's race, gender, religion or ethnicity (Holloway,1989).

According to Blanchard (1989,p.194), "the policy of affirmative action was born of the recognition that the passive procedures of Equal Employment Opportunity had failed to yield the anticipated outcome of broad inclusion of minorities and women in the institutions of American Society".

It has been argued that equal opportunity and affirmative action are conflicting practises for while equal opportunity espouses values of equality of treatment, affirmative action embraces the notions of differential treatment (Taylor, 1989). However, Clayton and Crosby (1990) contend that affirmative action can be both likened and contrasted to equal opportunity. Both policies have the goal of creating and maintaining a social world that is gender and race neutral. However, they are diametrically opposed about the most practical and fairest means of achieving this goal.

Sarakinsky (1991) discriminates between the two policies when he differentiates between equality of treatment (equal opportunity) and equality of opportunity (affirmative action). Sarakinsky (1991) stresses that these two concepts are inextricably linked and serve to complement each other for whilst equality of treatment will result in the removal of discriminatory practises, it will not result in the reduction of disadvantage. "The reality is that equality of treatment without equality of opportunity is only pseudo equality and may even be a mask for existing inequalities" (Sarakinsky,1991,p.22).

Crosby (in press) offers a clear outline of the five key differences between the policies of affirmative action and equal opportunity. The first and most important difference, according to the author, is that equal opportunity is a passive, reactive policy whereas affirmative action demands that an organisation be proactive. Equal opportunity requires no active initiatives by the organisation - there is no plan, no monitoring system and no remedial action. Crosby however, needs to qualify what type of equal opportunity she is referring to in this instance, for an established equal opportunity programme within an organisation does imply a proactive strategy and plan that is remedial in nature, as it seeks to eradicate discrimination and afford equal opportunities to all.

The second difference between affirmative action and equal opportunity is the assumption made about the world we live in and more accurately differentiates between the two policies.

Equal opportunity assumes that we live in a fair world -- one where the playing field is not slanted -- whereas affirmative action assumes that we live in a world where decades or centuries of discrimination have created a slanted playing field (Crosby, in press).

In this world of affirmative action, measures are needed to level this playing field, so that all have an equal chance of winning.

A third key difference is that whilst equal opportunity overplays the importance of intentions, affirmative action downplays the role of intentions. This means that equal opportunity policies assume that the intention to be fair and non-discriminatory is sufficient for these intentions to become a reality. In contrast, affirmative action policies assert that initiatives need to be taken by the organisation to ensure that this fairness becomes an actuality.

The fourth difference highlights the locus of attention of the two policies. Equal opportunity places the locus of attention at the individual level while affirmative action places it at the systems level. Affirmative action proposes that discrimination can occur even in the absence of ill-will or prejudice on the part of one individual towards another. Equal opportunity in turn, ignores that subtle discrimination can still occur at a structural level.

The fifth difference is often quoted as a reason for affirmative action and equal opportunity being opposing policies, for whilst equal opportunity ignores the demographic markers of race and gender, affirmative action requires recognition of these factors. Affirmative action posits that cognisance must be taken of race and gender if race and gender fairness are to be achieved. " Affirmative action mandates a consciousness of race and gender, not because these are the most important considerations when evaluating an individual but because a lack of concern with group differences imposes a false homogeneity in which everyone is assumed to be white and male " (Clayton and Crosby, 1992,p.46).

*(c) Black Advancement, Managing Diversity & Affirmative Action*

The terms black advancement, affirmative action and managing diversity continue to be used interchangeably, particularly in the South African context. Human (1991a, p.319) notes that these are merely "labels employed, somewhat euphemistically, to describe the process by means of which blacks and white women are provided with the opportunity to participate fully in the organisation and the societies in which they work and live". She notes however, that these are value-laden labels, with a host of issues behind them which cause great consternation, doubt and discomfort - issues of black control, tokenism, lowering of standards, preferential treatment and the myth of the melting pot (where everyone is seen as the same). Whilst it may indeed be an artificial distinction, there is a need to distance the policy of affirmative action from that of black advancement. The era of black advancement, driven by the Sullivan and EEC codes, was characterised by the token advancement of black men and women into positions of no real responsibility, resulting in mere window-dressing, underperformance and thus the reinforcement of stereotypes within the organisation (Charoux, 1991). What is required is a paradigm shift from black advancement to affirmative action (Tsukudu, 1992).

According to Human and Bowmaker-Falconer (1992), black advancement is more than just a concept. It is a way of thinking about black people and how they fit into a white world. The black advancement model that currently pervades the white corporate world rests on the assumption that blacks currently do not have the wherewithal to succeed in business and that the only requirement is to educate and train them so that they can take up their place in the organisation as it exists. If blacks fail under these conditions, accusations of stupidity and laziness are offered. Human and Bowmaker-Falconer (1992, p.26) term this black advancement model, "the deficit model of underpreparedness for the white corporate world", as it does not take into account the need for providing an environment in which blacks are provided with adequate support such that they can grow and develop on merit.

Real black advancement or the more commonly-used term of black empowerment, is the real goal of affirmative action. Black empowerment means ultimately placing control in black hands and involves the accelerated movement of blacks within an organisation through training and development so that positions of authority and responsibility are attained due to merit and not tokenism (Mbatha, 1992).

Managing diversity is a term closely linked to the issue of affirmative action and is receiving considerable interest in the U.S.A. and the U.K. Managing diversity means valuing the differences between people and managing people in such a way that differences are taken into account (Oakley-Smith & Baxton, 1993). It is seen as the third generation, after equal opportunity and affirmative action. It is "going beyond, though not abandoning affirmative action to recognize and capitalize upon diversity in the workplace" (Clayton & Crosby, 1992, p.125). Lot Ndlovu, executive director of the BMF, sees affirmative action and managing diversity as complimentary practises, with affirmative action preceding diversity management. "Affirmative action brings in and advances those who are disadvantaged whilst diversity management ensures their appropriate

management" (De Villiers,1993a,p.11-12).

Human and Bowmaker-Falconer (1992) are sceptical of this new term, as they state that it is just another word for all the other creative euphemisms for black advancement which have now become *passe*. These authors emphasise that if managing diversity is seen as extolling the virtues of all cultures, understanding all cultures and contending that all cultures are equal, then programmes falling under this banner, will not address the problems experienced with black development in South Africa. Human and Bowmaker-Falconer (1992) extend three concerns with the above understanding of managing diversity. Firstly, such an approach does not deal with the prejudice of individuals for certain groups, it does not deal with the negative expectations and perceptions that whites have of black people's culture. Telling each other that all cultures are equal will not work unless these stereotypes and biases are dealt with. Secondly, reinforcing cultural differences will only serve to perpetuate the 'us' and 'them' syndrome enforced by apartheid. Thirdly, managing diversity programmes tend to blind people to differences within groups. There is a need to show respect of both the similarities and differences of each individual.

In the South African context, affirmative action is seen to be transcending its traditional and narrow definitions of job mobility and quality of life (Magwaza,1991). It is embracing the issues of decent housing, educational assistance, community development and direct intervention by the organisation on political issues affecting employees' lives. "For the process to be effective, it also needs to address the broader social and political issues and promote real economic participation of blacks and other minorities" (Magwaza,1991,p.7).

## 2. Understanding Discrimination

According to Campanella (1993), affirmative action seeks to move beyond the discrimination experienced in the past, discrimination which has harmed blacks and women as groups, if not as individuals. Discrimination has meant limited job opportunities and the retardation of the promotion process within the organisation. If affirmative action is a "mandate to employers to first discover the barriers to the employment of those under-represented in the workforce and then to remove those barriers " (Holloway,1989,p.18), then a discussion of what constitutes discrimination is warranted.

Campanella (1993) describes two distinct forms of discrimination namely, direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination can be defined as treating an individual or group less favourably, solely on the basis of their race or gender. Indirect discrimination, whilst just as prejudicial as direct discrimination, is a covert type of discrimination and "can be seen as an imposition by an employer of a requirement or condition which appears neutral and applies equally to all persons, but is such that the proportion of people of one gender or race who can comply with it is considerably smaller than the proportion in another" (Campanella,1993,p.19). Campanella (1993) offers an example of indirect discrimination which helps to illustrate this type of discrimination. An employer states that only people taller than 6ft will be employed. On the surface this condition seems neutral but most women would be excluded by this condition. If the employer could justify this criterion of height as crucial to performance on the job, it would not be construed as discrimination.

Forms of discrimination include racism and sexism. These terms both convey an understanding of oppression based upon some socially accepted designation (Reid & Clayton, 1992). "Sexism and racism are clearly institutional processes - part of our heritage and our social structure. They are also broadly denied. To implement a program to intervene in these processes is to challenge fundamental institutional arrangements in our society, arrangements which many refuse to acknowledge exist" (Chertos,1983,p.233).

Racism can be defined as a "belief that race is a primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race" (Webster cited in Reid & Clayton,1992,p.251). Racism is determined by a variety of interpersonal (societal sources) as well as intrapersonal (individual personality or cognitive influences) factors (Reid,1988). However, more emphasis is placed on the intrapersonal sources of racism such as the development of individual perceptions and judgements (Aboud cited in Reid & Clayton,1992) and personality dysfunctions such as authoritarianism, extrapunitiveness and insecurity (Delany cited in Reid & Clayton,1992).

In contrast, sexism is merely defined as discrimination against women. No underlying belief system is operating with sexism as is the case with racism. Explanations for sexism are predominantly classified as interpersonal/societal, resulting from a "heritage of patriarchal institutions, disparaging images of women in the

media and differential treatment of female and male at home and at school" (Reid & Clayton, 1992, p. 252).

The emphasis on intrapersonal factors of racism versus interpersonal sources of sexism, means that sexism is seen as more typical whereas racism is a deviation of a norm i.e., pathological. Eliminating sexism would mean that change would have to be targeted at the societal level. However, Reid and Clayton (1992) believe that this absolves individuals and the individual organisation from taking responsibility for their actions. In turn, eliminating racism would mean limiting the influence of individual racists. This however, ignores the extent to which societal mechanisms bring about passive discrimination against certain groups. Thus, the implementation of a policy to combat racism and sexism is not an easy task. Such a policy needs to be comprehensive and target both individual and societal sources of discrimination, for combating a single source of racism and/or sexism will not be effective.

It is important to consider the interaction of sexism and racism. They are usually treated as separate but parallel processes. "When the effects of racism have been studied, it has been assumed to affect men and women of colour equally. Similarly, sexism has been presumed to pose an identical problem for white women and for women of colour" (Reid, 1988, p. 256). In the case of women of colour, there is a need to observe the interaction effects of racism and sexism. Reid (1988) believes that women of colour find themselves in a double bind situation where they face conflicting demands of racial identity and gender identity. African American women want an end to both racism and sexism but these issues are not dealt with simultaneously but rather stand in conflict. African American men ignore the needs of African American women as women whilst white women ignore the needs of African American women as people of colour.

This is confirmed by Hooks who believes that African American women receive treatment that is a unique product of their race and sex (cited in Reid & Clayton, 1992). Within their own member group, they are subjected to sexism and by other racial groups, they are victims of racial discrimination. This is also the case with black women in South Africa.

The main difference between white women and women of colour in their experience of gender oppression is that the latter are further from the centre of power, for white women historically have had indirect access to power (economic, social and political) through their alliance with white men (Hood cited in Reid & Clayton, 1992). This situation has been particularly acute in South Africa where the white minority have had economic, social and political power to access and control resources for their own benefit.

Pettigrew and Martin (1987) point out that the current extent of prejudice in the U.S.A, is often underestimated because people generally think of white resistance to racial and ethnic change in terms of raw, overt discrimination. This is misleading as the majority-group resistance tends to be more subtle, indirect and ostensibly non-racial. Lot Ndlovu, executive director of the BMF, agrees with this and notes that black people

point to the racist culture in organisations as the primary problem in corporate South Africa. He further states that there is the perception amongst the white management that racism has been eradicated and that those who raise this issue as a concern are seen as causing "some sort of disturbance in the 'normality' which prevails " (De Villiers, 1993a,p.11).

According to Pettigrew and Martin (1987), modern forms of racial prejudice are typified by several characteristics. Firstly, they reject gross and global stereotypes of African Americans and blatant forms of racial discrimination. Secondly, white opposition to racial change is couched as a nonracial concern. This was illustrated in the U.S.A busing controversy. The aim of school desegregation per se was not criticised but the necessary transportation of students to achieve desegregation was vehemently opposed. Lastly, the attitudes of white individuals about racial policies and affirmative action programmes are deeply interlinked with widespread individualistic conceptions of opportunity in the U.S.A.

"Precisely because of their subtlety and indirectness, these modern forms of prejudice and avoidance are hard to eradicate"(Pettigrew and Martin,1987,p.50). Often the African American is the only person that perceives the prejudice operating in the work situation and is labelled "terribly touchy" and "overly sensitive" by white colleagues who remain unconvinced of the reality of subtle prejudice and discrimination. In turn, people of colour may respond with anger, alienation, low morale and other physical symptoms of stress. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that their performance may suffer.

The differences between racism and sexism may necessitate corresponding differences in the implementation of affirmative action programmes. Reid and Clayton (1992) contend that the policy of affirmative action is based on a false assumption namely, that the economic and social relationships between gender groups parallel those between racial groups and that the problems of racism and sexism have similar solutions. This contention obviously has important implications for the implementation of affirmative action programmes. Differing attitudes toward race and gender as social categories, the different histories of these groups as well as the difference in relationships within these groups, means that the type of programmes needed and the reaction to these programmes, will vary among the different groups. Research in the U.S.A. indicates that white men show greater support for affirmative action programmes targeted at benefitting women rather than minorities (Clayton cited in Reid & Clayton,1992). However, Human (1990) indicates that in South Africa the opposite is true. White women are seen as privileged and a lack of progress as their own fault. According to Human (1990,p.18) it is a "curious indictment of corporate life in South Africa that the very mention of white women in relation to management development is likely to alienate more members of any audience than a single-minded concentration on blacks". Tsukudu (1992,p.124) warns against neglecting the importance of affirmative action for women - "if the private sector ignores gender planning it will be committing the most serious omission in the South African economic scenario. Affirmative Action must make gender part of the agenda". Ferndale (1993) points out that in South Africa, affirmative action is generally conceptualised as the advancement of blacks. He

points out that if this continues it will inevitably lead to the maintenance of the status quo for women and disabled people. He advises that the issue of gender equality should be considered together with the advancement of black people and that the special needs of women should be investigated and addressed.

It has been argued that black women may benefit disproportionately from affirmative action programmes as the representatives of two disadvantaged groups and as such have access to the benefits accruing to both groups. Reid and Clayton (1992) however, say that this is not the case as more often than not, women of colour may be passed over as companies may find it easier to hire white women and black men. According to the authors, special consideration needs to be given to black women and they need to be recognised as a distinct and important group in their own right.

Affirmative action is useful as it provides the necessary impetus for increasing the diversity in the organisation's workforce. However, affirmative action should never be viewed as a panacea for racism and sexism, other measures are needed to accomplish this (Reid and Clayton, 1992).

### 3. The Need for Affirmative Action

The need for a policy such as affirmative action is one of the cornerstones of the debate and controversy that rages about the issue of affirmative action. Demonstrating the need for affirmative action is important for unless there is a need for such a policy, why embrace the principles of affirmative action and furthermore, why invest resources in ensuring that the practise thereof is effective, efficient and fair (Crosby, in press)?

The argument that affirmative action is necessary can be viewed from two perspectives namely, (a) that a policy of equal opportunity rather than affirmative action is required to eliminate discrimination and increase the proportion of under-represented groups and (b) that a policy such as affirmative action rather than equal opportunity is required to compensate for past discrimination. What is implied under the first perspective is that equal opportunity is not sufficient in itself to eradicate discrimination and increase the numbers of certain groups within the workforce.

#### *(a) Equal Opportunity rather than Affirmative Action*

This perspective recognises that discrimination is prevalent within organisations and that measures need to be taken to eliminate any forms of racism and sexism. Inherent in this argument is that equal opportunity rather than affirmative action is needed. Kemp (1992) refers to a black South African critic of affirmative action, Madoda Mbatha. Mbatha believes that the main factor holding blacks back is discriminatory practises on the part of current employers, the majority of whom are white. Furthermore, he asserts that equal opportunity rather than affirmative action is needed to remedy this. It is Mbatha's belief that equal opportunity alone will allow blacks to move up within the organisation.

#### *(b) Affirmative Action rather than Equal Opportunity*

The second perspective argues that affirmative action is required as equal opportunity and black advancement programmes have failed to achieve the necessary outcomes of increased representation of certain groups at specific levels in the organisation as well as the absence of discrimination. This argument in turn, must be viewed in two contexts namely, in the South African context where no policy of affirmative action or equal opportunity has as yet been legislated and where implementation has been limited and that of the continued implementation and need for affirmative action in countries where such a policy has already been legislated and instituted for a lengthy period.

### *South African context*

The most prevalent reason offered for affirmative action in South Africa is the need to redress the existing imbalance of resources. An imbalance that includes an exaggerated demand for skilled labour (Magwaza, 1991) and an imbalance of skills and knowledge between blacks and whites that has resulted from unequal opportunities in education, training and development (Mpufane, 1992). Charoux notes the need for affirmative action when he states "that in South Africa the education of blacks has placed them at a disadvantage and that they will be no better off with equal employment opportunities if they have to compete with whites on merit. Their educational deficit has to be overcome first" (cited in Kemp, 1992, p.14).

Albie Sachs (1990) believes that the realisation of a truly non-racial society in South Africa cannot occur without at least one generation of accelerated progress being achieved under the principles of affirmative action. His argument concurs with that of Charoux's who claims that affirmative action is not just a system of promoting blacks because they are blacks. Instead, affirmative action means making a special effort to improve their qualification, skills and knowledge, so that standards are maintained (Charoux, 1991).

Nelson Mandela (1992) articulated the ANC's preference for a policy of affirmative action versus equal opportunity when at an ANC conference on affirmative action, he stated that affirmative action is a strategic alternative to waiting centuries for the market on its own to eliminate the massive inequalities left by apartheid, lawless confiscation and arbitrary sharing out of resources. It is necessary to break the cycle of over-privilege and under-privilege prevalent in South Africa and in order to do so special measures such as affirmative action can assist in overcoming this legacy of past discrimination.

From the private sector's viewpoint, affirmative action is now becoming a necessary and viable business proposition. "The economic survival of South Africa will depend on our ability to competitively trade with and obtain funding from the rest of the world. In order to achieve this, a structured policy of affirmative action needs to be legislated" (Malherbe, 1992, p.20). Malherbe (1992) is not referring to equal opportunity for whilst he notes that there is a recognition that equalisation laws are necessary in South Africa, they are not sufficient to ensure equalisation. In his opinion, what is required, is affirmative action.

Mpufane (1992) agrees with this when he advocates that South Africa cannot and will not be able to survive in the increasingly competitive international markets with an economically ill-equipped majority. Corporate South Africa must also come to realise that affirmative action is an issue of self-preservation as the need and competition to secure skilled labour escalates (Magwaza, 1991).

### *Continued Implementation of Affirmative Action*

It is also necessary to look at the continued implementation of an affirmative action policy in countries where such policy has been legislated for a lengthy period. The U.S.A. has experienced twenty-five years of legislated affirmative action, using the quota system based on the principle that eighty percent of staffing must reflect the current pool of labour (Arnott & Mitchell, 1992).

Affirmative action in the U.S.A. has evolved through various stages. As first introduced by President J.F. Kennedy in the early 1960s, affirmative action was defined as active recruitment and outreach measures with the aim of enhancing employment opportunities for all Americans (Bradford Reynolds, 1992). Its race-neutral character was clearly expressed. Change was evident during this period, as racial discrimination was outlawed in employment and racial barriers in wider society crumbled. A decade later, the momentum of this equal opportunity initiative had peaked. It was acknowledged that the educational and economic disparities between African Americans and other race groups had not lessened significantly and that this discrepancy existed because of the long history of segregation and disadvantage experienced by African Americans. Affirmative action then became a race-conscious tool where "race neutrality gave way to the concept of racial balance, on the representation that the former could not be fully realized unless the latter was achieved" (Bradford Reynolds, 1992, p.42). Quotas, goals and timetables gained increasing acceptance and by the end of the 1970s, racial considerations coloured all public employment decisions.

One thus needs to question whether affirmative action is still necessary. Crosby (in press) affirms that there are two key reasons why affirmative action is still needed in the U.S.A namely, that racial and gender prejudices persist and that the onus of recognising and correcting these injustices should never fall on the very victims of racism and sexism.

Persistent injustices are evident when looking at the economic well-being of African American families versus white families where the median income per family is less for the former than for the latter. The same injustices are evident between white men and women. Critics of affirmative action often assert that these differences cannot be attributed to discrimination but extensive research has shown that these differences in earnings and in wealth are derived from discrimination (Bergman, Crosby, Faludi & Rhode cited in Crosby, in press). Differential treatment for certain racial groups often is subtle and occurs outside people's awareness as found in the study by Ayres and Siegelman (cited in Crosby, in press).

The second rationale offered for continued implementation of affirmative action looks at the victims and why the onus for detecting discrimination and taking the necessary action should not fall on them. Two reasons are proposed. Data from a number of studies shows that most victims of discrimination experience a denial of personal disadvantage (Birt & Dion, Crosby, Ford, Hafer & Olson, cited in Crosby, in press). This means that they convince themselves that they are personally exempt from the discrimination known to befall the group of

befall the group of which they are a member. Furthermore, victims may experience an unequal balance of power preventing them from coming forward and reporting discriminatory behaviour. The second reason notes the importance of aggregated data when detecting discrimination. Individual instances of discriminatory treatment are difficult to detect but when data are arranged in aggregated form, discrimination is easier to determine. The policy of affirmative action assists in the detection of patterns of discrimination.

Demonstrating the need for affirmative action is critical to the efficacy of the implementation of such a policy. For without a clear need for such a policy, there is no incentive to ensure its success and effectiveness. Affirmative action is seen as essential to both the economic survival of South Africa (Malherbe,1992; Mpufane,1992) and to the establishment of a truly non-racial country (Mandela,1992; Sachs,1990).

#### 4. The Fairness of the Policy of Affirmative Action

Fairness is a key issue in the arguments about affirmative action, with (a) supporters of affirmative action believing the policy to be the only fair alternative and (b) critics of the policy viewing it as affording unfair privileges to some people at the expense of others (reverse discrimination) (Crosby, in press).

##### *(a) Affirmative action is a fair policy*

Carson and Crosby (1989) note that affirmative action faces a significant problem in being perceived as fair because at face value the policy appears to be less fair than equal opportunity (in Crosby, in press). Given that first impressions are important, it is problematic that the fairness of the policy is not immediately apparent to people.

Affirmative action is based on the concept that "treating everyone equally does not mean treating everyone identically" (Crosby, in press). Crosby (in press) uses the analogy of a footrace to illustrate this idea. Under a fair system, all runners have an equal chance of winning the race. To ensure an equal chance of winning, all runners have the same number of meters to run. The oval running track can be likened to affirmative action. In an oval track, the inside track has fewer meters than the outside track. Ensuring that each runner is treated fairly means that the finish line must be placed at an angle and not at the ninety degree angle of a straight track. Thus the slant in the finish line compensates for unequal conditions of running. Affirmative action works on the same principles of securing an equal race by ensuring that all athletes are exposed to the same conditions.

Any discussion of the fairness of affirmative action, necessitates a look at the principles of justice. From a psychological perspective, one reason for people feeling so strongly about justice is that it increases their perceptions of personal control over the environment (Lerner cited in Clayton & Tangri, 1989). Clayton and Tangri (1989) claim that the fairness of an affirmative action policy can be evaluated under the four categories of justice namely, distributive, retributive, procedural and micro-macro-justice.

The issue of **distributive justice** arises whenever the allocation of goods and services occurs. Three principles of distributive justice have been identified : equity, equality and need.

Equity refers to the correlation between inputs and outputs. A relationship is equitable if the ratio of output to input is equal for all individuals. The principle of equality espouses that everyone is provided with the same amount of inputs or resources. Under the principle of need, everyone is allocated the resources they need such that those who start with the least are allocated the most. While the principle of equity appears to be the underlying tenet of our economic system, the principles of equality and need often complement equity-based rules of distribution.

Affirmative action programmes have been accused of violating the norms of distributive justice. Clayton and Tangri (1989) contest these criticisms as ill-founded as firstly, they assume that the principle of equity and the practise of affirmative action are incompatible and secondly, they presume that equity is the only pertinent principle of distributive justice. With regard to the first argument, it is claimed that affirmative action policies violate equity because the irrelevant characteristics of race and gender are factored into the equation of inputs being transformed into outputs. However, one needs to question whether the characteristics of race and gender are indeed irrelevant. Clayton and Tangri (1989, p.180) argue that "relevance has been defined for generations by white males, and merely extending the boundaries to include other groups does not mean that the relevant inputs will be the same for them". For example, how is one to evaluate the history of accomplishments of an African American versus a white manager when the former has had to make it through the ranks in an era of overt racism? Fairness dictates that cognisance must be taken of the fact that individuals bring into the organisation different amounts of the same things as well as different things, all of which make them valuable to the organisation. The second argument of Clayton and Tangri (1989) namely that equity is not the only principle of distributive justice requires determining what equity really means and in evaluating what appears to be the same inputs. Standardised scholastic tests provide a good example, where scores of white students have a certain amount of predictive value but for students of colour have low validity. Ensuring an objective calibration of outputs to inputs means weighting the equity equation by including factors of race or gender to the input side of the model. Non-equity models are more legitimate than equity under circumstances where social relations and human growth are of primary importance. Under these conditions, the principles of equality and need become more relevant and necessary than the principle of equity.

**Retributive justice** can be seen as a form of distributive justice, where punishments rather than rewards are allocated. The key difference between retributive and distributive justices is that the amount of punishments are theoretically infinite whilst resources are generally limited.

Inherent in the criticism that affirmative action penalises the innocent rather than the guilty, is the acknowledgement that there has been discrimination but that the punishment is misdirected to those who have done nothing to deserve such punishment. This argument is often termed as affirmative action punishing the sons for the sins of the father. However, this argument is based on the erroneous assumption that the goal of affirmative action is retribution. This is not true as affirmative action programmes do not take away from any individuals money or status they already have. Rather, they adjust what people can expect. Affirmative action programmes usually have finite resources and thus the gain for men of colour and women can be perceived as a cost to white males. Glasser (1988) agrees with this argument when he notes that the past distribution of jobs on the basis of race and gender has created an expectation amongst whites and males. The loss of that expectation may seem unfair to them but he asserts that these expectations were not fair to begin with. Fairness requires the end of discrimination, not the perpetuation of it.

**Procedural justice** refers to the "process preceding the distribution. It focuses on the means rather than the ends" (Clayton & Tangri, 1989, p. 184). Where equity is the predominant principle underlying distributive justice, so equality is the key value supporting procedural justice. An example of procedural justice is the American legal system where everyone theoretically has access to the legal resources of a lawyer and a fair trial. Thus because the procedure is deemed fair, there is an acceptance of the outcome as fair.

Under procedural justice, there is an acceptance of the outcomes if there is faith in the fairness of the procedures. However, Clayton and Tangri (1989) argue that the means may not justify the ends and as such procedural justice, whilst important, is insufficient. To assess whether a procedure which looks fair, is actually fair, it is necessary to evaluate the outcomes of that procedure. Affirmative action programmes provide ways of monitoring the outcomes of employment practises so as to ensure that the decisions made are fair.

Differentiating between **micro- and macrojustice** requires assessing respectively, the fairness of individual versus societal outcomes. Thus the distinction between the two reflects a difference in the level of analysis.

The justifications for affirmative action are strongest at the macro level. The principles of equity generally operate to exacerbate pre-existing differentials in resources, thus reinforcing existing patterns of resource distribution in society. Groups of individuals who start out advantaged become progressively more advantaged. Affirmative action can actively change this macro-level pattern. It is at the societal level that some of the most harmful and long-lasting effects of discrimination are found. The systematic exclusion of whole categories of people from positions of authority, not only limits the attainments of these individuals but it also restricts the perspectives of those who occupy these positions. Furthermore, it limits the expectations and achievements of future generations who are deprived of role models who would encourage them to strive for high goals. Focusing on the micro-level erroneously personalises the issue. This precipitates looking at discrimination as caused by prejudiced individuals rather than at institutional discrimination which has existed at the societal level in the past.

Objections to the macrojustice argument is that a focus on macro rather than microjustice takes control out of the hands of individuals. There is a loss of control as uncontrollable factors of race and gender are given weight in the employment practises under the affirmative action policy. What objectors do not realise is that these uncontrollable factors have in the past, always strongly influenced employment decisions, but to the detriment of certain individuals because of their race and gender. Affirmative action programmes seek to reverse the weight previously given to the variables of race and gender and in doing so, to neutralise the effect that they had in such decisions.

*(b) Affirmative action is not a fair policy*

Caldwell (1992,p.63) accuses supporters of affirmative action of resorting to rhetoric to cover the punitive nature of the policy. "Changing the words doesn't change the reality... when carried out, ... affirmative action is always punitive. In fact affirmative action *must* (italics added) be punitive".

The issue of the fairness of the affirmative action policy is a contentious one. A complaint often raised in relation to the issue of fairness is - is there any limit to the number of groups that can legitimately claim the benefits of affirmative action (Sowell,1989)? This is based on the notion that many groups have suffered discrimination in the past. In reply, Clayton and Tangri(1989) emphasise that retribution is not the underlying philosophy of affirmative action. Entitlement is rather based on the present circumstances of certain groups because of long-standing discrimination. Ramphela agrees and disagrees with this. She notes that a common model of equity must avoid the "mistaken perceptions of punishment for those who benefitted in the past and advancement due to disadvantaged entitlement for others" (De Villers, 1993b,p.11). Rather, an environment needs to be created where all have a fair chance at opportunities for development and advancement.

A second objection focuses on the problem of determining when affirmative action is no longer needed, at what point is it not a fair policy because the playing field has been levelled and any further affirmative measures result in unfair privileges (Sowell,1989). The answer lies in the consideration of outcomes. If resources such as jobs, salaries and promotions are equitably distributed between groups, then affirmative action is not necessary and can be phased out.

The foregoing discussion is based on the importance of the concept of justice to the people of the U.S.A and the understanding they have of how fair the policy of affirmative action is. It remains to be seen what emphasis South Africans will place on the need for fairness as a criteria for validating the presence of affirmative action and what form of justice, the policy of affirmative action will conform to.

## 5. The Effectiveness of Affirmative Action

Putting aside the argument for the need for affirmative action, or how fair a policy it is, criticisms and justifications are often levelled at affirmative action purely on the grounds of whether it is effective or not. Here again, a range of opinions is offered. Crosby (in press) attributes this divergence of opinion to the difficulty encountered in defining effectiveness. She offers the following definition of an effective affirmative action programme:

Affirmative action ... needs to improve the situation of men of color and women to the extent that there is true equality of opportunity and to do so without engendering fears and resentments among white males, without undermining the self-confidence or the self determination of traditionally "oppressed" groups, and without making anyone feel alienated from the social system.

The ultimate criterion of effectiveness is therefore the redundancy of the policy of affirmative action. However, until this stage is reached, the effectiveness of affirmative action programmes needs to be gauged in terms of the advances made towards this goal. Herein lies the second dilemma as effectiveness is difficult to measure. The effects of affirmative action are often difficult to isolate from the operation of broader socio-political and economic factors. Certain measures of effectiveness have been identified and include (a) change in economic and employment status, (b) the reduction/elimination of discrimination and (c) the absence of undesirable "by-products".

### *(a) Change in economic and employment status*

One measure of the effectiveness of affirmative action is to ascertain whether there has been an improvement in the employment status of previously disadvantaged groups. Arnott and Mitchell (1992) believe that despite twenty-odd years of affirmative action in the U.S.A., the majority of black people have retained the most disadvantaged positions in American society. Whilst a small elite group have advanced, the majority have remained shut out from real career pathing.

However, to contest this assertion, statistics from the U.S.A. show that there was a greater percentage increase in the employment of minorities and women in those organisations who complied with affirmative action standards than in those who did not (Taylor, 1989). Research by Leonard confirmed this when he found that affirmative action targets were the single best predictor of subsequent representation of women and men of colour in the workforce (cited in Crosby & Clayton, 1990).

Clayton and Crosby (1992) affirm that the economic position of women and other target groups (in the U.S.A. this includes Hispanic Americans, the handicapped and Vietnam veterans) has improved but they are hesitant to attribute this solely to affirmative action. They do claim however, that whilst the evidence on the economic efficacy of affirmative action is not copious, it is consistently positive.

The effectiveness of affirmative action in Zimbabwe can also be evaluated. It provides a contrast to the U.S.A. experience and many similarities to the South African situation. The Presidential Directive was the only piece of affirmative action legislation issued in Zimbabwe and concerned the restructuring of the civil service. No legislation or legal mechanisms demanding the implementation of affirmative action in the parastatals or private sector, have yet been issued or implemented to date (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992).

Bennel and Strachan (1992) are scathing of the lack of progress made in black advancement in the private sector, attributing this to the lack of legislation and punitive measures on the part of the Zimbabwean government. Furthermore, the issue of the advancement of black women has not been afforded the importance it deserves and as a result, this group of people have made very poor progress in terms of advancement in organisations. In defense of this lack of progress, the private sector has pointed to the failure of the Zimbabwean economy to expand sufficiently. A further reason offered is that the development of people takes time and the decade since independence is too soon to expect meaningful results.

*(b) The reduction/elimination of discrimination*

A second measure of the effectiveness of affirmative action is to determine the degree to which discrimination has been eliminated. Clayton and Crosby (1992) state that the effectiveness of affirmative action is evident when using this criterion, as it has created an awareness of discrimination as well as ensured the implementation of measures to prevent these practises from continuing. However, discrimination persists (Hitt & Keats, 1984) and thus affirmative action is still necessary. Affirmative action programmes need to be continually evaluated and improved to combat the more subtle, indirect and rational forms of discrimination that are now being recognised (Dovidio, Mann & Gaertner, 1989).

*(c) Absence of undesirable "by-products"*

The impact of affirmative action programmes constitutes a further measure of effectiveness, for if affirmative action results in too many undesirable attitudinal or behavioural by-products, it could not be deemed effective. This measure of effectiveness is perhaps the most contentious as there are those who claim that affirmative action increases group conflict and resentment amongst those who do not benefit (Caldwell, 1922), encourages African Americans to use their victim status as a source of power and privilege (Steele, 1990) and reinforces myths of the inferiority of people of colour (Carter, 1991). These are all perceived to be undesirable by-products of affirmative action.

Some of the most troubling criticisms offered of the policy of affirmative action suggest that the policy also has unintended adverse psychological effects, harming those whom the policy intends to benefit. Effects include the undermining of the beneficiaries self-confidence (Boxill cited in Nacoste, 1989), delegitimising their achievements because others assume they are under-qualified (Dexter & Roberts cited in Nacoste, 1989) and the under-evaluation of their own accomplishments. Coming to the defence of affirmative action programmes and qualifying these criticisms, is research conducted by Nacoste (1985). This research established that the unintended adverse effects experienced by beneficiaries were contingent on the perceived fairness of the affirmative action programmes. Nacoste (1985) found that poor self-evaluation was evident only amongst those beneficiaries who thought affirmative action to be an unfair policy. Ayers (1992) conducted similar research that confirmed Nacoste's (1985) findings. In the interviews she conducted with thirteen beneficiaries, Ayers found that positive experiences of affirmative action were associated with attention to fair procedures and a commitment to those procedures. A commitment that was engendered by involving the beneficiaries in the determination of the procedures.

A further undesirable by-product of affirmative action is the "backlash" experienced in organisations, in response to affirmative action programmes. This backlash is white male dissatisfaction with the preferential policies that favour men of colour and women (Rosen & Jerdee, 1979). In the U.S.A, a growing sense of grievance is evident amongst the younger working-class and middle-class white males most affected by affirmative action preferences (Lynch & Beer, 1990).

Lynch (1989) conducted thirty-two in-depth interviews with middle-class white males who saw themselves as victims of reverse discrimination. They voiced frustration and cynicism about affirmative action which had resulted in the lowering of standards to the point where education counted against one. Lynch (1989, p.180) feels that white males have become "invisible victims as the media, social scientists, corporations, and politicians [have] refused to openly discuss affirmative action, much less acknowledge that a new class of victims was being wrought by well-intentioned social policy".

Manifestations of white male backlash can either be covert or overt. The more subtle forms are perhaps the more destructive as they are more difficult to detect and thus eliminate. They include slowing down the career progress of affirmative action candidates by selectively withholding information from them, excluding them from participating in key decisions and by treating their accomplishments with indifference or disdain (Rosen & Jerdee, 1979). Lynch and Beer (1990) suggest that racial incidents in male-oriented organisations may also be an expression of frustration with affirmative action.

However, ignoring the legitimate grievances of whites who believe that affirmative action programmes are penalising them for injustices they personally did not commit, is a serious omission. Rosen and

Jerdee (1979) offer a four-step strategy to avoiding potential backlash :

- (a) Reassess affirmative action guidelines to identify inequities.
- (b) Survey employee's reactions to affirmative action.
- (c) Educate and create awareness of the affirmative action policy and deal with false expectations.
- (d) Encourage employee participation in designing and implementing affirmative action goals.

Effectiveness is not easy to define or assess but the measures of effectiveness as construed for the purposes of this study, indicate that affirmative action in the U.S.A has been successful in improving the economic status of minority groups and women and in making significant strides in eliminating the overt forms of discrimination. Empirical evidence pointing to the effectiveness or failure of affirmative action in Zimbabwe, is lacking and attitudes are divergent. As to the success of affirmative action programmes in avoiding or minimising the potential negative effects, evidence is limited. However, so is any evidence proving otherwise.

Affirmative action is a firm reality in a future South Africa. It is imperative that programmes are designed and implemented to maximise success. Affirmative action is not a perfect policy and its costs are high. For the people of the U.S.A, it has been a important symbol of their country's commitment to civil rights (Gleckman, Smart, Dwyer, Segal and Weber,1991). So too in South Africa, it is necessary for affirmative action to become an integral part of a new Bill of Rights (Sachs,1990).

## 6. Arguments against Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is a contentious topic, evoking a range of emotional reactions regarding tokenism, reverse discrimination, the lowering of standards, quota systems and a disregard for meritocracy (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992). Whilst conservative opposition to affirmative action is not surprising, it is disconcerting to note the opposition from those whom the policy aims to benefit (Smith & Crosby, in press).

Arguments to affirmative action can be classed into two categories namely those which focus on the deficiencies in the philosophy of affirmative action and those criticisms which find fault with the practise of affirmative action. The majority of the arguments against affirmative action are concerned with the latter (Clayton & Crosby, 1992). Certain areas of controversy have already been addressed and include that the need for affirmative action, the fairness of the policy and its effectiveness. Further arguments against affirmative action can be listed as follows, (a) reverse discrimination and preferential treatment, (b) disregard for a system of meritocracy and lowering of standards, (c) quota systems, (d) elitism of the affirmative action policy, (e) period of implementation, (f) economic arguments against affirmative action and (g) criticisms from beneficiaries of affirmative action.

### *(a) Reverse discrimination and preferential treatment*

Affirmative action has been accused of being a racist policy which results in reverse discrimination against whites (Caldwell, 1992). White males are said to experience further discrimination in situations where white women are also candidates for affirmative action. Affirmative action is perceived as synonymous with reverse discrimination and preferential treatment because it "requires employers to discriminate against better-qualified, or equally qualified, whites who themselves bear no responsibility for discrimination" (Glasser, 1988, p.351).

Some proponents of preferential policies argue that the current generation of white males deserve to bear the cost of affirmative action for in the past they have had exclusive access to certain resources such as information, education and experience. The past was characterised by one hundred percent affirmative action for white males and thus they now deserve disfavoured treatment (Carter, 1991). The risk inherent in this approach is that affirmative action becomes a punishment for being born the wrong colour or gender and white males are seen as the villains. Furthermore, the goal of affirmative action becomes retribution which as noted earlier is not the purpose of affirmative action (Crosby & Clayton, 1992).

Carter (1991) contends that supporters of affirmative action must be prepared to state that some individuals are preferred above others because of the colour of their skin and/or gender. To pretend otherwise is to undermine the validity and necessity of affirmative action. He believes that proponents of affirmative action should be more concerned with arguing for the need for preferential treatment.

Human (1991a) in looking at the implementation of affirmative action in South Africa, supports the use of preferential treatment at the selection and recruitment stage only. Thereafter, all employees should be given the necessary support and opportunities to be promoted on merit. Human (1991a) feels that this is necessary and fair because the education and background of blacks have affected their opportunities and access to obtain meaningful work. Once within the organisation, the upward mobility of men of colour and women should always be a "question of pure competence and character unmuddled by accidents of birth " (Thomas,1990,p.109).

However, Sowell (1989) does not support the belief that preferential policies can be extended partway into a process with equal opportunity constituting the remainder of the process. This he believes is an illusion. He quotes the example of the lowering of university-admissions standards in India for students from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. These students were admitted on the proviso that the relaxation of entrance requirements would not extend to passing or grading within the university. However, the end result was that "affirmative grading" did occur so as to prevent excessive failures of these students. Similar situations are apparent in the U.S.A, Soviet Central Asia and Malaysia. Sowell (1989) thus contends that the belief that preferential policies can be implemented partially, is a fallacy.

Solomon (1991) asks whether affirmative action in fact does result in reverse discrimination and how this can be avoided. Pope as quoted in Solomon (1991) states that truly effective diversity programmes will also benefit white males because of the inclusive attitude of such programmes. Fear and resentment have to be removed and white males must be assured that their contributions to the workplace are as important as other groups. Blanchard (1989) agrees with Solomon (1991) in that neglecting to hire and promote white males is unwarranted. Organisations should seek to hire and promote those white males that encourage diversity and promote a multi-cultural environment.

***(b) Disregard for System of Meritocracy & Lowering of Standards***

Affirmative action has also been accused of ignoring merit and lowering organisation standards, in its relentless drive to meet goals. Coupled with these criticisms are further arguments that the lowering of standards and disregard for merit results in inefficiency and creates an unfair burden on others within the organisation, resulting in resentment towards the beneficiaries (Caldwell,1992).

Glasser (1988,p.350) argues that "no responsible advocate of affirmative action opposes merit or argues that employers should be required to hire unqualified applicants, or that standards should be reduced in order to meet affirmative action goals".

Blanchard (1989) admits that affirmative action can appear to jeopardise perceptions of organisation fairness and effectiveness but that a good affirmative action programme will allow for the expansion of standards so that they

do not prejudice more individuals of one group than another. Affirmative action forces employers to examine standards that are used, what merit really constitutes and what it is they wish to reward within the organisation (Smith & Crosby, in press). A good affirmative action programme questions previously unchallenged and unwarranted assumptions about what is best for any organisation (Norris & Reardon, 1989 in Smith & Crosby, in press).

According to Glasser (1988), individual merit should be the key criterion for selection. Contrary to popular belief, in the past, selection has not been based on merit or objective standards. Instead certain factors believed to be proxies for merit have been used, resulting in discrimination. Maintaining these "standards" would mean perpetuating and protecting white privilege. Affirmative action, according to Glasser (1988, p.351), is "not opposed to high standards, but it is opposed to double standards".

### *(c) Quota Systems*

The contention of lowered standards and a disregard for meritocracy is normally borne out of the understanding of affirmative action as the implementation of a quota system (Smith & Crosby, in press).

The quota system dictates what percentage of the organisation certain groups should comprise. The quota system has been criticised on three grounds. The first criticism offered is that the rigid nature of quota systems places considerable pressure to fill the numbers without due regard to standards. Quotas are further associated with the promotion of unqualified individuals, resulting in the creation of a stigmatising effect prejudicing those people who possess genuine merit. A second argument is that quotas set too low result in placing an artificial ceiling on the number of blacks and women who can be employed. The third criticism is that the failure to meet a quota is often justified by pointing to a lack of suitably qualified applicants. The relevance of having a quota system is then questionable (Campanella, 1993). However, within South Africa, this is a very real situation where a lack of suitably qualified candidates may not exist. Ndlovu agrees that large numbers of black people, ready to move into managerial positions, do not exist. However, he also asserts that there are many who are there already but who are not being properly utilised (De Villiers, 1993a).

Clayton and Crosby (1992) regard rigid quota systems where unqualified people are brought into the organisation and then left to flounder on their own, as the worst distortion of affirmative action principles. The result of this is that negative attitudes towards affirmative action and negative stereotypes of certain groups are perpetuated. Advice from Clayton and Crosby (1992) cautions organisations to take pains to show how affirmative action plans are not simply an imposition of quotas and that qualifications are taken into account. Failure to do so will generate resentment amongst the workforce and will serve to alienate the beneficiaries of affirmative action.

Campanella (1993) suggests the use of goals, targets or 'soft' quotas, that are reviewable and take into account the changing job market and economic climate. Bradford Reynolds (1992,p.47) however does not believe that this is the answer as :

racial goals, tied to short- or long-term timetables, offer no solution to the real problem at hand. Whether racial preference is enforced by raw racism of a quota program or guided by the more subtle hand of a flexible goal, it still confers benefits on some while denying them to others for the worst of reasons : because of skin color or ethnic origin.

*(d) Elitism of Affirmative Action Policy*

Affirmative action is reproached for being over- and under-inclusive (Clark,1992). It is perceived as such for it primarily benefits middle-class members of the preferred group. Sowell (1989) says that in some countries with affirmative action policies (e.g., U.S.A, India, Malaysia, Hungary), the less fortunate members of the preferred group regressed whilst the more fortunate advanced. Sowell (1989) warns that it is dangerous to assume that the policies which benefit the disadvantaged will be at the expense of the privileged.

Affirmative action has been criticised as only being available to those who have the necessary qualifications for a job or for further education. It does not reach blacks who have been disadvantaged in attaining the opportunity of appropriate education and skills. Clark (1992) believes that the answer lies in supplementing affirmative action with programmes to reduce illiteracy, upgrade skills, improve education and expand employment opportunities. It requires a company-community co-operation and could include further initiatives such as conflict resolution training, establishing education schemes for employees' children, as well as welfare type projects such as housing and transport (Oakley-Smith,1992).

Blade Nzimande of the University of Natal, South Africa notes that affirmative action should not be limited to promoting Africans to managerial levels but should also be directed at lower-level employees, the bulk of the workforce (in Hofmeyr,1993).

*(e) Period of implementation*

Sowell (1989,p.22) rejects the assurances of affirmative action supporters that the policy is of a temporary nature. "The rhetoric of transience and the reality of persistence and proliferation are both international features of preferential policies". He notes that not only have these policies extended over decades in some countries but they have also expanded to include more and more groups. He voices a frustration that the dimensions of "temporary" have not been defined - are they to be evaluated in actual units of time or by the attainment of some preconceived social measure?

*(f) Economic Arguments*

Critics of the policy of affirmative action argue that the policy is not economically viable. They contend that profitability will decline because of a lowering of standards and subsequent decreases in productivity. Expenses will increase and resources will be wasted, further affecting profitability. Furthermore, customer service will deteriorate and this will result in a loss in market share (Alexander, 1993).

However, Alexander (1993) points out that the costs of not having an affirmative action policy and programme will soon outweigh the costs of having one. There is a sound marketing rationale for implementing an affirmative action policy. The spending power of the black consumer is increasing rapidly and the organisation needs to keep abreast of these changes by reflecting the demographic composition of the market it is serving. There is also the threat of consumer boycotts and sanctions if the organisation is seen as unsympathetic to the advancement and development of black people.

Increasing the diversity of the organisation's pool of employees is a further benefit. A pool of unique human resources is created, one that brings a fresh and different perspective to the organisation. Unleashing the potential of all employees will mean a dynamic and productive organisation that uses the diversity of its people as a competitive advantage.

The affirmative action policy also has immense strategic value. Due to the skills shortage and limited resources, it is in the organisation's best interests to develop and promote its staff so that it has the people to lead the organisation in the future. This is critical if the organisation wishes to remain internationally competitive.

*(g) Criticisms from Candidates of Affirmative Action*

Criticisms of affirmative action by black South Africans are very limited. Madoda Mbatha of Natal University has accused the policy of being racist because it looks at blacks as a separate species. Furthermore, he believes that affirmative action makes children of blacks (in Kemp, 1992).

Smith and Crosby (in press) note that in the last few years in the U.S.A, there has been a spate of books and articles published by highly successful ethnic minority men who have severely criticised the policy of affirmative action. The arguments of Steele (1990) and Carter (1991) will be reviewed.

Steele (1990) believes that blacks stand to lose more than they will gain from affirmative action. Under affirmative action, preferential treatment for blacks results in an implied inferiority i.e., affirmative action suggests that racial preferences will do for blacks what they cannot do for themselves. Thus in its desire to achieve racial representation, affirmative action has the high cost of retarding racial development. A further shortcoming of affirmative action, according to Steele (1990, p.118) is that it "indirectly encourages blacks to exploit their own past victimization as a source of power and privilege". The result is that more energy is

invested in harping on past suffering instead of present and potential achievements.

Steele (1990) criticises affirmative action for posing as a social programme with its aim of creating racial parity. He asserts that this is not possible as a deep-down restructuring of values, expectations and ideals needs to occur. Preferential treatment, according to Steele(1990) should be discarded and there should be a return to equal opportunity with the concurrent goals of education and economic development of disadvantaged people (irrespective of race) and the eradication of any form of discrimination.

According to **Carter** (1991), affirmative action is at best a "mixed blessing". Carter's (1991) foremost criticism of affirmative action is that in the pursuit of achieving diversity, a new stereotype of the representative black has emerged, based on the assumption that blacks hold certain views that are different to other racial groups. Thus a disregard for black people as distinct individuals has resulted. "Ideals of affirmative action have become conflated with the proposition that there is a black way to be - and the beneficiaries of affirmative action are nowadays supposed to be people who will be black the right way" (Carter,1991, p.34). Carter (1991) believes that racial preferences have placed blacks in positions as tokens where they are the "best blacks", not the "best qualified". Furthermore, the hiring of second rate black professionals hurts the ethnic groups as a whole as their failure will undoubtedly be attributed to ethnicity rather than individual inadequacies.

An other adverse effect of racial preferences is that "the playing field, once slanted against the achievement of people of color, is instead graded so far in their favor that it is almost insulting to their intellect" (Carter,1991 in Smith & Crosby, in press).

A further major criticism of Carter's (1991) is that affirmative action is an elitist policy and does not concentrate its efforts where they are most needed, amongst the poorer blacks.

Smith and Crosby (in press) dismiss many of the criticisms of Steele (1990) and Carter (1991) on the grounds that their arguments are based on a narrow and thus inaccurate understanding of affirmative action. By perceiving affirmative action as a policy which aims to achieve compensation or retribution for past ills, Steele (1990) and Carter (1991) fail to give credit to what the objective of affirmative action really is namely, the elimination of prejudice and discrimination that pervades the existing system and the full-representation of all identified groups.

Both Steele (1990) and Carter (1991) believe that affirmative action is harmful to the beneficiaries because of increased self-doubt and decreased self-esteem. However, research conducted by Nacoste(1985) and Ayers(1992) indicates otherwise.

Preferential treatment and quota systems which result in tokenism and the lowering of standards, and reverse discrimination are amongst the fiercest accusations levelled at affirmative action. Advocates of affirmative action in turn, point out that these criticisms are often based on either a limited definition of what constitutes affirmative action or what could be construed as the poor implementation of an affirmative action programme.

Caldwell (1992) is scathing of this defense by proponents of affirmative action. He accuses them of having difficulty in defining what exactly the policy means in the real world. "It seems that few want to admit that affirmative action means forcing people into groups to meet quotas and accepting lower standards for the preferred group" (Caldwell, 1992, p.63).

## 7. The Effects of Affirmative Action on its Beneficiaries

One of the most disturbing criticisms levelled at affirmative action is that the policy harms rather than helps those it purports to benefit. The potential cost of affirmative action on its beneficiaries, namely that of adverse psychological effects is based on two propositions : first, affirmative action has a derogatory influence on the perceptions of members of beneficiary groups; and second, that these negative perceptions lead to behaviour that further discriminates against or handicaps candidates (Crosby & Clayton, 1990).

Supporting the second proposition is Jussim's (1986) review of research illustrating the validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The theory of self-fulfilling prophecies is based on the assumption that beliefs about an individual (based on stereotypes and/or information) tends to result in expectations concerning his/her future behaviour and performance. These expectations too easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy by eliciting consistent behaviour through differential treatment of the individuals concerned. Research conducted evidenced the self-fulfilling prophecy as it operated in the classroom (Jussim, 1986). This concept was operationalised in three sequential stages : "(a) Teachers develop expectations, (b) teachers treat students differently depending on their expectations, and (c) students react to this treatment in expectancy-confirming ways". In the case of poor expectancies leading to low performance, this cycle can lead to learned helplessness, where low performance in turn leads to a lower evaluation of the activity, lowered self-esteem and then finally to a learned helplessness.

If affirmative action is psychologically destructive to its beneficiaries, it would be a self-defeating policy. It is therefore, crucial to examine the evidence concerning the (a) intrapersonal effects, (b) interpersonal effects of affirmative action on performance expectancies, as well as (c) the social psychological effects as created by the employment situation.

### *(a) Interpersonal Effects*

Crosby and Clayton (1990) note that the mere existence of an affirmative action programme may reinforce existing stereotypes about men of colour and white women. Stereotypes which hold that the targeted groups are not really qualified for certain positions and could not have obtained them in the absence of affirmative action. The expectation based on this perception is that the performance of beneficiaries will be lower than that of others. In turn, employers and fellow employees may behave in ways that do not allow the candidates of affirmative action to perform to their potential (self-fulfilling prophecy). Inconsistent behaviour in the form of good performance is attributed to situational factors (termed the ultimate attribution error by Pettigrew and Martin, 1987) rather than to the ability or skills of the candidate.

As a policy, affirmative action may appear to be a vulnerable target for the truly prejudiced, who will argue for instance, that blacks are seeking preferential treatment because they are lazy, unwilling to work or just plain incompetent (Kaufman cited in Crosby and Clayton, 1990). Crosby and Clayton (1990, p.67) however, argue that

"when resistance to affirmative action serves to justify, rather than create, racist and sexist beliefs, minorities and nonminority women are not worse off under affirmative action than they would be in the absence of affirmative action".

The question that thus needs to be posed is : does affirmative action create or reinforce prejudicial beliefs, by serving to highlight the racial or gender characteristics of its employees, thus increasing the chance of these factors being used in making an attribution? Crosby and Clayton (1990) again defend affirmative action by stating that to the extent that proponents of the status quo oppose affirmative action out of prejudice or self-interest, similar or even greater negative expectancies would be likely to exist under equal opportunity policies. They state that education and firsthand experiences with men of colour and women can go a long way to mitigating the negative expectancies of fair-minded people.

#### *(b) Intrapersonal Effects*

The potential intrapersonal effects of affirmative action on expectancies is a more critical concern, for affirmative action has been accused of undermining the self-confidence of the very people it is designed to help (Steele,1990). One of the ideas most prevalent amongst policy analysts is that affirmative action is stigmatising and thus psychologically harmful to beneficiaries (Nacoste,1990).

Affirmative action, according to Nacoste (1990),relies on using criteria other than merit in making personnel selection decisions. This is seen as problematic because the candidates selected will question on what basis they were chosen and other individuals knowing that affirmative action was involved in the selection process, will be uncertain of why these people were chosen. This uncertainty is thought to be stigmatising as well as psychologically debilitating to the beneficiaries.

Heilman, Lucas and Block (1992) point out the distinction between an onlooker's assumptions of how affirmative action works and what in fact actually may occur. For instance, competence may be the first screening criterion in hiring affirmative action candidates, with issues of race and gender only being considered once competence is established. Thus all individuals hired are competent. However, unless onlookers are privy to this information, it is unlikely that they will assume that qualifications dominated the selection process. "This assumption, which may or may not coincide with reality, fuels the discounting process and its consequent inferences of competence" (Heilman et al., 1992, p. 537).

Nacoste (1990) contends that the belief in the stigmatising effects of affirmative action is flawed on two related points. Firstly, it assumes that affirmative action is a monolithic policy. As has been discussed earlier, affirmative action can be implemented at different levels (SACOB,1993). Secondly, because the outcomes of affirmative action are seen as unfair relative to the inputs, this will negatively influence how beneficiaries see themselves.

Certain research conducted supports the notion that affirmative action can be psychologically stigmatising. In a study conducted by Heilman et al. (1992,p.542) the researchers showed that the stigma of incompetence may accompany the affirmative action label. In the research, "whether male or female, ... [African American] or White, above, below, or equal in level; well-known or recently acquainted, co-workers were more likely to be viewed as incompetent when their selection was presumed to be based on affirmative action policies than when it was not" (Heilman,1992,p.542). Chacko (1982) found that women managers who believed that their gender was an overriding factor in their promotion/selection, showed dissatisfaction with work, experienced role ambiguity and conflict and evidenced poor organisational commitment. Austin, Friedman, Martz, Hooe and Ball demonstrated that emotional distress of beneficiaries followed their evaluation that their own selection was unfair (cited in Nacoste,1990). Heilman, Simon and Repper (1987) did a laboratory study with sixty-four males and seventy-six female undergraduates, comparing their performance as task leaders under conditions of gender-based preferential selection versus merit-based selection. The results indicate that when selection supposedly occurred on the basis of gender, women devalued their performance, took less credit for successful performance and reported less motivation in persisting as the leader.

However, despite this empirical support, the validity of this stigma hypothesis relies on the assumption that affirmative action is a monolithic policy and consists primarily of preferential treatment. This is not the reality where affirmative action can be implemented in different ways within and between organisations. Equity theory ignores the implications of the different procedures of affirmative action. The most obvious difference between strategies is the use of race or gender as a "weighting factor" versus the "only factor". Nacoste (1990) posits that people may react to the fairness of the implementation procedure and not simply to the distribution of outcomes of affirmative action.

In thinking of affirmative action in terms of different types of procedures, it is also necessary to evaluate if these different degrees of affirmative action may be perceived as more or less fair. This is seen as extremely pertinent to Nacoste (1990), who notes that procedures perceived as fair, are less likely to cause a stigma. Nacoste (1990) differentiates between the universalistic (comprehensive criteria including qualifications, potential, suitability for job etc. as well as demographic markers) and particularistic (race or gender) criteria in the selection procedure of affirmative action. A fair affirmative action policy will give the most weight to universalistic factors because "such a weighting structure gives "voice" to each person's performance-related claims to deservingness" (Nacoste,1990,p.183). The opposite is true when particularistic criteria are given the most weight.

The presence of affirmative action is not necessarily sufficient in itself to lead to perceptions of unfairness. Rather, perceptions of fairness or unfairness, depend on how the policy is implemented i.e., how much weight is given to universalistic versus particularistic criteria. This model is supported by Nacoste's (1985) research where beneficiaries perceived affirmative action as fair when universalistic criteria were used and responded emotively in a more positive way. Further research indicated that beneficiaries demonstrated higher negative

expectancies about how subordinates would evaluate their work in situations where a particularistic procedural structure existed i.e., when they were selected because of their race or gender (Nacoste & Lehman cited in Nacoste, 1990). Furthermore, Nacoste's research conducted in 1987 showed that beneficiaries were attracted to work in organisations with an affirmative action policy, when the selection procedure gave more weight to qualifications (universalistic criteria) than group membership (particularistic criteria) (cited in Nacoste, 1990).

Nacoste (1990) concludes that the evidence taken from studies which take procedures into account strongly suggests that responses to the policy of affirmative action are contingent on the accurate or inaccurate or understanding of the procedure of affirmative action.

There are certain personality factors which make some of the beneficiaries of affirmative action less prone to experiencing negative expectancy effects, even in situations where they are aware affirmative action has been involved.

One such factor is the self-image of the target. People with a high self-esteem are less likely to internalise the negative expectancies of others (Banks, Jussim cited in Crosby and Clayton, 1990). Nacoste's (1989) laboratory research indicated that people with strong self-esteem, who believed that they might have been selected through preferential treatment lowered their evaluation of their performance, but not their actual performance. Thus individuals who have a strong sense of self-worth may be little affected by these concerns (cited in Crosby & Clayton, 1990).

A second factor mediating the effect of affirmative action on expectancies, is the beneficiary's attitude towards affirmative action. As discussed earlier, if the candidate perceives affirmative action as fair, the negative effects are less likely to manifest.

Tougas and Vielleux (1989) also found that a strong affiliation to one's membership group has been associated with support for affirmative action for one's group and oneself. Crosby and Clayton (1990) believe that this support may make the beneficiaries more immune to the negative expectancy effects.

*(c) Effects as created by the employment situation*

Pettigrew and Martin (1987) offer a social psychological analysis of the detrimental effects experienced by individuals of colour as created by the employment situation. African Americans within the organisations often find themselves in a situation of triple jeopardy i.e., of experiencing negative racial stereotypes and being placed in the solo and token role.

A solo is the only African American individual in a group of whites, but the term is used more generally to denote a situation where African Americans are relatively few in proportion to whites in a given work group. The concept of a token African American contrasts with a solo in that it is used to indicate how the individual was brought into the group i.e., through affirmative action initiatives.

Single candidates of affirmative action programmes may hold both solo and token roles whilst numerous African American entrants may be perceived as tokens but will obviously not engage in a solo role. Sometimes people of colour are placed in solo positions simply because they are so rare. Other circumstances include employers deliberately scattering African American individuals, so as to "share the wealth" and make the results of affirmative action recruitment and advancement more visible.

The first problem encountered by solos is that of low performance expectations. Not only are low expectations insulting but they can have a detrimental effect on performance. African Americans may internalise these low expectations and come to expect less of themselves (self-fulfilling prophecy). The opposite situation, that of very high expectations, can also be a problem for the solo. Unfortunately, high expectations are usually unrealistic and result in disappointment when performance is perceived in a more realistic light. The position of the solo is subject to the dangers of polarization. Dealing with unrealistically high or low expectations and evaluations means that solos may not trust the validity of the feedback they receive. Compounding this problem is the fact that they do not have similar others with whom to compare experiences.

In addition to all the difficulties of solo status, African Americans are often assumed to be tokens as well. The hallmark of token status brings with it its own uniquely negative consequences. The most important of these is the assumption of incompetence and follows on the logic that new African American appointments hired under affirmative action must be incompetent for if they were competent in their own right, they would not have been hired under affirmative action. Tokens also have to bear the usual difficulties associated with negative racial stereotypes. Their personal dissimilarities to members of the majority-group often tend to be exaggerated.

Stereotyped beliefs are the associations made between two types of categories : types/groups of people and clusters of particular human characteristics (Pettigrew and Martin,1987). Stereotyped beliefs are extremely resistant to change and are maintained through processes of biased information seeking, labelling and recall. Causal attributions also contribute to the maintenance of beliefs. There is a tendency to attribute causes for a person's behaviour in a manner that is consistent with beliefs about that person. In explaining behaviour as consistent with our beliefs, the behaviour is seen as dispositionally determined (e.g., if someone is seen as an extrovert acts in a friendly, outgoing manner). If the behaviour does not conform to beliefs about that person, there is a tendency to explain that behaviour as situationally determined (e.g., the person was behaving like an extrovert because she was in that particular situation). Taylor and Koivumaki found that negative behaviour is generally attributed to situational factors for intimates but to dispositional factors for strangers (cited in Pettigrew

and Martin, 1987). Thus belief-inconsistent behaviour is explained away with situational attributions whilst belief-consistent behaviour is confirmed in terms of dispositional attributions (Crocker, Hannah & Weber cited in Pettigrew and Martin, 1987).

Pettigrew formalised the application of these concepts when he proposed the "ultimate attribution error" whereby attribution processes served to reinforce negative stereotypes of certain groups (cited in Pettigrew and Martin, 1987). When African American individuals behave in a manner seen to be negative, white people, particularly those who are prejudiced, are likely to attribute this behaviour to the personal character of African Americans. These dispositional causes are often viewed as innate attributes which are unlikely to change. Situational determinants of negative behaviour by African Americans are largely ignored.

The ultimate attribution error, according to Pettigrew (1979), is also evident in the behaviour of African American people that is seen as positive. This behaviour is usually explained away in one of four ways. Positive behaviour may be seen as exceptional rather than ordinary. Performance may be attributed to situational (luck or unfair advantage) rather than dispositional factors (skills, abilities and knowledge). High levels of performance are undermined by attributing them to unrealistically high motivation and effort which in the long run are seen to be unsustainable. Therefore, there is an expectancy of poor performance in the future. Top performance may be explained away as situational i.e., the availability of good equipment or plentiful assistance contributed overwhelming to the good performance.

These evaluation biases raise concerns for the retention of African American individuals within the organisation. Under normal circumstances, the failure to receive expected promotions is a major reason for personnel to consider leaving an organisation. This situation is aggravated under conditions where the ultimate attribution error is discriminating against the promotion of people of colour. The presence of these biases in an organisation; fulfils their fears of discrimination. This in turn leads to stress and in some instances lower performance and ultimately, their taking leave of the organisation.

That affirmative action can result in negative expectancy effects, both on an interpersonal and intrapersonal basis, needs to be viewed with great concern and not dismissed as irrelevant. Whilst certain research lays claim to the validity of adverse psychological effects occurring under affirmative action programmes, it needs to be borne in mind that responses to affirmative action are dynamic. That is, the policy may or may not induce feelings of stigma in beneficiaries; or may or may not cause negative responses (in the form of hostility and resentment) from non-beneficiaries, depending on the form that affirmative action takes. The perceived fairness or unfairness of the procedure of affirmative action is a significant factor influencing the absence or presence (respectively) of negative expectancy effects. When affirmative action programmes are perceived as fair, beneficiaries are less likely to experience an adverse psychological impact, as are non-beneficiaries in becoming hostile and antagonistic to target groups and/or individuals. Nacoste (1990) stresses that the procedures adopted

are critical to understanding affirmative action as a variable and dynamic rather than a monolithic policy.

The implications of the research and literature highlighting the potential effects of affirmative action on its beneficiaries, emphasises the need to implement an affirmative action programme that relies predominantly on universalistic rather than particularistic criteria, a strong distinction must be made between quotas, with their emphasis on particularistic criteria and other forms of the policy (Nacoste, 1990). Other factors to be considered in the implementation of an affirmative action programme include educating employees as to the fairness of affirmative action and that merit does constitute a major criterion for selection (Heilman et al., 1987). The organisation must also be aware of the detrimental effects experienced by affirmative action candidates as created by the employment situation (Pettigrew and Martin, 1987). This means setting up training programmes to combat modern forms of prejudice and discrimination and avoiding where possible situations of solos and tokens.

When organisations institute affirmative action programmes, they cannot hope to eliminate the prejudice that exists in the world at large. So too, is it impossible to always prevent negative expectancies from forming under affirmative action. However, affirmative action unlike equal opportunity does not assume that the world operates free of stereotypes and expectations. Designing and implementing affirmative action programmes, necessitates a knowledge of how expectancy effects operate (Crosby & Clayton, 1990).

## 8. Ensuring the Effectiveness of Affirmative Action

Given that affirmative action is a necessary policy to eliminate discrimination as well as to ensure full-representation of all groups, and that it is more successful than equal opportunity in doing so (Crosby & Clayton, 1992), it is necessary to ensure that effective affirmative action programmes are implemented. Various factors are offered as critical to enhancing the chance of success whilst minimising the probability of backlash and negative expectancy effects. These factors include (a) the need for strategic change, (b) top management commitment, (c) employee commitment and receptiveness, (d) a participative approach, (e) the appearance of fairness, (f) education, (g) communication, (h) support systems, (i) setting realistic targets and (j) adopting a holistic approach. Underlying all of these factors is the need to take into account the uniqueness of the South African situation and the need to develop a model of affirmative action that addresses this uniqueness.

### *(a) The need for strategic change*

Chertos (1983) notes that one of the key barriers to the effective implementation of affirmative action programmes is the lack of organisational authority and power allocated to those given the responsibility of implementing the programme. Another is the organisational goal incompatibility where conflicts arise between affirmative action and other management goals. Reducing inequality through affirmative action is often not considered to be a primary goal of most organisations and thus decisions may be made that may undermine the effectiveness of the affirmative action programme. A further problem encountered is that of goal clarification and specification. In order to ensure effective implementation, goals must be defined in conceptual as well as concrete operational terms. However, this is where the difficulty lies, for the more explicitly the objectives are defined, the lower the probability of agreement among parties involved or affected. These inherent tensions need to be recognised and dealt with.

Chertos (1984) asserts that all these issues point to the need to alter the strategic thinking of organisations. If affirmative action is to be effective, there is a need to think strategically about the programme's goals, the possible tradeoffs with other organisational priorities, how the affirmative action programme will fit into the overall functioning of the organisation and the inherent tensions that will exist. McGregor (1993) noted that the major obstacle facing South African organisations committed to affirmative action was the tension between the requirements of reducing the number of employees on the one hand and changing the racial profile on the other.

McGregor (1993) identifies four phases that form part of the strategic planning process. They are firstly, the determination of the company's philosophy towards affirmative action and its relative importance to other business goals; secondly, creating an awareness of the need for affirmative action and in conjunction with key stakeholders, to develop the policy and strategy; thirdly, the proactive integration of the programme by setting out specific implementation plans and fourthly, the consolidation phase where the organisation has normalised and equality of opportunity is achieved.

*(b) Top management commitment*

Allied to the need for change in strategy, is the importance of top management commitment. When top management has carefully considered why advancement should be a priority; when they have been convinced that the future of the business depends on the achievement of such advancement objectives; and when they are prepared to commit time and effort to playing a leading role in ensuring that these objectives are met: then affirmative action objectives will be achieved (Hofmeyr, 1989).

Blanchard (1989) notes that strong, public commitment from top management is critical for three reasons. Firstly, top management controls the allocation of resources and if adequate resources are to be committed to affirmative action, these programmes must have top management approval. Secondly, the leadership of these key people will influence others to follow with similar attitudes. Lastly, top management can favourably influence organisational norms which subtly guide interpersonal behaviour.

*(c) Employee commitment and receptiveness*

It is not enough to secure the support of top management, all levels of the organisation must support the affirmative action programme. This extends to all employees taking ownership of the programme and being accountable for the programme's success. Ownership means being involved in determining how affirmative action objectives should be achieved (Hofmeyr, 1989).

Eugendering the support of all employees implies that any resistance to the programme for reasons of prejudice, insecurity or a satisfaction with the status quo, are dealt with. Programmes must include efforts to identify and measure the opinions of relevant groups as well as techniques to allow the resistance and fears to emerge so that they can be managed.

It is also critical that the commitment of the beneficiaries of the programme be secured. The affirmative action candidates must be consulted as to their understanding of the concept of affirmative action and how they see the implementation of the programme (Tsukudu, 1992). The perceptions, expectations and ambitions of the beneficiaries of the programmes must be addressed and incorporated into the organisation's strategy (Hofmeyr, 1989).

In order to make employees receptive to affirmative action, Nkuhlu (1993) stresses the need to change the mind-set of white managers as well as black people. There is a need to change white manager's approach to black advancement which is based on the assumption that the black trainee must change to fit in. Furthermore, the negative expectations that white managers hold of black trainees' performance also needs to be addressed, for these expectations often are fulfilled resulting in poor performance. Allied to changing the attitudes of white management, is altering the mind-set of black people. They need to overcome their feelings of anger, alienation and inferiority (produced by the dehumanising experience of apartheid) and instead be determined to overcome

all obstacles and be willing and motivated to work hard and make the sacrifices necessary for success. However, in order to do so there must be a perception that the system is fair and that achievements will be rewarded.

Human (1993) contributes to what Nkuhlu (1993) has to say by noting that affirmative action programmes often fail because of the extent to which blacks and white women are willing to put time and effort into developing themselves. It is important that they face up to their own strengths and weaknesses and realise the role they have to play in their own development.

Hofmeyr and Whata (1991) refer to the Zimbabwean experience when they agree that affirmative action can only be successful if blacks assume a large part of the responsibility for success. As well as being highly qualified academically and professionally for management positions, they must have the determination and flair to overcome the problems they are sure to encounter.

#### *(d) A Participative Approach*

Hofmeyr (1993) extends this concept of involvement by employees and suggests that all individuals and groups who have a stake in the decisions taken and the programme implemented should participate in the process of affirmative action. He identifies four key stakeholder groups namely, management, employees, trade unions and political groups.

Hofmeyr (1993) points out that the current lack of participation contributes to the poor progress made with the traditional top-down approaches to affirmative action in South African companies. However, this is a problem that is not given much attention. Hofmeyr (1993,p.30) is careful to note that a distinction needs to be made between consultation (the current *modus operandi*) with black candidates and real participation. Real participation means a bottom-up approach which implies a focus on the individual and his/her development. In contrast, a top-down approach is "geared to managing a process, recruiting people, running training programmes and 'keeping score' of the numbers of blacks promoted".

Hofmeyr (1993) is not advocating that a top-down or directive approach is unnecessary but rather that both direction and participation are required. Direction is needed to drive and accelerate the process in the short to medium term whilst participation is a remedial strategy to ensure the development of all employees.

*(e) The appearance of fairness*

Much of the resistance expressed towards affirmative action stems from the belief that it is an unfair policy. The organisation must seek to address this issue and show that whilst on the surface affirmative action may appear less fair than equal opportunity, it is in fact fair at both the macro and the micro-justice level (Crosby, in press).

*(f) Education*

Education plays a key role in changing people's attitudes and perceptions of the policy of affirmative action, for negative attitudes are often held due to a lack of information or misinformation as to what affirmative action entails. Crosby and Clayton (1992) contend that the educational thrust needs to go beyond merely instructing people about affirmative action. They believe that organisations also need to educate people about the nature and extent of prejudice and discrimination as well as increase the awareness of ethnic and gender stereotypes. There is also a need to be educated about different cultures so that misunderstandings are avoided.

*(g) Communication*

Communication is a critical success factor in the effective implementation of an affirmative action programme (Khosa, 1992). Hofmeyr (1989) emphasises the need for two-way communication in the development and execution of the programme. All too often, 'black advancement' programmes in South Africa are designed and implemented by whites based on the traditional view that 'Whites know what is best for blacks'. An effective affirmative action programme requires ongoing communication. The organisation needs to make known its plans of affirmative action to its workforce and provide opportunities for employees and managers to discuss, debate and ask questions about these plans.

*(h) Support Systems*

Clear and appropriate support systems are imperative to an effective affirmative action programme (McGregor, 1993). These include counselling facilities, mentoring and coaching systems, and training programmes for beneficiaries as well as training for managers, to assist them in how to have an affirmative action candidate on their team. Hofmeyr (1989) notes that often too much emphasis is placed on formal training programmes, whilst most of what a person learns at work is learnt on the job from peers, subordinates and the boss. Thus, this interface must not be ignored in favour of formal training.

The need for support systems highlights the need to make the environment in which affirmative action candidates are placed, conducive to their development and subsequent success in the organisation. Human (1991b) notes that all too often the failure of a candidate of affirmative action is attributed to a lack of ability whereas, it is often a result of the way that person has been managed i.e., an unsupportive environment.

*(i) Setting realistic targets*

Blanchard (1989) notes that any effective affirmative action programme is based on realistic numeric goals. The use of targets enhances the rate of inclusion of men of colour and women because progress is continually monitored against a pre-determined measure. However, targets must be realistic because in the quest to reach these goals, standards must not be compromised and merit must not be disregarded. For under this situation, affirmative action becomes window-dressing and tokenism. "Companies will come under pressure to show progress in affirmative action at all costs and, in view of the existing shortage of qualified, competent and ready-made black managers, both tokenism and paternalism will once again come under the spotlight. Companies will have to ensure that accelerated 'black advancement' does not collapse into window-dressing and under-performance" (Charoux, 1991,p.15). In a blueprint on affirmative action, expected to form the basis of affirmative action legislation under a new government, the BMF have put forward proposals that by the year 2000, non-whites (no distinction is made between Coloureds, Indians and blacks) must occupy fifty percent of all board seats, thirty percent of senior management positions, eighty percent of trainee positions and more than half of middle, junior and supervisory jobs. These according to the BMF, are broad targets which will be negotiable with an equal opportunities commission (EOC) depending on what sector the organisation operates in. Rewards and penalties for compliance also form part of this proposal. Failure to meet targets will result in quotas been imposed on the company by the EOC (Ryan,1993).

*(j) Adopting a holistic approach*

Anton Roodt (1992) believes that effective affirmative action programmes will only occur if emphasis is placed on the responsibilities of the individual as well as the organisation and the interaction of both as an integrated social system. It is the organisation's responsibility to create an enabling environment for black advancement. This implies dealing with negative attitudes to affirmative action and stereotypes of and prejudice towards potential candidate groups. Roodt (1992,p.15) contends that it also goes beyond preparing "blacks to fit into the 'white' business environment".

Supporting this, Human (1991a) advocates that a paradigm shift is required, from the black advancement to the people management school of thought, where the model of development is a holistic one. The fundamental difference between these two schools of thought are the models of development on which they are based. There are three key differences that can be noted. The first difference is that the black advancement school views development in simplistic terms namely that of "putting knowledge and skills into black people and then expecting them to function in an environment which remains fundamentally unchanged" (Human, 1991a,p.220). In contrast, the people management school views the process of development as involving three important elements : the individual's perceived ability (are they able to do the job?), the individual's motivation (are they willing to do the job?), and the manner in which the individual is managed (are they allowed to do the job?). The people management school recognises that the latter element (are they allowed to do the job?) is ignored far too often as a contributing factor to the failure of black men and women within the organisation. The second

difference stemming from the first, is that under the people management school, the individual rather than the group is the focus. This suggests that all employees should be regarded as individuals with their own strengths and weaknesses. People management means placing the issue of an individual's culture where it belongs, as an issue affecting a particular individual at a particular point in time. Broad-brush stereotypes and assumptions (e.g. blacks have greater affiliation needs than whites do) need to be avoided. A third difference noted is the attention paid to the problem of discrimination, prejudice and negative expectations. The black advancement school, according to Human (1991a) pays scant attention to these issues, thus failing to understand the role that a white manager complete with stereotypes and perceptions of blacks, can play in retarding the development of black individuals. The white manager may not allow the black individual to perform to his/her capacity because of negative expectations based on stereotypes. The people management school takes these factors into account.

Human (1991a) contends that affirmative action programmes instituted by South African organisations often fail because they are based on the black advancement model, rather than the people management model. What she offers in her analysis of these two schools and the promotion of the people management school, is a sound basis for what affirmative action should be all about.

Inherent in a holistic approach, is addressing the need for changes within the corporate culture South Africa. Mbigi (1992) states that it is essential that organisations in South Africa adapt Western management concepts to address the daunting challenges that are unique to our context. Challenges that include a resource-rich minority of fifteen percent absorbing a poor majority of eighty-five percent which is politically powerful and will be more so after the elections of April 1994. Mbigi (1992) proposes a developmental corporate culture based on four cardinal principles of Ubuntu namely, morality, interdependence, spirit of man and totality. The principle of morality asserts that no organisation can achieve its true potential without considering the role of morality and the link between motives and behaviour. The principle of interdependence is based on the belief that recognising and accepting the collective corporation of all stakeholders is the only way to optimise wealth-creation. The principle of the spirit of man acknowledges that man as creator and benefactor of wealth is entitled to unconditional respect and dignity and to work in the spirit of service and harmony. The principle of totality regards wealth-creation as complex, involving every member of the organisation contributing to this task.

However, whilst organisations may not adopt the approach that Mbigi (1992) is advocating, there is a need to question the status quo and to adapt to the changing demographic profile of the organisation.

### *Affirmative Action in South Africa*

South Africa is a unique country because of not only the diversity and make-up of its people but also because of its socio-economic situation. This uniqueness demands that a fresh and novel approach is adopted when drawing up and implementing a policy of affirmative action. A model that is well-suited to the South African context needs to be determined, a model that takes into account the history as well as the future of South Africa.

One circumstance unique to South Africa are the effects of apartheid education. Whilst discrimination in education was experienced by black Zimbabweans, the education system for blacks was of a sufficiently high standard to provide a base for further training and development (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992). South Africa does not find itself in this position. Instead there is a dearth of skills and the majority of the population do not have the necessary educational base to allow them to participate in job training.

A second circumstance is that black South African managers, in response to the demand for black advancement, are being promoted too quickly. Many of these managers are underqualified and ill-equipped to handle these positions. The result is the reinforcement of white prejudices about black individual's incompetence (Arnott & Mitchell, 1992).

A third situation unique to South Africa is that whilst blacks constitute the minority in organisations, they form the majority of the population. Whilst Mutizwa (1992) believes that there will be a "flight of skills" from South Africa in the future, it remains to be seen whether this exodus of skilled people will constitute the same percentage (fifty percent) as it did in Zimbabwe (Hofmeyr & Whata, 1991). The implication of this is to what degree the availability of jobs will increase and who will fill these positions, given the skills shortage in South Africa.

However, lessons can be learnt from the design and implementation of affirmative action policies and programmes elsewhere in the world. If there is one overriding lesson that can be learnt, it is this : There is no quick-fix! (Bennell & Strachan, 1992).

## GOALS OF RESEARCH

The research will attempt to address two main goals.

The first goal of the research is to detail and compare the attitudes of men and women, black and white to affirmative action. This includes exploring the level of understanding of what constitutes affirmative action and how it differs from equal opportunity. An understanding of the need for affirmative action will also be determined as well as the need for affirmative action rather than equal opportunity. It will also be ascertained whether there is a perceived dichotomy between the philosophy and the practise of affirmative action.

The second key goal of the study is to examine the perceived impact of an affirmative action programme on both the beneficiaries(black men and women) and non-beneficiaries(white men and women) of affirmative action. For the purposes of this study, white women are not recognised as beneficiaries by the researcher, as the research organisation has not identified white women as a target group of their affirmative action programme.

The researcher will further seek to explore employee attitudes to the effectiveness of the organisation's affirmative action programme. This can be termed a sub-goal of the research, underlying the two main goals, as it provides a context in which to understand attitudes towards affirmative action as well as the perceived impact of an affirmative action programme.

Following on from this analysis of the organisation's affirmative action programme, factors will be identified and used to offer guidelines for the effective creation and implementation of an affirmative action programme.

The factors are as follows :

- (a) Factors critical to the success of an affirmative action programme
- (b) Factors that undermine the effectiveness of such a programme
- (c) Factors that contribute to the failure of such a programme

# METHODOLOGY

The present study consisted of two stages :

1. The pilot study
2. The main study.

## 1. Pilot Study

Pilot surveys, according to Moser and Kalton (1975,p.47) are essential, as "it is exceedingly difficult to plan a survey without a good deal of knowledge of its subject matter, the population it is to cover, the way people will react to questions and ... the answers they are likely to give".

Almost anything about a survey can be piloted - from the wording and sequence of questions to the type-face of the printing, colour of the paper and the method of reply-envelopes to be used (Oppenheim, 1992). However, as Oppenheim (1992, p.50) states, "a line has to be drawn somewhere and some issues will receive greater priority than others".

In the proposed study, three key areas were focused on and were also the reasons why the pilot study was deemed necessary. The first reason for undertaking a pilot study was to conduct qualitative interviews with the purpose of identifying the range of respondents' attitudes and perceptions on affirmative action. The purpose of the interviews was also to highlight any issues that may have been overlooked by the researcher. Hoinville and Jowell (1982,p.9) believe that small-scale qualitative work is the "soundest basis of developing structured questionnaires ... [as] this avoids forcing respondent's views into a false or irrelevant structure".

A second reason for conducting the pilot study was to test the questionnaire, to ensure that all questions were understood as intended. It was also necessary to create an 'item pool' of questions from which the best items could be selected for the main study (Oppenheim, 1992).

The third reason was that the pilot study afforded the researcher exposure to the employees of the organisation as well as practical insight into the issues to be handled. The interviews also gave the researcher the opportunity to gain experience in conducting qualitative interviews as well as in the technique of probing.

## 2. Main study

The main study constituted the second phase of the research. Themes highlighted in the pilot study were focused on in both the questionnaire and the interviews. The necessary changes to the questionnaire, as emphasised by the pilot study, were made.

In detailing the rationale for choosing the methodology of the research and the process that was followed, issues such as (a) survey research as a methodology, (b) the survey design, (c) data collection techniques and (d) data analysis will be discussed.

### *(a) Survey research as a methodology*

Survey research is a term that encompasses a variety of interpretations as the nature of survey research is such that it may take many forms (Tull & Albaum, 1973). Most often, a survey connotes a study to get information from a sample of people by use of a questionnaire. The information collected can fall into one or more of four broad based categories of questions namely, the prevalence of attitudes, beliefs and behaviour; changes in these over time; differences between groups of people in terms of their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour (as in this study); and causal propositions about these attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Weisberg, Krosnik and Bowen, 1989). In a survey, data are collected using questions asked in a personal interview, over the telephone and/or sent to the participant in the mail.

Despite the variety of forms that survey research may take, there are elements that remain common and consistent in all. These characteristics can also be viewed as the strengths of survey research and why this methodology specifically was chosen for the purposes of this study. The key elements can be summarised as follows (Backstrom & Jursch-Cesar cited in Schnetler, 1989) :

- \* Systematic : survey research follows a specific, logical and formal procedure that can be repeated time after time
- \* Unbiased : survey research selects a sample of the population without personal preference or bias
- \* Representative : survey research incorporates questions which are representative of the study. The sample is also representative of the population among which the investigation is carried out.
- \* Theoretical : survey research is based on relevant theoretical principles and assumptions.
- \* Quantitative : survey research allows for the assignment of numerical values to non-numerical characteristics of human behaviour. This means that valid interpretations of these characteristics can be made.
- \* Contemporary : the focus of survey research is predominantly current rather than historically factual findings.
- \* Can be duplicated : survey research is a reliable research design such that other persons who employ the same method in the same manner can expect similar results.

*(b) Survey Design*

The design of the survey is critical to the validity and reliability of the research. "A poorly designed survey will fail to provide accurate answers to the questions under investigation; it will leave too many loopholes in the conclusions; it will permit little generalization; and it will produce much irrelevant information, thereby wasting case material and resources" (Oppenheim, 1992, p.8).

The procedure of planning the survey design, as outlined by Guy, Edgley, Arafat and Allen (1987) was strictly adhered to by the researcher.

The steps followed in the research were :

*(1) Definition of the research objectives*

The first step of the survey design was defining the research objectives. For further details, see Goals of the Research (page 46).

*(2) Identification of the unit of research*

The second step was identifying the unit of research. The research was conducted in one large organisation situated in the PWV area, chosen because it had a formal affirmative action programme. The beneficiaries of this organisation's affirmative action programme were expressly blacks (this does not include Asians and Coloureds). The organisation participated in the research because it wished to evaluate the acceptability and impact of its current programme. A further benefit to the organisation was an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of their programme.

The organisation was selected using the method of convenience sampling. A convenience sample is one in which the researcher selects participants who are "close at hand" (Guy et al., 1987, p.189). The organisation was chosen because firstly, it had a formal affirmative action programme and secondly, because it was interested and willing to participate in the research. See Appendix 1, for an organisational profile. Please note that the organisation will be called company XXX for reasons of maintaining the anonymity of the company.

*(3) Choice of sample*

Choosing the sample from the population constituted the next step in the survey design. The sampling frame used was a personnel record that contained the name, race and gender details of each employee in the organisation. The organisation provided the researcher with lists of the names of employees grouped into the four sample groups or strata i.e., white men, white women, black men and black women.

The sampling method utilised within the organisation was disproportionate stratified sampling, using race and gender as strata. This method of sampling was necessary as a proportional allocation of the sample relative to the

population of certain stratum would yield too small a sample for specific groups. This situation was particularly acute when looking at the number of black women in the research organisation. This method of sampling was also chosen as it is more efficient and a better predictor than proportional stratified sampling for the comparison of data (Guy et al.,1987). Hoinville and Jowell (1982) confirm that this method of sampling conforms to the basic requirements of probability sampling. Following the method of random sampling, as advocated by Groniger (1990), the participants were randomly chosen from each stratum/list.

The table below indicates the number of respondents involved in the main study. Note that no individuals participated in both the pilot and the main study nor in the qualitative and quantitative element of the research.

<b>SAMPLE GROUP</b>	<b>QUALITATIVE RESEARCH<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>ANTICIPATED RESPONSE<sup>c</sup></b>
<b>WHITE WOMEN</b>	5	50	35
<b>WHITE MEN</b>	5	50	35
<b>BLACK WOMEN</b>	5	40	28
<b>BLACK MEN</b>	5	50	35
<b>TOTAL GROUP</b>	20	190	133

Note to the table :

a - Figures reflect the number of interviews that were held.

b - Figures reflect the number of questionnaires that were mailed to respondents.

c - Figures reflect the number of questionnaires anticipated back from respondents, as calculated at a seventy percent response rate.

#### (4) Choice of research setting

The fourth step in planning the design of the survey was to choose an appropriate research setting. All interviews were conducted in an office in the Personnel Department at Head Office. This meant that interviews could be conducted without any disturbances or distractions.

#### (5) Choice of research time-frame

The final step in the survey design was choosing the time frame for the research. The study is a cross-sectional survey, as data was collected from a chosen sample at a single point in time (Guy et al.,1987).

### *(c) Data Collection Techniques*

Following the clarification of the design of the survey, decisions needed to be made about the selection and design of the measuring instruments. This was important, for as Churchill and Peter have empirically demonstrated, the data collection tool has the greatest impact on the reliability of data (cited in Schnetler, 1989).

In this study, two data collection techniques were utilised namely, a questionnaire to be mailed to respondents (quantitative focus) and individual in-depth interviews (qualitative focus). The rationale for using dual data collection techniques was founded on three arguments. The first rationale was that the two methods complemented each other for while the quantitative element of the research provided the scope required, the qualitative focus ensured the depth desired in such an investigation. The second argument was that this approach of triangulation served to enhance the reliability of the study (Mouton & Marais, 1988). The third reasoning was that the researcher wished to capitalise on the strengths of each technique such that they compensated for the weaknesses in the other (Dixon, 1989).

#### **Mail Questionnaire**

The use of a questionnaire as a measuring instrument is well known. However, cognisance is often not taken of the need to construct the questionnaire according to certain criteria (Schnetler, 1989).

In the present study, the mail questionnaire was chosen as a data collection method for two reasons. It allowed access to a significant number of people given certain resource constraints of the research. The researcher was based in Grahamstown and unable to spend lengthy periods of time in Johannesburg. Accordingly, personal interviews with a large number of people was not feasible. The second and more important reason was that in dealing with a sensitive and controversial subject such as affirmative action, an anonymous questionnaire would encourage respondents to be honest and open, more so than they would possibly be in the presence of an interviewer (Oppenheim, 1992).

As with any data collection technique, there are drawbacks to using the mail questionnaire. However, the researcher has taken these into account and attempted to minimise the effects of these where possible. In order to address the potential problem of a low response rate and thus consequent bias, guidelines as suggested by Oppenheim (1992) were followed. A letter from the Affirmative Action Programme Manager was sent to respondents informing them of the research and its importance in the organisation and requesting their co-operation. This letter accompanied the questionnaire. See Appendix 2 for a copy of the cover letter. Further suggestions as offered by Oppenheim (1992) were also followed e.g., confidentiality and anonymity were assured, return envelopes were sent with the questionnaires, the length and time needed to complete the questionnaire was not too long and reminder letters were sent out. See Appendix 3 for copies of the reminder letters.



A further disadvantage of the postal questionnaire is that respondents lack the opportunity to offer explanations or ask for help and the researcher is unable to clarify issues or correct misunderstandings (Oppenheim, 1992). The pilot study helped to minimise this from occurring as those questions which were found to be ambiguous or difficult to comprehend were eliminated or improved upon in the final questionnaire which was sent out in the main study.

A well-designed questionnaire is critical to establishing the validity and reliability of the survey (Schnetler, 1989). Guy et. al. (1987) offers six essential steps to follow in questionnaire construction. These were emulated by the researcher as follows:

(1) Determination of information required

The type of information needed to address the research objectives was the first step taken. The critical issues to be determined were:

- \* General attitudes and perceptions of affirmative action
- \* The acceptance of the need for and the philosophy of affirmative action
- \* The acceptance of the implementation methods of affirmative action
- \* The perceptions of the effects of affirmative action
- \* The acceptance of the company's affirmative action programme
- \* The perception of the effectiveness of the company's affirmative action programme
- \* The perception of the beneficiaries of the company's affirmative action programme and the effects of the programme
- \* The prevalence of stereotypes, discrimination and the need for change in the affirmative action strategy and programme of the company

(2) Decision on the type of questions to use

The next step taken was to decide on the type/format of the questions to be used. Two basic question formats were utilised in the research, namely open-ended questions and closed questions (Schnetler, 1989). Appendix 4 offers a sample of the questionnaire used in the research. The open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire because an understanding of an individual's attitude towards affirmative action requires an explanation of what they think affirmative action means, for as stated by Clayton and Crosby (1992), there is a general lack of understanding with what affirmative action entails. Furthermore, the free responses enhance the reliability and validity of the answers given in the closed questions as they allow for cross-checking and ensuring that the closed questions are not misunderstood.

The majority of questions used in the questionnaire were closed questions, as this facilitated the administration, processing and analysis of the large quantity of data (Schnetler, 1989). Closed questions are often criticised for a loss of rapport and frustration on the part of respondents because response options may not accommodate their personal opinions (Schnetler, 1989). The likelihood of this occurring in the present study however, was minimised

by the use of a pilot study, incorporating in-depth qualitative interviews which assisted in identifying the range of responses.

The closed questions were based on a Likert Scale as scales allow for the measurement of abstract concepts or attitudes; they permit the standardisation of measurement, allowing comparative research; and also serve to increase the reliability and validity of the data (Schnetler,1989).

When using the Likert Scale, the respondent is asked to agree or disagree with a statement as well as to indicate the strength of agreement or disagreement (Moser & Kalton,1975). Five categories were assigned to each item in the questionnaire. These categories were strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree and strongly disagree. Scores of 1 to 5 were assigned to the above categories, respectively. The questionnaire contained positive as well as negative statements to avoid response sets (Schnetler,1989). It is usual for all the scores to be added together to achieve a total score which is a measure of the respondent's attitude (Moser & Kalton, 1975). In this research however, a total score will not be calculated. One of the key criticisms of using scales, is its lack of reproducibility (Oppenheim,1992). This means that the same total score may be obtained in a variety of ways. It has thus been argued that such an attitude score has little meaning as two identical scores may have totally different meanings. This was also the opinion of the researcher who felt that a single score would not reflect the complexity and depth of attitudes to affirmative action and thus that such a score would be meaningless.

The closed questions have been put into clusters by the researcher to show how the different questions contribute to answering the critical issues of the research (as outlined in point (1) above). The clusters and questions are as follows :

General attitudes and perceptions of affirmative action : 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 30

Acceptance of the need and philosophy of affirmative action : 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Acceptance of implementation methods of affirmative action : 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 21, 22

Perception of effects of affirmative action : 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33

Acceptance of company's affirmative action programme : 33, 34, 35, 36, 38

Perception of effectiveness of company's affirmative action programme : 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 61

Perception of beneficiaries and effects of programme in company : 45, 46, 47, 48, 51

Prevalence of stereotypes, discrimination and the need for change in affirmative action strategy/implementation: 43, 44, 56, 59, 60, 62

### (3) Completion of first draft of questionnaire

The third step taken by the researcher in the construction of the questionnaire was to write the first draft of questions. The advice of Kidder (1981) was followed. A large number of items considered relevant to the attitudes being investigated were assembled together by consulting the current literature available on affirmative action as well as using the information gained from an interview with the Affirmative Action Programme Manager of company XXX. Considerations offered by Weisberg et al. (1989) and Schnetler (1989) on the wording, order and length of questions, were taken into account by the researcher.

### (4) Revision and review of questionnaire

The next step was to review and revise these questions ensuring that no ambiguity existed, that no technical jargon was used without being explained, that no double-barrelled questions were used and that other typical errors in questionnaire construction were avoided (Weisberg et al., 1989; Schnetler, 1989). The questionnaire was then forwarded to the Affirmative Action Programme Manager who was requested to review the questionnaire and point out any inconsistencies or questions that did not pertain to the company's affirmative action programme.

### (5) Documentation of procedures for using questionnaire

The following step involved documenting the procedures for using the questionnaire. This included the writing of a covering letter and ensuring that the instructions of how to answer the questionnaire were clear. A covering letter was written to all respondents from the Affirmative Action Programme Manager introducing the research and questionnaire, asking for co-operation. The purpose of this letter was to legitimise the research (Oppenheim, 1992). In accordance with Guy et al. (1987), the covering letter also aimed to convey the importance of the respondent's part in the research, emphasised the need for truthful and accurate answers and assured the respondent that all information would be kept anonymous and confidential. See Appendix 2 for a copy of this letter. The front page of the questionnaire outlined the key instructions for the research. Further instructions headed each new section, clarifying what was required of the respondent. See Appendix 4 for a copy of the questionnaire.

### (6) Pretesting of questionnaire

The final step in the questionnaire construction was the pretesting of the questionnaire in the pilot study. Letters were sent out to all pilot study participants, telling them about the study and asking for their assistance. They were requested to participate in an hour long interview. See Appendix 5 for a copy of the letter that was sent to them. For the purposes of the quantitative element of the research, interviews were held with sixteen individuals, randomly chosen from a list of employees categorised into the four sample groups. During these interviews, respondents were asked to indicate their responses to each question by checking one of the five categories. They were also asked to indicate those questions that they did not understand or that were difficult to answer. After the respondent had completed filling in the questionnaire, the researcher went through it with the respondent asking for clarification on certain questions to ensure that the question had been understood as intended. If certain inconsistencies appeared in the answers, the researcher probed further to establish if the question was understood or why the participant had

answered as they had. All questions answered with "Don't Know" responses were also queried as it was important to establish if the participant genuinely did not know or whether they did not understand the question. All items that had a high percentage frequency of "Don't Know" responses were either modified or eliminated from the questionnaire.

### **In-depth Interviews**

The individual in-depth interviews constituted the qualitative element of the research. Their purpose was to provide depth to the research, thereby complementing the survey quantitative results to offer a more holistic and meaningful research study.

In-depth interviewing provides the researcher with the opportunity to investigate the subjective human experience (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This was deemed necessary in this study. In attempting to understand the attitudes of individuals, in-depth interviews are suitable for they allow attitudes to be expressed without prompting and structuring participants' responses. This was particularly pertinent as the majority of questions in the questionnaire were based on attitudes found in literature and research conducted overseas. As the purpose of the study was to understand the attitudes of South Africans, it would have been limiting to not allow the expression of attitudes and perceptions that may be unique to this context.

In-depth interviews were also chosen because they are flexible and dynamic. In-depth qualitative interviewing refers to "face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their own lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.77.).

In certain interviewing situations, researchers use an interview guide to ensure that key topics are explored with a number of respondents. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) are quick to point out however, that the interview guide is not a structured schedule or protocol but rather, serves to list the general areas that need to be covered in the course of the interview. Appendix 6 offers an outline of the questions used in the qualitative interviews of this study. These questions were based on themes that emerged from the eight qualitative interviews held during the pilot study. As suggested by Hoinville and Jowell (1982), attempts were made by the researcher to keep the questioning as open-ended as possible to allow the respondents to spontaneously talk about their attitudes and experiences.

Probing techniques were used to encourage respondents to communicate their attitudes and feelings. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984) one of the keys to successful interviewing is knowing how and when to probe. This involved following up of topics that were raised by asking specific questions, encouraging the respondent to describe attitudes and experiences in detail and constantly asking for clarification of the interviewee's words.

In preparation for these interviews, all interviewees received a letter requesting their participation in the study. The letter included the purpose of the research and the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. See Appendix 7 for a copy of this letter. The Personnel secretary of company XXX telephoned each candidate and set up a time and date for the interview, requesting the interviewee to come to a venue where all the interviews were to be conducted.

All interviews were tape recorded. This was seen as necessary as it allowed the researcher to focus on what the interviewee was saying, facilitating the process of probing. The interviews lasted for one hour. Given the time constraints of business persons, it was felt that a longer interview would have raised objections from the participants and resulted in possible refusal to participate.

The researcher made attempts to maximise reliability and validity throughout the interviews, by minimising the potential response effects as listed by Dixon (1989). Response effects are a variety of distortions which may result in an interview situation, distortions caused by variables other than the respondents' views, in which the researcher is interested.

Response effects which the researcher sought to minimise included context effects, role-restricted response effects and interviewer effects. **Context effects** refer to the research setting as well as the broader historical, socio-political and economic factors that may impact on the research situation and influence research results (Dixon,1989). Interview dates and times were set up well in advance, at times convenient to the respondents.

Interviews were conducted in a private office, allocated to the researcher for the period of the research. This ensured privacy and removed the respondent from their environment where disturbances and interruptions were the norm. However, of greater importance is the South African and organisational context in which the research was conducted. The organisation underwent a major restructuring exercise in 1992/1993 when the organisation was broken up into smaller groups/business units. As a result approximately fifty people were retrenched. In a workforce of one thousand four hundred employees, the retrenchment of fifty workers is minimal, but the effects if any of the restructuring and subsequent retrenchment on the data collected, were borne in mind.

In an attempt to control **role-restricted response effects** (Dixon,1989), all interviews were conducted by one researcher thereby minimising those effects caused by different styles of interviewing, levels of competence and expectations of the interviewer by the interviewees. The researcher sought to ensure consistency in all the interviews.

**Interviewer competence** has a major influence on response effect. Sudman and Bradburn found that the response effect was more than double for inexperienced than for experienced interviewers (cited in Dixon,1989). This was an important consideration as the researcher/interviewer at the outset of the research was fairly inexperienced in this regard. However, the pilot study offered an opportunity for the interviewer to become more familiar with the subject matter as well as to gain experience in interviewing. Furthermore, as a researcher, the interviewer was acutely aware of how and when response effects could occur and the need to minimise them. The researcher was also aware that being a student may have created a perception of incompetence and inexperience in the minds of the interviewees. In the initial stages of the interview, it was of critical importance that the researcher establish credibility and an air of professionalism.

Whilst it is virtually impossible to eliminate all response effects, the researcher followed the advice of Mouton who outlines a few techniques that can be used to minimise these effects (cited in Dixon,1989). One technique used was to utilise a combination of survey methods namely, the questionnaire and the interviews. This meant that the one method compensated for the shortcomings of the other. A second method was to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of responses thus increasing the chance that more reliable results would be obtained. A third technique used to minimise possible response effects, in particular observation effects arising from an interview situation (Dixon,1989), was to establish a sound rapport with the respondent.

#### *(d) Data Analysis*

Data analysis is an issue of extreme importance in the planning of a research project and should be anticipated in the early phases of the research. Failure to anticipate data analysis at this stage of the research may result in the researcher ending up with insufficient or inappropriate data (Smith,1975).

#### **Evaluation of the Sample Realisation**

If the researcher wishes to draw valid conclusions from the sample survey data, it is important that the sample provide a reliable representation of the population (Stoker,1989). In the current research, this was ensured in two ways. The first way was to ensure that the sample's design conformed to probability sampling procedures. As previously noted, the sample design of the research was disproportionate stratified sampling which according to Hoinville and Jowell (1982) does conform to the basic requirements of probability sampling. The second way of ensuring the sample offered a reliable picture was to evaluate the realization of the sample. Realization refers to that percentage of the sample that is contacted, participates in the research and accurately completes the questionnaire or interview (Stoker,1989).

Stoker (1989) identifies three types of missing data that can influence the realization of a sample and thus were taken into account when evaluating the sample realization. The first type of missing data is non-coverage and occurs when the survey population does not coincide with the target population. In this study this did occur in the selection of participants for the interviews. Only people working in the PWV area participated in the interviews; employees based in the Cape Town area were not eligible for participation, due to obvious logistical constraints.

Unit non-response is the second category of missing data. "This type of missing data occurs when it has not been possible in a survey of individuals to contact all the selected persons" (Stoker, 1989, p. 181). Of particular relevance to the research was the occurrence of unit non-response as a result of refusal to participate or failure to return questionnaires.

The third and final type of missing data is known as item non-response. This arises when respondents fail to answer all the questions in the questionnaire. In the current study, amongst the sample group of white men, ten percent of the sample were unwilling to reveal certain demographic details such as age, education level, current job and whether they were a manager or not. Questions that elicit a "don't know" response or invalid answers can also be interpreted as item non-response. In this study, "Don't Know" answers were not interpreted as invalid for they have something to suggest about the level of awareness and understanding about affirmative action in general and more specifically about the company's affirmative action programme.

The methods offered by Stoker (1989) to compensate for non-response, were followed by the researcher in an attempt to reduce the magnitude of non-response. "In every sample survey, every attempt should be made to compensate for non-response" (Stoker, 1989, p. 182)

### **Methods of Quantitative Analysis**

For the purposes of this study, the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data involved the use of single-variable as well as bivariate statistics.

Responses to closed questions were coded as follows :

Strongly Disagree = 5

Disagree = 4

Don't Know = 3

Agree = 2

Strongly Agree = 1

No response = 0

Responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire were also coded into various categories of themes (Miles & Huberman, 1984), as was applicable for each question. Percentile frequencies were calculated for the responses for each question within the different sample groups as well as for the total group of research participants, to indicate the prevalence of an attitude. The following issues were taken into account when analysing and calculating the percentile frequency of responses for all the research participants. Firstly, similar responses were grouped together from the four sample groups and the average percentile frequency was calculated. Secondly, the responses reflected were those that were evident in more than one sample group or those responses that had a fairly high percentage frequency in one sample group (at least greater than 10%). All other responses were recorded under "Other" and are further detailed in Appendix 8. However, a few exceptions do exist to this point. The researcher wanted to acknowledge the presence of some of those responses which had a small percentage representation in order to indicate the breadth and/or depth of attitudes expressed. Similarly, whilst the percentage frequency of some of the responses in the Total Group may seem insignificant, these have been indicated to show the breadth of attitudes expressed.

For the closed questions, frequency distributions were also presented in percentage form for each question for each sample group, as well as for the total group. The chi-squared test was employed to compare the sample groups to ascertain if a difference in attitudes existed. The chi-squared statistic "is used to evaluate the relative frequency or the proportions of events in a population that fall into well-defined categories" (Kaplan, 1987, p.267).

### **Methods of Qualitative Analysis**

In the research, two methods of qualitative data analysis were employed. These methods were the noting of themes and patterns and clustering, as detailed by Miles and Huberman (1984). As noted by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), qualitative data analysis relies on the insight, intuition of the researcher as well as his/her familiarity with the data.

Noting of themes and patterns is a very productive analysis strategy when the data overload is severe (Miles & Huberman, 1984) and was thus chosen for this study where a large amount of data were to be handled. Finding themes and patterns is a relatively easy process as the "human mind finds patterns so quickly and easily that it needs no how-to advice" (p.216). The essence of this data analysis method was thus not the identification of themes and patterns, but rather being able to see further added evidence of the same pattern and remaining open to evidence that may have been disconfirming. The researcher heeded the advice of Miles and Huberman (1984, p.216) who warn that "patterns need to be subjected to scepticism ... and to conceptual and empirical test". This technique was used as the first step in the analysis of the interview data.

The analysis method of clustering followed that of noting themes. Clustering is the process of grouping similar data together into categories (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The majority of categories or classes used by the

researcher already existed or they emerged from the data. "Clustering can also be seen as a process of moving to higher levels of abstraction" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 219) and this was done by the researcher. Thus, the themes from the twenty qualitative interviews were grouped together where applicable, into clusters. Miles and Huberman (1984) caution against pre-mature closure of categories, a common occurrence when employing conclusion-drawing tactics. This advice was followed by the researcher.

#### **A Synthesis of Methods**

In the discussion of the results of the research, the qualitative and quantitative data were interwoven to complement each other and offer an integrated and holistic analysis and interpretation of the data.

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The results will be presented in two main sections :

1. Results of the pilot study
2. Results of the main study

### 1. Results of the Pilot Study

The pilot study proved invaluable as it a) tested certain assumptions made by the researcher, b) highlighted areas of investigation that had been overlooked by the researcher and c) pointed out potential problem areas in the questionnaire itself.

#### *a) Testing of Assumptions*

During the qualitative interviews and the administering of the questionnaires and the feedback received from the respondents, it became apparent to the researcher that the awareness and understanding of company XXX's Affirmative Action Programme was minimal.

The questionnaire had been constructed on the assumption that a fairly high awareness and understanding of the programme existed. This assumption was based on the fact that the programme had been operating in the organisation for nearly five years as well as on information gained in an earlier interview with the Affirmative Action Programme Manager who had outlined the awareness and education programme undertaken by the organisation. Whilst Schnetler (1989) does warn researchers against constructing questions that include any assumptions with regard to the knowledge, attitudes or behaviour of the respondents, the researcher in this study feels that knowing about the level of awareness and understanding of the affirmative action programme, is important and a significant issue. The pilot study thus proved important in highlighting this issue. All questions requiring background knowledge of the organisation's programme (e.g., Company XXX has set unrealistic targets for its Affirmative Action Programme and The current mentorship programme is operating well.) were not included in the questionnaire used in the main study.

### ***b) Highlighting of New Issues***

The pilot survey also served to highlight a key issue pertaining to the environment in which the research was conducted.

During the interviews, it became apparent that a clear understanding of affirmative action was lacking. In particular, there was a blurring of the principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action. Many respondents perceived them as one and the same, with affirmative action being the new "buzzword". However, what was of particular relevance to the research was that interviewees expressed a discontent with the application of the principle of equal opportunity in the organisation. Employees felt that there was a policy of differential treatment, rather than one of equal opportunity. White employees expressed a dissatisfaction at black employees being favoured and treated differently to them. Black respondents in turn, felt that racism was still prevalent in the organisation and that promotions were not occurring on pure merit but rather on a system of favouritism and nepotism. They also expressed anger at different remuneration packages. This issue of **perceived** inequity was obviously one that could not have necessarily been anticipated by the researcher but needed to be addressed in the main study.

Allied to this issue was addressing the poor understanding of what affirmative action meant. In the initial questionnaire used in the pilot study, many questions referred to 'affirmative action' and it became obvious that the responses given were dependant on the respondent's understanding of what affirmative action was. This could range from being anything from equal opportunity to reverse discrimination. Accordingly, it was necessary to alter those questions that referred directly to affirmative action by either explaining what was meant by the term in that specific question or changing the complete wording of the question.

### ***c) Potential Problem Areas***

The third domain addressed by the pilot study was potential problem areas in the questionnaire and incorporated the wording of questions, the placing of certain questions and the number of questions in the questionnaire.

Certain terminology was not understood by some of the participants e.g., culture, lip-service, diversity and preferential treatment and certain catch-phrases had to be explained e.g., affirmative action allows blacks to use their victim status as a source of power and Organisations should be striving to be *colour and gender blind* in employment practises.

Several of the respondents commented about the open-ended questions at the beginning of the questionnaire, stating that participants may think that the entire questionnaire consisted of these questions and may therefore, find the questionnaire too daunting and not answer it. A suggestion was offered namely, to stagger the questions throughout the questionnaire. This was implemented for the main study.

The third potential problem area was that of the number of questions. Most of the respondents said that the questionnaire was far too long. However, this is not a problem as the pilot study questionnaire was an item 'pool' from which the 'best' items were selected.

## 2. Results of the Main Study

The data from the main study are divided into five parts namely,

- (a) Qualitative data from the interviews,
- (b) Quantitative results from the open questions and
- (c) Quantitative results from the closed questions.
- (d) Demographic data
- (e) Sample realization
- (f) Issues of reliability and validity

### *(a) Qualitative Data from Interviews*

The qualitative data have been arranged in themes which have been grouped into clusters. A diagrammatic representation of the clusters is as follows :

#### *Redefining Affirmative Action*

#### *Reformulating an Affirmative Action Programme*

#### *ATTITUDES TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION*

##### *# Equal Opportunity vs Affirmative Action*

##### *# Perceived Impact of Affirmative Action Programme*

##### *# Practise*

##### *# Philosophy*

##### *\* Perceptions*

##### *\* Perceptions*

##### *\* Co-worker's*

*of the*

*of*

*Perceptions*

*Affirmative Action Discrimination and Support*

*Programme*

The clusters have been arranged to illustrate a progression of themes, as they contribute to the goals of the research. The arrows indicate the use of first levels clusters in contributing to the explanation of the next level and so forth. As such the clusters also represent different levels of abstraction.

As can be seen from the diagram, all clusters marked with the superscript\* are clusters contributing to the sub-goal of the research as they provide the context for understanding the perceived impact of the programme and attitudes to affirmative action. These clusters feed into the second level cluster, the perceived impact of an affirmative action programme which is the second goal of the research. This cluster in turn augments the understanding of the main goal of the research, namely to detail and compare attitudes to affirmative action. Also contributing to this goal are the clusters marked with the superscript#.

The diagram indicates that the attitudes expressed gave rise to themes that have been clustered and termed 'Reformulating an Affirmative Action Programme' and 'Redefining Affirmative Action'. Notice that the arrows leading from these clusters return to the first level clusters, showing that attitudes to affirmative action are dynamic. As such this diagram represents a systems approach to affirmative action.

For ease of explanation and discussion, the clusters can also be arranged in a linear progression. The themes relating to each cluster are illustrated.

Clusters

Themes

Equal opportunity

vs Affirmative Action

Clear understanding of what constitutes equal opportunity

Lack of clarity as to what constitutes affirmative action

Philosophy versus practise  
of Affirmative Action

Support of philosophy of affirmative action

Overcoming the educational disadvantages of blacks

Affirmative action in recruitment and selection

Affirmative action in promotions :  
maintaining a system of meritocracy

Quota Systems

Perceptions of discrimination  
in Company XXX.

Application of policy of equal opportunity

Racism

Sexism

Perceptions of Affirmative  
Action Programme

Lack of awareness

Communication

Loss of "good black people"

Satisfaction/dissatisfaction with performance appraisals  
and advancement opportunities/promotions

Lack of adequate grievance procedures

Perceived Impact of Programme

Minimal impact on all employees

Solo role

Co-worker's perceptions and support

Evaluation of performance

On-the-job training and support

Reformulating the affirmative  
action programme

Communication and education

Addressing attitudes

Training and Development

Mentors

Redefining affirmative action

Rationale and need for affirmative action

Education and Social responsibility

Beneficiaries

***CLUSTER : EQUAL OPPORTUNITY VERSUS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION***

**Themes : Clear understanding of equal opportunity but lack of clarity as to what affirmative action means**

All interviewees had a clear understanding of what constituted equal opportunity. Furthermore, they were aware of the emphasis placed on this principle by company XXX. In contrast, there was a lack of clarity as to what affirmative action meant. In all four sample groups, some of the interviewees confused affirmative action with equal opportunity, saying that affirmative action was just the new catchphrase.

Amongst the **black men and women**, there was a recognition by a few that affirmative action was a "sub-set" of equal opportunity, i.e., it ensured true equal opportunity by "levelling the playing field". Many of the interviewees equated affirmative action with training and development opportunities for black people, because of past discrimination and disadvantage experienced. One black man and one black woman noted that affirmative action could be interpreted as tokenism and window-dressing if black people were promoted without due consideration to their potential and competence.

Amongst the sample group of **white men**, words such as tokenism, reverse discrimination and window-dressing were mentioned.

***CLUSTER : PHILOSOPHY VERSUS PRACTISE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION***

**Theme : Support of philosophy of affirmative action**

There was considerable support for the philosophy of affirmative action, namely to eliminate discrimination and afford everyone the same opportunities. However, the sample groups differed on how this was to be achieved.

The **black men and women** believed that equal opportunity was not sufficient in itself to ensure true equal opportunity but that it served to maintain the current system of inequities. They felt that a focus on black people was justifiable given the denial of opportunities in the past, the educational disadvantages experienced and the resulting racial imbalances within the organisation and corporate South Africa. However, the implication was that of ensuring true equal opportunity, rather than retribution and reverse discrimination. Many of the black interviewees expressed that this focus on black people should not be to the detriment of other groups. One black man declared that affirmative action was not about race or gender but rather about targeting those who are disadvantaged. In South Africa, the focus would thus be on black people, as they were the most needy.

**White men and women** felt that a focus on black people was unnecessary and that the application of the principle of equal opportunity should be sufficient.

### **Theme : Overcoming the educational disadvantages of blacks**

All interviewees agreed that black South Africans had suffered an educational disadvantage under the apartheid system and that this was one area that action needed to be taken. Most interviewees agreed that affirmative action (i.e., a focus on black people) in training and development was acceptable. Training and development was seen as necessary to prepare black people to be able to compete on an equal footing with their white counterparts, in promotions.

Amongst the sample groups of **white men and women**, there was some disagreement with the implementation of affirmative action in training and development. Two individuals believed that training and development should be for all employees and should not focus on black people. One individual cautioned against creating an "us and them" situation and that rather whilst in practise the training and development may focus on black people, it should be perceived as training for all employees who need to acquire certain skills.

### **Theme : Affirmative action in recruitment and selection**

The issue of affirmative action in recruitment and selection was more contentious and attitudes more varied.

**Black men and women** raised the concern of the racial imbalances in company XXX and in particular the small numbers of black people in senior/management positions.

Amongst the sample group of **black men**, the overall attitude was that affirmative action was necessary in recruitment and selection. This meant that the company should be aware of the need to hire more black people, that a thorough recruitment strategy should be employed and that people of different races should be represented on the selection panel. There was consensus that this form of affirmative action did not imply that standards should be dropped but rather that efforts should be taken to hire competent people with potential.

Amongst **black women**, the general attitude was that affirmative action was needed when recruiting and selecting future employees. For these black women, affirmative action meant giving competent, well-qualified black people the opportunity to work in a meaningful job. It did not mean that one's skin colour and gender was an advantage in the selection process but rather that it was not a disadvantage.

Within the sample group of **white males**, the attitude was equivocally one of the "best person for the job". Among some of this sample group however, there was an acknowledgement that "good" black individuals had to be sought out because there was a need to increase the number of black people in the organisation before the legislation forced it to. Essentially, this sample group embraced the notion of affirmative action recruitment but equal opportunity in selection.

Attitudes on this issue were divided within the group of **white women** interviewees, with the majority believing that affirmative action in recruitment and selection was necessary. It was deemed that race and gender needed to be taken into account at this stage in order to get more black people and white women into organisations.

These women also emphasised the need to look at the potential of the individuals and not only skills and qualifications. The minority of white women were of the attitude that affirmative action hiring for blacks would result in white resentment and that affirmative action would be perceived as a system that excluded whites. These individuals advocated the application of equal opportunity.

**Theme : Affirmative action in promotions : maintaining a system of meritocracy**

The third interface at which affirmative action can be implemented is in promotional decisions. All interviewees raised the importance of the issue of merit and competence, being the sole criteria used in the selection of employees for promotion. There was agreement across all sample groups that only equal opportunity should be applied in the case of promotions. It was noted that affirmative action in any other form, other than ensuring the absence of discrimination, would result in tokenism and window-dressing.

The sample groups of **black men and women** articulated similar attitudes and in addition believed that affirmative action had a role to play in ensuring that promotion really did occur on merit and not on systems of seniority, favouritism or nepotism. The attitude that the equal opportunity of the past was maintaining the status quo and thus the advancement of white men, was expressed.

The attitudes expressed by the sample of **white men** reflected the need for the organisation to target and prepare black people to successfully compete for senior/management positions in the organisation. Allied to this was ensuring that a pool of suitably qualified candidates (men and women of all races) existed from which appointments could be made.

Similar attitudes were expressed within the sample group of **white women**, where it was also noted that promotions should occur from within the organisation.

**Theme : Quota systems**

The issue of quota systems is a contentious one and as can be expected, attitudes were divergent.

Within the sample group of **black men**, the majority felt that a quota system was necessary to ensure that more black people were hired but that this should not negate the importance of qualifications and hiring competent people. One individual also noted that the quota systems should not be unrealistic but operate on a "50/50" principle where one black person was hired for every white person employed. Amongst the minority of this group was the attitude that quota systems would result in tokenism and window-dressing and that skills should be the main reason for hiring people.

Amongst the **black women**, interviewees agreed with the use of quotas at the selection stage to increase the numbers of black people in organisations - they felt that race and gender needed to be considered at this point (but not as the only criteria).

The majority of **white men** also expressed acceptance of the quota system. It was recognised that quotas were goals just like other business goals but that they needed to be realistic or would result in tokenism and window-dressing. Furthermore, quotas should not be so drastic that they result in reverse discrimination. The minority of white men interviewees disagreed with a quota system, stating that only equal opportunity should apply, such that only the best people were chosen.

Amongst the **white women** interviewees, there was consensus that quota systems should not be implemented. It was felt that such a system created a focus on numbers and not people and that in the quest to reach quotas, standards would be sacrificed and incompetent people hired.

#### *CLUSTER: PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION IN ORGANISATION*

##### **Theme : Application of policy of equal opportunity**

One of the key themes that emerged in the pilot study and was followed through in the main study was the perception of how fairly company XXX's policy of equal opportunity was being implemented. Attitudes about this were not consistent within or between the different sample groups.

Amongst the sample group of **black men**, there was consensus that equal opportunity was not applied in company XXX but explanations offered were different. One individual noted that equal opportunity was not applied in this organisation because all people were not equal and could therefore not compete on an equal footing. This he stated was evident in the lack of progress in the advancement of black people into meaningful positions in company XXX. Another interviewee felt that blacks were treated differently in company XXX and that the equal opportunity practised was only for whites. It was commented on by another person that the philosophy of equal opportunity existed but failed in implementation because of certain individuals. A further explanation was that in order to get promoted in this organisation, one had to "play the politics" and that promotions occurred without true regard to merit and competence.

Within the sample group of **black women**, the issue of racial imbalances within company XXX was raised as evidence of the absence of equal opportunity. One woman pointed to the fact that there appeared to be "black positions and departments" in company XXX i.e., positions specifically targeted as being for a black person and certain departments staffed predominantly by black people. Black women interviewees also perceived that remuneration packages were different, depending on whether one was white or black.

Within the sample group of **white men**, the majority of interviewees felt that equal opportunity was "by and large" applied in company XXX but that there were certain pockets of the business where it was maliciously complied with and not implemented as it should be. One of the interviewees noted that he was beginning to question the application of equal opportunity because of the racial imbalances at certain levels in this organisation and the lack of progress in this regard. Of the two white male interviewees that believed equal opportunity was not being applied, the two attitudes expressed were distinctly different. The one individual expressed that company XXX favoured certain groups of people and that the demands made on them were less

than those made on white workers. In contrast, the other interviewee said that he believed that equal opportunity was not being applied because of what his black colleagues had said about this organisation.

The sample group of **white women** were very hesitant to commit themselves to whether they believed equal opportunity was applied in company XXX. The majority said they presumed that the company tried to ensure equal opportunity, but that it was a delicate issue given the South African context, as well as the situation women found themselves in namely, that of simultaneously being mother, wife, housekeeper and employee. Other attitudes expressed were that equal opportunity in company XXX was "more equal for some than for others" (referring to men and black people being preferred above white women); that colour was often used as an excuse and that concessions were made with regards to black people to avoid causing a disruption.

#### **Themes: Racism and sexism**

Related to these perceived inequities, were the perceptions of racism and sexism within company XXX. These perceptions differed significantly between the various sample groups. It is to be noted that racism was indirectly defined by all interviewees as the negative attitudes of white people towards black people. At no time was racism expressed in terms of black people's attitudes towards white people. What was alluded to however, by one of the interviewees in the sample group of white women, was that black people often used the colour of their skin as an excuse, that they got "chips" on their shoulders and that they sometimes made a "point of being black".

The majority of **black men** interviewed indicated that there was no longer blatant racism in company XXX but were quick to point out that a "broerskap" and "Old Boys Network" existed from which they felt excluded. If one was not part of this, one's opportunities for advancement were stunted. Those that felt that racism was still evident, offered the following examples of the fear of victimisation by managers, differential treatment by co-workers and management, the lack of training opportunities and "vibes" picked up from white co-workers that they did not really want to work with him.

Amongst the sample group of **black women**, the overriding attitude was one that racism albeit in subtle forms still existed. There was the perception that it was dependant on who one's manager was and that there were some managers who would deliberately hold their black sub-ordinates back. A further attitude expressed was that one had to work twice as hard as one's white colleagues for the same recognition and that as a black person, one had to fight for access to information and training. Several of the interviewees pointed to the number of black women and men in senior/management positions in company XXX as further proof of racism and sexism. There was consensus amongst this group that sexism still operated in company XXX but the group afforded it less emphasis than the issue of racism. Whilst some women noted that they had not personally experienced acts of sexism, one only had to look at firstly, the number of black women in the organisation and secondly, that there had been less than a handful of black female managers in the entire history of company XXX. It was further mentioned that black women faced sexism by their black colleagues who because of their culture perceived women as sub-ordinate to men. These women also perceived their opportunities within company XXX as very limited, as black men or white women were preferred in promotions. There was also

a perception that affirmative action favoured men above women.

Amongst the **white men** interviewed, the majority did not believe that racism still existed within company XXX. Amongst the minority of this group, one interviewee had been told by black colleagues that this organisation was racist whilst another deemed that racism would always exist but that the company should prevent "pockets of racism" from forming and that at no time should individual's beliefs be allowed to influence another person's development. All the white men interviewed believed that sexism had been eradicated in company XXX and that women were afforded the same opportunities as men.

In contrast, the majority of **white women** interviewed felt that sexism was still operating within company XXX. There was an acknowledgement that operating in the South African corporate context (white, male dominated environment) was difficult and that stereotypes were shaped by the culture of South Africans and brought into company XXX. One interviewee pointed out that company XXX had made great strides given the environment it operated in. In support of why the majority perceived sexism to be operating in company XXX, explanations given included the failure to advance despite good performance evaluations, women were treated like "second-class citizens", there were differentials in remuneration packages, women had to work harder than men to get the same recognition, an "Old Boys Network" was still operating and that black men had a better chance of advancing than women in this organisation. When questioned on racism in company XXX, most white women interviewees commented that the company had been successful in eliminating it. However, they noted that there were certain "pockets" where racism was still occurring. One interviewee believed that these attitudes were attributable to management in those areas.

#### ***CLUSTER : PERCEPTIONS OF THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMME***

##### **Theme : Lack of awareness**

The theme of a lack of awareness and knowledge about the programme was a key theme that emerged during the pilot study and again in the main study.

In the sample group of **black men**, all interviewees were aware that the programme existed and that there was a manager running the programme. The majority of these interviewees were able to broadly outline the purpose of the programme but were unaware of the progress being made.

Amongst the **black women** interviewed, the level of awareness was also high. Interviewees knew that the programme existed and that there was a manager overseeing the programme. However, the majority of this sample group were unable to identify what the programme was all about and how it could help them.

All **white male** interviewees were aware that the programme had existed but there was confusion as to whether it was still in existence, what its role was and whose its beneficiaries were.

Only one interviewee in the sample group of **white women** did not know that the affirmative action programme

existed. However, the remaining interviewees were unable to relate much more about the programme other than it existed, that it was not working and that it was no more than the equal opportunity programme that had operated for many years.

**Theme : Communication**

The second theme in this cluster is closely related to the first because it is through poor communication that a lack of awareness and understanding of company XXX's affirmative action programme exists. All interviewees in the four sample groups emphasised the need to communicate what the programme was all about. This lack of communication fuelled the scepticism about the programme and the degree of commitment from management to making a success of the programme. The lack of feedback on the programme's progress was also cited as a problem and further deemed as adding to the perceived secrecy about the programme. Poor two-way communication was an added dimension to the theme of communication.

**Black interviewees** stressed the need to find out what employees felt about the programme and the need for employees to be involved in the determination of such strategy.

**White interviewees** in turn, felt that two-way communication was integral in addressing the unrealistic expectations of beneficiaries, the negative attitudes of employees towards the programme as well as the fears and uncertainty about how the programme would affect non-beneficiaries.

Thus, the overwhelming attitude was that the affirmative action programme should be actively promoted and the channels of communication kept open for concerns and problems to be raised.

**Theme : Loss of "good black people"**

Many of the black interviewees and one white male respondent made the observation that company XXX was losing a significant number of "good black people".

**Black men** attributed this to blacks feeling frustrated within company XXX due to a lack of opportunities and inadequate career planning.

The **white male** believed this could be ascribed to the "sink or swim" mentality that was evident in company XXX i.e., the lack of adequate support structures. Concern was also expressed about the high turnover of the person in the position of Affirmative Action Programme Manager. That he was leaving was felt to be indicative of the state of the affirmative action programme.

**Theme : Satisfaction/dissatisfaction with performance appraisals and advancement opportunities/promotions**

The **black interviewees** expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which promotions were occurring in the organisation.

Amongst the sample group of **black men**, most of the interviewees perceived that promotions were not based on merit and that instead advancement was occurring through an alliance with the right people ("broerskap" and "Old Boys Network"). Individuals also pointed to what they called "black positions" in the company as evidence of how promotions were not based on merit. These individuals also felt that black people are placed in jobs that do not allow them "to grow" and that they are given careers "that won't take you anywhere". One person commented that he thought black managers were in those positions because they needed to be "shut up". As such they had been co-opted into the system.

The predominant attitude amongst the **black women** interviewed was that "good people" were being overlooked for promotion and that the scope for advancement of black women in company XXX was very limited. Many of the women interviewed did not see themselves advancing and felt that in order to do so they would have to leave company XXX. Dissatisfaction with the way performance appraisals and career planning were conducted and followed up, was also expressed. They explained that whilst ratings in their performance appraisals were good, they continued to remain in the "same boring and unchallenging " job. They described their jobs as lacking in responsibility, where they were not allowed to use their skills and qualifications. They felt that they needed to be given an opportunity to prove themselves so that they could be eligible for promotion.

The attitudes of the **white male** interviewees were entirely different on these issues. The majority of this group felt that no bias existed in performance appraisals and that promotions were based on merit. A contrary attitude to this was that management was far too lenient with some black employees whose performance was lacking. It was also noted that there was apprehension amongst management to put pressure on these individuals to perform, for fear that they would be labelled racist.

Attitudes within the sample group of **white women** varied with the majority responding that there was not adequate scope for women's advancement in company XXX. Their attitude was that women in general were overlooked in the case of promotions and that a system of seniority and an "Old Boys Network" still seemed to be operating. Only one interviewee expressed dissatisfaction with the appraisal system and career planning because despite good ratings and repeated requests to be involved in another area of the business, her request had not been addressed. One interviewee even went as far as to state that an anti-black and female sentiment existed amongst management and that this was retarding black men and all women from advancing in company XXX.

#### **Theme : Lack of adequate grievance procedures**

This theme was only raised by the sample groups of **black men and women**. Interviewees communicated that their grievances were not dealt with. Forums had been held by the affirmative action programme manager in the past to raise and discuss grievances but nothing was ever done about these complaints. The same grievances were raised time after time.

**CLUSTER : PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME****Theme : Minimal impact on all employees**

Amongst the sample groups of **black interviewees**, the impact of the affirmative action programme was seen to be minimal. Only one black female (graduate and hired fairly recently by company) identified herself as a beneficiary of affirmative action. The overriding benefit of the programme to her was that she had been hired. She had experienced difficulty in finding a job (because she was well-qualified, she attributed her lack of success to being black and female) and believed that company XXX had hired her because of its affirmative action programme. She felt very positive about this. Her understanding of the programme was that she had been hired despite the fact that she was black and female and not because of it i.e., her colour and gender had not been to her disadvantage. However, this individual was beginning to feel disenchanting with the organisation and its "so-called affirmative action programme" because whilst she had been hired, her subsequent training and development had been ignored.

The impact of the affirmative action programme was seen to be minimal on the sample groups of white men and women. None of these interviewees felt that the programme had affected their opportunities within company XXX.

The sample group of **white men** did not anticipate that the programme would affect their scope for advancement in the future. However, many of the interviewees pointed out that the effects of affirmative action legislation and such a programme in organisations, would be felt by their children because resources were increasingly scarce and the competition for these resources had increased.

Some of the **white women** however, related that opportunities for advancement were stunted because of the lack of a properly implemented affirmative action programme that targeted white women and sought to ensure equal opportunity for them. One white woman interviewee believed that black men were considered for promotion before white women and as such this was retarding women's advancement within company XXX.

**Theme : Solo role**

Three of the **black interviewees**, one female and two males, were the only black individuals in their departments (**solo role**) in company XXX. Two of these individuals, one from either gender, expressed a difficulty with this situation. They felt lonely and left out. Information was not passed on to them by their colleagues and they felt that they did not have the support of their colleagues.

**CLUSTER : CO-WORKER'S PERCEPTIONS AND SUPPORT****Theme : Evaluation of performance**

Amongst the **black male** interviewees, all respondents saw themselves as good performers whose performance appraisal ratings supported this notion. They felt confident in the work that they did and were generally happy in company XXX. The majority of this sample group noted that when starting a new job within company XXX, there was a pressure to prove oneself, often despite many years of service and a proven track record in the company. These interviewees also noted that sometimes their performance elicited surprise, that is their white colleagues were surprised when they evidenced competence and were able to do a job. One individual related how his colleagues had double-checked his work (but no-one had been checking their work) as though they were not confident of the standard of his work. He resented this because as he pointed out, if he was incompetent, why had he been appointed to that job. None of the black males interviewed saw their jobs or the attitude of other employees in the organisation as undermining their self-confidence or their belief in their ability to do the job. Interviewees however, did report that it was often difficult to not doubt oneself when those around you did.

Within the sample group of **black women**, various explanations were offered of how they were evaluated by others. These included that others doubted their competence, the work that they were given did not give them the opportunity to prove themselves and that their white colleagues and bosses were reluctant to acknowledge their good work. They felt that they were first evaluated as a black person, then as a woman and then as an employee who may have skills. One individual related how at first she had doubted her own competence but then realised that she was competent and well-qualified but needed to adjust to her new environment and learn her new job. Similar to black male interviewees, the black women respondents felt that there was pressure to prove themselves, a pressure that was not placed on their white colleagues. However, they also related that once competence was established and white colleagues got to know them, there was a greater acceptance of their ability to contribute within their work environment.

A very positive theme that emerged from the interviews with **white men and women** was their evaluation of their black colleagues. Many of them indicated that the black individual's employed by company XXX were of a very high calibre. Furthermore, these interviewees when questioned about the performance of their black colleagues, noted that some were very good performers whilst others were bad. However, they were quick to point out that this was not a colour or gender issue as amongst the white employees there were also good and poor performers.

The **white men** interviewed disagreed that the myth of black incompetence still existed because as they pointed out, the black people in company XXX were of a high standard.

A small minority of **white women** felt that the myth about black people being incompetent was still evident in certain areas of company XXX and that there was a need for blacks to prove themselves to their colleagues and bosses.

**Theme : On-the-job training and support**

A theme highlighted by the **black interviewees** was the lack of on-the-job-training and support. Many of these individuals felt that there was not adequate guidance given when they first started new jobs. Colleagues were reluctant to help them, information was seldom passed on and their bosses were not responding to their requests for training. They experienced frustration because learning the job took that much longer and they were unsure of their progress. Some of the interviewees expressed the need for regular feedback on the quality and quantity of work so that they could monitor their progress and work on those areas that needed to be improved on.

**REFORMULATING AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMME**

A theme that became evident during the interviews was the desire to have a new and improved programme. The overwhelming attitude was that affirmative action was necessary and that an affirmative action programme could work in company XXX, given a few important changes and improvements to the current programme.

**Theme : Communication and education**

The first theme in contributing to the reformulation of an affirmative action programme was the need for communication and education. Interviewees communicated that they wished to know more about the affirmative action programme, what its objectives were, how its progress was measured, who its beneficiaries were as well as what the programme had to offer its beneficiaries. Linked to this, grievances needed to be heard and addressed. Part of this communication process was the education of employees as to what affirmative action meant and why it was necessary.

Many of the **black interviewees** expressed the need to be open about the programme and that the secrecy surrounding it fuelled the negative attitudes about it, formed by a lack of understanding and knowledge about the programme. Black interviewees also verbalised a desire for company XXX to be more open about how performance appraisals were conducted, how remuneration packages were determined and what criteria were used in the process of selecting people for promotions.

**Theme : Addressing attitudes**

The need to address the attitudes of employees was a further theme that emerged.

**Black respondents** believed that an affirmative action programme could only work if white employees, in particular management, changed their attitudes and supported the programme.

**White interviewees** stressed the need to address the expectations of black employees as well as the fears and prejudices of white workers and management.

**Theme : Training and development**

The interface that received the most support in terms of an affirmative action policy, was that of training and development and yet this was one area where **black interviewees** felt they were not being supported. On-the-job training and more guidance from colleagues and bosses when starting a new job was requested. Furthermore, they did not want to be put in "dead-end" jobs. They expressed the desire to have jobs which are meaningful and which will allow them to grow and prove themselves.

**White interviewees** felt that the training and development offered by company XXX was sufficient for the needs of its employees.

**Theme : Mentors**

A **support structure** deemed as integral to that of integrating new employees into the business, was that of mentoring.

The **black interviewees** saw the affirmative action programme manager as something of a mentor, although one may argue that he was more of a trouble-shooter. Nevertheless, he was someone that they could discuss their problems with. One black interviewee noted that the colour of the mentor did not matter, rather it was their attitude towards black people and concern for their development and advancement that was important.

Some of the **white interviewees** who were not supportive of an affirmative action programme, felt that mentors or coaches was an excellent way of supporting staff (not necessarily black people). A few individuals remembered that a mentoring programme had existed but that it had not been successful. Explanations given included a poor match between mentor and mentee, inadequate training for the mentors and lack of motivation in mentor and mentee.

***CLUSTER : REDEFINING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION***

Allied to the above cluster, is redefining affirmative action according to the themes that emerged from the interviews. This cluster can be distinguished from the above cluster as it deals with more global and strategic issues whilst the above cluster dealt more the practical issues i.e., the implementation of an affirmative action policy.

**Theme : Rationale and need for affirmative action**

The rationale and need for affirmative action was a theme that contributed to the cluster of redefining affirmative action.

**Black interviewees** were less concerned with the rationale and need for affirmative action being its business viability than with the humanitarian perspective thereof. That is, they felt that affirmative action should not be implemented because company XXX would eventually be forced by the government to engage in affirmative action practises but because the company genuinely cared about the development and advancement of all of its employees.

The issue that was raised by the **white male** interviewees was the need for affirmative action to be seen as a viable business proposition. Not only did it need to be perceived in terms of not negatively affecting productivity or resulting in white resentment but also in terms of ensuring the competitiveness of company XXX i.e., ensuring that there are enough competent people to manage the business in the future. One white male interviewee pointed out that affirmative action may be more readily accepted by white males if it were seen to be critical to the preservation of company XXX.

#### **Theme : Education and social responsibility**

A second theme that emerged was the need for affirmative action to encompass a community focus on education. Interviewees from all four sample groups stressed the importance of the company XXX's social responsibility to invest in education. Suggestions included the education of employee's children, encouraging employees to study further, offering bursaries in exchange for a work contract after successful completion of the degree and hiring more matriculants who could then study part-time through the technikon.

#### **Theme : Beneficiaries of Affirmative Action**

A further theme contributing to redefining affirmative action was looking at who the beneficiaries of affirmative action should be.

Amongst the sample group of **black men**, the majority believed that affirmative action was not about skin colour or gender but rather should focus on that sector of the population that was disadvantaged. There was also the attitude that affirmative action was needed for white women but this was seen as ensuring that they were not victims of sexist practises and denied equal opportunities. Thus there was the recognition that a different type of affirmative action was needed for white women than for black people.

The sample group of **black women** were a little more specific in who they thought the beneficiaries of affirmative action should be. The primary group they believed, should be black people and the secondary group white women. This focus was felt to be justifiable given the discrimination and disadvantage experienced. Only one individual stated that affirmative action should be for everyone and that it should merely ensure that everyone had equal opportunities. She explained that she would not like to be hired or promoted because she was black but because she was well-qualified. A further dimension of this beneficiary theme was that the beneficiaries should not only be graduates. It was felt that the focus on graduates made the policy accessible to only a small number of blacks, specifically those that had been fortunate enough to have the resources to finance a degree. Rather, matriculants should also be hired and trained or further educated.

Amongst the **white men** interviewed, the majority felt that affirmative action's beneficiaries should be black people because of the disadvantage experienced. One individual pointed out that whilst this may be the case in practise, the focus of affirmative action should be disadvantaged people and could thus include all races. The majority felt that affirmative action was not necessary for white women as there were a number of white women in senior positions and an adequate pool of them, within company XXX.

Attitudes were very varied within the sample group of **white women**. Some interviewees felt that affirmative action should be for blacks as well as for white women as they were also under-represented at certain levels in company XXX. In contrast, others felt that affirmative action should be a global employment policy for everyone. A third attitude expressed was that affirmative action should target those that were disadvantaged and that this did not mean only black people. Similar to the group of black women interviewed, it was felt that affirmative action should also not only be for graduates because many individuals had done very well in company XXX without a degree.

*(b) Quantitative Results from Open-ended Questions.*

**Question A : What do you understand by the term Affirmative Action?**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A	59	33	48	64	90
B	7	11	17	-	-
C	11	23	-	20	-
D	6	17	9	-	-
E	2	4	-	-	4
F	4	12	-	-	4
G	4	-	18	-	-
H	7	-	8	16	2

A - Affirmative action is a proactive policy targeting the disadvantaged/ underprivileged sector of the population (black people) who in the past have been discriminated against. Affirmative action seeks to level the playing field by training and supporting black people so that they can compete equally for jobs that have been hitherto denied to them.

B - Affirmative action is a policy that works together with equal opportunity - it ensures true equal opportunity.

C - Affirmative action is legal discrimination. It means hiring blacks over whites, even when they are less qualified, at higher salaries than they are worth. It means forcing companies to employ certain groups of people in order to meet quotas.

D - Affirmative action seeks to address the demographic imbalances in the organisation such that the employee profile of the company more accurately reflects that of the population.

E - Affirmative action means the elimination of job discrimination at all levels in the organisation. It is an attempt by the organisation to remove bigotry and discrimination from the workplace.

F - No idea, it is not clear.

G - Creation of job opportunities for blacks and promoting them into management positions that they qualify for.

H - Other. See Appendix 8 for further details.

EXPLANATION OF TABLE
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In response to question A, 59% of the Total Group, 33% of white women and 48% of black women gave response A. Responses A through H for the different sample groups total 100%
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**Question B : In your opinion, is Equal Opportunity different to Affirmative Action. Please explain your answer.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A	38	71	9	59	14
B	21	4	23	29	28
C	20	-	32	6	43
D	14	25	27	6	-
E	7	-	9	-	15

A - Yes, affirmative action focuses on race and gender using these as a basis for discriminating between people whilst equal opportunity does not.

B - Yes, equal opportunity and affirmative action work together. Affirmative action ensures true equal opportunity.

C - Yes, equal opportunity assumes that a culture of merit exists where everyone can compete equally. Affirmative action is based on the assumption that due to past discriminatory practises and an educational disadvantage, black people cannot compete equally with whites. Affirmative action is about creating a culture of merit so that all can compete on an equal footing.

D - No. They are the same thing.

E - Other.

Question D : How has Affirmative Action affected you, if at all?

RESPONSES	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A	77	77	70	61	100
B	8	12	-	22	-
C	8	-	30	-	-
D	2	8	-	-	-
E	2	-	-	8	-
F	3	3	-	9	-

A - No effect.

B - Have had to put up with the incompetence of black people which creates a greater workload for their colleagues. Often have to put up with excuse of being black.

C - Helped individual get new or different job.

D - Seen black people demoralised because not able to cope with job.

E - Seen competent black staff come into organisation.

F - Other.

Question E : How do you anticipate Affirmative Action affecting you in the future, if at all?

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A -TOTAL	36	44	33	19	46
A 1	10	19	-	19	-
A 2	14	-	33	-	23
A 3	6	-	-	-	23
A 4	6	25	-	-	-
B	21	-	25	43	14
C	17	-	38	-	32
D	3	5	-	-	8
E	5	19	-	-	-
F	5	19	-	-	-
G	3	-	-	14	-
H	10	13	4	24	-

A TOTAL - No effect.

1 - no reasons offered.

2 - no commitment from company so will not be implemented properly.

3 - not applicable in work environment.

4 - if implemented properly, no effect.

B - With proper implementation, hope that this will mean getting good people into company XXX, monitoring and supporting them and encouraging their development. It must not mean promoting incompetents or lowering the standards of entrance requirements.

C - Will ensure growth in job, get recognition that is deserved.

D - Should not be implemented because programme does not work.

E - Will result in the increasing incompetence of staff.

F - Will lose opportunity to blacks.

G - Will increase the frustration level of whites.

H - Other.

**Question G : What is your knowledge and understanding of company XXX's Affirmative Action Programme?**

RESPONSES	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A	54	52	56	44	54
B	15	17	24	-	22
C	12	18	4	19	8
D	12	13	12	12	12
E	4	-	-	19	-
F	3	-	4	6	4

A - Nothing, very little, has ceased to exist.

B - Affords black people (and sometimes white women) development and promotional opportunities.

C - Exists but is experiencing problems. Business objectives take priority. Affirmative Action Programme Manager has no real power to change things. Needs alot of work. Lacks proper implementation.

D - Pure lip-service in this company, fulfilment of social expectation, playing the numbers game, placing of blacks in token positions.

E - Has strong focus in company. There is a manager handling the programme. Has good reputation.

F - Other.

**Question H : Is the principle of Equal Opportunity applied as it should be in company XXX.  
Please elaborate further than a simple 'Yes' or 'No' and justify your answer.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A	51	24	82	24	74
B	32	64	10	50	4
C	9	-	4	13	18
D	8	12	4	13	4

A - No, differential treatment exists, racism still exists, blacks have to work twice as hard as whites for same recognition. Different remuneration packages. Promotions not occurring on merit.

B - Yes, although it does depend on the manager as to how consistently it is applied. Yes, with benefits and salary packages. Yes, it cannot afford to do otherwise else the company will lose market share. Better than other companies. Yes, can be seen in the number of blacks and women that occupy senior positions in organisation.

C - Yes, but because of past discrimination and disadvantage, blacks need more than equal opportunity.

D - Don't Know.

**Question J : In your opinion, what are the biggest obstacles to the effective implementation of an Affirmative Action Programme in company XXX?**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A	33	34	33	13	52
B	18	10	23	17	21
C	10	21	13	7	-
D	7	7	10	7	6
E	4	14	-	-	-
F	3	-	2	7	2
G	11	-	8	37	-
H	14	14	11	12	19

A - Attitudes of racism, sexism, paternalism. Resentment, refusal to acknowledge the need for change. Lack of acceptance of programme.

B - Lack of commitment from management - top management as well as line management. Lack of accountability for programme. Managers unprepared to change.

C - Lack of education and communication about programme.

D - Lack of adequately skilled black people. Lack of aggressive hiring to get them into organisation. Inability to hold onto good blacks. Failure to risk black appointments.

E - Failure to recognise good people and promote them on merit and ability instead of favouritism.

F - Failure of business to grow sufficiently, downsizing, breaking up of company, business too competitive, economic times, company not prepared to bear short-term cost of programme, no incentive to management to manage programme properly.

G - Customer prejudice.

H - Other.

**Question M : What are the positive aspects of company XXX's Affirmative Action Programme?**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
A	35	29	55	40	18
B	27	50	10	20	27
C	8	7	-	20	5
D	6	-	5	-	18
E	24	14	30	20	32

A - There are none.

B - Recognition by company XXX that something needs to be done, although this is only an agreement in principle and has not followed through into implementation.

C - Some progress, albeit not enough has been made.

D - Good development and training

E - Other.

*(c) Quantitative Results from Closed Questions*

The closed questions in the questionnaire and the percentile responses to these for each sample group, have been grouped into predetermined clusters and are shown in Tables 1 to 38. Please note that not all the results of this section are shown. The "best" questions from the item pool (Oppenheim,1991) have been selected. Furthermore, several of those questions which merely serve to duplicate the results in the qualitative section have also been removed.

Given the sample sizes used, differences of five percent or less should not be regarded as significant, whilst large differences are typically regarded to be in the range of thirty percent (Weisberg et al.,1987). This must be taken into account when reading the tables.

The tables are grouped into the following categories :

- \* General Attitudes and Perceptions of affirmative action
- \* Acceptance of the Need and Philosophy of affirmative action
- \* Acceptance of Implementation Methods of affirmative action
- \* Perception of the effects of affirmative action
- \* Acceptance of Company XXX's affirmative action programme
- \* Perception of Effectiveness of Company XXX's affirmative action programme
- \* Perception of beneficiaries and effects of programme on employees
- \* Perception of stereotypes, perceived discrimination and the need for change

## GENERAL ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

**TABLE 1:** In order to be able to ignore race and gender in employment decisions in the long-term, we need to focus on race and gender in the short-term, such that people will have an equal chance of success.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	27	15	42	0	50
Agree	43	44	29	65	32
Don't Know	9	11	10	5	9
Disagree	16	22	14	20	9
Strongly Disagree	5	8	5	10	0

**TABLE 2:** Affirmative action undermines the effectiveness of the organisation because lesser qualified blacks are hired and/or promoted who cannot perform adequately on the job.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	15	22	0	30	9
Agree	31	52	14	30	27
Don't Know	8	4	19	10	0
Disagree	30	22	48	25	23
Strongly Disagree	16	0	19	5	41

**TABLE 3:** Affirmative action is a system which benefits one group at the expense of another.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	6	11	5	5	5
Agree	30	56	5	45	14
Don't Know	10	7	14	10	9
Disagree	37	19	52	40	36
Strongly Disagree	17	7	24	0	36

## ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEED AND PHILOSOPHY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

**TABLE 4:** Affording black men and women equal opportunity in the workplace, is not enough to overcome the disadvantage caused by the social, economic and racial discrimination experienced in the past. Black men and women require special opportunities and treatment.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	24	15	34	15	41
Agree	32	33	29	40	27
Don't Know	1	4	0	0	0
Disagree	28	22	27	30	23
Strongly Disagree	10	26	10	15	9

**TABLE 5:** White women need special opportunities and treatment because they are having to deal with a male dominated corporate culture that inherently discriminates against them.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	9	19	0	0	18
Agree	29	26	33	20	36
Don't Know	5	0	10	-	9
Disagree	43	33	47	70	23
Strongly Disagree	14	22	10	10	14

**TABLE 6:** Due to the social, economic and educational discrimination experienced by blacks in the past, blacks and whites do not compete on an equal footing. Thus in reality, equal opportunity does not result in giving everyone an equal chance.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	34	14	43	10	68
Agree	38	41	24	60	27
Don't Know	5	4	5	5	5
Disagree	17	30	23	15	0
Strongly Disagree	6	11	5	10	0

**TABLE 7:** Black women as a group, have been the target of racism AND sexism in the past. Accordingly, they should be the primary beneficiaries of black advancement strategies.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	15	4	33	0	23
Agree	32	41	33	20	32
Don't Know	10	7	14	0	18
Disagree	36	44	14	60	27
Strongly Disagree	7	4	6	20	0

**TABLE 8:** The development of women, irrespective of race, is as important an issue as that of black development.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	30	26	43	5	46
Agree	43	48	52	35	36
Don't Know	5	0	0	15	5
Disagree	17	22	0	35	9
Strongly Disagree	5	4	5	10	4

## ACCEPTANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION METHODS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

**TABLE 9: Preferential treatment is an acceptable policy when hiring/employing black individuals.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	11	0	10	5	27
Agree	22	14	28	20	27
Don't Know	7	4	0	10	14
Disagree	42	52	62	30	23
Strongly Disagree	18	30	0	35	9

**TABLE 10: Preferential treatment is not an acceptable policy when promoting black individuals.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	24	26	20	35	23
Agree	46	66	33	60	37
Don't Know	3	0	10	0	5
Disagree	20	4	23	5	26
Strongly Disagree	7	4	14	0	9

**TABLE 11: Preferential treatment is acceptable when training black men and women.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	19	19	10	15	32
Agree	44	34	52	55	36
Don't Know	5	0	5	0	14
Disagree	19	30	33	5	9
Strongly Disagree	13	17	0	25	9

**TABLE 12:** Whilst a basic level of competence is necessary, organisations need to lower the standards that they use when hiring blacks. The lowering of standards under these circumstances is acceptable.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	10	8	5	15	14
Agree	10	7	5	10	18
Don't Know	8	0	19	5	9
Disagree	36	33	47	35	27
Strongly Disagree	36	52	24	35	32

**TABLE 13:** The government must legislate the hiring and promotion of black men and women, as the generosity, conscience or goodwill of the private sector cannot be relied on to ensure the advancement and development of this group of people.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	10	0	24	5	31
Agree	20	7	24	15	32
Don't Know	13	15	24	0	14
Disagree	28	41	9	35	9
Strongly Disagree	29	37	19	45	14

## PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

**TABLE 14:** Affirmative action delegitimizes the achievements of blacks because others presume that they were hired under affirmative action and are thus incompetent and under-qualified.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	7	19	0	0	9
Agree	32	26	38	30	32
Don't Know	16	14	24	20	5
Disagree	33	37	24	45	27
Strongly Disagree	12	4	14	5	27

**TABLE 15:** Blacks, the beneficiaries of affirmative action, experience a lack of self-confidence because they are perceived by others as incompetent and in need of assistance in the form of affirmative action.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	4	0	0	0	18
Agree	21	30	14	15	23
Don't Know	28	33	19	60	0
Disagree	39	37	57	25	36
Strongly Disagree	8	0	10	0	23

**TABLE 16:** Blacks have unrealistic expectations of what an affirmative action programme has to offer them.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	7	11	0	5	13
Agree	21	41	14	25	5
Don't Know	37	37	24	70	18
Disagree	26	11	52	0	41
Strongly Disagree	9	0	10	0	23

**TABLE 17:** The failure of black advancement programmes is often explained in terms of the lack of motivation or lack of qualifications on the part of black individuals. However, fault often lies with the organisation for failing to adequately support these individuals within the work environment.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	22	11	28	0	49
Agree	38	37	38	35	41
Don't Know	20	26	24	30	0
Disagree	18	26	10	30	5
Strongly Disagree	2	0	0	5	5

**TABLE 18:** The promotion of blacks in the future will impact directly on the promotion opportunities available to whites. This is acceptable given that in the past whites were afforded opportunities that were not rightfully earned but rather gained through the discrimination of black people.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	20	0	24	0	54
Agree	28	30	33	25	27
Don't Know	16	15	19	15	14
Disagree	27	44	24	40	0
Strongly Disagree	9	11	0	20	5

**TABLE 19:** Under a policy of affirmative action, whites feel resentment towards blacks for being preferred in employment, training and promotion opportunities.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	18	11	14	10	36
Agree	36	37	33	25	50
Don't Know	27	22	43	40	4
Disagree	15	26	5	25	5
Strongly Disagree	4	4	5	0	5

## ACCEPTANCE OF COMPANY XXX'S AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMME

**TABLE 20:** I am satisfied with the company's decision to endorse a policy of affirmative action.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	25	11	24	20	45
Agree	36	41	43	45	14
Don't Know	16	15	14	15	18
Disagree	12	26	10	5	9
Strongly Disagree	11	7	9	15	14

**TABLE 21:** Company XXX's affirmative action policy of focusing on blacks is justifiable.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	16	4	19	5	36
Agree	37	33	38	55	23
Don't Know	23	22	19	15	36
Disagree	15	37	19	5	0
Strongly Disagree	9	4	5	20	5

## PERCEPTION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPANY'S AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMME

**TABLE 22:** I am satisfied with the implementation of the company's affirmative action programme.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	8	7	10	0	14
Agree	20	11	29	35	5
Don't Know	40	56	21	45	36
Disagree	14	19	20	10	9
Strongly Disagree	18	7	20	10	36

**TABLE 23:** There is a high degree of confidence in Company XXX's affirmative action programme.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	2	0	0	0	9
Agree	7	7	10	5	5
Don't Know	37	52	38	40	18
Disagree	31	33	33	30	27
Strongly Disagree	23	8	19	25	41

**TABLE 24:** In Company XXX, white women should also be included in the affirmative action programme.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	9	7	5	0	23
Agree	32	37	42	15	36
Don't Know	26	11	29	40	23
Disagree	27	41	24	30	13
Strongly Disagree	6	4	0	15	5

**TABLE 25:** The development and promotion of black women in Company XXX is neglected.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	15	7	28	0	23
Agree	26	11	52	20	22
Don't Know	32	43	10	40	36
Disagree	22	33	10	35	9
Strongly Disagree	5	4	0	5	10

**TABLE 26:** People in Company XXX continue to "tip-toe" around, that is avoid, the issues of racism, affirmative action and black development.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	22	3	19	15	50
Agree	34	41	38	15	41
Don't Know	22	19	38	20	9
Disagree	20	30	5	50	0
Strongly Disagree	2	7	0	0	0

**TABLE 27:** It is my perception that blacks in Company XXX are satisfied with the attention that is being paid to their development and promotion within the company.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	2	0	10	0	0
Agree	6	19	0	5	0
Don't Know	29	51	9	50	5
Disagree	35	26	29	35	50
Strongly Disagree	28	4	52	10	45

**TABLE 28:** The hiring and promotion of black people into certain positions in Company XXX has been no more than window-dressing.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	14	7	10	10	27
Agree	28	30	33	15	32
Don't Know	22	11	24	30	23
Disagree	33	48	24	40	18
Strongly Disagree	3	4	9	5	0

**TABLE 29:** The training and development programmes offered in Company XXX are inadequate in preparing employees to contribute within their work environment.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	10	7	10	5	18
Agree	25	22	24	25	27
Don't Know	15	22	14	15	9
Disagree	43	42	38	45	46
Strongly Disagree	7	7	14	10	0

**TABLE 30:** The affirmative action strategy and implementation thereof, has been well-communicated to all employees.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	2	0	0	0	9
Agree	10	7	19	10	5
Don't Know	9	7	14	5	9
Disagree	56	56	29	85	54
Strongly Disagree	23	30	38	0	23

**PERCEPTION OF BENEFICIARIES AND EFFECTS OF PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYEES**

**TABLE 31:** In Company XXX, whites have their doubts that their black colleagues, who when promoted into positions of responsibility and authority, will succeed in those positions.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	15	4	19	5	32
Agree	36	30	38	30	45
Don't Know	20	18	24	20	18
Disagree	24	33	14	45	5
Strongly Disagree	5	15	5	0	0

**TABLE 32:** Blacks in Company XXX, unlike their white counterparts are not left to get on with their jobs. They are under constant scrutiny.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	15	0	29	0	32
Agree	19	4	38	10	23
Don't Know	15	7	19	15	18
Disagree	44	70	14	65	27
Strongly Disagree	7	19	0	10	0

**TABLE 33:** Whilst Company XXX does demand a certain level of competence of all current and prospective employees, allowances are made for the blacks within the organisation.

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	5	4	0	15	0
Agree	23	44	4	30	16
Don't Know	29	30	29	25	32
Disagree	37	22	48	30	46
Strongly Disagree	6	0	19	0	7

**PREVALENCE OF STEREOTYPES, PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION AND THE NEED FOR CHANGE**

**TABLE 34: Sexism is still occurring in Company XXX.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	19	22	38	0	14
Agree	35	37	38	20	45
Don't Know	22	15	5	35	36
Disagree	24	26	19	45	5
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0

**TABLE 35: Racism is still prevalent in Company XXX.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	27	8	38	5	55
Agree	27	11	29	30	36
Don't Know	18	30	14	20	9
Disagree	25	44	19	40	0
Strongly Disagree	3	7	0	5	0

**TABLE 36: Every manager's performance assessment should be based on how well they manage and support the development of blacks in Company XXX.**

RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	13	0	19	0	32
Agree	24	12	38	10	36
Don't Know	13	7	5	25	14
Disagree	43	70	38	45	18
Strongly Disagree	7	11	0	20	0

**TABLE 37:** The progress of the affirmative action programme in Company XXX should be monitored closely and the results made known to all in the organisation.

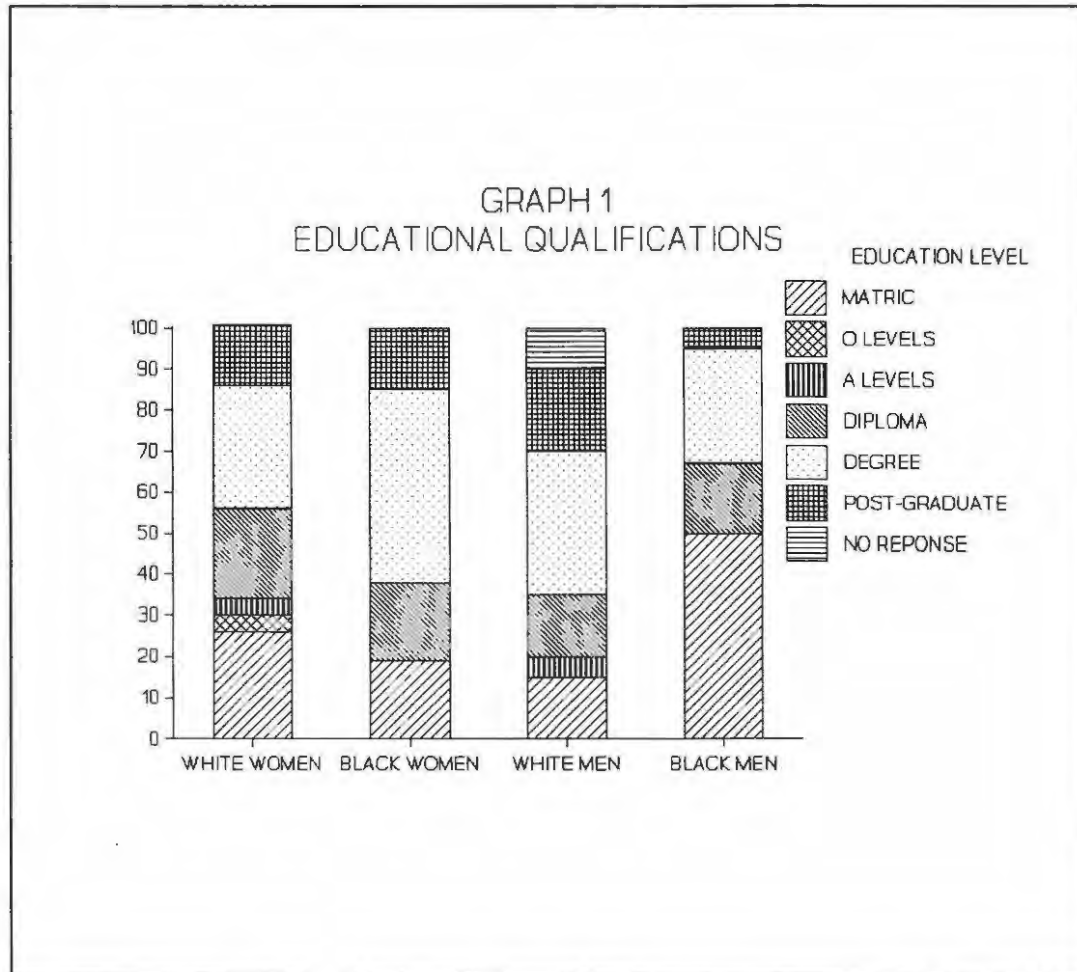
RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	35	14	47	25	58
Agree	50	56	48	65	32
Don't Know	4	4	0	5	5
Disagree	5	15	5	5	0
Strongly Disagree	4	11	0	0	5

**TABLE 38:** It is the responsibility of every single manager in Company XXX to communicate the strategy of Affirmative Action to their subordinates.

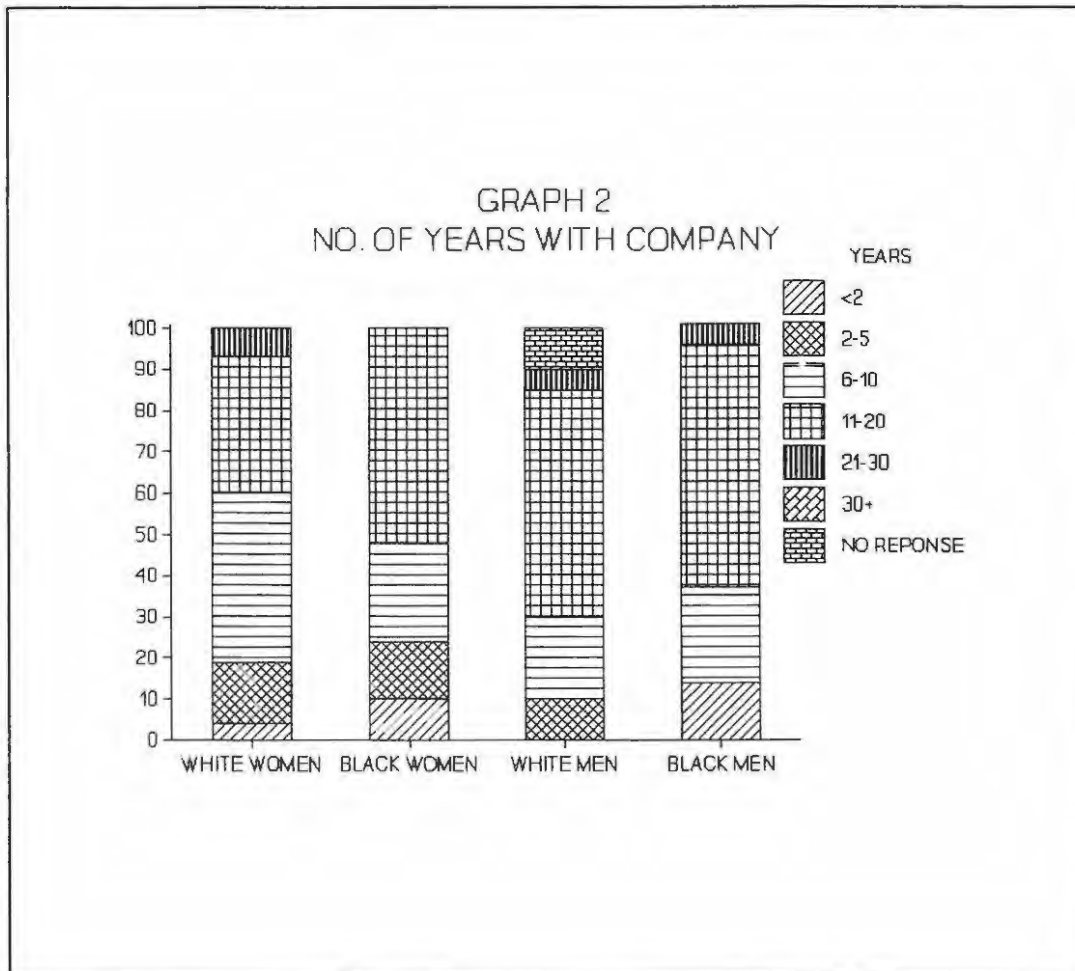
RESPONSE	TOTAL GROUP	WHITE WOMEN	BLACK WOMEN	WHITE MEN	BLACK MEN
Strongly Agree	22	15	43	10	59
Agree	52	70	52	55	32
Don't Know	4	4	5	0	9
Disagree	12	11	0	35	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0

*(d) Demographic Data*

Whilst various demographic details were provided by the respondents, only the educational qualifications and the number of years spent by respondents in the employee of company XXX, are highlighted in Graph 1 & 2, respectively.



The above graph serves to point out how well educated and qualified the respondents from all four sample groups are. This is consistent with the type of industry in which the research organisation operates namely, the information services industry, where the minimum educational qualification held by an employee is a matric. This obviously has implications for the generalizability of the research, particularly to industries where illiteracy is high. It is also significant to note that the black female respondents are the group which evidence the highest percentage of degrees and post-graduate degrees. In contrast, black men are the group with the largest percentage of matriculants.



The above graph which reflects the number of years spent by respondents in the employee of company XXX, shows that fifty percent of the sample groups of white men, black men and black women have been employed by company XXX between eleven and twenty years. A further twenty percent of these three groups have been with the company for more than six but less than ten years. The figures for the sample groups of women reflect the opposite picture with fifty percent having been with company XXX for between six and ten years and thirty percent for more than eleven years but less than twenty.

**(e) Sample Realization**

The actual response rate achieved in the quantitative element of the research was less than anticipated. In the study, three types of non-reponse (Stoker, 1989) could be accounted for. Firstly, questionnaires were not returned by respondents because people had left the organisation during the period of the research. Secondly, questionnaires were returned, with a note explaining that the respondent felt that he/she did not know enough about affirmative action or company XXX's programme to answer the questionnaire. Thirdly, questionnaires were returned with a letter, noting the respondent's refusal to participate. See Appendix 9 for examples of the letters sent to the researcher.

In some instances, where questionnaires were returned with notes, it was not possible to determine from which sample group the questionnaires had been returned, because gender and race details had not been provided and it was not possible to trace the questionnaire to the respondent. Accordingly, the number of questionnaires returned were evenly allocated to all four sample groups.

The final response rate is as follows :

SAMPLE GROUP	QUESTION. SENT OUT <sup>a</sup>	UNIT NON-RESPONSE <sup>b</sup>	QUESTION. RETURNED <sup>c</sup>	ACTUAL % RESPONSE <sup>d</sup>
WHITE WOMEN	50	4	27	59%
WHITE MEN	50	5	24	54%
BLACK WOMEN	40	2	21	55%
BLACK MEN	50	6	22	50%
TOTAL GROUP	190	17	94	56%

## NOTE :

- a - The number of questionnaires sent out to respondents.
- b - The number of unit non-response accounted for (as explained above).
- c - The number of questionnaires returned completed by respondents.
- d - The actual response rate calculated as follows :  $c/(a-b) * 100$

The figures have been rounded off to the nearest percentage point.

*(f) Issues of Reliability and Validity*

Attitudinal questions are far more sensitive than factual questions to changes in wording, context and emphasis such that it is almost impossible to assess reliability by asking the same question in another form, as this constitutes a different question (Oppenheim,1992). In the current study, this problem was overcome in three ways. As suggested by Oppenheim(1992), the questionnaire consisted of sets of questions relating to an underlying attitude so that any bias in one question was cancelled by another. The use of open- and closed- questions also helped to ascertain the reliability of the responses, as answers to the open-questions could be compared to the responses of the closed questions to ensure comprehension of the question and consistency of responses. The results of the study reflect a high consistency in responses. A third way of ensuring reliability was the use of dual data collection techniques (Mouton & Marais,1988) where the responses provided in the questionnaire were consistent with the data that emerged from the interviews.

Assessing the validity of the questionnaire is difficult because of the lack of external criteria available (Oppenheim,1992). This was pertinent to the current research where previous surveys conducted have been limited to the issue of black advancement, which is arguably a different issue to that of affirmative action . As it was difficult to find a suitable external criterion or a strong construct system, the researcher concentrated on content validity i.e., whether the questions were a well-balanced sample of the content domain to be measured (Oppenheim,1992). The researcher ascertains that the questionnaire has high content validity.

The pilot study also served to enhance the validity of the questionnaire, by ensuring that those factors which had the potential to affect the validity of the questionnaire (Schnetler,1989) were taken into account and minimised in the questionnaire used in the main study.

However, where the validity of the quantitative element of the research is potentially weak, the validity of the qualitative/interviews is strong (Taylor & Bogdan,1984), thus enhancing the overall validity of the study. The opposite is also true of the issue of reliability. For whilst the reliability of questionnaires is strong, the reliability of interviews is potentially weak. This is the case because qualitative research emphasises validity whilst quantitative research emphasises reliability and replicability (Taylor & Bogdan,1984). Thus, as noted in the methodology, the dual methods for data collection serve to complement each other and compensate for the other's weaknesses (Dixon,1989).

Thus, it is the opinion of the researcher that the findings of the research are both reliable and valid.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. General Attitudes to and Perceptions of Affirmative Action

#### *(a) Defining Affirmative Action*

Understanding attitudes to affirmative action necessitates the provision of a definition (Clayton & Crosby, 1992) and this was the starting point of the research (see p.80).

The majority of the respondents in the research, defined affirmative action as a policy of targeting the disadvantaged/blacks who have been discriminated against in the past. Its purpose is to level the playing field, by focusing on training, developing and supporting these people so that they can compete equally for jobs that have hitherto been denied to them. Emphasis was placed on the educational disadvantage suffered by black South Africans and the implication was that education was the most important issue needing to be addressed by affirmative action. Issues of full representation of all racial and gender groups and eliminating job discrimination were mentioned but received far less consideration by all four sample groups. The opposite is true in the U.S.A, where the issues of under-representation and discrimination of certain groups (Blanchard, 1989; Clayton and Crosby, 1992) are focal points of the affirmative action policy. Thus what is apparent from this research is that affirmative action in South Africa has derived its own meaning and emphasis namely, that of being perceived primarily in terms of overcoming the educational disadvantages of black people by training and developing them. This emphasis is unique to the South African context and can be understood within this context for the effects of apartheid education have been devastating (Charoux cited in Kemp, 1992; Mpufane, 1992), more so than in other countries such as Zimbabwe where past circumstances have been similar (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992).

However, this emphasis on education may suggest a tendency to conform to what Human and Bowmaker-Falconer (1992) refer to as the deficit model of underpreparedness for the white corporate world. This is based on the assumption that blacks currently do not have the wherewithal to succeed in business and that the only requirement is to educate and train them so that they can take up their place in the organisation as it exists. If they fail under these conditions, they are accused of being stupid and lazy. Human and Bowmaker-Falconer (1992) term this a deficit model because it does not take into account the need for providing an environment in which blacks are provided with adequate support such that they can grow and develop on merit. Black men and both black and white women of the research agreed that the failure of black advancement programmes is often explained in terms of the lack of motivation or lack of qualifications on the part of black individuals but that fault often lies with the organisation for failing to adequately support these individuals (see Table 17, p. 97). As many white men agreed, as disagreed with this attitude.

If affirmative action is to take the focus of addressing the educational disadvantages of blacks, as suggested by the research respondents it must be careful to not adopt the black-advancement model of the past, for then it will have a poor chance of success. Human (1991a) contends that affirmative action programmes instituted by South African organisations often fail because they are based on this black advancement model. Given this emphasis on education and thus a somewhat limited perspective on affirmative action, it would be very easy for organisations to adopt this black advancement model, believing it to be in the interests of the beneficiaries of affirmative action. Company XXX would be very prone to falling prey to this situation, given the attitudes expressed. The respondents tended to perceive education as the panacea for creating equality of opportunity. As noted earlier, this is arguably a limited perspective of affirmative action.

Whilst this emphasis on education implies a positive orientation towards affirmative action, a large percentage of white respondents view it in very negative terms. Amongst the white respondents, twenty percent generally offered an understanding of affirmative action as legal discrimination, where blacks are hired over whites, at higher salaries than they are worth, even when they are less qualified. Affirmative action according to these research participants, means forcing companies to employ certain groups of people in order to meet quotas. This understanding of affirmative action is consistent with Caldwell's (1992) criticisms of the policy namely, that affirmative action results in reverse discrimination, lowering of standards, preferential treatment and quota systems. Advocates of affirmative action challenge these criticisms, noting that they are based on a limited definition of what constitutes affirmative action (Smith & Crosby, in press). However, Caldwell (1992,p.63) is scathing of this defense and accuses proponents of affirmative action of having difficulty in defining exactly what affirmative action is in the real world - "It seems that few want to admit that affirmative action means forcing people into groups to meet quotas and accepting lower standards for the preferred group".

#### *(b) Affirmative Action versus Equal Opportunity*

The second level of analysis in defining affirmative action is contrasting it to equal opportunity (Clayton & Crosby,1992). Research respondents were very familiar with the term of equal opportunity (see p.66) but offered different interpretations of how it differed from the policy of affirmative action.

Amongst the black respondents of the research (see p.81), emphasis was placed on how the two policies complemented each other. These respondents recognised that affirmative action is necessary to ensure true equal opportunity. As Sarakinsky (1991) notes, the two policies are inextricably linked and serve to complement each other for whilst equal opportunity will result in the removal of discrimination, it will not result in the reduction of disadvantage. The black respondents of the research also noted that affirmative action was different to equal opportunity in that it did not assume that a culture of merit existed but rather that steps needed to be taken to ensure that such a system existed where all could compete on an equal footing. This corresponds with what Crosby(in press) says about the policy of equal opportunity namely, that it assumes that we live in a fair world, one where the playing field is not slanted. In contrast, affirmative action assumes that we live in a world where decades or centuries of discrimination have created a slanted playing field and that measures need to be taken to level the playing field.

Amongst white respondents, the dominant attitude was that the two policies differed in the emphasis that is placed by each on the demographic markers of race and gender (see p.81). Where affirmative action focuses on race and/or gender and uses these markers as a basis of discriminating between people, equal opportunity does not. Thus it appears that white respondents are aware of the more obvious difference between the equal opportunity and affirmative action and are less aware of how the two policies complement each other (Sarakinsky, 1991) and the need for the two policies to work together (Clayton & Crosby, 1992).

Clayton and Crosby (1992, p.46) offer a reason for why race and gender need to be taken into account. It is "not because they are the most important considerations when evaluating an individual but because a lack of concern with group differences imposes a false homogeneity in which everyone is assumed to be white and male". The majority of all four sample groups agreed that these demographic markers had to be considered in the short-term if they are to be ignored in the long-term (see Table 1, p.89). However, it is important to question what emphasis will be placed on race and gender in affirmative action. Nacoste (1990) differentiates between the use of universalistic versus particularistic criteria in employment decisions. Universalistic criteria are comprehensive and include the consideration of a variety of factors (qualifications, potential, suitability for the job as well as race and gender) in the selection of individuals. In contrast, the utilisation of particularistic criteria results in only focusing on the race and/or gender of the individual and not on their qualifications or competence. A fair affirmative action programme will give the most weight to universalistic factors. All research respondents noted that qualifications were of utmost importance in the selection of employees (see ps.67 & 68). Thus, in the implementation of an affirmative action programme, the use of universalistic criteria rather than particularistic factors, would be more suitable.

Amongst some of the respondents, particularly the women, there was an understanding of affirmative action as the same policy as equal opportunity and that it was no more than the new term for equal opportunity (see p.66 & 81). This can be understood in the context of the research as company XXX initiated an affirmative action programme whilst still supporting a policy of equal opportunity and failed to adequately educate all employees as to how this policy differed from but complemented that of equal opportunity. The policy of equal opportunity remains an integral part of their Mission Statement and Values.

### *(c) Orientations to Affirmative Action*

In evaluating attitudes to affirmative action amongst white men and women, the predominant feeling was negative, with white women being more negative in their attitudes than white men. This may be attributed to a greater lack of understanding about what constitutes affirmative action and what company XXX's affirmative action programme entails. Crosby (in press) notes that negative attitudes to affirmative action are often the result of a superficial or limited understanding of the term.

The white research respondents perceive affirmative action to be reverse discrimination, a system which benefits one group at the expense of another (see Table 3, p.89). It is seen to undermine the effectiveness of the organisation as lesser qualified blacks are hired and/or promoted who cannot perform adequately on the job (see Table 2, p.89). However, Clayton and Crosby (1992) regard this type of affirmative action, where unqualified

people are brought into the organisation and then left to flounder on their own, as the worst distortion of affirmative action principles.

The attitudes of the majority of black respondents on these issues, contrasted those of their white counterparts. However, note must also be taken of the twenty-five percent of black men and ten percent of black women who generally agreed with the accusations levelled at affirmative action by their white colleagues. These negative attitudes may rest on the perception that equal opportunity is sufficient to ensure black advancement and the absence of discrimination. These negative attitudes to affirmative action are not wholly unexpected, as there are black South African opponents of affirmative action who have voiced their criticisms of the policy. Mbatha, one such critic, has accused the policy of being racist because it looks at blacks as a separate species and makes children of them (cited in Kemp, 1992). Thus whilst these research results are not unexpected, it is significant to note the degree of disagreement with affirmative action amongst the black sample groups in the research. Furthermore, it is of consequence that black men and women are not perceived as a homogenous group with one attitude towards affirmative action. South Africans must avoid falling into this trap. In the U.S.A., as a result of affirmative action, a new stereotype of the representative black has emerged, based on the assumption that blacks hold certain views that are different to other racial groups (Carter, 1991). This situation should be avoided for as Human (1991a) suggests black employees should be treated as individuals, not as blacks who hold certain attitudes or will behave in a certain way. In treating them as individuals, race is just one element of who they are as people.

These initial perceptions of affirmative action are thus divided along racial lines with white respondents agreeing with the negative perceptions that exist about the policy (Caldwell, 1992; Bradford Reynolds, 1992; Glasser, 1988) and black participants disagreeing with these. It is suggested that these attitudes represent an orientation rather than an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of attitudes to affirmative action. For whilst they gauge the prevalence of certain perceptions, they fail to explore the scope and complexity of affirmative action adequately. Thus they should be regarded as a starting point in understanding a certain group's orientation towards affirmative action. This has implications for the implementation an affirmative action programme and the education of both the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries thereof.

## 2. Acceptance of the Philosophy and Need for Affirmative Action

All respondents expressed support for the philosophy of affirmative action namely, to eliminate discrimination and afford everyone the same opportunities. Furthermore, the dominant attitude in all four sample groups was that equal opportunity does not result in giving everyone an equal chance of success (Table 6,p.90) and that race and gender need to be considered in the short term if it is to be ignored in the long term (Table 1,p.89). However, as noted by Clayton and Crosby (1990), whilst the policies of equal opportunity and affirmative action have similar goals, they are diametrically opposed about the most practical and fairest means of achieving these objectives. This was highlighted in the research, where respondents supported the mutual goals of affirmative action and equal opportunity but disagreed over what alternatives to equal opportunity if any, were acceptable.

### *(a) Affirmative Action rather than Equal Opportunity or vice versa ?*

"The policy of affirmative action was borne of the recognition that the passive procedures of Equal Employment Opportunity had failed to yield the anticipated outcome of broad inclusion of minorities and women " (Blanchard,1989,p.194). Blanchard (1989) thus advocates that affirmative action rather than equal opportunity is required. In the research, agreement with Blanchard (1989) was divided along racial lines and varied between and within the sample groups (see Table 4,p.90). Within the sample groups of black respondents, there was agreement that blacks needed to be given certain opportunities in order to equalise their chance of success. Amongst the white respondents, as many supported as contested that black men and women needed special opportunities. The more popular attitude amongst this group was that equal opportunity rather than affirmative action should be sufficient. This may appear inconsistent with earlier attitudes expressed in that whilst the majority of respondents agree that equal opportunity does not result in giving everyone an equal chance of success and that race and gender need to be taken into account, they agree with the need for affirmative action but instead support a policy of equal opportunity. This can be explained in one of two ways. Firstly, it highlights the lack of understanding as to what constitutes affirmative action coupled with a negative orientation towards this policy such that whilst neither equal opportunity nor affirmative action are deemed suitable, equal opportunity is seen as the preferable and more equitable policy. Secondly, this inconsistency can also be explained when looking at the acceptability of the methods of affirmative action at various interfaces in the organisation. Methods which serve to address the educational deficit of black people coupled with equal opportunity measures are perceived as the most suitable form of affirmative action. This inconsistency also suggests that the need for affirmative action will be more readily accepted under conditions where such a programme does not fulfil current expectations of what an affirmative action programme constitutes e.g., reverse discrimination, lowering of standards and hiring of incompetents.

Attitudes about the need for affirmative action for white women were far more distinct (see Table 5,p.90). Amongst white women themselves, the majority did not believe that they needed affirmative action, despite the fact that they believed that sexism was still operating within company XXX. A possible explication for this is that studies have shown that most victims of discrimination experience a denial of personal disadvantage (Birt & Dixon, Crosby, Ford, Hafer & Olson cited in Crosby, in press). It is proposed that this denial of personal disadvantage may be particularly acute in situations where discrimination relative to other groups, is not seen

to be as harmful or the effects as devastating. In South Africa, white women may thus perceive that relative to blacks, they are not discriminated against as a group. An alternative explanation is that they do not understand that affirmative action can be constituted at different levels such that affirmative action for white women would be different than that for black people. Reid and Clayton (1992) assert that the differences between racism and sexism necessitates corresponding differences in the implementation of affirmative action programmes. A third explanation is that white women believe that they require equal opportunity rather than affirmative action. However, the proactive measures needed constitute the first level of affirmative action, as outlined by SACOB (1993).

There was considerable support amongst the black men and women for affirmative action for white women, evidencing that an attitude of retribution or reverse discrimination may not exist. It appears that instead there is an attitude that all employees should be afforded true equal opportunity. Amongst the black respondents of the study, there was a recognition that affirmative action for white women would be different than that for blacks. Affirmative action for white women is seen to constitute the first level of affirmative action, as outlined by SACOB (1993). An overwhelming majority (eighty percent) of the white men were vehemently against the idea of affirmative action for white women. Furthermore, they did not agree that the development of women, irrespective of race, is as important an issue as that of black development (see Table 8, p.91). This is consistent with what Human (1990, p.18) states when she notes that it is a "curious indictment of corporate life in South Africa that the very mention of white women in relation to management development is likely to alienate more members of any audience than a single-minded concentration on blacks". As white men still form the power and decision base of corporate South Africa, this raises a serious concern that gender issues in affirmative action will not be adequately addressed. South African proponents of affirmative action have warned against neglecting the importance of affirmative action for women (Tskudu, 1992) and that failure to consider gender issues will lead to the maintenance of the status quo (Ferndale, 1993). It appears that factoring gender into the affirmative action agenda will be an issue that organisations alone will have to address for the BMF guidelines for affirmative action, seen to be the blueprint for affirmative action legislation under a new government (Ryan, 1993), have not made mention of gender issues, nor does it propose targets for the inclusion of women as a separate group.

A further dimension of this gender issue was whether black women, arguably the most disadvantaged group, because of past experiences of both racism and sexism, should be the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action (see Table 7, p.91). Black men and both black and white women both showed significant support for this notion whilst white men did not. This is significant to note, particularly in light of the belief that black women are subjected to sexism within their own member group and seen as subordinate to men (Hooks cited in Reid & Clayton, 1992). What these results may indicate is that sexism amongst black people within corporate life, is perhaps less of a problem than it is perceived to be and is more rife amongst white men. However, Oppenheim (1992) warns against assuming that attitudes can accurately predict behaviour.

Affirmative action has been criticised for being an elitist policy in that it helps the more fortunate members of a preferred group, whilst the less fortunate members regress (Sowell, 1989). It is reproached for only being available to those with the necessary qualifications for a job or further education (Clark, 1992). In the research, respondents did raise the issue of whether or not the beneficiaries of affirmative action should only be graduates (see p.78 & 79). The participants felt that a focus on graduates would mean that the programme was only accessible to a small number of blacks, specifically those that had been fortunate enough to obtain a degree and that were geared towards filling management positions. It was noted that many individuals in company XXX had done very well without a degree. It was suggested that more matriculants be hired and educated and trained further. Furthermore, the development and promotion of current employees irrespective of whether they are graduates or not, should be encouraged. This concurs with Nzimande's recommendations that affirmative action not be limited to promoting Africans to managerial levels but that it should also target lower-level employees who constitute the bulk of the organisation (cited in Hofmeyr, 1993).

*(b) Perspectives on the Need for Affirmative Action*

The need for affirmative action is also seen from two different perspectives by white and black respondents (see p.77 & 78).

White respondents raised the importance of affirmative action being perceived as a viable business proposition. It was noted that not only did it need to be perceived in terms of not negatively affecting productivity but also in terms of ensuring the competitiveness of the organisation. Economic considerations were listed by this group, as amongst the biggest obstacles facing the effective implementation of an affirmative action programme within company XXX (see p.86). Issues such as failure of the business to grow sufficiently, downsizing and break up of the company and bad economic times were raised. Critics of the policy of affirmative action argue that affirmative action is not economically viable. However, Alexander (1993) points out that the costs of not having an affirmative action policy and programme will soon outweigh the costs of having one. In the research, it was pointed out that affirmative action would be more readily accepted by whites if it was seen to be critical to the preservation of the company.

Black respondents were less concerned with the need for affirmative action being its business viability than with the humanitarian perspective thereof. They felt that affirmative action should reflect the company's genuine concern for the development and advancement of all of its employees. It should not merely be initiated because legislation forces the organisation to do so.

A theme that emerged from the research was the need for affirmative action to encompass a community focus, particularly in the area of education (see p.78 & 88). Respondents from all four sample groups stressed the importance of company XXX's social responsibility to invest in education. According to Magwaza (1991), there is a need for affirmative action in South Africa to transcend its traditional and narrow definitions of job mobility and quality of life. Educational assistance is only one of the issues noted by Magwaza (1991) but was raised as a priority by all four respondents and is consistent with their evaluation of the purpose of affirmative action.

### 3. Acceptance of Implementation Methods of Affirmative Action

As noted by Clayton and Crosby (1992), the majority of arguments against affirmative action are concerned with the implementation of the policy. Methods of implementation such as preferential treatment (Caldwell, 1992) and quota systems (Bradford Reynolds, 1992) are amongst the fiercest accusations levelled at affirmative action. In the research, these two methods were focused on, at different interfaces of the organisation.

#### *(a) Preferential Treatment*

Black respondents felt that preferential treatment was an acceptable way of achieving a demographically balanced workforce. Their white counterparts did not agree. Disagreement also existed within and between sample groups, as to when or at which interface, preferential treatment may or may not be acceptable (see ps.67 & 68; Tables 9,10,11 & 12, ps.92 & 93).

Black women were of the attitude that preferential treatment was not acceptable when hiring or promoting black individuals. Rather, affirmative action in recruitment and selection meant giving competent, well-qualified blacks the opportunity to gain meaningful employment. It did not mean that the abilities of blacks should be disregarded and only their race focused on. These black women agreed with preferential treatment when training black men and women, seeing it as necessary to enable blacks to compete on an equal footing with all employees.

Black men were the only group that held that affirmative action in hiring was acceptable. However, this did not imply that inferior or incompetent people should be hired or that standards should be dropped. What it did mean was that a concerted effort should be made to ensure that more black people were employed. Similar to all other three sample groups, black men agreed that preferential treatment in promotions was not acceptable and that only the merit and competence of the individual should be taken into account in this process. There was agreement that preferential treatment when training black men and women, was acceptable.

It is to be noted that within the group of black participants, thirty-five percent of black male and female respondents generally agreed that preferential treatment in promotions was acceptable (see Table 10, p.94). This may be explained as the need to achieve balanced representation at all levels of the organisation. Alternatively, these results may be interpreted in terms of the existing perception that currently promotions in company XXX do not occur on merit but rather on a system of seniority, favouritism ("Broerskap" and "Old Boys Network") or nepotism. Preferential treatment would serve to equalise these circumstances. Glasser (1988) indicates that contrary to popular belief, in the past, selection has not been based on merit or objective standards. Instead, certain factors believed to be proxies for merit have been used, resulting in discrimination. Affirmative action has a role to play in ensuring that promotions truly do occur on merit. The perception amongst the white respondents is that promotions in company XXX do occur on merit (see p.73). This divergence of attitudes amongst black men and women on this issue further strengthens the contention that there is not a "black attitude or way to be" (Carter, 1991).

White women, more so than any other group, opposed preferential treatment in hiring and promotions. They believed that this would result in white resentment as blacks would be preferred at the expense of whites. Attitudes to the issue of preferential treatment in training were less emphatic with a small majority agreeing that such a practise was acceptable.

The attitudes of white men in this study were similar to those of white women. They did not agree that affirmative action should take the form of preferential treatment when hiring and promoting black people. Only equal opportunity should apply at these interfaces. There was a recognition however, that recruitment efforts needed to be increased to ensure that the pool of applicants included suitable black candidates. Preferential treatment when training black men and women was perceived as acceptable.

In summary, preferential treatment when selecting candidates for training and development, was seen as acceptable by all four sample groups. This corresponds with the understanding of affirmative action in terms of addressing the educational disadvantages experienced by black South Africans. Any other forms of preferential treatment were seen as unfair and unacceptable by the majority of the total group. Furthermore, all respondents were opposed to standards being dropped and a system of meritocracy being undermined (see Table 12, p.93).

#### *(b) Quota Systems*

The contention of lowered standards and a disregard for meritocracy is normally borne out of the understanding of affirmative action as the implementation of a quota system (Smith & Crosby, in press). The research indicated that attitudes to quota systems are divided along racial lines, with black men and women agreeing that quotas are the only way of ensuring that blacks or white women do make progress within corporate South Africa (see p.68 & 69; Table 13, p.93). However, black respondents felt that quota systems should not negate the importance of qualifications and hiring of competent people. Furthermore, black men and women felt that government intervention/legislation in this regard was necessary as the generosity, conscience or goodwill of the private sector could not be relied on to ensure the advancement and development of this group of people. This is consistent with Bennel and Strachan's (1992) insistence that legislation and punitive measures on the part of the government are necessary, if real progress is to be achieved in black advancement in the private sector.

White men and women in turn, expressed disapproval of quota systems. It was felt that such a system created a focus on numbers and not on people and that in the quest to reach quotas, standards would be sacrificed and incompetents hired. However, Glasser (1988,p.350) contests this idea as "no responsible advocate of affirmative action ... argues that employers should be required to hire unqualified applicants, or that standards should be reduced in order to meet affirmative action goals". Instead, affirmative action means making a special effort to improve the qualifications, skills and knowledge of blacks, so that standards are maintained (Charoux,1991).

White men of the research were more willing to accept the idea of targets or soft goals similar to other business goals but stress the need for these targets or soft goals to be realistic. Campanella (1993) suggests that the use of soft goals or targets is usually more acceptable, given that they are reviewable and take into account the changing job market and economic climate.

*(c) Good versus Poor Affirmative Action*

Analysis of the methods of implementation and the possible interfaces at which implementation can occur indicates that respondents differentiate between what can be termed good and poor affirmative action. Amongst white men and women, there was an awareness that affirmative action could be taken to extreme lengths resulting in tokenism, window-dressing and reverse discrimination. This was seen as poor affirmative action. The attitude that something needed to be done to overcome the educational disadvantage of black people and increase their numbers in the organisation, was pervasive in all four sample groups. However, amongst white respondents, equal opportunity coupled with good training and development for black people constitutes good affirmative action. Similarly, amongst black men and women, affirmative action in the form of training and development was seen as good affirmative action as it adequately prepared black people to compete on an equal footing for promotions. Good affirmative action also meant heightening the need to recruit suitable black people and supporting them within the organisation. Poor affirmative action was setting unrealistic targets, not maintaining entrance requirements and standards; and not promoting on merit. Good affirmative action ensured that everyone truly had equal opportunities.

*(d) Acceptance of Levels of Affirmative Action*

What is apparent from the attitudes of the respondents is that the second level of affirmative action, as termed by SACOB (1993), is favoured. This is termed input-based affirmative action and involves all measures to "boost the capacities or competitive abilities of members of the target population in order that they may compete on equal terms with others" (SACOB, 1993, p.2). This corresponds with respondents' acceptance of affirmative action in training and development as well as their understanding of the purpose of affirmative action.

Amongst the black male respondents, preference is shown for the third level of affirmative action, referred to as the initial preferential policy, where active measures are taken to recruit and train/prepare members of the beneficiary group, in preference to members of other groups (SACOB, 1993). However, following their inclusion in the organisation, their performance would be judged with strict impartiality. This corresponds with what these black research respondents said.

As noted by SACOB (1993), each level of affirmative action includes the implementation of all measures of the previous levels. Thus, the second and third levels of affirmative action would also include the first level. This level of affirmative action includes all intentional steps taken to ensure that any form of discrimination is eradicated. It is contrasted to equal opportunity in that it acknowledges that informal or inadvertent discrimination still occurs and that measures of affirmative action are required. What is evident in the research is that the majority of the white respondents do not believe that racism in any form, still exists (see p.70; Table 34, p.101). The attitudes of their black counterparts are contrary to this but there is an acknowledgement that

this racism is not the overt racism of the past. As Pettigrew and Martin (1987) suggest overt, raw racism has given way to more subtle, indirect and ostensibly non-racial forms. It is often the case that the person of colour is the only individual that perceives the prejudice operating in the work situation and is labelled "terribly touchy" and "overly sensitive" by white colleagues who remain unconvinced of the reality of subtle prejudice and discrimination. These attitudes were evident amongst the white participants of the research. This research finding is consistent with the literature and further supports Reid and Clayton (1992) assertion that the institutional processes of racism and sexism are broadly denied in society. This assertion has important implications for the implementation of any programme designed to challenge these processes (Reid & Clayton, 1992). Within the South African context, this is particularly pertinent for those individuals with power to exact change in organisations, are the very ones who refuse to acknowledge that discrimination still exists and thus change is needed.

Both male and female black respondents of the research supported the use of quota systems. SACOB (1993) outlines this as the fifth level of affirmative action, following that of the fourth level of affirmative action namely, preferential treatment and the relaxation of standards when hiring and promoting. However, the research respondents do not find elements of this level of affirmative action acceptable such as preferential treatment when promoting and the lowering of standards. It is obvious that the participants see quota systems as compatible with the other forms of affirmative action and not just preferential treatment and the relaxation of standards. Thus, the critique offered about SACOB's (1993) levels of affirmative action namely, that the levels are a simplistic analysis and suggest independency, are supported by the research. What is evident from the research is that affirmative action is not a monolithic policy and its implementation cannot be assumed to follow structured steps.

#### 4. The Fairness of the Policy of Affirmative Action

Fairness is a cornerstone of the debate that continues to rage over affirmative action. Supporters view affirmative action as the only fair alternative. Critics on the other hand, view it as affording unfair privileges to some groups at the expense of other groups (Crosby, in press).

Black respondents felt that a focus on black people was justifiable given the denial of opportunities in the past and the educational disadvantages experienced (see p.66). They felt it was only fair that blacks are now given special opportunities to compensate for the discrimination suffered in the past. White women were emphatic that a focus on black people and affording them special opportunities was unfair and constituted reverse discrimination. This corresponds with Caldwell's (1992) argument that affirmative action is punitive. However, Crosby and Clayton (1992) are adamant that the goal of affirmative action is not retribution but rather equalisation. White men, as a group were more ambivalent about whether a focus on black people and affording them special opportunities was fair or not, with no clear majority agreeing or disagreeing with this attitude.

Carson and Crosby (1992) remark that affirmative action faces a significant problem in being perceived as fair because at face value the policy appears to be less fair than equal opportunity (in Crosby, in press). Amongst the black participants, there is a keen awareness that affirmative action and equal opportunity need to work together to ensure true equality. The opposite is true of white respondents who perceived equal opportunity to be the fairer of the two policies.

##### *(a) Principles of Justice*

It is possible to assess the fairness of affirmative action under four principles of justice namely, distributive, retributive, procedural and micro-macro justice (Clayton & Tangri, 1989).

The principle of distributive justice is practised whenever the allocation of goods and services occurs. It consists of three types : need, equity and equality. It can be deduced from the research results that participants perceive affirmative action as fair under the principle of need. Under this principle, everyone is allocated the resources they need such that those who start with the least are allocated the most (Clayton & Tangri, 1989). According to the respondents, there is a need to provide training and support for black people such that the educational disadvantages experienced can be overcome. The principle of equity espouses that there is a correlation between inputs and outputs (Clayton & Tangri, 1989). White participants of the research regarded the principle of equity and the practise of affirmative action as incompatible. Since the demographic markers of race and gender are factored into the equation of inputs being transformed into outputs, the correlation between inputs and outputs is weak. Affirmative action is therefore, seen to violate this principle of equity. However, Clayton and Tangri (1989) argue that one must question whether in fact the demographic markers of race and gender are irrelevant. Given that relevance has been defined by white males, extending the boundaries to include other groups does not necessarily mean that the relevant inputs will be the same for all. According to these authors, fairness dictates that individuals bring into the organisation different amounts of the same things as well as different things, all of which make them valuable to the organisation. However, attitudes to the equity of affirmative

action vary according to the interface at which the policy is implemented as well as to what emphasis is placed on the demographic markers in the equation of inputs to outputs. From the research results, it is evident that the perception exists that affirmative action in the form of preferential treatment when promoting blacks violates the principle of equity. According to the majority of respondents, at this interface, there must be a strict correlation between inputs and outputs such that merit and competence results in promotion and nothing else is factored into this equation. In contrast, black men are of the attitude that when recruiting and hiring, cognisance must be taken of the race and gender of applicants but that these factors do not constitute the only input into the equation. Other factors such as competence and qualifications should also be considered. This corresponds with Nacoste's (1990) proposal that universalistic criteria be used if affirmative action procedures are to be deemed fair.

The second principle of justice namely, retributive justice is a form of distributive justice (Clayton & Tangri, 1989). The difference between the two is that punishments rather than rewards are allocated. If affirmative action is seen to be fair under this principle of justice, then the implication is that the goal of affirmative action is retribution. In the research, the perception of affirmative action as reverse discrimination was evident amongst some of the white respondents whilst others noted that affirmative action in extreme forms would result in reverse discrimination. Thus while the goal of affirmative action may not be retribution, attention must be paid to implementation procedures such that the practise of affirmative action does not result in retribution. It must also be noted that affirmative action programmes do not take away from individuals money or status they already have. Rather, it adjusts what they can expect in the future. According to Glasser (1988), the past distribution of jobs on the basis of race and gender has created an expectation amongst whites and males. The loss of that expectation may seem unfair to them but he asserts that these expectations were not fair to begin with. In the research, the majority of black men and women agree that the promotion of blacks in the future will impact directly on the promotional opportunities of whites (see Table 18, p.95). This was seen as acceptable given that in the past whites had been afforded opportunities that were not rightfully theirs. The majority of white counterparts did not agree with this.

The third type of justice, procedural justice, focuses on the process of justice, the means rather than the ends (Clayton & Tangri, 1989). Under procedural justice, there is an acceptance of the outcomes if there is faith in the fairness of the procedures. Amongst black respondents, an overwhelming majority did not perceive fairness in the application of the principle of equal opportunity, a policy that forms the cornerstone of company XXX's Mission statement and Values (see ps.69 & 85). Black participants indicated that the principle of equal opportunity is not applied fairly in company XXX and reasons offered include that promotions are conducted without true regard to merit and competence, that equal opportunity within company XXX is only for whites, remuneration packages are different; and blacks have to work twice as hard as whites for the same recognition. The racial imbalances (outcomes) within company XXX, according to these respondents, is evidence of the absence of fairness. In contrast, white respondents felt that the principle of equal opportunity is fairly applied. However, many noted that they were beginning to question the application of equal opportunity because of the racial imbalances at certain levels of this organisation and the lack of progress in this regard. Equal opportunity and affirmative action are different policies but they both have the common goal of creating and maintaining

a world that is gender and race neutral such that everyone is afforded equal opportunity (Clayton & Crosby, 1992). The perceived inequities highlighted by the research respondents indicate that not only is equal opportunity not being fairly applied but that any affirmative action programme has failed to equalise circumstances.

The fourth principle of justice is micro-macro justice where the difference lies in assessing the fairness of individual versus societal outcomes, respectively (Clayton & Tangri, 1989). The justification for affirmative action is strongest at the macro level where the systematic exclusion of whole categories of people from positions of authority is evident. In the research, the racial imbalances were pointed to, as evidence of how the application of equal opportunity within company XXX served to maintain existing differentials in groups of people and resources (see p.70). These macro-level injustices were referred to far more frequently than discrimination experienced at the individual/micro-level.

## 5. The Perceived Effects of Affirmative Action on Beneficiaries

One of the most disturbing criticisms levelled at affirmative action is that the policy harms rather than helps those it purports to benefit (Crosby & Clayton, 1990). If affirmative action is psychologically destructive to its beneficiaries, it would be a self-defeating policy.

Attitudes on this issue are varied in the current study. It is significant to note that a high percentage of questions addressing this issue elicited "Don't Know" responses. In the pilot study, white respondents were very reluctant to commit themselves to stating what their perceptions were, of how blacks may feel under a policy of affirmative action. They indicated that since they were not black, they could not respond in agreement or disagreement. This finding is of consequence as it illustrates a lack of awareness of the attitudes of other racial and gender groups. The understanding of the attitudes of others is critical to the establishment of any affirmative action programme as it provides the foundation for doing so (Crosby and Clayton, 1992). In some instances, black women also had a high level of "Don't Know" responses. This may be seen to be a function of company XXX's affirmative action programme from which black women are seen to be subtly excluded and can therefore not comment on the effects of such a programme.

The effects of an affirmative action programme can be discussed at the interpersonal, intrapersonal and organisational levels.

### *(a) Interpersonal Effects*

Crosby and Clayton (1990) admit that it is difficult to dispute the contention that non-beneficiaries may attribute the success and achievements of blacks to affirmative action rather than to personal merit. There is an expectation, based on stereotypes held, that the performance of beneficiaries will be lower than that of others. It was noted amongst some of the white men and women in the research that affirmative action had affected them in that they had to put up with the incompetence of black people and their excuses for poor performance (see p.82). There was also an anticipation that under a policy of affirmative action, the levels of incompetence will increase more (see p.83).

In terms of the perceived competence of black employees in company XXX, white men and women regard their black colleagues, subordinates and superiors to be of a very high calibre (see p.75). They noted that some blacks were very good performers whilst others were very poor but were quick to point out that this was not a racial issue as there were good and poor performers amongst all racial groups. It can therefore be argued that poor performance rather than being indicative of the competence of black people, it is representative of how these individuals are managed. As Human (1991b) asserts, all too often the failure of blacks is attributed to a lack of ability whereas, the fault lies in the way that person has been managed. Further supporting this, the research results indicate that white respondents were of the attitude that allowances were made for blacks within the organisation and that at times, management was too lenient in dealing with poor performance (see Table 33, p.100). This is not consistent with developing a culture of merit within the organisation and is contrary to what black respondents support in terms of an affirmative action policy.

A further effect of affirmative action at the interpersonal level but one which is not identified as such by the literature, is the effect of harping on past suffering instead of focusing on present and potential achievements. White respondents of the research noted that some blacks made a "point of being black" and had "chips on their shoulders" (see p.70). Steele (1990,p.118) believes that affirmative action "indirectly encourages blacks to exploit their own past victimization as a source of power and privilege". This results in their focusing on the past instead of concentrating on the future.

Crosby and Clayton (1990) question whether the various negative attitudes or expectancies are also likely to exist under equal opportunity policies or whether they are a unique product of an affirmative action programme. The answer to that in the context of the current study is that such attitudes would and do exist under a policy of equal opportunity and are not unique to company XXX's affirmative action programme. This is assumed as such because the effects of the affirmative action programme have according to the respondents been minimal. Crosby and Clayton (1990, p.67) state that if this is the case then people of colour and women "are not worse off under affirmative action than they would be in the absence of affirmative action". They also comment that education and firsthand experiences with men of colour and women serve to mitigate negative expectancies held by fair-minded people. Whilst the fair-mindedness of the white research respondents cannot be commented on with great conviction, black participants did indicate that their white colleagues were more willing to accept them and not question their competence after they had proved their ability and got to know them better (see p.75). However, this initial doubting and pressure to prove oneself is a difficult experience for black men and women, one which their white counterparts are not subjected to.

#### *(b) Intrapersonal Effects*

The potential intrapersonal effects of affirmative action is a more pressing issue as affirmative action has been accused of stigmatising and thus psychologically harming those it aims to benefit (Nacoste,1990).

A small majority of black participants of the study indicated that affirmative action is not stigmatising i.e., it does not delegitimise the achievements of blacks, nor do blacks experience a lack of self-confidence as a result of affirmative action programmes (see Table 14 & 15,p.94). Respondents saw themselves as good performers (which according to them, was confirmed by good performance ratings in their appraisals) and felt confident in the work they did (see p.75). They noted that there was a pressure to prove oneself, often despite years of service and a proven track record in the company. Furthermore, good performance often elicited surprise from their white colleagues. Whilst, these behaviours did not undermine their self-confidence in the long term, it was noted that it was difficult to not doubt oneself when those around you did. This situation was particularly acute in a new job when competence had not yet been established and proven. However, as noted, it was only a small majority of black respondents that did not see affirmative action as delegitimising the achievements of blacks. This suggests that the risk of stigmatisation exists and is dependant on how the programme is implemented. Nacoste (1990) posits that people react to the fairness of the implementation of an affirmative action programme and that procedures perceived as fair, are less likely to cause a stigma.

That the black respondents of the research do not find affirmative action to be stigmatising and have not experienced negative expectancy effects, is contrary to research conducted in the U.S.A. (Heilman et al., 1987; Chacko, 1982; Heilman et al., 1992). This incongruity can be explained by looking at certain factors which may make some of the beneficiaries of affirmative action less prone to experiencing negative expectancy effects. One such factor is the self-image of the target (Banks, 1984; Jussim, 1986; Crosby & Clayton, 1990). The stronger the self-image of the beneficiaries, the less likely they are to experience negative effects. In the current study, the self-image of the respondents could not be assessed adequately, given the methods of data collection. However, the self-reports of the respondents indicated that they do have a positive self-image. A second factor is the perceived fairness of affirmative action such that if the policy is perceived as fair, then the negative effects are less likely to manifest (Crosby & Clayton, 1990). As detailed earlier, affirmative action is perceived as fair by the black respondents of the study. Affiliation to one's membership group has also been associated with support for one's group and oneself (Tongas & Vielleux, 1989). This is the strongest argument in favour of the research findings as black South Africans have a very strong affiliation with their membership group. According to Crosby and Clayton (1990), this makes them more immune to the negative expectancy effects. An alternative reason for this incongruity concerns the period of implementation of the affirmative action programme in company XXX. This programme has only been in existence for approximately five years. This may be too short a period to evaluate if the programme has had any negative effects on its beneficiaries.

Amongst the sample group of white men there is strong support to negate the criticism that affirmative action is stigmatising. White women as a group, were divided on the issue. There was also a high degree of "Don't Know" responses.

### *(c) Organisational Effects*

The third level of analysis is the negative effects as created by the employment situation. Using a social psychological analysis, Pettigrew and Martin (1987) state that people of colour may find themselves in a situation of triple jeopardy i.e., of experiencing negative racial stereotypes, being placed in a solo and token role.

Whilst none of the black respondents felt that they were tokens, they were of the attitude that the hiring and promotion of black people into certain positions in company XXX had been no more than window-dressing. It was commented on that black managers were in those positions, not because they deserved to be, but because they needed to be "shut-up". As such they had been co-opted into the system (see p.73).

The solo role namely, that of being the only person in a team or department of white people, was experienced by some of the black participants. They expressed a difficulty with this situation, stating that they felt lonely and left out and lacked the support of their colleagues (see p.75). According to Pettigrew and Martin (1987) indicate that the term solo can also be applied to more than one black person, when they are in situations where they are clearly outnumbered by their white counterparts. This is often the case in company XXX where black employees constitute only sixteen percent of the total number of employees. Pettigrew and Martin (1987) caution that this position of solo is subject to polarization namely, that in dealing with the unrealistic expectations and

evaluations of their peers and boss, they may not trust the validity of the feedback they receive. This problem is further compounded by the fact that they do not have similar others with whom to compare experiences. The black respondents of the research did express a dissatisfaction with the evaluation system, stating that despite good performance ratings, they were not progressing in company XXX but instead staying in the same boring and unchallenging job (see p.73). This made them suspicious of how they were being evaluated. They also stressed the need for regular feedback on the quality and quantity of work produced.

In addition to bearing the difficulties of the solo and/or token role, black individuals often have to contend with negative racial stereotypes (Pettigrew & Martin,1987). White male respondents did not believe that the myth of black incompetence still existed, as the black employees of the company were of a high standard (see p.75). Whilst white women generally agreed with this assertion, they did indicate that this myth was still evident in certain areas of company XXX. Evidence of the myth, albeit in subtle forms, is highlighted in the black respondents' comments of the need to prove themselves as competent. However, they do point out that once they had proved themselves, their competence is accepted and taken as given. Thus evidence of the ultimate attribution error termed by Pettigrew (1979) (in Pettigrew & Martin,1987) is not apparent in this research.

Allied to the effects of racial stereotypes, is the failure by the organisation to risk black appointments. Black research participants felt that they were not given the opportunity to prove themselves. Instead they were placed in boring, unchallenging jobs that offered no real growth and were not part of an effort to develop a career path for the individual. This is particularly pertinent in light of the fact that a significant percentage of black men and women have degrees as well as post-graduate qualifications (see p.103). In the case of women, many are placed in administrative positions and it thus appears that they are not being allowed to develop their potential, as evidenced by their tertiary education. This confirms what Ndlovu (cited in De Villiers,1993a) says is occurring in corporate South Africa namely, that many black people in organisations are not being properly utilised.

## 6. Perceived Effects of Affirmative Action on Non-Beneficiaries

Critics of affirmative action claim that the policy and the implementation thereof, increases group conflict and resentment amongst those who do not benefit (Caldwell,1992). In the U.S.A., there is a growing sense of grievance and dissatisfaction amongst white males most affected by affirmative action preferences (Lynch & Beer,1990).

### *(a) Impact of Affirmative Action Programme*

The majority of white women and men in the research indicated that affirmative action had not affected them at all and had not curtailed their scope for advancement (see p.82 & 83). Furthermore, a small but significant number anticipated that it would have not an effect on them in the future. Amongst the sample group of white men, individuals asserted that whilst they personally would not be affected by the policy and the legislation thereof, their children would be, as resources were scarce and the competition for these resources was increasing.

### *(b) White Resentment*

The majority of white women agreed that whites feel resentment towards blacks for being preferred in employment, training and promotion opportunities (see Table 19,p.95). In contrast, the responses from the sample group of white men evidenced a high percentage of "Don't Know" responses. Amongst the white male sample group, this may indicate that they personally do not experience resentment because the affirmative action programme in company XXX has not affected them and they are uncertain if resentment is an inevitable by-product of affirmative action. However, one does need to question whether this inconsistency between white women and white men. A possible explanation in the context of this research, is that white women do feel resentment for loss of opportunities in company XXX, for they perceived that black men were considered for promotion before white women and that this was retarding their advancement in company XXX. Whilst this is perceived as a racial issue by these women, it is proposed that it may be a gender issue where within company XXX, women's development and promotion needs are sub-ordinate to that of males. This is also consistent with what black women communciated in the research (see p.70 & 71).

Amongst the black respondents, women also indicated a high percentage of "Don't Know" responses whilst eighty-six percent of black male participants agreed that whites felt resentment under a policy of affirmative action. This perception and the assumptions or attitudes it is based on, needs to be investigated further. One needs to question whether this perception is based on the experiences of the past and a racial stereotype of white people as racists. Alternatively, the attitude can be taken at face value such that the adjustment of expectations as a result of affirmative action will not be easily accepted by whites and will cause resentment.

Low levels of resentment were noted by the researcher. They were evident in remarks such as "blacks have chips on their shoulders" and in the response to how affirmative action had affected them namely, that they had had to deal with incompetents and that this situation would worsen in the future.

Solomon (1991) asserts that neglecting to hire and promote white males because of an affirmative action programme is unwarranted. Pope advocates that a truly effective programme will also benefit white males because of its inclusive nature (cited in Solomon,1991). What is required according to Pope, is to ensure that this resentment is addressed and removed and that white males they are assured that their contributions to the workplace are as important as those of other groups.

## 7. The Perceived Effectiveness of Company XXX's Programme

The attitude of the majority in all four sample groups was that affirmative action should be a recognised and promoted policy of company XXX and that they were satisfied with the company's decision to endorse such a policy (see Table 20, p.96). However, from the preceding discussion, it is to be remembered that these groups and even individuals within the groups differed on what forms of affirmative action are perceived as acceptable or at what interfaces the implementation of an affirmative action programme is acceptable. Given that there is an acceptance of such as programme, it is important to consider its effectiveness.

In determining the perceived effectiveness of company XXX's affirmative action programme, one can look at strategic as well as implementation issues. Strategic measures of the effectiveness of affirmative action include the change in employment status of previously disadvantaged groups, the elimination and reduction of discrimination and the absence of undesirable by-products. Implementation issues measuring the effectiveness of the affirmative action programme include lack of awareness and the need for communication; the need for education; ensuring employee commitment and receptiveness; securing management commitment and support; and the provision of clear and appropriate support systems.

### *(i). Strategic Measures of Effectiveness :*

#### *(a) Change in Economic and Employment status*

One measure of the effectiveness of affirmative action is to ascertain whether there has been an improvement in the employment and economic status of previously disadvantaged groups. The economic status of the respondents of this research cannot be commented on as this was not the scope of the study. However, it can be noted that many black respondents felt that blacks received different remuneration packages to whites, all things being equal (see ps.69 & 85). As far as the employment status of blacks in company XXX is concerned, black participants pointed to the racial imbalances within the company as evidence of the lack of progress that has been made.

Research in the U.S.A. has shown that affirmative action targets are the single best predictor of increasing the representation of women and men of colour in the workforce (Leonard,1985). However, cognisance must be taken that the affirmative action that Leonard (1985) refers to, was implemented under U.S.A. government legislation. This may explain the lack of progress made in company XXX as well as in the rest of corporate South Africa (Quest Personnel,1992). Bennel and Strachan (1992) believe that legislation is necessary if any real progress is to be made in the private sector. However, it is to be borne in mind that the very existence of the affirmative action programme in company XXX, is in itself a very positive sign. It was noted by a significant number of participants of the research that a positive aspect of the company's programme was that although its implementation issues were not addressed adequately, at least the company had recognised in principle that something needed to be done (see p.87).

*(b) The Reduction/Elimination of Discrimination*

A second strategic measure of the effectiveness of affirmative action is to determine the degree to which discrimination has been eliminated. Both issues of racism and sexism were looked at in the current study.

All sample groups, except for white male respondents agreed that sexism was still occurring in company XXX (see p.70, Table 34 & 35, p.101). Amongst white women, explanations for this attitude included differentials in remuneration packages, women had to work harder than men to get the same recognition, an "Old Boys Network" was still operating and that black men had a better chance of advancing within company XXX than white women did. They did however, acknowledge that sexism was a social problem and part of the heritage and culture of South Africans and as such sexist attitudes were brought into the organisation. Despite this, white women did not feel that company XXX needed to pay more attention to their development and promotion within the organisation and that they should be included in the affirmative action programme. These attitudes as well as those of the other sample groups on this issue of affirmative action for white women are consistent with earlier attitudes that white women did not need affirmative action.

Amongst black women, the issue of sexism received less emphasis than that of racism but they also agreed that sexism was still occurring in company XXX.

According to the black respondents of the study, racism was still prevalent in company XXX. The attitudes of their white colleagues, was that it was not. Pettigrew and Martin (1987) point out that often it is only people of colour that are aware of the prejudice and discrimination in the workplace and that their white colleagues remain unconvinced of the reality of this prejudice and discrimination.

Reid believes that black women find themselves in a unique situation because they are victims of both racism and sexism and thus experience the interaction effects of the two (cited in Reid & Clayton, 1992). According to Reid and Clayton (1992), black women are often passed over by companies as organisations find it easier to hire white women and black men. The black female respondents in the research did indicate that they perceived affirmative action as a system that favoured men above women and that within company XXX, their development and promotion as a group was neglected to the point that black men and white women were preferred before black women in promotions.

*(ii) Implementation Measures of Effectiveness :**(a) Lack of awareness and the need for communication*

Communication is a critical success factor in the effective implementation of an affirmative action programme (Khosa, 1992). The awareness levels and knowledge about company XXX's affirmative action programme was generally poor (see p.66). Amongst black respondents, there was a high awareness that the programme existed and that there was a manager overseeing it. However, they were unable to relate in real terms what the programme could do for them or what progress had been made to date. Amongst the white participants of the research, there was confusion as to whether the programme still existed, what the objectives of the programme were or who the beneficiaries were (white women were included in the group of beneficiaries by some

participants). All four sample groups agreed that the affirmative action strategy and implementation thereof had not been well-communicated to all employees (see Table 30, p.99). The need for communication about the programme was seen as essential for lack of knowledge about the programme fuelled the scepticism that surrounded it (see p.76).

Hofmeyr (1989) adds that two-way communication is needed for the development and execution of an affirmative action programme. All respondents in the research were of the attitude that the affirmative action programme needed to be better communicated and that the channels of communication needed to be kept open for concerns, problems and grievances to be raised. The lack of communication and education about the programme was raised as one of the biggest obstacles to the effective implementation of the programme and was cited more frequently by respondents as the change they would like to see made to company XXX's current programme (see p.86). Furthermore, the majority of respondents in all groups agreed that the progress of the programme needed to be monitored and the results made known to all employees (see Table 37, p.102). This communication of the strategy of the affirmative action programme and its progress, was seen to be the responsibility of every single manager in company XXX (see table 38, p.102).

#### *(b) The Need for Education*

Education plays a very important role in changing people's attitudes and perceptions about the policy of affirmative action (Crosby & Clayton, 1992). These authors contend that any education initiative must also address the nature and extent of prejudice, increase the awareness of ethnic and gender stereotypes and enhance cultural awareness. Education was an issue that was raised as important by all respondents (see ps.67 & 76). They expressed the need to know more about the programme, who its beneficiaries were, what it offered its beneficiaries and how it would affect its non-beneficiaries. It is also apparent that the differences in perceptions on issues of racism and sexism dictate that these issues need to be addressed and worked through. All respondents with the exception of the group of white males, felt that the employees of company XXX avoid the issues of racism, affirmative action and black development (see Table 26, p.98).

An issue that also needs to be addressed through education, is the fairness of the policy of affirmative action. Much resistance expressed towards affirmative action stems from the belief that it is an unfair policy and individuals must be shown that it is in fact fair at both the micro and macro justice level (Crosby, in press). Other areas to be targeted by an education programme in company XXX include how equal opportunity and affirmative action policies differ but complement each other, the need for affirmative action and the inclusive nature of affirmative action.

#### *(c) Ensuring Employee Commitment and Receptiveness*

Some of the questions about the affirmative action programme elicited a significant percentage of "Don't Know" responses as the lack of knowledge about the programme was high. No clear majority amongst the respondents from any of the four sample groups communicated that they were either satisfied or dissatisfied with the current programme (see Table 22, p.97). The high percentage of "Don't Know" responses is indicative of the ignorance about the company's programme. A similar response was evident amongst white respondents, when questioning

respondents about the degree of confidence in company XXX's affirmative action programme. Black participants in turn, were of the attitude that there was not a high degree of confidence in the programme.

These findings are pertinent as they suggest a lack of commitment to and support of the company's affirmative action programme. Hofmeyr (1989) sees employee commitment as critical to the success of the programme. He believes that this commitment extends to all employees taking ownership of the programme and being accountable for its success. The attitude of the majority in all four sample groups was that employees in company XXX should be consulted as to what they believe an affirmative action strategy should entail and how it should be implemented. It was also noted by respondents albeit by a small number, that employees should be involved in the process of determining policy and setting up programmes. The comment was made that affirmative action should not be a management problem but the responsibility of all employees.

In engendering the commitment and receptiveness of all employees, beneficiaries need to be committed to the programme (Tsukudu, 1992) and have to understand what role they have to play in the process of their own personal development and advancement (Human, 1993). Human (1993) however, points out that affirmative action programmes often fail because of the extent to which blacks and white women are willing to put time and effort into developing themselves and that they had to realise the input they had to make in their own development. In the current study, only the majority of white women were of the attitude that blacks fail to realise what role they personally have to play in their own development and promotion within the organisation. As many white men agreed as disagreed with this attitude. Blacks men and women however, believed that they were aware of the role they needed to play in their own development.

Ensuring employee receptiveness and commitment also means that the mind-set of white managers as well as black people needs to change (Nkuhlu, 1993). Attitudes of racism, sexism and paternalism; refusal to acknowledge the need for change; and the lack of acceptance of the affirmative action programme were cited the most frequently as the biggest obstacles facing the effective implementation of company XXX's affirmative action programme (see p. 86). Black respondents believed that an affirmative action programme could only work if white employees, in particular management, changed their attitudes and supported the programme. They were of the opinion that the attitudes of management have not changed sufficiently to successfully support a strategy of affirmative action (see p. 76).

Their white counterparts' responses yielded no definite attitude on whether management's attitudes had altered enough to support a strategy of affirmative action. However, they did stress the need for the programme to address the fears and prejudices of white workers and management as well as the expectations of black employees (see p. 76). The majority of white men and women felt that blacks had unrealistic expectations of what an affirmative action programme had to offer (see Table 16, p. 94).

*d) The Need for Strategic Change*

Chertos (1983) asserts that organisations need to alter their manner of strategic thinking, particularly with reference to how affirmative action goals will fit into the overall structure of the organisation. Furthermore, adequate power and organisational authority must be given to those implementing the programme.

In the research it was noted by some of the respondents that business objectives take priority in company XXX and that the Affirmative Action Programme Manager had no real power to change things within the organisation. The Affirmative Action Programme Manager expressed his frustration with the programme in that there was all talk and no action on the part of top management. An important strategy meeting had been held in the latter half of 1993, after the data collection period. In this meeting, the Chief Executive Officer agreed to take ownership of the programme and key decisions affecting this programme were made. The Affirmative Action Programme Manager saw this meeting as important in the future progress of the programme.

*(e) Securing Management Commitment and Support*

Securing management commitment and support means ensuring that management are aware of the need to make advancement a priority. When they are convinced that the future of the business depends on the achievement of such advancement objectives, they will be prepared to commit time and effort to ensuring that these objectives are met (Hofmeyr, 1989).

Black respondents agreed that top management in company XXX was not doing enough to promote the employment, development and promotion of blacks within the organisation. This was also rated as a frustration that respondents had with company XXX's current affirmative action programme as well as one of the biggest obstacles facing the effective implementation of such a programme in company XXX (see p.86). The lack of accountability for the programme amongst management was also raised as an issue and black respondents supported the notion that manager's performance appraisals should be based on how well they manage and support the development of blacks in company XXX (see Table 36, p.101).

The sample group of white men and women also indicated that lack of management commitment and leadership was a frustration with the current affirmative action programme, but did not place as much emphasis on it as their black colleagues. They also agreed that this lack of commitment was an obstacle to the effective implementation of the current programme. However, they were against the idea that in order to engender commitment through accountability, manager's performance appraisals should be based on how well they manage and support the development of blacks in company XXX.

*(f) The Provision of Clear and Appropriate Support Systems*

McGregor (1993) maintains that clear and appropriate support systems are imperative to an effective affirmative action programme. Human (1991b) claims that all too often the failure of the candidate of affirmative action is attributed to their own personal attributes whereas, an unsupportive environment and the manner in which they have been managed is the problem and cause. The types of support structures that were raised in the research included formal training and development programmes; on-the-job training and support; career

development and planning and mentorship.

The attitude amongst the majority of white and black women as well as white men was that the formal training and development programmes offered in company XXX were adequate. Half of the black male respondents agreed with this, whilst the other half did not (see Table 29,p.99).

In contrast, the on-the-job training and support was seen to be lacking. Black respondents felt that the guidance provided when they first started a new job was inadequate. Furthermore, colleagues were reluctant to help them and their requests for training were not responded to. They expressed that this led to feeling frustrated and at times doubtful about one's ability to do the job (see p.76).

The third area of support is career development. Annual meetings are held between employee and his/her boss to discuss career plans. Black male and female respondents did not find these meetings beneficial. These individuals indicated that the jobs that blacks were generally placed in were boring, "dead-end" jobs that offered no opportunity for growth. It was also noted that "good people" were often overlooked for promotions. An attitude expressed amongst the black women was that they perceived the scope for advancement of black women in company XXX as very limited and that in order to advance, they would have to leave the company. Whilst the majority of white women expressed that the annual career development meetings were of benefit, this was only by a small margin (nine percent). In the interviews, dissatisfaction with career planning and development meetings, was expressed. It was noted that repeated requests to be involved in another area of the business had not been addressed (see p.76).

Another key support structure, integral to an effective affirmative action programme is the functioning of a credible mentorship programme. Such a programme had been established within company XXX but was ineffectual and had ceased to exist. A new programme had been formulated in July of 1993 and was due for implementation in late 1993. However, the research data obviously does not reflect attitudes to this new programme. Awareness of the old programme was minimal but mentors were deemed as important by all respondents. Black men and women of the research saw the Affirmative Action Programme Manager as something of a mentor but the researcher would argue that he was more of a trouble-shooter, for rather than playing the role of mentor, he served to address the problems and grievances of black employees (see p.77).

In conclusion, from the attitudes expressed by the respondents regarding the various measures of effectiveness, it can be assumed that the prevailing perception is that the programme is not effective. The lack of awareness and knowledge about the programme is a factor that underscores this perception amongst all respondents.

As noted in the goals of the research, the perceived effectiveness of the programme provides a context for understanding attitudes to affirmative action and the perceived impact of such a programme. It is to be noted is that despite the perception of company XXX's affirmative action programme as ineffective, black respondents still have a positive attitude to affirmative action as a policy. However, one third of black women and one

quarter of black men were sceptical of affirmative action having any effect on them in the future because they doubted the commitment of company XXX to implement a programme that would truly benefit them (see ps.82 & 83). That a large majority of blacks felt that affirmative action had not affected them at all, can also be understood in the context of the research and the ineffectiveness of company XXX's programme to bring about significant changes in the employment status of black people. However, the intrapersonal, interpersonal and organisational effects experienced are still valid as these are the effects of an affirmative action programme, albeit a poorly implemented one.

Amongst the white respondents, the majority expressed that the programme had had no effect on them (see p.82). It could thus be argued that company XXX has an effective affirmative action programme, for a truly effective programme would ensure that white resentment was not a by-product (Crosby & Clayton,1992). However, this is not the case for according to the black respondents, there has not been a corresponding change in the status quo of the organisation. The poor implementation, especially the lack of adequate support structures in company XXX, may explain the negative attitudes towards affirmative action. These included that affirmative action is a system that undermines the effectiveness of the organisation by hiring incompetent blacks who cannot perform on the job. The lack of adequate on-the-job training may point to blacks having problems on the job which may in turn fuel these attitudes.

## 8. An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Company XXX's Programme

The preceding discussion related the research respondent's perceptions and attitudes of the effectiveness of the company's affirmative action programme. However, it is also pertinent to offer an analysis of the effectiveness of the programme from the researcher's point of view. This will be done by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the programme as well as highlighting those factors critical to the success of the affirmative action programme, those factors that undermines its effectiveness and those factors that may contribute to its failure.

### *(a) Strengths and Weaknesses of Company XXX's Affirmative Action Programme*

The overriding strength of company XXX's affirmative action programme is that in principle it has been recognised by top management as important and relevant and more recently that the Chief Executive Officer has committed himself to taking ownership of the programme. However, the flipside of this is that not enough attention has been paid to implementation issues and engendering the commitment of lower levels of management as well as employees to the programme. Chertos (1983) claims that in order to ensure the effectiveness of the affirmative action programme goals of affirmative action must be clarified and specified in conceptual as well as operational terms. Whilst the organisation has been able to conceptualise their goals, they have failed to adequately operationalise them.

The benefit of an affirmative action programme that already exists, albeit a poorly implemented one, is that employees are less likely to resist changes to the programme than if such a programme did not exist and then was introduced. In light of recent BMF proposals (Ryan, 1993), and the drive to meet the proposed targets, this may prove to be a key strength of company XXX in that a programme will not have to be implemented from scratch.

A further strength is that the attitudes of the majority of participants in this study reflect tolerance rather than rigidity. The attitudes of respondents indicated that there was an awareness of the need for affirmative action and an acceptance of affirmative action in the form of training and development. This demonstrates a permissive attitude towards affirmative action that can probably be modified under a education programme where the fallacies and myths of affirmative action could be dealt with. This education forum would also serve to address the fears and potential resentment of whites within company XXX.

Allied to this is a further strength namely, that the current programme has not yet served to alienate the white employees of company XXX. This means that they may be more willing to participate and engage in the process of affirmative action and accept an affirmative action programme.

A fifth key strength of the affirmative action programme lies in the calibre of people employed by the organisation. The demographics of the research indicate that about sixty percent of black women, thirty percent of black men, forty percent of white women and fifty percent of white men have a degree or post-graduate degree. This indicates that the people within the organisation have the potential to advance if properly

developed. However, this situation also points out a weakness of the programme and that is the failure of the organisation to utilise its employees to their full potential. Black respondents of the research indicated that they were being placed in dead-end jobs and that they were not able to use their skills or develop their potential.

A sixth strength is also related to the demographics of the participants of the research. A significant number in each sample group have been employed by company XXX for more than ten years. This indicates a loyalty to the company and a willingness to stick by the company through its difficulties. Furthermore, amongst the black respondents, a large portion of their work experience had been gained in company XXX indicating a familiarity with the organisation and the job. A threat to company XXX is if more of these individuals decide to leave the organisation. As communicated in the research, a lot of "good black people" had left the organisation because they were dissatisfied with their progress and the manner in which their careers within the organisation had been managed.

Chertos (1983) maintains that one of the most important barriers to the effective implementation of an affirmative action programme is the lack of organisational authority and power allocated to those given the responsibility for implementing the programme. This constitutes a key weakness in company XXX's affirmative action programme. Furthermore, the Affirmative Action Programme Manager is the only individual overseeing the function and ensuring the effective implementation of the programme. If awareness is to be enhanced within company XXX, employees are to be educated and the results of the programme monitored and communicated to name but a few important implementation issues, more manpower is required. If affirmative action is to be a priority in the organisation, then adequate resources in terms of time, people and money need to be committed to ensuring that these objectives are met (Hofmeyr, 1989).

The lack of credibility of the affirmative action programme amongst employees of company XXX, particularly its beneficiaries is a major weakness of the company's programme. Furthermore, many of its beneficiaries do not anticipate any change in the programme in the future because of the lack of commitment by the management of company XXX. The programme is perceived as window-dressing and an attempt to look good rather than do good.

Furthermore, the perceived inequities in treatment, remuneration packages, development and promotional opportunities between white and black employees also poses a real threat to the credibility of any affirmative action strategy or equal opportunity policy. That these inequities may not exist is not the issue, as the perceptions that they do exist, are real. These perceptions must be addressed and an education programme would assist in this regard.

A further weakness of company XXX's affirmative action programme is that the compatibility of affirmative action goals and other business goals has not been defined. As noted by participants of the research, business goals take precedence. If affirmative action is to be a priority, the trade-off between its objectives and those of other business functions need to be clarified.

*(b) Factors that are Critical to the Success of an Affirmative Action Programme*

Top management commitment is the most important critical success factor as company strategy is determined and the relative importance of various business objectives delineated at this level. If top management fails to afford affirmative action objectives the prominence they warrant, then these objectives will not be considered seriously by the rest of management. Blanchard (1989) communicates that strong, public commitment from top management is critical for three reasons. The first reason is that top management controls the allocation of resources and in order for affirmative action to receive adequate resources, it must have the approval of top management. A second reason is that people will follow the leadership of top management, adopting their values and attitudes. A third reason is that top management can favourably influence the organisational culture and its norms which in turn influence interpersonal behaviour. Top management commitment is needed to provide the impetus for the affirmative action initiative (Hofmeyr, 1993).

A second critical success factor is that the programme must be acceptable to its beneficiaries. It is important that they have confidence in the programme and see it as a credible, fair system. As suggested by Tsukudu (1992), beneficiaries must be consulted as to what their understanding of affirmative action is as well as be involved in the implementation of any affirmative action programme. As noted in research conducted by Ayers (1992), positive experiences of affirmative action were associated with attention to fair procedures and a commitment to those procedures. A commitment that is ensured by involving the beneficiaries in the determination of procedures.

A third and related factor is the need to address any perceptions of inequity or discrimination within the organisation so that the affirmative action programme will be perceived as a fair and credible programme. It is to be remembered that affirmative action is not a panacea for racism or sexism (Reid & Clayton, 1992) and that other measures will be needed to address these attitudes.

A fourth critical success factor is ensuring that a pool of well-qualified and competent black candidates exists within the organisation for promotion. This is particularly difficult in the South African situation, given the skills shortage. However, companies must be proactive in this regard and create this pool by recruiting actively and ensuring that all willing and able employees are trained, developed and prepared for advancement. Ndlovu admits to the skill shortage but also stresses that there are many blacks within organisations that have the potential to advance but that are not being properly utilised (cited in De Villiers, 1993a).

Roodt (1992) advocates a holistic approach to affirmative action and that effective programmes will only result if emphasis is placed on the dual responsibilities of the organisation and the individual as well as the interaction of both as an integrated system. Thus, a critical success factor is the realisation by candidates of affirmative action of the role that they play and the responsibility that they must take in their own development and advancement.

The organisation's responsibility constitutes the fifth factor critical to the success of an affirmative action programme. This is ensuring that adequate structures exist in the organisation to provide a supportive

environment in which the beneficiaries of affirmative action can develop and advance. As indicated by Human (1991b) the failure of a candidate of affirmative action is often attributed to personal deficits rather than the absence of supportive structures and the manner in which the individual was managed. One of the most important support structures is providing adequate guidance and on-the-job training such that the employee can gain confidence in their competence on the job. This will also negate any doubts about their incompetence and serve to eradicate the stereotypes that exist.

***(c) Factors that Undermine the Effectiveness of an Affirmative Action Programme***

The perceptions, expectations and ambitions of the beneficiaries of affirmative action must be addressed and included in an education strategy (Tsukudu, 1992). Failure to do so will undermine the effectiveness of an affirmative action programme, for no matter how effective the programme may be, if expectations of beneficiaries are unrealistic, they will perceive the system to be ineffective. The ambitions of beneficiaries must also be taken into consideration such that employers or superiors do not have unrealistic expectations of the candidate as these expectations often result in disappointment when performance is perceived in a more realistic light.

A second factor undermining the effectiveness of an affirmative action programme is the lack of communication about an affirmative action programme. If an organisation has committed itself to an affirmative action strategy and supports the values inherent in such a policy, then it must be prepared to communicate this strategy, how it is to be implemented and the progress thereof. Inadequate communication fuels scepticism about the programme and creates a perception that the programme is ineffective. As Hofmeyr (1989) suggests, there must be two-way communication so that concerns and grievances can be raised.

A third factor that will undermine the effectiveness of an affirmative action programme is a disregard for a system of meritocracy. As indicated in the research, all respondents supported the maintenance of a system of merit and rejected the lowering of standards. Failure to create and maintain a culture of merit will result in the affirmative action programme being a handout rather than being about empowerment.

Failure to address grievances will also serve to undermine the success of an affirmative action programme, particularly when the establishment of the programme has followed a participative approach.

***(d) Factors that Contribute to the Failure of an Affirmative Action Programme***

Failure to consider and implement the critical success factors as noted above, will obviously contribute to the failure of an affirmative action programme. However, there are other factors that need to be taken into account.

Neglecting to take into account the attitudes, fears and resentment of the non-beneficiaries of affirmative action is a factor that may contribute to the failure of an affirmative action programme. If the commitment of this group of people is not forthcoming, they can undermine the development of affirmative action candidates in subtle and indirect ways and in this way sabotage the programme (Rosen and Jerdee, 1979). This means that the grievances of non-beneficiaries must not be ignored, as this is a serious omission that may result in a backlash.

Allied to this is the need to understand the role that a white manager complete with stereotypes and perceptions of blacks, can play in retarding the development of black individuals, by not allowing candidates of affirmative action to perform to his/her capacity because of these negative expectations. Ignoring the importance of these influences could serve to contribute to the failure of an affirmative action programme (Human,1991a).

Unrealistic targets can also contribute to the failure of an affirmative action programme, as the quest to reach quotas can result in window-dressing, tokenism and paternalism (Charoux,1991). This will undermine the credibility of the programme amongst its beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries, result in incompetence and the reinforcement of stereotypes. These are not the hallmarks of an effective affirmative action programme.

## **9. The Need for Change : A Systems Approach**

The research has indicated the depth and breadth of strategic and implementation issues of affirmative action as they interact with other areas of the business. An affirmative action programme cannot be viewed as an isolated system, to be implemented with only a cursory understanding of its impact on other functions and objectives of the business. Rather, it needs to be viewed from a systems approach whereby it forms one part of the total business entity, affecting other areas and in turn being influenced by other parts of the system. Furthermore, attitudes to affirmative action are dynamic and as outlined in the results, redefining affirmative action and reformulating an affirmative action programme does not only constitute the end of the process but also the beginning of the cycle of evaluating attitudes to affirmative action and the perceived impact of the programme. This is an iterative process of one process initiating the other.

The researcher proposes that the most effective manner of defining an affirmative action policy and implementing such a programme is to adopt an organisational development approach to these issues. The determination of affirmative action policy and implementation of a programme would constitute part of an OD intervention. The purpose of an OD intervention is to intervene in the routine functioning of the organisation, with the intent of imparting skills, knowledge and attitudes required for continual organisation development and growth (Burke,1987).

A type of OD intervention proposed is survey feedback. This is a process of assessing individual's attitudes towards the functioning of the organisation, towards people in the organisation and towards their job (Bowers,1973). This essentially is what the research has done but looking more specifically at the issue of affirmative action. As such this study can form part of the initial data collection in survey feedback. The second phase of survey feedback is to feedback the results to the individuals as a group for discussion, analysis and interpretation.

The ultimate goal of this type of intervention is to create feedback loops within the organisation so that data is continually collected and used to identify and solve problems (Nadler,1977). This corresponds with the iterative process of affirmative action mentioned earlier.

Thus, the next step proposed in this research is to engage in an organisational development intervention aimed at redefining affirmative action and reformulating the affirmative action programme in company XXX.

## CONCLUSION

Due to the sensitive and controversial nature of affirmative action (Gatherer & Erikson, 1992), attitudes to the topic differ widely (Crosby & Clayton, 1992). This was borne out in the current study, where the attitudes expressed about affirmative action as well as about the various issues of affirmative action, were divergent between as well as within the four sample groups of white men, white women, black men and black women. This serves to caution organisations when implementing an affirmative action programme, to not assume that there is a certain attitude held by whites or blacks. Rather, there are a range of attitudes which can and often do cross racial and gender lines.

Initial surface attitudes to affirmative action reflected a negative orientation amongst white respondents but a positive orientation amongst the black respondents. This has important implications for implementation of an affirmative action programme for this mindset/orientation needs to be borne in mind when approaching the subject of affirmative action and educating employees about the policy and the organisation's programme.

Understanding attitudes to affirmative action necessitates the provision of a definition because of a general lack of familiarity with what affirmative action entails (Clayton & Crosby, 1992). The results of the research indicate that the majority of respondents understand affirmative action as a policy to primarily address the educational disadvantages of black South Africans. This emphasis was further supported by the acceptance of affirmative action in the form of preferential treatment in training and development, by all four sample groups. This emphasis is unique to the South African context and differs to affirmative action in the U.S.A where issues of full-representation of all racial and gender groups and the elimination of discrimination receive far more consideration (Blanchard, 1989; Clayton & Crosby, 1992). However, given the effects of apartheid education, this emphasis is warranted.

Respondents expressed support for the philosophy of affirmative action namely, to eliminate discrimination and afford everyone the same opportunities. However, disagreement existed over what alternatives to equal opportunity were acceptable. Preferential treatment in hiring was found unacceptable by all sample groups with the exception of black men. All four sample groups maintained that preferential treatment in promotions was unacceptable. At this interface, only merit should be taken into consideration when selecting employees. Acceptance of quota systems was divided along racial lines. Blacks perceived such systems as necessary while white respondents believed that they would result in tokenism and reverse discrimination.

Gender issues in affirmative action and the development of women received far less emphasis by all four sample groups. It is of concern that white males of the research indicated that the development of women was not as important an issue as that of the development of black people, since white males still constitute the power base and decision-making powers of organisations and thus dictate the importance placed on issues of development. This implies that the development of women may be neglected and seen as sub-ordinate to the development of

black people. This in turn may affect black women the most negatively because more often than not, they are passed over in favour of hiring and/or promoting white women or black men (Reid & Clayton, 1988). This appeared to be the case in company XXX.

In addressing the second goal of the research, the results indicate that beneficiaries of affirmative action do not perceive the policy or programmes to be stigmatising. Respondents did not report negative intrapersonal effects such that they experienced a loss in self-confidence or esteem. It appeared that the greatest effect of the affirmative action programme in company XXX was at the interpersonal level but as Crosby and Clayton (1990) contest, such effects are also likely to exist under a policy of equal opportunity.

Low levels of resentment from the non-beneficiaries of the affirmative action programme, were evident. The respondents communicated that resentment could be a by-product of such a programme if blacks are to benefit at the expense of whites.

Whilst respondents were emphatic in their attitudes about the policy and programme of affirmative action, they were less knowledgeable about the by-products/effects of such programmes. This is thus an area of education that an organisation with an affirmative action programme needs to investigate further.

The sub-goal of the research was to explore employee attitudes to the effectiveness of the organisation's affirmative action programme. The programme in company XXX was not received well by its employees and is seen to be ineffective due to interalia, the lack of communication about the programme, the dearth of evidence of its progress in terms of significant representation of blacks at senior levels and the inequities that are seen to be seen pervading the organisation.

In conclusion, it is the researcher's opinion that the two main goals and one sub-goal of the research have been adequately realised by the study. In conducting a qualitative and quantitative study of affirmative action, the breadth and scope of the subject is satisfactory. This research has had a wide focus and the study could have rather concentrated on any one of the three areas covered (attitudes to affirmative action, effects of such a programme, and the effectiveness of affirmative action programmes). and covered them in more depth. This research sought to address the critical issues in each and can therefore be viewed as a starting point for further research. As suggested by the researcher, the next step in the research is to follow through with the implementation of an improved affirmative action programme in company XXX. The next step of the research would therefore focus on implementation issues.

Affirmative action is a complex issue and was a difficult one to grapple with in the research. However, the researcher believes that a comprehensive analysis and presentation of the issues has been provided.

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## APPENDIX 1

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE**INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM TWO INTERVIEWS WITH THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMME MANAGER.**

The research was conducted in a large organisation, with links to a multinational company. The organisation is based in the PWV area and operates in the information technology business.

The organisation employs approximately 1400 people, 987 (72%) of whom are white, 229 (16%) black and 160 (11%) Coloured or Asian. The following statistics offer a picture of the racial demographics at certain levels and in certain functions in the organisation:

## Headcount by Job Category

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Other Race Groups
Managers	263	231	13	20
Professionals <sup>a</sup>	740	552	121	69
Others <sup>b</sup>	373	204	164	71
Total	1376	987	229	160

## NOTES :

(a) Professionals are those individuals in the organisation that occupy specialist positions such as engineers, analysts, technicians and so forth.

(b) Others are those individuals who are not professionals or in management positions. These people typically occupy clerical, administrative, secretarial posts or are trainees in marketing or sales.

## Headcount by Occupation

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Other Race Groups
Software Engineering	297	227	43	27
Marketing	267	242	14	11
Administration	526	319	119	88
Technical	286	199	53	34
Total	1376	987	229	160

Over the past year, the organisation has undergone a significant restructuring exercise to form a company consisting of a group of smaller business units, each serving a specific market niche.

Part of this restructuring exercise has been the necessary retrenchment of approximately fifty people, mainly in centralised positions and administration, due to job or skill redundancy. This had affected the morale of employees but its effects on the research were anticipated to be minimal because of the small numbers of individuals retrenched. The restructuring exercise has however, had the effect of unsettling employees, making them uncertain of the future. It has also contributed to a loss of identity with what the company actually stands. All interviewees responded that the affirmative action programme had not influenced these attitudes or feelings at all.

The organisation in which the research was conducted prides itself on being an "equal opportunity" employer. All employees are aware of this philosophy and understand what it means. The company has believed in promoting equal opportunity because of a felt social responsibility to behave ethically, even before external pressures exerted by the Sullivan code in the 1980s forced many organisations to engage in the "practice" of equal opportunity and black advancement.

In the late 1980s, the organisation progressed from a policy of equal opportunity to one of affirmative action. According to the Affirmative Action Manager, this shift was founded on the belief that true equality of opportunity can only be achieved with the presence of affirmative action. There was a recognition that equal opportunity had failed to take into account the disadvantaged backgrounds of many of the organisation's employees. Accordingly, affirmative action was needed to "level the playing field" such that employees could compete equally.

The organisation resolved to focus on blacks as its core group of beneficiaries. This was felt to be necessary so as to not dilute the efforts of the affirmative action initiative. However, consideration was given to other racial groups (Coloured and Asians), particularly in certain areas in South Africa where these groups are geographically concentrated. White women are not recognised by the research organisation as a beneficiary group.

The Affirmative Action Manager noted that the organisation's affirmative action programme is seen as temporary such that when blacks collectively constitute thirty percent of their workforce, there will no longer be the need for affirmative action, as the system would then become self-perpetuating.

The strategic time frame provided for the realisation of this thirty percent is a five-year period from 1992 to 1997. Currently, black men and women constitute sixteen percent of the total number of employees, but only five percent of managers. There is one black female manager. Encouraging to note however, it that the numbers of black men and women are higher at the trainee level (34% of all trainees), thus providing a large pool of potential for development and future promotion.

According to the Affirmative Action Manager, the affirmative action programme is linked to other initiatives in the company such as training and development, career development as well as support programmes such as mentoring and sponsoring. Whilst the mentorship programme in the past has not met with satisfactory results, the organisation, in conjunction with the Witwatersrand Business School devised a new, more effective programme mid-1993. This mentorship programme is targeted at high-potential black employees.

The culture of the organisation, according to the Affirmative Action Manager encourages open communication and an open-door policy. It is in this climate that the affirmative action programme is "sold" to its employees. The Affirmative Action Manager is responsible for educating management about the programme. It is their responsibility to support the programme and communicate it to their subordinates. The educational thrust to managers, was explained by the Affirmative Action Manager as a holistic approach where all employees (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the programme) were involved in workshops where the objectives of the programme were explained; and fears, criticisms and doubts were addressed. These workshops were called Transformation Awareness Seminars.

However, in the pilot study, it became evident that despite an awareness that there was an Affirmative Action Manager and some sort of affirmative action programme, knowledge of what this meant and what the programme constituted was lacking. Of the employees interviewed during the pilot study, only one knew of and had been involved in these Transformation Awareness Seminars. In contrast however, employees were very clear about the organisation's policy of equal opportunity.

A strategy meeting held in June 1993, between the Chief Executive Officer(CEO), directors and the Affirmative Action Manager was recognised by the latter as a landmark in the progress of the affirmative action programme. It was at this meeting that the CEO agreed to take ownership of the programme. Placing affirmative action on the agenda as an important business priority, meant that the importance of the affirmative action programme and the success thereof was seen as important. A budget for the funding of related activities (mentoring, screening programme, networking) was agreed upon. Another important issue agreed upon was the principle of hiring senior personnel from sources external to the company. Previously, all senior posts were filled internally. However, given the limited number of black employees available for promotion within the company, this was seen as a restrictive policy hindering the process of promoting a demographically balanced workforce at all levels within the organisation. According to the Affirmative Action Programme Manager, these decisions meant that real progress could occur and they represented a move from just talking about the issues to really doing something about them.

At the same strategy meeting, the following criteria were agreed upon as critical success factors :

1. Visible composition both vertically and horizontally within the organisation of previously disadvantaged groups. White women are not recognised as a disadvantaged group.
2. Reaffirming a culture of meritocracy across all business units. Moreover, affirmative action cannot be seen to undermine the system of meritocracy.
3. The demand by the executive for uncompromising performance by all employees. This is currently not the case in the organisation. Linked to this is the courage to deal fairly and effectively with poor performance.
4. Openly encourage and create a culture of learning and self development.
5. Availability of appropriate high potential candidates through affirmative hiring.
6. Acceptance by disadvantaged communities of the relevance and appropriateness of the affirmative action programme. Thus the affirmative action programme must have credibility externally as well as internally.

The research data does not reflect this strategic change as the data collection occurred too soon after this strategy meeting and no communication of the strategy and subsequent implementation had taken place.

COVERING LETTER THAT ACCOMPANIED QUESTIONNAIRE

WRITTEN ON A COMPANY LETTERHEAD

2 August 1993

Dear Mr. XXX

RE: PARTICIPATION IN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SURVEY

Company XXX is currently involved in a research project that aims to detail attitudes towards affirmative action and to investigate the perceived impact of such programmes.

Of particular relevance to our organisation, the research will also address the attitudes of company XXX's employees to its own affirmative action programme. Understanding attitudes to affirmative action is the first step that needs to be taken if effective affirmative action programmes are to be implemented. Accordingly, the research can play a valuable role in assessing the efficacy and effectiveness of company XXX's current affirmative action strategy and the implementation thereof.

You have been asked to participate in the main study of the research. Your name has been randomly chosen from a sample of all company XXX employees. You are requested to answer the questionnaire attached to this letter. In order to achieve an adequate sample that is representative of all employees in company XXX, it is of critical importance that the questionnaire be completed and returned by 23 August 1993. We thus appeal that you do so.

The questionnaire should take no more than 25 minutes to complete. Your views and attitudes as expressed in the questionnaire will remain anonymous and confidential. You are not required to provide your name and only the researcher will have access to the completed questionnaire. Accordingly, we request that you be as frank and honest as possible in completing the questionnaire.

Please familiarise yourself with the instructions on the front of the questionnaire before you attempt to answer it.

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation and the time taken to complete the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely  
Sibu Mngomezulu

**REMINDER LETTERS**

REMINDER LETTER NO.1  
WRITTEN ON COMPANY LETTERHEAD  
10 August 1993

Dear Mr. XXX

**RE: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

This letter serves to remind you to please complete the Affirmative Action questionnaire that you received in the post approximately 10 days ago.

As stated in the letter that accompanied the questionnaire, your co-operation in completing the questionnaire is essential to the validity and accuracy of the study. If you have misplaced or failed to received questionnaire, please contact Annatjie du Plooy, Secretary to the Personuel Manager, who will forward another one to you. You are requested to return the questionnaire by 23 August 1993.

If you have completed and returned the questionnaire, please ignore this and subsequent reminders. Thank you also for your co-operation and assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Sibu Mngomezulu

REMINDER LETTER NO. 2  
WRITTEN ON COMPANY LETTERHEAD  
16 August 1993

Dear Ms. XXX

**RE: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

This letter serves to remind you that the due date for the completion and return of the Affirmative Action questionnaire is only a week away. If you have not yet completed and returned the questionnaire, please do so as soon as possible before the 23 August 1993.

Again, it is necessary to emphasise that your co-operation in this regard, is essential to the validity and reliability of the study. If you have misplaced your questionnaire, please contact Annatjie du Plooy, who will foward one to you.

If you have completed and returned the questionnaire, thank you. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely  
Sibu Mngomezulu

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

***AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SURVEY***

***Research Conducted by S. Wright, Rhodes University, Grahamstown***

***Company Liaison : Mr. Sibu Mngomezulu, Affirmative Action Programme Manager***

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Please complete and return the questionnaire, in the envelope provided, **by 23 August 1993**.
2. Please complete the questionnaire **YOURSELF**. The sample will be distorted if someone else completes the questionnaire on your behalf.
3. Please reflect your attitudes about the subject matter as accurately as possible.
4. Please answer the questions in the sequence in which they occur.
5. Please bear in mind that throughout the questionnaire, in all instances where the term "Affirmative Action" is used, reference is only being made to affirmative action within the organisational/corporate context rather than affirmative action in wider society. Your responses should also reflect this distinction.

**PLEASE NOTE**

1. No-one other than the researcher will have access to this document and that the attitudes expressed herein, can in no way be connected to you.
2. The results of the survey will be communicated to all ISM employees by the Affirmative Action Programme Manager in early 1994.

**THANK YOU KINDLY FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION AND THE TIME  
TAKEN TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

SECTION ONE : PERSONAL AND WORK DETAILS

**INSTRUCTIONS :** Please place a cross in the appropriate block.

**AGE**

< 25		25 - 34		35 - 44		45 - 54		> 54	
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**RACE**

ASIAN		BLACK		COLOURED		WHITE	
-------	--	-------	--	----------	--	-------	--

**GENDER**

FEMALE		MALE	
--------	--	------	--

**EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

MATRIC		O-LEVELS		A-LEVELS		DIPLOMA		DEGREE		POST-GRAD DEGREE	
--------	--	----------	--	----------	--	---------	--	--------	--	------------------	--

Please write down the job title of :

YOUR CURRENT JOB IN XXX

YOUR POSITION ON ENTRY INTO XXX

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**NUMBER OF YEARS SPENT IN CURRENT JOB**

< 2		2 - 5		6 - 10		11 - 15		16+	
-----	--	-------	--	--------	--	---------	--	-----	--

**NUMBER OF YEARS WITH XXX**

< 2		2 - 5		6 - 10		11 - 20		21 - 30		31+	
-----	--	-------	--	--------	--	---------	--	---------	--	-----	--

**NUMBER OF YEARS WORK EXPERIENCE**

< 2		2 - 5		6 - 10		11 - 20		21 - 30		31+	
-----	--	-------	--	--------	--	---------	--	---------	--	-----	--

-2-  
SECTION TWO : ATTITUDES TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

INSTRUCTIONS : Please write in BLOCK CAPITALS.

A. What do you understand by the term **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**?

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B. In your opinion, is **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY DIFFERENT TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**? Please explain your answer.

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C. INSTRUCTIONS : Please place a cross in the block **THAT BEST REPRESENTS** what you feel.

1. Affording black men and women equal opportunity in the workplace, is not enough to overcome the disadvantage caused by the social, economic and racial discrimination experienced in the past. Black men and women require special opportunities and treatment.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

2. White women need special opportunities and treatment because they are having to deal with a male dominated corporate culture that inherently discriminates against them.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

3. Due to the social, economic and educational discrimination experienced by blacks in the past, blacks and whites do not compete on an equal footing. Thus in reality, equal opportunity does not result in giving everyone an equal chance.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

4. Black women as a group, have been the target of racism AND sexism in the past. Accordingly, they should be the primary beneficiaries of black advancement strategies.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

5. Giving blacks and not whites certain opportunities is necessary, in order to equalise their chances of success within the organisation.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

6. It is only fair that blacks are now given special opportunities to compensate for the discrimination suffered in the past.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

7. The development of women, irrespective of race, is as important an issue as that of black development.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

8. There are certain occasions in the organisation when preferential treatment\*, is an acceptable employment practise.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

9. There is a recognised need to increase the number of blacks and women at certain levels in organisations in South Africa. Preferential treatment\* of blacks and women is an acceptable way of achieving a demographically balanced workforce.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

10. Preferential treatment\* is an acceptable policy when hiring/employing black individuals.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

11. Preferential treatment\* is not an acceptable policy when promoting black individuals.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

12. Preferential treatment\* is acceptable when training black men and women.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

13. Affirmative action means focusing on an individual's race and/or gender. This is not acceptable. In all employment practises, ONLY the abilities of the person should be taken into consideration.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

14. In order to be able to ignore race and gender in employment decisions in the long-term, we need to focus on race and gender in the short-term, such that people will have an equal chance of success.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

15. Whilst a basic level of competence is necessary, organisations need to lower the standards that they use when hiring blacks. The lowering of standards under these circumstances is acceptable.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

16. Affirmative action undermines the effectiveness of the organisation because lesser qualified blacks are hired and/or promoted who cannot perform adequately on the job.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

17. Affirmative action merely results in the reinforcement of the stereotype of black people as incompetent because blacks are placed in jobs that they are not properly prepared for and as a result do not meet the performance criteria of the job.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

\* Preferential treatment means treating some people differently, giving them special opportunities and making allowances for them because they are a certain race or gender.

18. The performance of the beneficiaries\* of affirmative action is generally of a lower quality than that of other employees.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

19. Affirmative action is reverse discrimination because blacks are now preferred above whites in training opportunities and hiring and promotion decisions.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

20. Affirmative action is just another patronising policy of doing things FOR the blacks, instead of doing things WITH them.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

21. Quota systems\* enforced by a government, are the only way of ensuring that businesses are making progress in hiring blacks or white women.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

22. The government must legislate the hiring and promotion of black men and women, as the generosity, conscience or goodwill of the private sector cannot be relied on to ensure the advancement and development of this group of people.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
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SECTION THREE : EFFECTS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

D. How has AFFIRMATIVE ACTION affected you, if at all?

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E. How do you anticipate AFFIRMATIVE ACTION affecting you in the future, if at all ? AND how do you feel about this?

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\* Beneficiaries are those people who are likely to benefit under a policy of affirmative action.

\* Quota systems state that a fixed percentage of blacks and white women must be employed and/or promoted in the organisation, within a certain period of time.

F. INSTRUCTIONS : Please place a cross in the block THAT BEST REPRESENTS what you feel.

23. Affirmative action delegitimizes the achievements of blacks because others presume that they were hired under affirmative action and are thus incompetent and under-qualified.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

24. Under affirmative action, blacks are not given credit for good performance. Others are more likely to attribute their success to reasons other than competence and hard work.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

25. As the beneficiaries of affirmative action, blacks may feel like impostors, having been hired primarily because of their skin colour and not because they are the best person for the job.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

26. Blacks, the beneficiaries of affirmative action, experience a lack of self-confidence because they are perceived by others as incompetent and in need of assistance in the form of affirmative action.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

27. Blacks have unrealistic expectations of what an affirmative action programme has to offer them.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

28. Blacks fail to realise what role they personally have to play in their own development and promotion within the organisation.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

29. The failure of black advancement programmes is often explained in terms of the lack of motivation or lack of qualifications on the part of black individuals. However, fault often lies with the organisation for failing to adequately support these individuals within the work environment.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

30. Affirmative action is a system which benefits one group at the expense of another.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

31. Due to the skills shortage, white men have been "over-promoted". This has resulted in their having unrealistic expectations of promotional opportunities in the future.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

32. The promotion of blacks in the future will impact directly on the promotion opportunities available to whites. This is acceptable given that in the past whites were afforded opportunities that were not rightfully earned but rather gained through the discrimination of black people.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

33. Under a policy of affirmative action, whites feel resentment towards blacks for being preferred in employment, training and promotion opportunities.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
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SECTION FOUR : AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN ISM

G. What is your knowledge and understanding of the AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMME IN XXX?

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H. Is the principle of EQUAL OPPORTUNITY applied as it should be in XXX? Please elaborate further than a simple 'Yes' or 'No' and justify your answer.

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I. *INSTRUCTIONS : Please place a cross in the block THAT BEST REPRESENTS what you feel.*

33. XXX's endorsement of the principle of equal opportunity is acceptable.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

34. The principle of equal opportunity is applied in all employment practises in XXX.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

35. Affirmative action, that is a focus on the development and promotion of black people, should be a recognised and promoted policy of XXX.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

36. I am satisfied with the company's decision to endorse a policy of affirmative action.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

37. I am satisfied with the implementation of the company's affirmative action programme.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

38. The XXX affirmative action policy of focusing on blacks is justifiable.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

39. There is a high degree of confidence in XXX affirmative action programme.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

40. It is my perception that women in XXX feel that more attention needs to be paid to their development and promotion within the organisation.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--

41. In XXX white women should also be included in the affirmative action programme.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

42. The development and promotion of black women in XXX is neglected.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

43. Sexism is still occurring in XXX.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

44. Racism is still prevalent in XXX.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

45. In XXX whites have their doubts that their black colleagues, who when promoted into positions of responsibility and authority, will succeed in those positions.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

46. It is my perception that being black in this organisation means that one has to perform better than one's white counterparts for the same recognition.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

47. Blacks in XXX unlike their white counterparts are not left to get on with their jobs. They are under constant scrutiny.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

48. Whilst XXX does demand a certain level of competence of all current and prospective employees, allowances are made for the blacks within the organisation.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

49. People in XXX continue to "tip-toe" around, that is avoid, the issues of racism, affirmative action and black development.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

50. Managers in XXX experience difficulties in reprimanding black subordinates for fear of being labelled racist.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

51. Being a black person in XXX means that excuses are made for poor performance.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

52. It is my perception that blacks in XXX are satisfied with the attention that is being paid to their development and promotion within the company.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree	
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--

53. The hiring and promotion of black people into certain positions in XXX has been no more than window-dressing.\*

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

54. Top management in XXX are not doing enough to promote the employment, development and promotion of blacks within the organisation.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

55. Attitudes of management have not changed sufficiently to successfully support a strategy of affirmative action.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

56. Every manager's performance assessment should be based on how well they manage and support the development of blacks in XXX.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

57. The training and development programmes offered in XXX are inadequate in preparing employees to contribute within their work environment.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

58. The career development meetings held on an annual basis are beneficial in that one can anticipate one's progress within XXX.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

59. Employees in XXX should be consulted as to what they believe an affirmative action strategy should entail and how it should be implemented.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

60. The progress of the affirmative action programme in XXX should be monitored closely and the results made known to all in the organisation.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

61. The affirmative action strategy and implementation thereof, has been well-communicated to all employees.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

62. It is the responsibility of every single manager in XXX to communicate the strategy of Affirmative Action to their subordinates.

Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't Know		Agree		Strongly Agree		<input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	--	----------	--	------------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	--------------------------

\*Window-dressing implies that these people have been put in these positions for show and not to contribute meaningfully to the organisation.

J. In your opinion, what are the three biggest obstacles to the effective implementation of any affirmative action programme in XXX?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

K. What frustrations, if any, do you experience with the current affirmative action programme?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

L. What changes, if any, would you like to see in XXX affirmative action programme?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

M. What are the positive aspects of XXX affirmative action programme?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 5

INTRODUCTORY LETTER SENT TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE PILOT STUDY

WRITTEN ON COMPANY LETTERHEAD  
27 May 1993

Dear Ms. XXX

RE: PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Company XXX is currently involved in a research project that aims to detail attitudes towards affirmative action and to investigate the perceived impact of such programmes.

Of particular relevance to our organisation, the research will also address the attitudes of company XXX's employees to its own affirmative action programme. Understanding attitudes to affirmative action is the first step that needs to be taken if effective affirmative action programmes are to be implemented. Accordingly, the research can play a valuable role in assessing the efficacy and effectiveness of company XXX's current affirmative action strategy and the implementation thereof.

You have been selected to participate in the pilot study of the research. Your name has been randomly chosen from a sample of all company XXX employees. You are requested to participate in an individual interview with the researcher, lasting 45 minutes. The interviews will be held during the week starting 21 June 1993. Annatjie du Plooy, from Personnel will contact you shortly to set up a day and time that would suit you. Your opinions on this subject are valued and your co-operation in this regard, would be greatly appreciated. Everything that you say in the interview will remain strictly anonymous and you are thus asked to be as frank and honest as you can.

Should you have further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance for your participation.

Yours sincerely  
Sibu Mngomezulu

**GUIDELINE FOR QUESTIONS ASKED IN QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS**

**Questions posed to ALL participants :**

1. What do you understand by the term "Equal Opportunity"?
2. Is Equal Opportunity applied in company XXX?
  - probe about how fairly Equal Opportunity is implemented
  - probe how they feel about the fair/unfair implementation of the policy of Equal Opportunity
3. What does Affirmative Action mean to you?
  - probe whether Affirmative Action is perceived as different to Equal Opportunity. How?
  - do you agree with Affirmative Action? Why/Why not?
4. Is Affirmative Action necessary in South Africa?
  - probe if participant thinks it is necessary given the educational disadvantages/discrimination experienced by blacks in South Africa
  - is affirmative action (focusing on blacks) justifiable? Why/Why not?
  - probe for acceptability of the use of affirmative action when:
    - \* Selection and Hiring
      - probe about use of quota systems, issue of lowering of standards for entry
    - \* Training
      - probe for purpose of training, levels of performance
    - \* Promotions
      - probe for importance of merit in making promotion decisions
5. Who should benefit from Affirmative Action?
  - Why?
  - probe to see if only graduates should qualify
  - probe to see for acceptability of affirmative action for white women
6. What do you know about the Affirmative Action Programme in company XXX?
  - probe for awareness of its existence and presence of affirmative action manager, knowledge about who beneficiaries are, what objectives are, how long it has existed
  - probe for what people think about the programme
7. Do you think that there should be an Affirmative Action Programme in company XXX?
  - Why/Why not? probe for feelings about Programme
  - probe for who beneficiaries should be
  - probe for what objectives should be
8. In the past year, there have been retrenchments and the company has undergone significant restructuring. What other changes have you noticed in company XXX?
  - probe for how employees are feeling
  - probe for whether affirmative action has impacted on these feelings
9. What conditions are necessary for Affirmative Action to work in South Africa?
10. What conditions are necessary for Affirmative Action to be successful in company XXX?
11. What needs to be changed in company XXX in order for the Affirmative Action Programme to be effective? What are the obstacles to its success?

**Questions posed to White Women :**

1. What does it feel like to be a white women in company XXX?
  - probe for experience of sexism, where, in what forms, access to resources/opportunities
2. Is there adequate scope for advancement of white women in company XXX?
  - probe for personal aspirations and whether they will be met in company XXX
  - probe for degree of satisfaction with development and progress in organisation
  - will affirmative action change these?
3. How do you feel about the increasing diversity of company XXX's employees?
  - probe for tolerance towards other race groups
4. Do you have any black colleagues/ sub-ordinates?
  - \* how do you view their performance?
    - probe for attitudes, beliefs about black people's competence
  - \* how do they fit into the organisation? Do they feel part of the company?
  - \* where do they experience problems?
    - probe for problems experienced with integration, learning on the job, receiving the support of colleagues or bosses
  - \* are the support structures adequate?
    - probe for support provided by colleagues(on-the-job assistance/training), boss(career guidance and support), organisation(orientation programmes, mentorships) etc.
5. How do your colleagues evaluate your performance?
  - probe for whether as a woman she is required to prove her competence, does she have to work harder than male colleagues for the same recognition?
  - probe for feelings and attitudes about this

**Questions for White Males :**

1. Do you anticipate that Affirmative Action will alter your opportunities for advancement?
  - why/why not? how do you feel about this?
2. Does Affirmative Action necessarily mean that white males are going to be excluded in the future?
  - why/why not? probe for feelings about this
3. How do you feel about the increasing diversity of people in company XXX?
  - probe for tolerance towards other race groups and females
4. Is racism still operating in company XXX?
  - probe for where, how, why, in what forms
5. Is sexism still operating in company XXX?
  - probe for where, how, why, in what forms
6. Do you have any black sub-ordinates/colleagues? in the past?
  - \* how do you view their performance?
    - probe for attitudes, beliefs about black people's competence
  - \* how do they fit into the organisation? Do they feel part of the company?
  - \* where do they experience problems?
    - probe for problems experienced with integration, learning on the job, receiving the support of colleagues or bosses
  - \* are the support structures adequate?
    - probe for support provided by colleagues(on-the-job assistance/training), boss(career guidance), organisation(orientation programmes, mentorships) etc.

**Questions posed to Black Women :**

1. What does it feel like to be a black women in company XXX?
  - probe for experiences of sexism, racism, where, in what forms, access to resources/opportunities
  
2. Is there adequate scope for advancement of black women in company XXX?
  - probe for personal aspirations, will she achieve these in company XXX, why/why not?
  - probe for degree of satisfaction with development and progress in company XXX
  - probe for how affirmative action will change these, if at all
  
3. How is your performance evaluated by others?
  - probe to establish if there is a pressure to perform because she is black or female
  - judged less or more harshly than white counterparts
  - what role does merit play in evaluations? Are there discrepancies between evaluations and progress in company?
  
4. Are there any areas in your job where you don't feel confident or you are not satisfied with?
  - probe to establish if support structures are adequate - integration problems, problems with colleagues, boss
  - probe to establish if sufficient training (includes on the job) is provided
  - probe to see if she is happy with the responsibility given in the job, underutilised, boring job, not using qualifications?

**Questions posed to Black Men :**

1. What does it feel like to be a black man in company XXX?
  - probe for problems with racism, where, why, what forms, access to resources/opportunities
  
2. Have black's opportunities for advancement changed in company XXX since the introduction of Affirmative Action?
  - how, why/why not? feelings about this
  - changes in the future
  - personal aspirations in company XXX, will he achieve these in company, why/why not?
  - how will affirmative action affect these, if at all
  
3. How is your performance evaluated by others in the organisation?
  - probe to establish if there is a pressure to perform because he is black
  - judged more or less harshly than white counterparts
  - what role does merit play in evaluations? Are there discrepancies between evaluations and progress in the organisation?
  
4. Are there any areas in your job where you don't feel confident or that you are not satisfied with ?
  - probe to establish if support structures are adequate - integration problems, problems with colleagues, boss
  - probe to see if sufficient training is provided
  - probe to see if he feels that he is given adequate responsibility, job uses his qualifications, abilities.

APPENDIX 7

LETTER SENT TO EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATING IN THE INTERVIEWS

WRITTEN ON COMPANY LETTERHEAD  
2 August 1993

Dear Ms. XXX

RE: PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Company XXX is currently involved in a research project that aims to detail attitudes towards affirmative action and to investigate the perceived impact of such programmes.

Of particular relevance to our organisation, the research will also address the attitudes of company XXX's employees to its own affirmative action programme. Understanding attitudes to affirmative action is the first step that needs to be taken if effective affirmative action programmes are to be implemented. Accordingly, the research can play a valuable role in assessing the efficacy and effectiveness of company XXX's current affirmative action strategy and the implementation thereof.

You have been selected to participate in the main study of the research. Your name has been randomly chosen from a sample of all company XXX employees. You are requested to participate in an individual interview with the researcher, lasting one hour. The interviews will be held during the week starting 30 August until 1 September 1993. Annajie du Plooy, from Personnel will contact you shortly to set up a day and time that would suit you. Your opinions on this subject are valued and your co-operation in this regard, would be greatly appreciated. Everything that you say in the interview will remain strictly anonymous and you are thus asked to be as frank and honest as you can.

Should you have further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance for your participation.

Yours sincerely  
Sibu Mngomezulu

## APPENDIX 8

APPENDIX TO RESULTS

Please note that the following responses have been coded under "Other" in the Results, section 3 - data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

*Question A : What do you understand by the term Affirmative Action?*

BLACK WOMEN :

- \* It is a smoke-screen to pretend that the organisation is doing something, no more than lip-service.
- \* Same as equal opportunity.

BLACK MEN :

- \* Real action; not lip-service.

*Question B : In your opinion, is Equal Opportunity different to Affirmative Action. Please explain your answer.*

BLACK WOMEN :

- \* Yes, affirmative action is concerned with the placement of blacks in the corporate world, whilst equal opportunity is only concerned with what happens inside the organisation.

BLACK MEN :

- \* Yes, equal opportunity is about getting the job, affirmative action is about progressing in that job and within the organisation.
- \* Yes, affirmative action is about making opportunities available to people whilst equal opportunity is about going out and getting them yourself.

*Question D : How has Affirmative Action affected you, if at all?*

WHITE WOMEN :

- \* The limiting of job opportunities outside the company.

BLACK WOMEN :

- \* Has resulted in stagnation in job. Get the job but subsequent development is neglected.

WHITE MEN :

- \* Denied job opportunity when wanted to return to Head Office.

*Question E : How you do you anticipate Affirmative Action affecting you in the future, if at all? And how would you feel about this?*

WHITE WOMEN :

- \* Not sure

BLACK WOMEN :

- \* Denial of opportunities if not the right race or gender.

WHITE MEN :

- \* Affirmative action will result in a good productive workforce which will make the company competitive in the new South Africa.
- \* Affirmative action will result in increasing the competition for whites.
- \* The company will no longer be able to purely focus on the bottom-line

*Question G : What is your knowledge and understanding of XXX's Affirmative Action Programme?*

BLACK WOMEN :

- \* There is no affirmative action programme, only equal opportunity

WHITE MEN :

- \* The company has to employ blacks and advance them at a certain rate.

BLACK MEN :

- \* There is a manager overseeing the programme but he has no real power, his hands are tied by management

*Question J : In your opinion, what are the biggest obstacles to the effective implementation of an Affirmative Action Programme in XXX?*

WHITE WOMEN :

- \* Lack of fair, consistent implementation and good management of programme.

BLACK WOMEN :

- \* Lack of trust in black employees

- \* Misuse of programme by black employees

WHITE MEN :

- \* The organisation should just practise equal opportunity.
- \* Affirmative action is not valid, it is based on false premises.
- \* Poor work standards.
- \* The attitude that blacks have to be promoted without regard to their capabilities.

BLACK MEN :

- \* Unqualified white managers, job reservation.
- \* Inadequate training for everyone.
- \* Lack of confidence in blacks.
- \* Tight economy.
- \* Customer prejudice.
- \* Employment of non-South African blacks.

*Question K : What frustrations, if any, do you have with the current Affirmative Action Programme?*

WHITE WOMEN :

- \* That it does not include women.
- \* No response.

BLACK WOMEN :

- \* Every little thing is an issue because one is black.
- \* Done for numbers, not out of concern for people.
- \* Doubt about one's competence because one is black.
- \* Lack of employee involvement in determination of policy and implementation of the affirmative action programme.

WHITE MEN :

- \* Lost alot of good black people that showed potential. Poaching from other companies of black staff is also frustrating.
- \* Focus needs to be on the community and education. Fix the problem not the symptoms.

BLACK MEN :

- \* Lack of commitment from whites.
- \* Lack of power of Affirmative Action Manager to exact real change.

\* Rationale for having affirmative action - to protect future in South Africa, not for a genuine interest in the welfare and development of its employees.

*Question L : What changes, if any, would you like to see in XXX's Affirmative Action Programme?*

WHITE WOMEN :

\* No response.

BLACK WOMEN :

\* Don't Know.

\* Seeing advancement of black people in organisation's hierarchy.

\* Right person to do the job of affirmative action Manager. Try to ensure low turnover of person in this job.

\* Ensure equal opportunity for all.

WHITE MEN :

\* Involve employees in the programme, don't make it a management problem

BLACK MEN :

\* Employment of more blacks, injection of new blood.

\* Give Manager real power, must not be a lackey of management

*Question M : What are the positive aspects of XXX's Affirmative Action Programme?*

WHITE WOMEN :

\* The organisation is no longer apologetic about race issues.

\* The increasing diversity of people in organisation.

BLACK WOMEN :

\* Transformation Workshops have addressed the attitudes of people.

\* Gives people a chance to prove themselves.

\* Exposure to senior management.

\* Motivates employees.

\* Employees know about it.

WHITE MEN :

\* Company's image abroad and within South Africa - attracts qualified non-whites and women because of its affirmative action policy.

\* Job creation.

BLACK MEN :

\* Company wide focus.

\* Company has resources in terms of people and money to successfully implement programme.

\* It is a business necessity.

APPENDIX 9

LETTER 1 :  
August 3rd, 1993

S. Wright  
Rhodes University  
Grahamstown

Dear S. Wright

**Affirmative Action Survey**

I am working for this company because I need subsistence. Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity programmes are for fresh graduates who aspire to reach the top in corporate business and who have the energy to spare on futile exercises.

In company XXX, I strongly believe and will always do that none of the two programmes will work because nobody wants them to. Company XXX were amongst the first to bandy these words around and the current company employment profile bears testimony to what has been achieved so far.

I wish and hope that my attitude would not adversely affect your research on these contentious subjects. But bear with me because my hopes have been viciously deflated by cunning people who knew what they were doing.

I hope other people would respond in full to your survey and wish you tons and tons of luck.

No hard feelings. BYE NOW!!!!

(Unsigned)

LETTER 2.

(Written on the questionnaire - no other details filled in)

I do not know what affirmative action is all about. Neither do I know about any such programme in Company XXX. I know that there has been Equal Opportunity in the company for ages now and support that everyone should have equal opportunities. Sorry, but can't answer your questionnaire.

